



Yale-New Haven
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2012 Volume II: The Art of Biography

Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry: Distant Experiences United in Style

Guide for Curriculum Unit 12.02.08
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On a spring day in London, Margaret Fry writes: "Years ago, after one of those discussions upon the methods of the arts which illuminated his long and happy friendship with you, Roger suggested, half seriously, that you should put into practice your theories of the biographer's craft in a portrait of himself." With these words, Virginia Woolf forewords the biography of her best friend from the Bloomsbury group. Roger Fry, art critic and post-impressionist painter, held a pivotal place in Woolf's life and literary career. His theories on aestheticism and art led her to experiment with new writing techniques in an attempt to create a literary narrative which would be the pure reflection of reality.

My unit's goal is to teach how to understand, analyze, and appreciate Virginia Woolf's fictional and non-fictional works, as well as how to write a biographical or autobiographical essay. In order to achieve this goal, my students will read Woolf's *Roger Fry, A Biography and Orlando*, and passages from Hermione Lee's biography, *Virginia Woolf*. Close reading strategies for written and visual texts will be implemented with two different final assignments: a written argument based on a self-selected fictional text (short story or excerpt by Virginia Woolf) and an autobiographical piece (college essay/personal statement).

(Recommended for English and AP English Literature and Composition, grades 11 and 12)

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