

Study Questions and List of Productive Persistence Reading Selections

Study Questions

- 1a. What is the basic content of your selection?
- 1b. How does your selection unfold/progress from the beginning to end?
- 1c. What is the potential meaning or point of your selection?

- 2a. How is your selection representative of your group's type of text?
- 2b. What is 1 or 2 sentences from your selection that best represents the text-type?
- 2c. What parts of your selection had to be and/or warranted analysis and close reading?

3. Why is your selection is worth reading, or why do you think it was deemed as worth publishing?

Poetry

- 1) Trilogy: "My Father Was a Poet," "The Father — Part 7, *King*," and "The Son — Part 7, *Mr. President*," Lester Graves Lennon (1-3 pages).
- 2) "My Shot," Lin-Manuel Miranda, pp. 26-30, Hamilton: The Revolution, Grand Central Publishing, 2016.
- 3) "How to Kill Like a Man," Amy Miller, pp. 40-41, ZYZZYVA, Spring & Summer, 2018.
- 4) "They Came," Jill Bialosky, pp. 21-22, Ploughshares, Spring 2018.

Narrative/Short Stories

- 1) "The Third Tower," Deborah Eisenberg, pp. 75-89, Ploughshares, Spring 2018.
- 2) "Everything Is Far from Here," Cristina Henriquez, pp. 52-55, The New Yorker, July 24, 2017, retrieved 07/09/18.
- 3) "Terminal," David, L. Ulin, pp. 43-52, ZYZZYVA, Spring & Summer, 2018.
- 4) "The Walk," Elizabeth Strout, pp. 325-331. It Occurs to Me That I Am American, Edited by Jonathon Santlofer, Touchstone, 2018.

Explanatory/Informative

- 1a) "Visionaries and scoundrels made the Los Angeles Times, which returns to local ownership after 18 years," Joe Mozingo, LA Times, June 17, 2018 (1-21 pages), retrieved 07/02/18.
- 1b) "Billionaire Patrick Soon-Shiong's purchase returns storied paper to local control after 18 chaotic years," Meg James, LA Times, June 17, 2018 (pages 1 and 14).
- 2) "The world catches up: She might be a hot discovery, but Luchita Hurtado was here all along," Carolina a. Miranda, LA Times: Arts and Books, July 8, 2017 (pages 1 and 4-5).
- 3) "Despite drought, still digging in: In San Pedro, gardeners try to keep a patch of the old country alive," Joe Mozingo, LA Times, June 4, 2018 (pages 1 and 8).
- 4a) "Beyond the Blue Marble: From space, the majesty of Earth can be difficult to describe. But these astronauts try," Nadia Drake and Martin Schoeller, National Geographic, (pages 68-77), March 2018.
- 4b) "One Strange Rock: 13 things that make life on earth possible," Manuel Canales, Matthew W Chwastyk and Eve Conant, National Geographic, (pages 78-85), March 2018.

Argument/Opinion

- 1) "What *E pluribus unum* means," Editorial, LA Times, July 4, 2018 (page 12).
- 2) "The Tyranny of Convenience," Tim Wu, The New York Times, February 16, 2018 (1-7 pages), retrieved 02/17/18.
- 3) "Why Lee Should Go, and Washington Should Stay," Jon Meacham, The New York Times, August 21, 2017 (1-4 pages), retrieved 07/01/18.
- 4) The ERA roars suddenly back to life: A century after it was first introduced, there's still a need for the Equal Rights Amendment," Editorial, LA Times, June 18, 2018 (page 13).
- 5) "We could kill Cal-3 in court," Richard L. Hasen, LA Times, June 25, 2018 (page 11)

Commentary/Column/Blog

- 1) "A Radically Woke and Deeply Conservative Commencement Address: At Pomona College, Danielle Allen spoke about the Declaration of Independence and its electric cord," Conor Friedersdorf, The Atlantic, June 12, 2018 (1-10 pages), retrieved 07/06/18.
- 2) "He never forgot homeless: Names of those who died on Santa Barbara streets were with him till end," Steve Lopez, LA Times: California, June 13, 2018 (pages 1 and 4)
- 3) "Could President Trump pardon himself? Either way, we are well outside what the Founding Fathers has in mind," Jonah Goldberg, LA Times, June 5, 2018 (page 9).
- 4) "Goodwin's Law in the age of Trump: I proposed the internet meme about comparisons to Nazis or Hitler. It still serves its purpose," Mike Goodwin, LA Times, June 24, 2018 (page 20).

