

Name:
Teacher: Boyd Gossett
Class: Mythology

Short Story Project: Turning History into Myth

Unit: History as Myth
How Will This Be Graded? Essay Grade

Major Directions

Are you ready for a challenge? I'm assuming that you said yes, so I will say, "Good! Glad you're up for the challenge." We are going to explore how a historical character can become a mythic character when her story is retold. To do this, you will first create a short story about a character living in a historical time period... and then you will transform that story into a myth! Confused about the process? Then let me break it down a bit more..

The first step is to write a short story (two pages typed or four pages handwritten) about a person who lives in a historical time period. For example, you could choose the age of pyramids in Ancient Egypt, the wars of the Roman Empire, the plantation rebellions of the American Slave Trade, the parties of the Roaring 20's, the pirate battles of the Caribbean, the organized crime of the Prohibition Era, the unemployment of the Great Depression, the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, the ex-patriot literary scenes of Paris, the musical heights of Mo Town, the dangers of NASA's space race, the protests of the Civil Rights Era, the exploits of English knights, the righteous battles of Japanese samurai, the sailing and trading in the great port cities on the East Coast of Africa, the epic conquests of Genghis Khan, the paintings of the Renaissance, the exploration of Mount Everest, the birth of Parisian high fashion, the flights of the Tuskegee Airmen, the horrors of the Tuskegee Experiments, the limits of the era of segregation, Jim Crow, and miscegenation laws, the high-stakes pressure of creating the atomic bomb at the Manhattan Project, the preaching that led to the birth of megachurches, the marches for the right to vote during Women's Suffrage, the resistance in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to European Colonization, the age of the assembly lines that produced the world's first automobiles, the contested presidential elections before the American Civil War, the dark ages of terrible diseases like smallpox, bubonic plague, tuberculosis, and yellow fever, the hippie revolution of San Francisco and Woodstock, the assassins of ancient China, the invention of the personal computer, the spies of the Cold War, the bravery of breaking the color barrier in schools, sports, and businesses, or the intrigue of kings and queens in European courts. If you cannot think of any historical time periods that meet your fancy, you can even set your story in the future. This first short story will be called **(E4) Short Story: The Rise and Fall of a Historical Character.**

The second step is to rewrite your historical short story as a myth (one page typed or two pages handwritten). For example, if you wrote your historical period as the exploration of Mount Everest, then you might turn it into the story of a person who climbs so high on the mountain that she becomes a star in the sky, turns into a cloud that forever floats above the mountain, or disappears and serves as a warning for anyone who would want to try and climb the mountain. The trick to turning your historical story into a myth is to pretend that the story has been told for many years and has become a legend. Then, you want to keep the major plot points from your historical story but make it more dramatic. This second short story will be called **(E5) Short Story: Reimagining History as Myth.**

HISTORY + **TIME** = **MYTH**
(1ST SHORT STORY) (2ND SHORT STORY)

(E4.1) Short Story: The Rise and Fall of a Historical Character

2 pages typed (No double space; Times New Roman Font 12)

OR 4 pages handwritten (easy to read handwriting please!)

- ***Note: By pages, I mean content. If your short story is handwritten, you could do 2 sheets of paper (back-and front) or 4 sheets of paper (front only).
- ***Note: Please use your common sense about handwriting. If you have large handwriting, then please take the initiative to write an extra page. The reason that I am setting the page count at 2 typed and 4 handwritten is because I am looking for a fully realized story. If you write 4 pages but with super large handwriting, then that may not do the job, and I may send it back to you so you can extend your story. A sure fire way to avoid the "large handwriting" effect and make sure that you are writing a sufficient amount is to type your story.
- ***Note: You should **ALWAYS** break your writing into paragraphs, and each time a new speaker speaks, this dialogue should result in a new paragraph.
- ***Note: This assignment needs an MLA style header. Please center the title and put in the top left corner of your paper the following header:

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Title Centered and Not Underlined

For our first short story, tell the tale of an important person of great wealth, power, and fame who loses everything. Invent the character (no real historical figures) and place the story in a historical time period. The more interesting the time period is, the better. Your character must lose her success, but whether the character rebounds to find success again or spirals downward into complete failure is up to you. Below, you will find thirteen challenges that will hopefully inspire you while writing your story. I expect you to complete **ALL** thirteen challenges, so please make creative choices that solve each of these challenges.

