

## Essay 4 Assignment Sheet: Gender Criticism

Donath -- English 102

Feminist criticism focuses heavily on (**understudied**) **texts** written by women, and on the experiences those women convey; however, an equally important feminist critical approach studies the portrayal of women (by both men and women) to question traditional assumptions about and depictions of women in literature. **Just as feminist critics challenge societal representations and expectations concerning femininity, gender criticism as a broader category questions the ways in which gender roles entail societal expectations about gays and lesbians, as well as heterosexual men. Gender criticism likewise examines, challenges, and asserts the representation of various gender roles in literature and in life. Many of the works listed below lend themselves to gender criticism in this broader sense.**

### Assignment:

Write a four-to-five page (1-2) on one of the works listed below. As always first read the work closely (Texts and Contexts 149-159) for an excellent model on how to go about your analysis. Choose one of the following:

- “Boys and Girls” by Alice Munro (*Lit.* p746-755)
- “Beauty and the Shoe Sluts” by Mary Karr (handout)
- “Catch” by George Bilgere (handout via email)
- “Frog Prince” by Ed Madden (handout via email)
- “Is There Life After Feminism” by Maude Meehan (*Lit.* 771-2)
- “Rites of Passage” by Sharon Olds (*Lit.* p764-5)
- “Become a Warrior” by Jane Yolen (handout)
- “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day” by Bill Shakespeare (*Texts* 161-2)

### Important Dates:

**F 4/4:** For homework, read the works, choose one for your essay and write a statement about how gender is portrayed in the text—to turn in Monday.

**M 4/7:** For homework, annotate your text and write notes in the margins. Prepare to write in class on Wed.

**W 4/9:** In class write the first draft of the essay in your journal. As always, provide a clear claim, along with reasons and supporting evidence. Type up your paper for Friday.

**F 4/11:** Typed copy of Essay 4.1 due at the beginning of class.

**F 4/18:** Essay 4.2 due (**highlight or underline changes/additions; staple original draft on back**).

Read the text once or twice, preferably aloud. Then mark up the text on your third reading; circle what seem to be key words; underline important phrases. (See annotated text on pp153-154 of *Texts and Contexts*).

Write in the margins and then, separately, jot down some longer notes about each line or stanza—to help you understand the surface meaning of the text as well as to help you raise important questions about it. (See pp152-3 of *Texts and Contexts*).

Question how gender is constructed in the text. As you begin to answer your questions, note how you will order each point you want to make (and how you will bring them together).