



Katherine Anne Porter's Artistry and Vision in "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," "Flowering Judas," and Pale Horse, Pale Rider

Curriculum Unit 85.03.01

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This curriculum unit will be used as a segment of the contemporary American literature course for honor's, college, and basic English three students. Also, it could be used appropriately for the same English four students if they have not read the stories in their junior year. It should take at least two weeks to cover adequately and experience deeply.

The unit will include "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" (1930), "Flowering Judas" (1935), and *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1937). These are representative samples of Katherine Anne Porter's literary craftsmanship and among the classics of twentieth-century literature. The three stories will have a profound and powerful effect on the intelligence, imagination, and feelings of either enthusiastic, casual, or indifferent students. On the whole, the virtues of these three stories are true-to-life, complex characters, multileveled meanings, richness of literal and figurative details, and illuminating visions of reality.

Katherine Anne Porter was intensely devoted to her writing and labored persistently to achieve originality and excellence. She once remarked: "There is no describing what my life has been because of my one fixed desire: to be a good artist, responsible to the last comma for what I write." ¹ Thus, she demanded a great deal of herself as an artist. Much of what she wrote she did not publish because it did not meet her aesthetic standards. ²

About the Author

The life of Katherine Anne Porter is reflected in many of the themes expressed in her fiction. Her most famous stories dramatize her political and social liberal beliefs. Also, her stories employ a variety of religious symbols and mythology which resulted from her Catholic upbringing. Her characters are inspired from her travels and life in the South, Mexico, the Rocky Mountains, Eastern cities, and Europe. ³ In some of her most artistic stories, she uses her own past experiences and herself as a main character. ⁴

Katherine Anne Porter of a Scots-Presbyterian family was born May 15, 1890, in Indian Creek, Texas. She received her education in convent schools in the South, and later converted to Catholicism. She has lived in Kentucky, Louisiana, Texas, New York, Mexico, and Europe. Her first published book of fiction was *Flowering Judas* in 1930. Her second was *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, containing three short novels, in 1939. *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories* was published in 1944. Ten years later, in 1952 after publishing *The Days Before*, the

author published her first long novel, *Ship of Fools* . 5

Objectives

1. To enrich students' vocabularies from the words used in the three stories.
2. To encourage students to analyze and interpret the main characters.
3. To improve writing skills by providing a variety of writing assignments related to the stories.
4. To develop the literary ability to recognize and understand the theme, figurative language, and symbols.
5. To help students understand the use of foreshadowing, flashbacks, and non-sequential time order.
6. To help students not only to analyze the three stories, but also to experience them deeply.
7. To urge students to become actively involved in analyzing and discussing the stories.
8. To practice "literary analysis skills" of determining cause-effect relationships, drawing conclusions, and understanding the difference between fantasy and reality.

About "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall"

The students will see the seeds of the author's later artistic development of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* in this story which is partly written from Granny's stream-of-consciousness perspective during the time she is dying. The story has the power to stimulate profound feelings and an intellectual understanding of life and death. Many students have lived with or visited grandparents or have experienced the pain and grief of their grandparents' dying. Furthermore, through its treatment of the important events in Grannie's life, the story raises the following questions which will interest most young adults:

1. What is the meaning and purpose of life?
2. How do people cope with adversity and bitter disappointment in life?
3. How do people survive from and adjust to painful life experiences?
4. How do people's experiences in life change their character and personality?
5. What are the qualities that constitute mental and emotional health?
6. What are the qualities that Grannie possessed which helped her to live successfully?
7. Does Grannie have any weaknesses? If so, what are they?
8. What intelligent advice and wisdom did Granny give her family?

“The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” opens with Doctor Harry visiting the eighty-year old Granny during her final day of life. “She flicked her wrist neatly out of Doctor Harry’s pudgy careful fingers and pulled the sheet up to her chin.”⁶ (p. 80) He is feeling her forehead and she becomes feisty with him: “Get along and doctor your sick . . . Leave a well woman alone. I’ll call you when I want you.” (p. 80) Next the author moves to the stream-of-consciousness narration which renders the thoughts, memories, and associations of Granny’s mind. This technique is especially well-suited to the story because it reveals Grannys alternating confused and clear thoughts during her final moments as she moves from lucid consciousness to confused semiconsciousness. Moreover, it helps the narrator to illuminate meaning by moving back and forth from the past to the present. Finally, with this technique, the author uses her literary resources to give a sense of immediacy to Granny’s thoughts, feelings, memories, and judgements.