Summaries of Productive Persistence Reading Selections

Poetry

- 1) Trilogy: “My Father Was a Poet,” “The Father — Part 7, *King*,” and “The Son — Part 7, *Mr. President*,” Lester Graves Lennon (1-3 pages), source is forthcoming.
Author/poet reveals his blind father wrote poetry in braille, which the author discovers only after father’s death. A second poem then recounts his father’s experience at MLK’s Washington address in 1963 and a third recounts the author’s experience as witness to the Obama presidency.
- 2) “My Shot,” Lin-Manuel Miranda, pp. 26-30, Hamilton: The Revolution, Grand Central Publishing, 2016.
Classic, extended poem/rap/song from the musical Hamilton, defining Hamilton’s individual resolve and the parallels to the nation he chooses to help build.
- 3) “How to Kill Like a Man,” Amy Miller, pp. 40-41, ZYZZYVA, Spring & Summer, 2018.
Written from the perspective of a gun advocate—a hunter but also one who thinks his possession of a weapon would put him in the position to save others from gun violence.
- 4) “They Came,” Jill Bialoksy, pp. 21-22, Ploughshares, Spring 2018.
Describes the people/relatives who come to witness, pay respects, register the horror of a desecrated Jewish cemetery...and what the fact that “they came” represents and remembers.

Narrative/Short Stories

- 1) “The Third Tower,” Deborah Eisenberg, pp. 75-89, Ploughshares, Spring 2018.
Recounts in vivid detail the experience of a woman struggling with brain disorder (aberrant cortical activity) to make her way through life (very much from her challenged perspective) and therapy to help her recover language.
- 2) “Everything...Is...Far...from...Here,” Cristina Henriquez, pp. 52-55, The New Yorker, July 24, 2017, retrieved 07/09/18.
Without specific details of where she is being detained or where is coming from, this is an up close account of a woman—a refugee—in detention, separated from her son with whom she’d traveled in hopes of finding safety and a better life. (published last summer).
- 3) “Terminal,” David, L. Ulin, pp. 43-52, ZYZZYVA, Spring & Summer, 2018.
Recounts the experience of man who travels a lot for work, specifically airline travel. He’s anxious and awaiting a flight and a mysterious woman asks him to watch her bag so she can purchase a phone charger and he then goes through escalating trauma about doing exactly what all the announcements tell you not to do if someone asks you to watch their bag.
- 4) “The Walk,” Elizabeth Strout, pp. 325-331. It Occurs to Me That I Am American, Edited by Jonathon Santlofer, Touchstone, 2018.
Out for a late night walk, an elderly gentleman reflects on his children, remembers his friendship a girl from high school, and then comes upon someone in need. Interestingly, his insights about his life change from the beginning of the story to the end—from the beginning of his walk to his return home.

Explanatory/Informative

- 1a) “Visionaries and scoundrels made the Los Angeles Times, which returns to local ownership after 18 years,” Joe Mozingo, LA Times, June 17, 2018 (1-21 pages), retrieved 07/02/18.
This is a thorough history of the Los Angeles Times and its founders and string of owners leading up to the new owner, Patrick Soon-Shiong, who certainly seems to have purchased the Times for the civic good (hinted at in this piece and developed more thoroughly with the counterpart piece, 1b).
- 1b) “Billionaire Patrick Soon-Shiong’s purchase returns storied paper to local control after 18 chaotic years,” Meg James, LA Times, June 17, 2018 (pages 1 and 14), from hard copy of Times.
Might be worth reading 1a and 1b together. They were published side-by-side, and this piece does more to introduce the new owner—Soon-Shiong—and his reasons for buying the paper.
- 2) “The world catches up: She might be a hot discovery, but Luchita Hurtado was here all along,” Carolina a. Miranda, LA Times: Arts and Books, July 8, 2017 (pages 1 and 4-5), from hard copy of Times.
This piece provides a semi-biography of painter, who at 97 years old is just two to three years into the discovery of her work. Married three times to other artists, she’s worked all her life at her craft but until only recently her work went unseen, despite the artistic renown of her 2nd and 3rd husbands.
- 3) “Despite drought, still digging in: In San Pedro, gardeners try to keep a patch of the old country alive,” Joe Mozingo, LA Times, June 4, 2018 (pages 1 and 8), hard copy.
This article introduces readers to a group of elders who for the last 50 years have gardened a plot land in San Pedro owned by LA Sanitation. Somehow despite problems with water use, turf battles, and an effort to clear the land, they—managed to maintain their gardens.

