

Expectations:

First, and most importantly, I expect there to be thoughtful, pertinent conversation about the readings daily. In order to help this process along, I will provide you with several questions to think about as you read every evening that we will discuss in class the next day. If you think about the topics as you read, then you will be prepared to contribute to the conversation.

Every evening you will record your questions, observations, and ruminations on the assigned reading in a dual-entry journal. A dual-entry journal entry will consist of a page divided into two columns: one for jotting down a passage from the text, complete with page numbers, and the other for responding to the passage. Read the questions before reading the chapter. This will help focus your reading and help you find good quotes for your journal. You do not have to answer each of the questions; they are there to guide you. Feel free to use them as prompts for your journal if you like.

Each class session will begin with a five-minute writing exercise focusing on a question from the previous night's reading assignment. This exercise will help you to recall important aspects of the reading, provide a jumping off point for conversation, hone your essay writing skills, and hone your critical thinking skills.

Assessment:

Your grade for this unit will be based on portfolios consisting of the following:

- A selection of your in-class writing assignments (pick the ones you like the most)
- A selection of your dual journal entries
- An essay (topics will be discussed later)
- Class participation

Essential Questions:

These are the questions that the text raises and that we will go revisit as we read the text:

- How does the shifting narrative perspective affect your understanding of the story?
- How do people forge healthy relationships? What contributes to unhealthy relationships?
- What do relationships provide to those involved?
- How does Hoffman's use of symbols reveal character?
- How does an author develop a character?
- What different views of love are presented in the text?
- What changes does Gretel go through during the course of the text?

Calendar:

Day 1

- Discussion of “Love”
- Introduction to Local Girls
- Explanation of syllabus
- Discussion of dual journal entries
- Discussion of in-class writings

Homework: Read remainder of “Dear Diary”, complete dual journal entry

Day 2 -- Dear Diary

- Discussion of characters
- Discussion of depictions of love
- Discussion of narrative style

Homework: Read “Rose Red”; record character information on chart; complete dual journal entry

Day 3

- Discussion of “Rose Red”
- Symbolism of roses
- Connotation & Denotation

Homework: Read “Flight”; begin to keep track symbols on chart; complete dual journal entry

Day 4

- Discussion of “Flight”
- Who is trapped
- Who is trapped?
- What traps them?
- What happens to them?
- Who escapes?
- How do they escape?
- Discussion of the Owl as a symbol

Homework: Read “Gretel”; journal entry.

Day 5

- Discussion of “Gretel”
- Is Gretel justified for what she does?
- Review fairy tale *Hansel & Gretel*

Homework: Read “Tell the Truth”; journal entry

Day 6

- Discussion of “Tell the Truth”
- Discussion of good questions
- Connect Mrs. Harrington to Revolver
- Connect the swollen stream to the highway “miracle” on 14

Homework: Read “How to talk to the Dead”; journal entry

Day 7

- Discussion of “How to talk to the Dead”
- Discussion of magical realism
- Discussion of narrative shift
- Discussion of choices

- Discussion of butter as a symbol

Homework: Read “Fate”; journal entry;

Day 8

- Discussion of “Fate”
- Portrayal of women in the text. How much control do they exert over their lives?
- Thematic elements (theme is not one word but how the text comments on the one-word topic)

Homework: “Bake at 350”; journal entry

Day 9

- Discussion of “Bake at 350”
- Eddie’s kiss
- Homework: Read “True Confession”; journal entry

Day 10

- Discussion of “True Confession”
- Discussion of heat & cold/ sparks
- Homework: Read “The Rest of Your Life”; journal entry

Day 11

- Discussion of “The Rest of Your Life”
- Discussion about Bird/Roses/Stars/Hope. What do the characters see? What do you see?
- Homework: Read “The Boy who Wrestled with Angels”; journal entry

Day 12

- Discussion of “The Boy who Wrestled with Angels”
- Discussion of heat & cold/ stars
- Homework: Read “Examining the Evidence”; journal entry

Day 13

- Discussion of “Examining the Evidence”
- Discussion of the plagues, seeing, stars
- Homework: Read “Devotion”; journal entry

Day 14

- Discussion of “Devotion”
- Discussion of stars, roses, seeing
- Homework: Read “Still Among the Living”; journal entry

Day 15

- Discussion of “Still Among the Living”
- Look at pool scene; determine symbolism (baptism)
- Homework: Read “Local Girls”; journal entry

Day 16

- Discussion of “Local Girls”
- Significance of Jill’s comment: “They should have just waited” (196).
- Homework: Look essay topics, write a thesis sentence, find 3 examples from text that supports your thesis. Begin to assemble your portfolio according to the requirements above.

Day 17

- Turnitin.com
- Discussion of essay requirements
- Discussion of thesis statement
- Homework: Revise thesis statement & create outline. Rough draft due on Day 19. Final draft and portfolio due on Day 20.

Day 18

- Discussion of essay structure
- Discussion of plagiarism
- Homework: Rough draft due on Day 19. Final draft and portfolio due on Day 20.

Day 19

- Peer editing
- Homework: Final draft due on Day 20 with all drafts, outline, thesis statements. Portfolio due on Day 20.

Day 20

FINAL DRAFT DUE

In-Class Writing Assignments

At the beginning of each class you will have five minutes to construct a response to a question on the board. The question will pertain to the previous night's reading and will fulfill many different roles—test your comprehension, exercise your critical thinking, practice your essay skills, and provide a jumping-off point for discussion.