In a semi-conscious state the feisty and cantankerous Granny reviews her life by remembering the important happenings, disappointments, crises, achievements, and feelings. Her character is depicted fully with vivid and rich details. She exemplifies many heroic qualities such as endurance, fortitude, intelligence, and the ability to work unremittingly hard. In her past life she worked as a farmer, doctor, veterinarian, and she has raised her children courageously. Many nights she sat up caring for sick children and sick animals. She was proud of the fact that she never lost a child except for Hapsy, her last born. She wishes that John, her dead husband, could see her children now and that she could see Hapsy. Furthermore, she wishes that the old days were back even though she had a hard time raising her children without her husband, John. Then her jilting sixty years ago when she was abandoned by George at the altar preoccupies her thoughts and feelings. She has never been able to forgive him because of the pain and humiliation that he caused her. She had buried the memory in her mind for many years, but now it overwhelms her:

But he had not come . . . What does a woman do when she has put on the *white* veil and set out the *white* cake for a man and he doesn’t come? For sixty years she prayed against remembering him and against losing her soul in the deep pit of hell, and now the two things were mingled in one and the thought of him was a smoky cloud from hell . . . (p. 84)

The above passages as well as the whole story includes many light and dark images. The artistry of the author is illustrated in the darkness and lightness showing the movement of Granny’s thoughts from the past which is light to the present which is dark. Moreover, her past life is clear to her while present events are unclear and mixed with

past memories. The light which she blows out at the end of the story represents her life and she will now descend into the blackness of death. The first jilting by George is made more poignant and intensely powerful by the second ironic jilting of dying.

. . . Again no bridegroom and the priest in the house. She could not remember any other sorrow because this grief wiped them all away. Oh, no there’s nothing more cruel than this—I’ll never forgive it. She stretched herself with a deep breath and blew out the light. (p. 89)

The stream-of-consciousness technique of the author effectively portrays the psychological nature of Granny and her relationships with George, John, Hapsy, Cornelia, and her other children. Also the author’s time techniques are well suited to the meaning. Psychological time is more important to Granny than chronological time. For example, Granny’s sense of time is much different from her daughter Cornelia’s (who takes care of her). The following passages illustrate this: “Tomorrow was far away . . .” (p. 81); “no footsteps but a sudden hand on her cheek” (p. 82); “. . . now all the children were older than their father.” (p. 83); “He just left five

minutes ago.”; “That was this morning, Mother. It’s night now.” (p. 85). The memories, thoughts, feelings, and images which strike Granny’s mind in the present when they happened in the past are her most significant experiences.

“The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” Reading Comprehension Sequence

Objective To help students develop an understanding of flashbacks, foreshadowings, and other time distortions from the chronological sequence.

Directions Katherine Anne Porter uses flashbacks, foreshadowings, and shifts back and forth between the present to the past to give necessary background information about the meaning and the characters. Below are listed thoughts or events. If the thought or event happened in the present write P on the line following it. If it happened in the past and Porter tells about it in one of Granny’s flashbacks, write F on the line. Then reorder the following events as they would have happened in real life or as they flashed through Granny’s mind.

1. The letters from George and John. _____
2. Granny rides in a wagon with a man she knows. _____
3. Granny’s first lover, George jilts her at the alter sixty years ago. _____
4. Granny received satisfaction in the raising of her children.
5. Doctor Harry visits Granny. _____
6. Granny blows out the eerie light at the end. . _____
7. Granny has made plans to leave certain possessions to her children. _____
8. Her dead child Hapsey’s ghostly form appears near her bed. _____
9. The priest, Father Connolly visits Granny. . _____
10. Granny raises her children alone. _____
11. Granny marries John who dies young. _____
12. Doctor Harry visits Granny when she delivers her first child. _____
13. Granny has milk-leg, and double pneumonia. _____
14. Granny’s child Hapsey dies. _____
15. When Granny was sixty, she made her will and cane down with a fever. _____

“Flowering Judas”

The triumph of Porter’s second story, “Flowering Judas” lies in its vividly evocative narration, its artistry, its captivating characters (Laura and Braggioni), and its complex insights into human nature. Moreover, it has a magical and mystical quality. In this story Porter continues to show her development as an artist. The complexly-portrayed characters, the stream-of-consciousness technique, the subtlety of meaning, the richness of details—all will stimulate students to probe deeply into the characterizations and the meaning of life. Furthermore, the story raises provocative questions that will stimulate students to think: 1. How did Laura happen to become an idealistic revolutionary? 2. Why can she not love anyone? 3. Why is she working for the Marxist revolution in Mexico? 4. Why is she a betrayer of herself and others? 5. What kind of a revolutionary leader is Braggioni, the half-Italian, half-Indian?