- 4a) “Beyond the Blue Marble: From space, the majesty of Earth can be difficult to describe. But these astronauts try,” Nadia Drake and Martin Schoeller, National Geographic, (pages 68-77), March 2018, hard copy.
This is a collection of short reflections from several astronauts who have spent time in space. They reflection on what it’s like to view the earth from afar and how being in spaces make one appreciate the specialness of human existence.
- 4b) “One Strange Rock: 13 things that make life on earth possible,” Manual Canales, Matthew W Chwastyk and Eve Conant, National Geographic, (pages 78-85), March 2018, hard copy.
This piece immediately follows 4a and it does just what it says, mostly in pictures and captions—lists the 13 things that make life on earth possible. Fascinating.

Argument/Opinion

- 1) “What *E pluribus unum* means,” Editorial, LA Times, July 4, 2018 (page 12), from hard copy.
This editorial makes the argument for civility, mutual understanding, etc.—“out of many, one,” recounting episodes in U.S. history when the country struggled but ultimately the triumph to maintain unity.
- 2) “The Tyranny of Convenience,” Tim Wu, The New York Times, February 16, 2018 (1-7 pages), retrieved 02/17/18.
Author argues that convenience—defined as ease and efficiency—has become an ideal, a value, one that had much to do with reducing menial chores during the industrial age and individuation during the technological age but one that can be dangerous and should be resisted.
- 3) “Why Lee Should Go, and Washington Should Stay,” Jon Meacham, The New York Times, August 21, 2017 (1-4 pages), retrieved 07/01/18.
Author takes up the matter put forth by President Trump at the time of the Charlottesville tragedy (August 2017): “I wonder, is it George Washington next week, and Thomas Jefferson the week after?” Author argues that a monument erected on public property devoted to honoring Americans must serve to honor those committed to building “a more perfect Union.” Washington, yes! Lee, no!
- 4) The ERA roars suddenly back to life: A century after it was first introduced, there’s still a need for the Equal Rights Amendment,” Editorial, LA Times, June 18, 2018 (page 13), from hard copy.
“Ninety five years after it was first introduced, and more than a generation after Congress passed it, and sent it to the states for ratification, the Illinois Legislature became the 37th state to approve it.” Editorial discusses the significance of the Amendment, how things might proceed productively.
- 5) “We could kill Cal-3 in court,” Richard L. Hasen, LA Times, June 25, 2018 (page 11), hard copy.
This lays out how the proposal to divide California into three separate states (November ballot) can be defeated in court. Author argues that the proposal contradicts provisions in the California constitution.

