Literary Adaptation Project

A literary adaptation is a composition rewritten into a new form.\(^1\) For example, *Apocalypse Now*, while it can stand alone as an important creative work, is also a retelling, a refashioning, of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Francis Ford Coppola’s film, in reworking something familiar, accomplishes something new. You, too, will create a literary adaptation of a novel or play we have read this year. The goal is for you to revisit a literary work that has moved or captivated you, and to use a creative medium of your choice (novel, play, musical or film) to express something original, interesting and new.

Your finished project will include the following:

1. A statement explaining which literary work you have chosen to adapt, and why.
2. A description of the SETTING for your adaptation. When and where does your story take place, and why have you chosen this location and time period? How does your setting amplify or re-envision the major conflicts or issues raised by the original work?
3. A description of at least one CHARACTER that serves as a counterpart to a character from the original work. Discuss the similarities and differences between the character we read about and the one you have created, and explain your choices.
4. A detailed description of at least one adapted SCENE from the original work. Explain how you will change the scene, and why. What elements of character, theme or plot development will you preserve, and what will you modify to better serve your setting, characters and story?
5. A reflection on the CENTRAL QUESTION or MESSAGE that your adaptation explores. In what ways are you commenting on contemporary politics, society or culture? What philosophical questions or ideas propel your creation? What do you hope your audience will wonder or think about?
6. A novel, film or play version of the scene you describe in item #4. If your adaptation is a novel or play, you will write that scene using the conventions of the form, and, if a play, perform it for the class. If you're making a film adaptation, write the script for the scene, and then actually cast, film and edit it.

Requirements:
- Items #1 – 6 above should be typed.

\(^1\) It might be helpful to think of adaptation, too, in its biological sense: “modification of an organism or its parts that makes it more fit for existence under the conditions of its environment” (Merriam-Webster). How can you make a literary organism that already exists more suitable to our current conditions and environment? How can something already made be made new in a manner that speaks to your current understanding of or questions about human experience?
- Polish your language; use precise diction, evocative imagery, and other literary tools to make your meaning clear and engaging.
- Items #1 – 5 will require at least one well-developed paragraph. Item #6 should at least 4-5 pages or 8-10 minutes in length
- DUE ON June 3rd (expect interim deadlines, tba)

Extras:
- If you’re making a film adaptation, film a trailer in addition to the required scene.
- If you’re writing a play, make a poster advertising the opening performance.
- If you’re writing a novel, design the cover art or write the first chapter or opening paragraphs in addition to the required scene.

For examples and inspiration check out these literary adaptations:

King Lear (William Shakespeare) / A Thousand Acres (Jane Smiley)
Jane Eyre (Charlotte Bronte) / Wide Sargasso Sea (Jean Rhys)
Antigone (Sophocles) / The Island (Athol Fugard)
Mrs. Dalloway (Virginia Woolf) / The Hours (Michael Cunningham)
Hamlet (William Shakespeare) / Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (Tom Stoppard)
The Orchid Thief (Susan Orlean) / Adaptation (dir. Charlie Kaufman)
Emma (Jane Austen) / Clueless (dir. Amy Heckerling)
Romeo and Juliet (William Shakespeare) / West Side Story

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2 This is really a prequel, not an adaptation, but still worth considering.