In *This Is My Best*, Porter gives some background information about the story:

“Flowering Judas” was written between seven o’clock and midnight of a very cold December, 1929, in Brooklyn. The experiences from which it was made occurred several years before in Mexico, just after the Obregon revolution. ⁷

Porter revealed in an interview with Ray West that “Laura was modeled upon a friend” but that she was a “combination of a good many people, just as was the character Braggioni” ⁸

Laura is a twenty-two year old American woman who has come to Mexico to work for the Mexican Marxist revolution. She is intimidated by Braggioni, the revolutionary leader. She listens to his playing the guitar and singing with courtesy because she does not dare to offend him. She feels that she “has been betrayed . . . by the disunion between her way of living and her feeling of what life should be Sometimes she wishes to run away but she stays.” (pp. 91-92)

Ironically, even though Laura has had Catholic religious training in her youth it holds no meaning for her now. Moreover, she feels disillusioned calloused and incomplete. She is not fully dedicated to the revolutionary movement and she is not truly committed to humanity, even though she brings food, cigarettes, a little money, and narcotics to the political prisoners. “The desperate complications of her mind” prevent her from “being at home in the world.” She can not love any of the men who are attracted to her. Thus she rejects the young captain who had been a soldier in Zapata’s army and she doesn’t have any feelings for Braggioni either. She can think of nothing to do when the brown youth wanted her to love him. How does one disentangle the complex, psychological forces within her? She has lost touch with the chain of humanity and cannot make a true commitment to life. Porter not only indicts Laura’s personality, but also indicts her world by evoking a sense of alienation, demoralization, and dreadfulness.

Braggioni, an intriguing and chilling character, is also rendered with complexity, subtlety, and psychological perception. The reader sees his character through Laura’s eyes and the narrator’s. At first he seems to be the embodiment of a self-seeking revolutionary leader, but Porter gradually reveals him to be a much more complex figure. Images of bulk, largeness, and fatness give an overall impression of Braggioni’s physical appearance. He is imposing in size. “He balances his paunch between his spread knees.” He “Swells with ominous ripeness” (p. 92) He is not only brave and noble, but also self-seeking and luxury-loving. Moreover, he is a “leader of men, a skilled revolutionist and his skin has been punctured in honorable warfare.” (p. 93) In Braggioni, the author has created an intriguing figure with his mysterious background, his ostentation, and leadership qualities. The reader gradually gathers the impression that he is egotistical and hypocritical. Yet he is a tangle of contradictory qualities and motivations that make him a sympathetic, yet

egocentric person.

As the reader experiences the concluding part of the story, certain moral and human ideas begin to emerge with greater clarity. Laura sees the horrifying meaning of her life in the nightmare quality of the final dream scene. She clung to the branch of the Judas tree. The tree's name originated from the belief that Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ, hanged himself on one of them. ⁹ Laura ate the warm bleeding flowers which symbolize her betrayal of her own spirit and of humanity. She has not possessed either feeling or trust for the people around her, the most "unpardonable sin." She says no to everything and everyone. Lacking religious faith and reverence for humanity, Laura will not partake of the body and blood of Christ, symbolizing atonement and salvation. She understands the frightening realization. Porter has not only made the reader feel the full impact of Laura's nightmarish dream, but also has given a fuller understanding of the "desperate complications of her mind."

"Flowering Judas" Figures of Speech

Objective To help develop analysis skills in understanding symbolism and figurative language.

Directions Star * the letter that is the true meaning of the following figures of speech. If you are uncertain, read the passage in the novel where the phrase appears.

