

Faculty First Grant Report 2018

“Sonnets: A Study of the Poetry of John Keats”

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Project Overview and Course Overview

This project is an online tool used to enhance learning of the sonnet form of poetry for the Introduction to Poetry, English 251 class. The goal was to create learning materials that could supplement what is covered in class and other readings so that students could be exposed to the information through an alternative methodology, thus catering to a wider variety of learning styles and allowing students to review the materials again, if needed. The original goal was to provide this to the fully-online version of 251 in the summer session, but it works equally well for supplementary materials in the traditional classroom course if placed on Canvas. Overall, the course is designed to introduce students to the genre of poetry, close readings, literary analysis, and the cultural and historical significance of literary shifts in poetry. We study various time periods, authors, themes, and topics. For this project, I chose to focus on the closed form of the sonnet, using the works of John Keats.

Number of students affected:

In the summer session, one section of the fully-online course may be offered. I am the only one authorized by the department to teach this online course since I was the one to originally propose the course and also develop the course online with OIT a few years ago. As for the traditional classroom offerings, I typically teach one or two sections each semester. Every class has an enrollment of 25 students. Therefore, this project has the potential to be used by 125 students per year.

Project outcomes and products:

With the guidance and expertise of Tonya Albright, a collection of study materials were created to help students understand the mechanical workings of the sonnet in order to prepare annotations, perform close readings, and understand the main message of four of Keats' poems. A book-like layout starts the main page, with topic buttons to guide students through the exercise of performing a close reading. The materials are not available publically, only through the Canvas course shell. Therefore, I have captured some screenshots here:

Menu

- The Basics
- Structure
- Structure Continued
- English Close Reading
- English Word Choice
- Italian Close Reading
- Italian Word Choice

John Keats

- Additional Sonnet One
- Additional Sonnet Two

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Menu

English Close Reading

“When I have fears that I may cease to be”

When I have fears that I may cease to be — *Foreshadowing he will die*

Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain, — *Literary success*

Before high-piled books, in character,
Hold like rich garners the full ripened grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starred face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,

And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel fair creature of an hour, — *Love*

That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink. — *Foreshadowing he will die*

Overview

Main Themes

Couplet

Quatrain

In this English sonnet written in 1818, Keats expresses his desperate longing for literary success and everlasting love. By the end of the poem, he gives in to the thought that **he will die** before he finds love or fame.

Overview

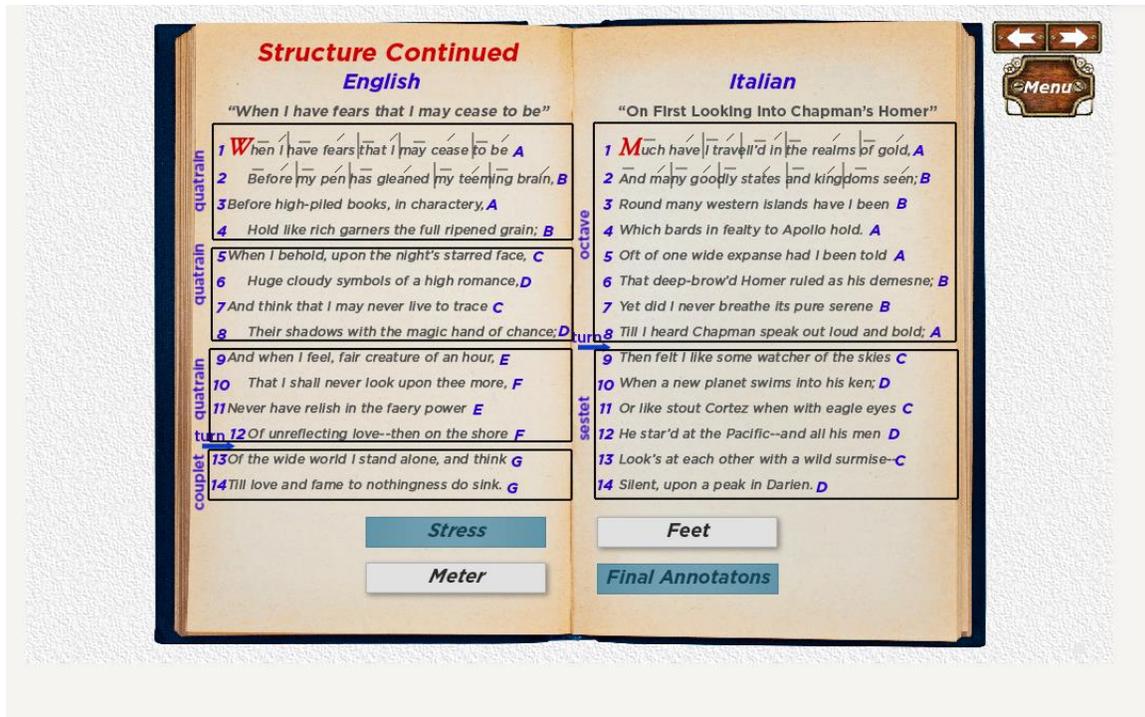
Quatrain

Couplet

In an English sonnet, the theme of the poem usually follows a pattern with the structure. The 3 quatrains generally set up the main theme of the poem, a problem, or even a speaker's story.

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Menu



Student Evaluation:

I have placed these materials in the Canvas course of my Spring 2019 class, but I do not assess formally through a quiz or reading response their specific grasp of the sonnet form. I give them a quiz on different types of closed forms, literary terms, and close readings a few weeks later, but, as of now, only a couple of questions address the sonnet specifically. This Spring, the tool was only supplied as a supplement to the instruction I gave in class since I had to create my syllabus before the project was completed. I would be better able to assess the tool in my online course where the students are essentially learning the information through what I provide to them on Canvas and the course textbook. For that version of the course, I could also insert a survey to gather information on the usability of the materials quite easily. However, I won't be teaching that until summer of 2020 at the earliest.

Project Benefits for the department and UT:

The English Department highly values innovation and pedagogical development, as does UT in its goal to become a Top 25 university. I am dedicated to providing the best instruction to my students who are eager to discover new ways to think about poetry and discover authors beyond what is given in a textbook. Integrating more technology into the well-established English 251 course was a positive endeavor. It shows that we can keep up with the expectations of our students who are increasingly reliant upon and familiar with technological advances, and it also shows that the English department, OIT, and the university are committed to this aim.

Conclusion:

This project met my goals in that what I had created on paper with hand-written annotations and color-coding, was transformed nearly identically onto the screen with interactive buttons and functions. Different colors were not used as I had hoped, but this was discussed as a difficult thing to achieve on screen and also because of accessibility concerns. I had not initially thought about adding in voice-over parts to the pages, but this was suggested by Tonya during our consultations. I believe that these additions created yet another layer of active learning for those students who may understand the materials better through a different delivery system such as audio. The information fits nicely onto the screen and is easy to use. I was initially disappointed that the project was pushed to a completion date of December 2018 since I was hoping to have it completed for inclusion into my summer course. (I am not scheduled to teach the class in summer 2019.) However, Tonya and I met several times either in her office, my office, or even through a couple of Zoom conferences to go over the materials, design the pages, discuss functionality, and insert the audio files. I always felt that Tonya listened to my vision for the interactive tool and took my suggestions on board. I also had a good understanding of some of the technical limitations of Adobe Captivate after meeting with her throughout the project. My future goals are to incorporate these materials into the Canvas course shell and have my students annotate a sonnet of their choice, using Keats' sonnets as a guide, for a quiz or reading response grade.