



English 11 Herron Summer Reading 2019

If you have any questions, please contact Kristin Chapman, English Department Chair
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1. Read, analyze, and annotate the novella, *Passing*, by Nella Larsen. Please ensure you have a physical copy you can write in and bring to class.

Read actively: make margin notes and annotate in your copy of the novel when something challenges, entertains, or interests you. While annotating in a particular style is not required, think about your English 10 annotation strategy to understand what types of things you should be annotating.

2. After reading, annotating, and processing the novel, complete the reading response assignment attached.

BEWARE! Your reading responses will be compared against Sparknotes, Cliff's Notes, Shmoop, LitCharts, and every other website that offers information about *Passing*.

Questions to ponder before entering English 11:

English 11 Essential Question: **How and to what extent can we form a true and authentic identity for ourselves?**

- Quarter 1 Essential Question: **What shapes and defines our identities?**
- Quarter 2 Essential Question: **To what extent can we change our identities?**
- Quarter 3 Essential Question: **To what extent are our identities tied to our families?**
- Quarter 4 Essential Question: **What is poetry and how does it speak directly to *you* and your particular identity?**

Reading Response Assignment

Assignment: You must respond to a minimum of THREE of the following prompts. For each one, you should write a thoughtful, analytical, and academic response. Each response should be approximately three paragraphs each (maybe a bit shorter for typed responses).

Really explain yourself. Don't ramble from one general response to another without referring to particular passages or chapters. Instead, stick with a topic for long enough that you discover more about what you're thinking. Tie your responses to sentences or passages in the novel and directly quote from it. Don't replace your own voice, though, with long quoted passages. You are using the quotes to support you –not the other way around.

1. Passing is the act of performing a racial identity other than one's own or disguising elements of one's presumed "natural" or "essential" racial identity, simultaneously perpetuating and destabilizing fixed, essentialist notions of race. Passing signifies the defiance of racial categorization. *Passing* underscores the understanding of race as a social construction or performance. *Passing* (1929) features two main characters, one who actively passes and another who chooses not to. How specifically does Irene's view of race differ from Clare's? Cite instances from the text that demonstrate your points.

2. Objectification

To objectify someone is to degrade a person's status or body to that of a mere object. It is a way of stripping someone of their personhood, humanity, and value. How is the idea of objectification represented in *Passing*? What are moments in the text where womanhood or black identity is objectified? How is this act of objectifying still displayed in current popular culture? In what ways have we continued to make subjects into objects?

3. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term coined by Black feminist Kimberle Crenshaw to help explain how the experiences of women of color are a product of intersecting experiences of racism and sexism –not just one. Race, Crenshaw would argue, must be examined with sex, gender, and sexuality. Remember, sex is male, female, or intersex –it is the sex assigned at birth based on body parts. Gender, however, is how a person self-identifies, typically on a masculine-feminine scale, regardless of their body parts. Identify key moments from *Passing* where you see links among race and gender, sexuality, or sex. What do these moments communicate about the particular expectations of or oppressions on Black women found in the text?

4. Theme & Motif

Beyond the universal idea of "passing," what is another universal idea (an abstract idea related to the novella's subject, e.g. love or betrayal) that you perceive operating in the narrative, what theme (message being communicated about that idea) is presented, and what motifs (any repeating concrete object in a literary work, e.g. bird imagery, darkness, blood, water) are being used to communicate that theme?

5. Final Scene

The final sentence of Part Two in *Passing* describes an emotional moment for Clare: "But Clare Kendry had begun to cry, audibly, with no effort at restraint, and for no reason that Irene could discover" (210). Why do you think she is intensely crying? How do you think she feels in this moment? What actions or choices has she made that has led her to this point? In what way do you see Clare as a sympathetic character in this moment? Do your feelings for her change by the end of the novella? Your answers must directly quote moments from the text to support your analysis.