1. Braggioni's skin has been punctured in honorable warfare, (p. 91).
 - a. He holds fast to principles
 - b. He is brave and noble
 - c. He is a skilled revolutionist
 - d. He has received physical Wounds
2. A revolutionist should be a vessel of abstract virtues. (p. 91).
 - a. Container of good food
 - b. A rite of passage
 - c. Full of heroic and noble qualities
 - d. Leader of moral strength and intellectual ability
3. Braggioni swells with ominous ripeness. (p. 92).
 - a. He is fully mature
 - b. He is intimidatingly fat
 - c. He is almost spoiled
 - d. He is extremely egocentric
4. Braggioni has been wounded by life. (p. 93).
 - a. He has been shot
 - b. He is dying of a heart attack
 - c. He has experienced a great disappointment in life.
 - d. He was hit by an arrow
5. Laura is not at home in the world. (p. 97).
 - a. Laura is uneasy, uncomfortable, and insecure
 - b. Laura doesn't have any friends
 - c. Laura is a great deal better morally than other people
 - d. Laura's parents threw her out
6. "No, repeats the unchanging voice of her (Laura's] blood." (p. 97)

- a. Laura's blood is always RH negative
 - b. Laura is demoralized, disillusioned, and alienated
 - c. Laura is not fully committed to the revolutionary movement or to humanity.
 - d. Laura's blood is not functioning properly.
7. Braggioni says: "One woman is really as good as another for me, in the dark. I prefer them all."
(p. 99) He means:
- a. Braggioni loves many women.
 - b. Braggioni is a sexual pervert.
 - c. Braggioni is indiscriminating and has an insatiable sexual appetite.
 - d. Braggioni is trying to impress Laura.
8. Laura "feels herself bogged in a nightmare." (p. 99)
- a. Laura's senses are overwrought.
 - b. Laura is filled with bitter anxiety.
 - c. Laura lacks faith and love and can not give herself to any cause.
 - d. Laura's world is a wasteland.
9. Laura clung to the topmost branch of the Judas tree, the symbol of Christ's betrayer. (p. 102)
- a. Laura betrayed her Catholic religion.
 - b. Laura tried to save herself from drowning in the flood.
 - c. Laura is frightened by the dog barking at the bottom of the tree.
 - d. The Judas tree is the symbol of Christ's betrayer. Thus Laura is a betrayer of humanity.
10. "This is my body and my blood. Laura cried No!" (p. 102)
- a. Laura rejects her Catholic background.
 - b. Life appears to be meaningless and futile for Laura.
 - c. Laura negates and fears life and truth.
 - d. Laura thinks that she is a Christ-figure.

Reading Guide for “Flowering Judas”

Use these questions to guide your reading and understanding of the story. Preview the questions before you begin in order to improve your reading comprehension. Write complete answers in your notebook.

1. What are the benefits of Laura’s relationship with Braggioni?
2. How is Laura different from the other people around her?
3. How long does the action of the story take place?
4. How does Laura’s Catholic upbringing help or hinder her as a Marxist revolutionary?
5. What is the purpose of the dream at the end of the story?
6. What kind of a person is Laura?
7. What are “the desperate complications” of her mind?
8. Through whose eyes does the reader see the character of Braggioni?
9. Describe the character of Braggioni. Is he capable of salvation?
10. Who is Eugenio?
11. What do the flowers of the Judas tree symbolize?

Pale Horse, Pale Rider

In *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* many artistic elements have been painstakingly woven together to express a powerful and illuminating statement about Porter’s vision of the human condition during the war. Thus, she has achieved the epitome of her development as an artist in several ways. First of all, the somewhat autobiographical experience has been enriched and elaborated on by the author’s imagination which makes it have the reality of actual experience lived. Porter stated in an interview:

I was quite young during World War I in Denver and I had a job on *Rocky Mountain News*. Bill the city editor, put me to covering the theaters.

I met a boy, an army lieutenant, . . . Our time was so short and we were much in love . . . I was taken ill with the flu. They gave me up. The paper had my obit set in type . . . I felt a strange state of—what is it the Greeks called it?—euphoria . . . But I didn’t die” I mustered the will to live. My hair turned white and then it fell out . . . But I was determined to walk and live again, and in six months I was walking and my hair was grown back.

And the boy, Miss Porter?

It's in the story. At the sudden memory she fought back tears— and won gallantly. He died. The last I remember seeing him It's a true story It seems to me true that I died then, I died once, and I have never feared death since¹⁰

Secondly, the unique quality of the story is achieved through the penetrating depiction of Miranda's character, the rich figurative language, and the very effective design of the short novel. The author uses a modified form of the stream-of-consciousness technique within the framework of the third person point of view to probe deeply into Miranda's character. It presents the flow of thoughts, sensations, associations, fears, reflections, and memories of Miranda from full consciousness to semi-consciousness to unconscious delirium. Since she is intelligent, thoughtful, independent, and heroic, this is especially suitable. The reader first sees Miranda in a dream where she is in her childhood home:

How I have loved this house in the morning before we are all awake and tangled together like badly cast fishing lines Too many have died in this bed already, there are far too many ancestral bones propped up on the mantelpieces, . . . what accumulation of storied dust never allowed to settle in peace for one moment. (p. 269).