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THIRTEEN CHALLENGES

1. Choose which perspective you will use in your writing.

- You could write it in 1st person (I/me), which would be from the point of view (P.O.V.) of your main character.
- You could write it in 3rd person limited (he/she), which would be looking over the shoulder of your main character and limited to her thoughts.
- You could write it in 3rd person omniscient (he/she), which would be knowing the thoughts and feelings of all the characters.

2. Pick a historical time period.

- The time period can be set in the past, but the time period must be more than 40 years ago.
- The time period can be set in the future, but the time period must be more than 40 years in the future.

3. Make the title of your story reflect your story's time period.

- Your title cannot have numbers.

4. Create a main character of great wealth, power, and fame who loses everything.

- The character cannot be a real historical figure; you must create the character from your imagination.
- The character must have a small item that symbolizes his or her success.
- The character must have a flaw; this flaw can lead to losing everything, or it can play a small part in a situation otherwise out of his/her control.

5. Create a supporting character who was born in a different country.

- If the character does not speak English, then the character must need something desperately.
- If the character does speak English, then the character must translate for a character who does not.

6. Create a supporting character who wields power in a small and subtle (hard to notice; clever; understated) way.

- This character can be the same as the character from a different country or it can be a new character.
- This character can help the main character, serve as inspiration, or obstruct (get in the way of) the main character.

7. Begin your story AFTER your main character has lost everything. This will be far more interesting.

- Later in your story, you could include small flashbacks to the character's first rise to success.
- Later in your story, you could use dialogue between characters to describe how your character first rose to success.
- At the end, your story could be full of hope and describe how the character finds success again, despite losing everything.
- At the end, your story could be depressingly sad and describe how your character fails to regain her wealth, power, and fame.

8. Include the description of a fragrance (smell).

- The fragrance could be either good or bad.

9. Include the description of either a sunrise or a sunset.

- Include what makes this sunrise or sunset unique, beautiful, or disappointing.

10. Include a detailed description of a street.

- The street could be in the country (rural), a neighborhood (suburban), or a city (urban).
- The description could be of sights, sounds, or touch.

11. Include the description of a character's distinctive clothes.

- The character can be the main character or a supporting character.
- The clothes should reflect the time period.
- The clothes should also reveal a character's personality, social status, or lifestyle.

12. Include a poem or the lyrics to a song.

- The poem (or song lyrics) must be of **your own** creation; the words **cannot** be from a real song.
- The poem (or song lyrics) could be spoken by the main character or another character.
- The poem (or song lyrics) could be found by a character or heard in the distance.
- The poem (or song lyrics) must be at least six lines; the poem (or song lyrics) does not have to rhyme.

13. Include the phrase "blink faster" in your story.

- The line can appear in any context.
- The line can be spoken or written by you as narration.
- The line can be changed grammatically in any way you need.

(C4.1) Brainstorming: Thirteen Questions About Your Own Writing

1 page handwritten or typed; stapled to the front of "Short Story: The Rise and Fall of a Historical Character"

***Note: Below, I suggest the number of sentences you should write to answer each question. If your sentences are super complex and meaningful, then you might be able to answer the questions in less sentences. Please, however, err on the side of meeting the number of sentences I have recommended.

***Note: This assignment needs an MLA style header. Please center the title and put in the top left corner of your paper the following header:

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Brainstorming: Thirteen Questions About Your Own Writing

To help you think about your story, and for my easy reading, please answer the following questions and attach the answers as a cover page to the front of your short story. On a separate piece of paper, describe the creative choices you made as solutions for the thirteen challenges. You do **not** have to re-write the question. Please make sure you are using **complete** sentences with punctuation.

