Exploring Literature

By Katherine Tanyu and Miranda McCulley

Reading is one of the most important skills we can ever develop. When we love to read, the whole world opens up to us. Through literature, we can read fact or fiction, truth or myth, fables or legends, adventure or mystery; we can learn new things or rediscover forgotten ones, gain new skills and hone the ones we already have, hope and dream while striving toward our heavenly goal. In this course, you will be doing a little of all those things as you read the selections chosen to take you around the world. You will be reading the works of authors such as Leo Tolstoy, O Henry, Longfellow and a great many others. You will read and examine short stories, novels, poems, histories, adventures, dramas, legends, even comedy. By the end of this course, you will be able to recognize and understand the roles of characters, conflict, setting, and point of view in a wide variety of literature and how they work together to make a great read. You will also learn a few details of some of the authors as well as the genres or types of literature you read which will give you a very solid base on which to expand your literary adventures in years to come.

All selections are available freely online through Project Gutenberg or other online sites as well as in most libraries. A complete list of the selected works is below. Whenever possible, I chose copies of works that would allow me to link directly to each day’s reading assignment. The main list will just be links to the actual complete books, if applicable.

“A Book” by Edgar Guest

“Now” - said a good book unto me -
“Open my pages and you shall see
Jewels of wisdom and treasures fine,
Gold and silver in every line,
And you may claim them if you but will
Open my pages and take your fill.

“Open my pages and run them o’er,
Take what you choose of my golden store.
Be you greedy, I shall not care -
All that you seize I shall gladly spare;
There is never a lock on my treasure doors,
Come - here are my jewels, make them yours!

“I amJust a book on your mantel shelf,
But I can be part of your living self;
If only you’ll travel my pages through,
Then I will travel the world with you.
As two wines blended make better wine,
Blend your mind with these truths of mine.
“I’ll make you fitter to talk with men,
I’ll touch with silver the lines you pen,
I’ll lead you nearer the truth you seek,
I’ll strengthen you when your faith grows weak -
This place on your shelf is a prison cell,
Let me come into your mind to dwell!”

Book List

- “The Little Match Girl” - Hans Christian Andersen
- “The Selfish Giant” - Oscar Wilde
- “An Angel in Disguise” - T. S. Arthur
- “The Messenger” - Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews
- “American, Sir!” - Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews
- “Quality” - John Galsworthy
- “Our Aromatic Uncle” - Henry Cuyler Bunner
- “The Ransom of Red Chief” - O. Henry
- “The Gift of the Magi” - O. Henry
- “The Inconsiderate Waiter” - James Matthew Barrie
- “A Camping Trip” - Hamlin Garland
- “A Reward of Merit” - Booth Tarkington
- “The Wise Men” - Stephen Crane
- “Abel and His Great Adventure” - Lucy Maude Montgomery
- “The Luck of Roaring Camp” - Bret Harte
- “Inasmuch” - S.V.R. Ford
- “Bernardo Del Carpio” - Felicia Hemans
- “The Burial of Moses” - Cecil F. Alexander
- “More Cruel Than War” - W.S. Hawkins
- “The Legend Beautiful” - Henry W. Longfellow
- *Gulliver’s Travels* - Johnathon Swift
- *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* - Lew Wallace
- *The Ballad of the White Horse* - G.K. Chesterton
- *Swiss Family Robinson* - Johann David Wyss
- *Emma* - Jane Austen / *The Red Badge of Courage* - Stephen Crane
- *The Pilgrim’s Progress* - John Bunyan (or better online copy)
- *Peter Pan* - James Matthew Barrie / *The Last of the Mohicans* - James Fenimore Cooper
Unit 1: Short Stories and Poetry
Unit 2: Gulliver’s Travels
Unit 3: Ben-Hur
Unit 4: The Ballad of the White Horse
Unit 5: Swiss Family Robinson
Unit 6: Emma / The Red Badge of Courage
Unit 7: Pilgrim’s Progress
Unit 8: Treasure Island / The Secret Garden
Unit 9: Peter Pan / The Last of the Mohicans
Unit 1: Short Stories and Poetry

Short stories are much the same as full length ones—they have all the same elements and characteristics, just power packed into a small space. They’re concentrated! And they make a quick way to learn a lot about literature quickly. All literary works will have some simple basic elements: plot, characters, setting, and point of view. We will be looking in detail at one of these each week, but everyday keep in mind that all are present. You have been noticing and paying attention to them for years already but maybe not always focusing on specific points.

Poetry is much the same as short stories—a concentrated effort to tell the reader something. But poetry is even more concentrated, and it is told in a metered, measured pattern of rhymes or other literary devices to give a flow and rhythm to the piece. Poetry is fun to read aloud and can often be set to music. It still has all the major elements of literature: plot, characters, setting, and point of view. However, some elements may not be very well developed and may be a bit harder to recognize.

Each day as you read this year, I want you to take notes on what you read. I want you to answer five questions:

1. Who is this about?
2. What are they doing?
3. Where are they doing it?
4. When are they doing it?
5. Why are they doing it?

Some days you may also be able to answer a sixth one:

6. How are they doing it?

Just remember to answer:

- WHO
- WHAT
- WHERE
- WHEN
- WHY
- & sometimes HOW

EVERYDAY!