With this wealth of precise, concentrated detail, the author hints at important ideas that will be developed more fully and richly in the story. There is the impression that Miranda's childhood was a happy one, yet the house saw an accumulation of sad and death-like encounters. In the second part of the same dream, there is a premonition of death, when the pale, evil, greenish stranger beckons Miranda on a journey, but Miranda says that she is not ready this time. Since she already knows this man, he is no stranger to her.

The author effectively uses the dream to foreshadow the evil and tragedy that will affect Miranda and to underscore the troublesome, fearsome, and bewildering world that she lives in. After the dream the author swiftly moves the reader from the world of Miranda's imagination to the real world by stating an indirect everyday thought: "But let me get a fine yaWn first" (p. 270). The dream world represents the real world. An atmosphere of desperation, despair and gloom is prevalent. There is the nightmare aberration of the war. American boys are fighting and dying there. Miranda is harassed and threatened by two professional patriots to buy Liberty Bonds which she cannot afford. The younger man had a stare that was stony and cold which "you might expect to meet behind a pistol on a deserted corner." (p. 212). Then Miranda joins a group of society ladies who visit injured, bored and restless soldiers in the hospital. She thought that it was enough to freeze her blood. Paradoxically, the ladies are there to cheer up the injured soldiers, yet one soldier with an unfriendly bitter eye gave Miranda a hostile reception by telling her to get her trash off his bed. Another soldier embodies her painful thoughts and state of mind. Then there is the endless procession of funerals which pass by when her head is swimming. Simultaneously, the influenza epidemic seems like a plague from the Middle Ages. The only comforting aspect of this world is Miranda's growing love for the innocent and healthy Adam. Yet, the author's use of the Negro spiritual "Pale Horse, Pale Rider done take my lover away" is an evil presentiment of death for one of them. The spiritual parallels Miranda's first dream where the pale, greenish stranger tempts her to death or evil.

The author unfolds another aspect of Miranda's personality in her growing relationship with the pure, strong-minded and innocent Adam. He is a twenty-four year old Second Lieutenant in the Engineer Corps, described as very handsome and healthy, an allusion to Adonis. In contrast to Miranda, he is more innocent and pure, an allusion to Adam in the Garden of Eden: "No there was no resentment or revolt in him. Pure, she thought all the way through, flawless, complete as the sacrificial lamb must be." (p. 295).

Later in the story when Miranda is suffering from her influenza, Adam leaves to get her prescription, she lies

reflecting thinking and imagining. Here is one of Porter's most artistic and meaningful passages:

I wish I were in the cold mountains in the snow, . . . , and all about her rose the measured ranges of the Rockies wearing their perpetual snow, their majestic blue laurels of cloud, chilling her to the bone with their sharp breath. Oh, no I must have warmth—and her memory turned and roved after another place she had known first and loved best, that now she could see only in drifting fragments of the palm and cedar, dark shadows, and a sky that warmed without dazzling, as this strange sky had dazzled without warming her; . . . (p. 298).

The artistry and style of the passage results from the artistic blending of several elements of fiction: the cold, warmth, and color imagery, the rich figurative language combined with the language of everyday bodily feelings, the interweaving of the present with the past, and fantasy with reality.

When Miranda's influenza progresses and she is delirious and unconscious, the author vividly creates in the stream-of-consciousness technique a variety of ominous sense imagery, literal descriptive images, metaphors, and symbols that Miranda's imagination sees, hears, smells, and touches in the jungle, a metaphor for death. The author fleshes out the nightmarish dream with vivid animal imagery such as spotted serpents, an allusion to the Garden of Eden, rainbow-colored birds with malign eyes, leopards with humanly wise faces, crested lions, screaming; long-armed monkeys exuding the ichor of death. What a marvel! Then Miranda is depicted as envisioning herself waving to herself in bed as she leaves her body behind with the ship sailing away into the jungle. The jungle will pounce upon its victims but the reader feels that Miranda will escape again this time. Then suddenly she hears voices crying, "Danger" and "War" as the author brings her back from oblivion and the nightmare imagery of death and evil to the world of reality when Adam enters the room. Thus, the imaginary images are converted to real ones of the everyday threatening world. This scene experienced by Miranda fills her mind with the menace and fear of horrors to happen. Therefore, the imaginary image of the "writhing terribly alive and ominous secret place of death" conveys a sense of horror and dread. In these original and powerful passages, the reader appreciates the fullest achievement of Porter's artistry.