1. (3 Sentences) Did you choose **1st person (I)**, **3rd person limited (he/she)**, or **3rd person omniscient (he/she)** as your point of view (P.O.V.) and what narrative (storytelling) advantage did it give you? Why not use the other perspectives?
2. (4 Sentences) Which historical time period did you choose and why?
3. (2 Sentences) What is the title of your story and how does it reflect the time period?
4. (3 Sentences) How did your character gain great wealth, power, and fame? Also, how does your character lose it all? What is your character's flaw?
5. (3 Sentences) One of your supporting characters is from another country. Which country, and how does she wind up where your story is set?
6. (3 Sentences) One of your supporting characters wields power in a small and subtle way. Subtle means hard to notice, clever, and understated. What is the subtle power she holds over your main character? How does she use this power? For good? For evil? Wisely? Stupidly?
7. (3 Sentences) You were required to begin your story **after** your main character has lost everything. Would you have rather began your story **before** your main character loses everything? Why or why not? Also, please explain whether or not you used any flashbacks or dialogue to explain how your character rose to success and reflect on how your story would be different if you began **before** she loses everything.
8. (1 Sentence + Quotation) What is the fragrance (smell) your story describes? Also, please transcribe (copy) a quote to show the fragrance.
9. (1 Sentence + Quotation) How did you describe the sunrise or sunset? Also, please transcribe (copy) a quote to show your description.
10. (1 Sentence + Quotation) What details did you use to show that the street was **rural** (country), **suburban** (neighborhood), or **urban** (city)? Also, please transcribe (copy) a quote to show your description.
11. (1 Sentence + Quotation) What distinctive clothes did you describe? Also, please transcribe (copy) a quote to show your description.
12. (3 Sentences + Quotation) How did your six lines of poetry (or song lyrics) relate to a major theme in your story? How did you choose to work them into the world of your story? Also, please transcribe (copy) all six lines of poetry (or song lyrics).
13. (2 Sentences) How did you include the phrase "blink faster" in your story? What was the situation, and who said it?

Major Directions

Hello, again! After all that writing, you must have a short story that makes you proud. Let's review what you have done. You have written a short story (2 pages typed or 4 pages handwritten), answered a series of 13 challenges, created a character that lives in a historical time period, and taken her through a fall where she loses her wealth, power, and success.

Now, let's take a closer look at the character herself. This character you created was most likely realistic. She probably did not have any magical powers or super strength. (If she did, that is fine. Just hang with me for a minute.) Even though she did not have super-powers, didn't your character seem special because of a more believable quality, such as her intelligence, creativity, bravery, or dedication? Well, what if we take that "special quality" and exaggerate it to the point that it almost seems like a superpower.

In this new short story, I want you to imagine the following scenario. Your character lived her life. People noticed that she was special and liked to talk about her. They spread rumors and passed down stories about what she did. Perhaps, people even continued to tell stories about your character long after she died. People who knew her will tell their children about her epic rise and fall, and then their children will tell their children. Each time her story is retold, it gets a little bit more exaggerated, until eventually she becomes a legend. The stories about her grow overtime, change, and become almost unrecognizable in their new form. What once was a historical tale of a person who loses power, wealth, and fame becomes a myth, and your character becomes remembered not accurately for who she was but for the myth she has become.

It is now time to rewrite your original story as the myth that your historical character could become, given enough time and retellings of her story.

(E4.2) Short Story: Reimagining History as Myth
1 page typed (No double space; Times New Roman Font 12)
OR 2 pages handwritten (easy to read handwriting please!)

****Note: By pages, I mean content. If your short story is handwritten, you could do 2 sheets of paper (back-and front) or 4 sheets of paper (front only).*

****Note: Please use your common sense about handwriting. If you have large handwriting, then please take the initiative to write an extra page. The reason that I am setting the page count at 1 typed and 2 handwritten is because I am looking for a fully realized story. If you write 2 pages but with super large handwriting, then that may not do the job, and I may send it back to you so you can extend your story. A sure fire way to avoid the "large handwriting" effect and make sure that you are writing a sufficient amount is to type your story.*

****Note: You should **ALWAYS** break your writing into paragraphs, and each time a new speaker speaks, this dialogue should result in a new paragraph.*

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SEVEN CHALLENGES

Does everyone like to play the game telephone? Because we are about to play telephone with our short stories. In your original short story, you told the tale of an important person of great wealth, power, and fame who loses everything. Pretend that at least three generations have passed since that person lived (the original character's great-grandchildren would be grown after three generations). First of all, this means that the historical time period will have advanced between 60 and 100 years. Retell your original story, but this time, tell it how it might be told by people three generations later. Tell it with exaggeration and perhaps a bit of magic, as if it has become a myth.