Since you have five minutes to construct and complete a response, this will not be a formal essay, will not be critical of spelling, and will not focus on “right answers” to the extent a formal essay would. Instead, what will be included in a well-written in-class assignment are three elements: a claim (thesis), evidence from the text that supports your claim, and an explanation of how the evidence you've chosen supports your claim. There is an example of what a well-written paragraph should look like below.

In response to the question: “Why does Gretel miss Jack Rabbit on page 9?”

Jill misses Jack Rabbit because the letters he was sending was the only attention that Gretel had in her life that made her feel good. When she describes love on page 7 she asks if it's similar to choosing a puppy. She says: “you think you're picking the cutest one, but really you wind up going home with the one who keeps insisting on climbing into your lap” (7). Having a puppy, a cute living thing, insist on climbing into your lap makes you feel loved and wanted. Jack was like the puppy who insists on climbing into the lap by continually sending the letters and made Gretel feel loved. When his letters stop, she feels unloved.

The first sentence states the claim: Gretel missed the attention that Jack paid her, the evidence is the quote focusing on love and insistence, and the explanation follows. For the questions at the beginning of class, there will be multiple interpretations and multiple answers. You cannot address all of the possibilities in 5 minutes, so focus on only one thing and address it fully. This is a rough draft and will be considered one. The most important thing is your idea and your command of the material we are studying. The first couple will be challenging as you grow accustomed to the format, but after some time it will become so natural you will feel like you are not doing enough work.

Questions for *Local Girls*

Use the questions to guide your reading and address the most significant questions in your dual entry journal. Be prepared to discuss the questions in class the following day.

“Dear Diary”

- Compare the different depictions of love and affection in the chapter. Are some wrong? Can they all be right?
- Why do the Samuelson’s go to Florida?
- Who is Jack Rabbit? How does Gretel feel about him? “Why does she miss him like crazy?”
- Why does Hoffman begin and end the chapter with a miracle?
- Explain what the miracle is at the end of the chapter. Why is it a miracle to Gretel?

“Rose Red”

- Why do the girls seek revenge on the people in the town (there is more than one answer)?
- Beside revenge, what do the girls get from their nighttime activities?
- Why does Hoffman distract Gretel with the roses?
- The roses are a symbol. Think about everything that you associate with a red rose and then explain what you think they symbolize in this chapter.

“Flight”

- Who is trapped?
- What happens when they are trapped?
- How did they become trapped?
- Who escapes?

“Gretel”

- Connect the character Gretel to the last sentence.
- Explain the significance of the last sentence.
- Look up the fairy tale about Hansel & Gretel--what connections do you see (look up the fairy tale of Rose Red too)?

“Tell the Truth”

- What’s the connection between Revolver and Jill’s mom?
- Heat is mentioned throughout the novel so far. What does it seem to be connected with?
- Connect the swollen creek on page 60 to the “miracle” on page 14. Draw a conclusion.

“How to Talk to the Dead”

- Account for the shift in narrative perspective from first person to third person.
- This chapter seems to be about choices--Frieda chooses to make a deal with heaven, Frieda chooses to eat food that’s not good for her, etc. How much choice do people really have? In real life? In the novel so far?
- What do you think about the ghost in the kitchen? Are we supposed to believe that Gretel really saw her?

“Fate”

- After reading this chapter, do you think there are real choices?
- Why does Gretel want a perfect kitchen?
- Why does Jill want pure white china with a gold band?
- Why does Gretel say that Margot’s comment “Good girl” sounded “something like a curse” (83).
- What’s the significance of the last paragraph?

“Bake at 350”

- What’s happening to Jason? Why?
- What happened to Jill? Why?
- What happened to Gretel when Eddie kissed her?
- Why does she say that “human beings really didn’t have a chance” (97)?
- Do you agree with her?

“True Confession”

- Gretel falls in love. But is it love?
- Gretel seems like a smart person, why does she fall for Sonny?
- Again, the narrative shifts. Why? Is it the same or a different reason than in “How to Talk to the Dead”?
- Track what Gretel notices (seeing) what does she notice and when? What’s the significance?

“The Rest of Your Life”

- What is the significance of the not singing bird?
- Consider what Frances means when she says that maybe it just sang the most beautiful song & now it’s just resting.
- What is the significance of the last line: “You can never tell” (129)?

“The Boy Who Wrestled with Angels”

- Again, the perspective shifts. Why? What’s the effect?
- Pay attention to the references to the sky & stars. What is the significance? How does it fit in with everything else we’ve talked about?
- Research the allusion to Pegasus, how does it fit in with the different ideas & themes we’ve been tracking?
- What does the fire monster represent?

“Examining the Evidence”

- What is “the evidence?”
- Consider the plagues Hoffman *chooses* to inflict Margot with (she could have had any misfortune befall her character that she wanted) what thematic significance or connections do you see?
- When Margot heads home on page 155, what does she *see*? Why is it significant (how does it fit)?

“Devotion”

- How does *seeing* play a role in this chapter?
- What does she see?
- What do you see?

“Still Among the Living”

- Explain the significance of the title.
- How has Margot taken over as the role of Mom?

“Local Girls”

- How have things come full circle in the novel?
- Is Jill jealous of Gretel – explain the significance.

Local Girls Characterization

Just as in real life, you can determine a lot about a character in a novel by observing them carefully. Look at how each of the characters are described in the text and record your thoughts in the appropriate area. Be sure to include the page number where you found your evidence. Write a brief overall conclusion about the character.

Character	What they say	What they do	What others say about them	Overall conclusions about the character
Gretel				
Frances				
Margot				
Jill				