After Miranda's descent into the delirium of the final stage of her illness, with an act of will and determination, she heroically resists the final threat of death and evil. Elements of Porter's artistic style: the distortion of the conventional time sequence in the interweaving of past, present and future time and the blending of fantasy with reality in order to render the sub-surface complexity of Miranda's personality are illustrated in the following passage at the end of the novel:

At once he was there beside her, invisible but urgently present, a ghost but more alive than she was, the last intolerable cheat of her heart; for knowing it was false she still clung to the lie, the unpardonable lie of her bitter desire. She said, "I love you," and stood up trembling, trying by the mere act of her will to bring him to sight before her. If I could call you up from the grave I would, she said, if I could see your ghost I would say, I believe . . . "I believe," she said aloud. "Oh, let me see you once more." " . . . Your taxicab is waiting, my dear," and there was Mary. Ready to go. (p. 317).

There is a chilling inevitable ending and bitter irony in Miranda's final consciousness before she leaves the hospital. The irony strikes very powerfully when Adam, the healthy one, from the Garden of Eden dies from the influenza he caught from Miranda when he was helping her to recover. His death is her final disillusionment of life and her illumination from it. Her descent into hell has paralleled the deterioration of the world she is living in which is full of danger, sickness, war, and destructiveness. Paradoxically though, through the passage into death she received the deepest understanding and awareness of human life, and was redeemed through her love of Adam. The facing of and knowledge gained through approaching death and evil is a theme woven through the three stories and links Granny Weatherall, Laura, and Miranda. In these three

protagonists, Katherine Ann Porter has “extracted the essence of human experience.”

Reading Guide for *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*

Preview the questions before you begin the short novel in order to improve your reading comprehension. Write the answers in your notebook.

1. What is the setting of the story?

Denver, Colorado, 1918 during the last days of W.W.I near a large army camp.

2. How does the story begin?

Miranda, the main character awakens from a dream in which she is back in her old childhood home. (p. 269).

3. Who is the lank greenish stranger Miranda remembers hanging about the place and riding beside her? (p. 270).

Porter’s conception of death and a prophesy of doom.

4. What does Miranda mean when she says to the stranger: “I’m not going with you this time—ride on!” (p. 270).

It foreshadows that she will outrun and outlive death this time.

5. What is the plot of the story?

Answers will vary.

6. When Adam leaves Miranda to fetch her some coffee, two interns from the county hospital arrive to take her away. Why isn’t Adam able to see her in the hospital? (pp. 305-306).

The hospital authorities refuse to admit him to the hospital since Miranda has influenza.

7. How did the aggressive men who had come to Miranda about buying Liberty Bonds treat her? (p. 275).

They threatened her, said that it was her patriotic duty, and that she would lose her job if she didn’t buy a bond.

8. What happens during Miranda’s long illness? (pp. 295-314). She sinks in and out of delirium; she recognizes and meets death; she feels very old, worn out, and helpless.

9. How does Miranda feel about Adam?

She loves him. (pp. 283, 317).

10. Why are there so many funeral processions? (p. 281).

The influenza epidemic has caused many deaths.

11. Give an example from the story when images of fantasy are mixed with those of reality in Miranda’s thoughts.

12. After her deep delirium, when Miranda comes to life, she hears bells, horns, and whistles. What is happening? (p. 312). It is the armistice, the end of the war.

13. How does Miranda feel about life after she has survived her illness? (pp. 314, 315).

Answers will vary. The answer is ambiguous.

14. What did the letter say that Miranda had received from the strange —man at Adam’s camp? (pp. 315,316).

Adam had died of influenza in the camp hospital.

Character Analysis: *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*

An author describes a character in the following different ways:

1. action—what the character does
2. appearance—how the character looks
3. dialogue—what the character says or thinks and what others speak to him or about him
4. physical and emotional atmosphere and environment—where the character lives, period of time, social class, events occurring around the character.
5. Stream-of-consciousness—the thoughts, feelings and imaginings that enter a character’s mind.
6. Comments by the author describing the character.