1. Choose which perspective you will use in your writing.

- You could write it in 1st person (I/me), which would be from the point of view (P.O.V.) of your main character.
- You could write it in 3rd person limited (he/she), which would be looking over the shoulder of your main character and limited to her thoughts.
- You could write it in 3rd person omniscient (he/she), which would be knowing the thoughts and feelings of all the characters.

2. Pick a time period after your the historical period in your original story.

- The time period must advance into the future by at least 60 years.
- The time period can advance much further into the future if necessary, even 1000 years.
- Decide how this new historical time period remembers your original story's main character---positively or negatively?

3. Change the title of your original story by at least one word.

- You can add at least one word to the title.
- You can delete at least one word from the title.
- You can substitute at least one word for another in the title.
- The one word you change cannot be an article (a, an, the) or an unimportant word

4. Exaggerate a quality of the main character from your original story.

- You could exaggerate the good (or bad) qualities of the main character, making her more powerful and interesting than before.
- You could exaggerate the level of wealth, power, and fame that is acquired until it is an absurd amount.
- You could exaggerate the ways your character rose to great wealth, power, and fame by either creating a prophecy that the character was following or by giving the character a magic power that helps her acquire the wealth, power, and fame.
- You could exaggerate the fall that your character experiences, turning the story into a "cautionary tale" that warns future children not to do what your character did.

5. When stories are retold, details change. Exaggerate at least one action, decision, or detail, perhaps redefining it so it is understood differently in the new time period.

- You could change the action or decision of either the main characters or one of the supporting characters.
- You could change the motivation behind an action or decision.
- You could change the effects created by an action or decision.

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6. Give a mythic identity to one of the supporting characters.

- You could choose the supporting character who was born in a different country.
- You could choose the supporting character who wields power in a small and subtle (hard to notice; clever; understated) way.
- You can choose any mythic identity outside of Irish Mythology; however, if you do choose an Irish mythic identity, you could choose a faery, selkie, leprechaun, changling, ghost, banshee, dullahan (headless horseman), death coach, pooka, or grogoch.

7. Begin with a frame story where a narrator character of your creation tells the original short story as if it is a myth / legend.

- Your frame narrator should have a specific name, background, goal, and desire, as well as a **reason** to tell the story.
- Your frame narrators could be a child or an elderly person (they often are), but you can create a frame narrator of any age.
- Your frame narrator can interrupt the story frequently or not at all. It's your choice.
- Your frame narrator must comment about the "myth / legend" she just told after she finishes telling your original short story.

(C4.2) Brainstorming: Seven Questions About Reimagining History as Myth

1 pages handwritten and stapled to the front of "Short Story: Reimagining History as Myth"

****Note: Below, I suggest the number of sentences you should write to answer each question. If your sentences are super complex and meaningful, then you might be able to answer the questions in less sentences. Please, however, err on the side of meeting the number of sentences I have recommended.*

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Brainstorming: Seven Questions About Reimagining History As Myth

To help you think about your story, and for my easy reading, please answer the following questions and attach the answers as a cover page to the front of your short story. On a separate piece of paper, describe the creative choices you made as solutions for the seven challenges. You do **not** have to re-write the question. Please make sure you are using **complete** sentences with punctuation.

1. (3 Sentences) Did you choose **1st person (I)**, **3rd person limited (he/she)**, or **3rd person omniscient (he/she)** as your point of view (P.O.V.) and what narrative (storytelling) advantage did it give you? Why not use the other perspectives?
2. (4 Sentences) How far in the future after your original story did you set this one? Why advance time this far? How has the original story evolved into a myth or legend?
3. (2 Sentences) How did you change the title of your partner's story by only one word?
4. (3 Sentences) Which quality of your main character did you exaggerate? How did you exaggerate it?
5. (3 Sentences) Which actions, motivations, or decisions changed in your new mythic version of the story? Why did you choose these? Also, would any of the actions, motivations, or decisions from the original story be understood differently in the new time period? If so, why?
6. (3 Sentences) Which mythic identity did you give to a supporting character? Which character and why?
7. (3 Sentences) Who is your frame narrator and why did you choose this character to begin and end your story?