In each passage below from *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* decide which of the different ways Katherine Anne Porter is depicting Miranda, Mary Townsend, Adam and Chuck.

Person Method *Quotation or description*

- | | | |
|----------------|--------|--|
| Miranda | ___1. | . . . Too many have died in this bed already, there are far too many ancestral bones propped up on the mantlepieces, (p. 269) |
| Miranda | ___2. | . . . we must outrun Death and the Devil. (p.270) |
| Adam | ___3. | . . . he liked better those things that took long to make; he loved airplanes . . . , all sorts of machinery, (p. 285). |
| Mary Townsend | ___4. | . . . she had broken out in a rage. (p. 275). |
| Adam | ___5. | . . . he had boasted that he had never had a pain in his life (p. 280). |
| Mary | ___6. | She was all open-faced glory and goodness, willing to sacrifice herself for her country. (p. 286). |
| Chuck | ___7. | He gave his father money on pay day for liquor. (p. 286). |
| Miranda | ___8. | I have pains in my chest and my head and my heart (p. 296).
. . . jungles; a writhing terribly alive and secret place of death, creeping with serpents, rain-bow colored birds . . . , leopards . . . extravagantly crested lions (p. 299). |
| Adam | ___10. | . . . the streets have been full of funerals all day and ambulances all night—. (p. 300). |
| Adam | ___11. | He washed her face, gave her cracked ice, brought her coffee and medicine. (p. 300). |
| Miranda | ___12. | She lay on a narrow ledge over a bottomless pit. (p. 310). |
| Mary and Chuck | ___13. | They came to see her bringing her letters and flowers. (pp. 314, 315). |
| Miranda | ___14. | That was a child’s dream of the heavenly meadow, the vision of repose . . . (p. 314). |
| Mary | ___15. | “We stored away all your things there” (p. 316). |
| Adam | ___16. | She loved him, stood up trembling and tried to bring him to sight before her. (p. 317). |

These three stories could lend themselves to dramatic readings which will involve the students more actively and help them to experience them more deeply. If this “Readers Theatre” approach is used students will think creatively and improve their imaginations. The oral presentation will demystify the story, make it live and breath, and take on the vivid colors of the author. As the students gain deeper insights into the character’s lives, they will understand their own personalities better.

Launch the Reader’s Theater by dividing the class into groups of five or six. Each group is responsible for a different Porter story. *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* could be divided into several chapters since it is a short novel. The members of the group are the teachers or experts. They are responsible for teaching the class: characterization, setting, point-of-view, theme, figurative language, foreshadowing, and flashbacks. The members will decide who will dramatize the narrative parts and who will be the characters. The narrator should be a strong reader. The members should practice their parts until they achieve fluency and expressiveness.

After the students have become familiar with the story, creating the script can take place. Remind the students to keep Porter’s vivid, precise language intact. The writers should be true to each story. As members make decisions about writing the play, they are analyzing, evaluating, and critically thinking about the stories. The teacher can bring her experience to the group by assisting and encouraging the members. After the script is written, members will rehearse the stories during class and after school for homework.

Each student should participate in the dramatic reading with the poorer readers playing the minor characters. With “Flowering Judas” some of the members can show slides of Mexican life. Other students can be responsible for gathering props or they can be involved as extras in scenes or as directors. As directors, members of the group can make suggestions to the narrator and players about how to read their parts or move around on the classroom stage. Have one or more of the members or the audience analyze as a director would do certain scenes and interpretations of characters. How would you have the characters move and why? What kind of costumes would you have the characters wear and why? What kind of a set should the story have? How would you have a character say certain passages of dialogue? What words should be emphasized; where should the pauses be, and why?

Students can now act out the story paying attention to narration and dialogue. Students who are the audience can judge how effective the actors were and why. After the performance students from the group will lead the discussion based upon specific study guide questions which they have devised themselves or I have given them. The discussion will be held after the performance. All members of the class will participate in the discussion. The performances of “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” and “Flowering Judas” should take one class period each, and *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* since it is much longer will probably take three class periods. The discussions afterwards will take one class period for each story.

Some Suggestions for Writing Assignments

1. Write the obituary or eulogy for Granny Weatherall that would appear in the *New Haven Courier* or *New York Times* shortly after her death.

Include facts of Granny’s background, parentage, ancestors education, accomplishments and personal life.

Include opinions, remarks, and comments about Granny as expressed by family members, George, husband and friends.

- Include Granny's values, beliefs, attitudes, hopes and philosophy.
2. Write a first person description of Laura through the eyes and mind of Braggioni.
 3. Discuss Miranda's development as a person of strength and integrity. Support the position by citing specific related passages from *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* .
 4. Discuss the statement to the effect that Katherine Anne Porter does or does not present a young adult's experience during the 1920's powerfully and realistically.
 5. Write about your favorite character in the three stories by Katherine Anne Porter and why?
 6. Do a research paper on one of the following:
 - a. Katherine Anne Porter's life
 - World War I
 - Mexican Marxist Revolution
 - The armistice of World War I
 - Zapata's Army
 - The personality of a revolutionary
 - The influenza epidemic of the 1920's.
 7. Imagine that you are a reporter for *The Register* or *New York Times* . You are assigned to write an accurate report about the wounded veterans in the hospital you have visited.

Notes

1. Glenway Westcott, *Images of Truth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 48.
2. Robert Penn Warren, ed. *Selected Essays of Robert Penn Warren* "Irony with a Center:

- Katherine Anne Porter" (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 70, 71.
3. Louis Auchincloss, *Pioneers and Caretakers: A Study of Nine American Women Novelists* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), pp. 138, 139.
 4. Ray West, Jr. *The Art of Modern Fiction* (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1949), pp. 287-92.
 5. Westcott, p. 25.
 6. Kathleen Anne Porter, *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter* (New York: Harcourt-Brace Jovanovich, 1969). All subsequent references to this book will be in parenthesis in the body of the paper.
 7. Whit Burnett and B.C. Hoffman, eds., *This Is My Best* (New York: Dial Press, 1942), pp. 539-40.
 8. Ray West, Jr. pp. 287-92.
 9. *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Field Enterprise Educational Corporation, published 1971), p. 183.
 10. George Hendrick, *Katherine Anne Porter* (New York: Twayne Pub., 1965), p. 76. Originally published in the *Denver Post* , March 22, 1956.

Student and Teacher Bibliography

Most of the following books were used in doing research in writing this unit. They are good reference books for both the teacher and students. Books especially relevant for students are marked with an asterisk.*

*Auchincloss, Louis. *Pioneers and Caretakers*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965.

This is a good research book for background information on Katherine Anne Porter's stories.

*Burnett, Whit, and B.C. Hoffman eds. *This Is My Best* . New York: The Dial Press, 1942.

An interesting interview with Katherine Anne Porter which gives enlightening information about her inspiration and writing techniques for the stories.

*Lieberman, Myron M. *Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction* . Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1971.

An excellent analysis of Porter's most artistic fiction and her development as an artist.

Mc Clave, Heather, ed. *Women Writers of the Short Story* . Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.,

1980.

An insightful article. "Reflections on Willa Cather" written by Katherine Anne Porter.

*Mooney, Harry John, Jr. *The Fiction and Criticism of Katherine Anne Porter* . Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962.

An excellent critical analysis of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* .

*Porter, Katherine Anne. *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter* . New York: Harcourt-Brace Jovanovich, 1969.

This volume is the one I used for the unit. "It brings together the collections of *Flowering Judas* ; *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* ; and *The Leaning Tower* ; as well as four stories not available elsewhere in book form."

*Porter, Katherine Anne. *The Days Before* . New York: Harcourt-Brace Jovanovich, 1952.

This book contains some interesting autobiographical information and essays about Porter's writing style and technique.

Voss, Arthur. *The American Short Story* . Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975.

Warren, Robert Penn ed. *Katherine Anne Porter: A Collection of Critical Essays* . Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979.

*Westcott, Glenway. *Images of Truth* . New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

West, Ray Jr. *The Art of Modern Fiction* . New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1949.

Classroom Materials

Film: *Death* . University of California Extension Media Center, Berkeley, Calif. 94720.

42 minutes, black and white.

Recordings/Cassettes:

Katherine Anne Porter: *The Downward Path to Wisdom* . Caedmon SWC 1006

Katherine Anne Porter: *Noon Wine* . Caedmon. SWC 2010. Two cassettes.

Katherine Anne Porter: *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* . Caedmon SWC 2007. Two cassettes.

Filmstrip: *Modern American Literature* . EAV

A sound/color filmstrip. This is a comprehensive overview of American literature from the end of World War I to

the present.

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