Commentary/Column/Blog

- 1) “A Radically Woke and Deeply Conservative Commencement Address” Conor Friedersdorf, The Atlantic, June 12, 2018 (1-10 pages), retrieved 07/06/18.
Introduces the Pomona College commencement speaker—Danielle Allen (brilliant scholar), shares the bulk of her commencement address, and then closes with an excerpt from a July 4th Lincoln address. Both Allen and Lincoln pivot off of the section...“We hold these truths to be self-evident...” and the two fold notion that it’s about individual rights...but also about building a government together
- 2) “He never forgot homeless: Names of those who died on Santa Barbara streets were with him till end,” Steve Lopez, LA Times: California, June 13, 2018 (pages 1 and 4), from hard copy.
Introduces us to a veteran Santa Barbara social worker and a philanthropist who supported the social worker’s efforts to help the homeless. Unfortunately the social worker is dying but he spends his last days in hospice at the home of the philanthropist next to a wall where an artist has inscribed the names of so many homeless individuals that the social worker tried to help.
- 3) “Could President Trump pardon himself? Either way, we are well outside what the Founding Fathers has in mind,” Jonah Goldberg, LA Times, June 5, 2018 (page 9), hard copy
Written soon after Trump declared he could pardon himself, Goldberg is a well-known conservative political commentator who lays out a conservative’s argument for why Trump probably can’t do that constitutionally and why even if it did hold up why it would be so at odds with the Founding Fathers.
- 4) “Godwin’s Law in the age of Trump: I proposed the internet meme about comparisons to Nazis or Hitler. It still serves its purpose,” Mike Goodwin, LA Times, June 24, 2018 (page 20), hard copy
Apparently Mike Goodwin authored in 1991 Godwin’s Law: As an online discussion continues, the probably of a comparison to Hitler or to Nazis approaches one....My goal was to hint that those who escalate a debate into Adolf Hitler or Nazi comparisons may be thinking lazily, not adding clarity or wisdom, and contributing to the decay of an argument over time.” Godwin comments on how his law is being used in current political discussions.

The Characteristics of These Types of Texts

Poetry

Characteristics: Poetry is usually characterized by the poignant choice of words. It's like the poet probably takes the same total amount of time as other authors to produce something really good but the output involves far fewer words (2 page poem vs. 14 page short story) because there is so much attention to each word and phrase. Seems like the key with poetry for the poet is to work and work and work to understand something with unique and profound insight and perspective—and then to capture that insight and perspective imaginatively and vividly in words. Reading poetry closely and analytically seems to be so much a part of getting into the mind of the poet—to truly grasp the unique insight or perspective, which typically does not reside on the surface at a literal level.

Examples: P1) Connecting so vividly and compassionately the experience of the father and the experience of the son in “Trilogy.” P2) The escalating, compounding passion of the revolutionary in “My Shot”: “this is not a moment, it’s a movement.” P3) The up close, in your face portrayal of attitude in “Kill Like a Man”—“for this is where everyone gets it wrong, where everyone least expects the danger.” P4) The juxtaposition in “They Came” of all that could be remembered (known) from a previous era of hatred and horror and its relationship to a current actions evidencing the same kind of hatred and horror.

Narrative

Characteristics: Narrative is usually typified by characters. For sure, narrative is also characterized by plot and setting—things happening in particular places, but the traditional plot, setting, and characters threesome make those elements seem distinct, when in fact, they are so interdependent. It's just so much easier to think about narrative in terms of characters and their experiences (experiences = plot & setting). In general, humans are always consciously or unconsciously interpreting and making meaning from their experience and the experience of others. And that is what we try to accomplish when we analyze and read narratives closely. Like life's experiences, good narratives don't announce the interpretation or meaning one should take from it. Good narratives leave that to the reader; but good narratives tell good stories and they tell them well—they are crafted so as to provide the reader with memorable and meaningful experiences—albeit, experienced second hand through reading.

Examples: N1) The vivid description in “The Third Tower” tries to take us inside the experience of someone with a brain disorder. N2) “Everything Is Far from Here” puts us inside a holding facility to portray the unending experience of an asylum-seeker separated from her son. N3) “Terminal” puts us in the head of someone trying to interpret an experience that could be completely banal or completely horrific. N4) We gain access to the reflections and recollections of a man in his late sixties trying to make sense of being in one's late sixties.

Explanatory/Informative

Characteristics: Informational/Explanatory writing is usually characterized by an interesting subject: an event, person, phenomenon, concept. Textbooks explain things to be studied in schools. All other explanatory texts (in newspapers, magazines, websites, books, etc.) are usually published because they bring information that is expected (by editors and publishers) to be of interest or use to readers. So if you're writing explanatory pieces, you better have something interesting to write about. And, if, per chance, your subject might not initially seem interesting, you better work really hard as a writer to find in your subject that which you and others will find interesting. As such, close and analytic reading of explanatory texts involves the search and ultimately an understanding of the subject of that which makes the subject of the piece interesting, informative, enlightening.

Examples: E1a) The long and varied history of the LA Times in “Visionaries and Scoundrels.” E1b) The interest history (pharmaceuticals) and the seemingly positive intentions of the new owner of the LA Times in “Billionaire...” E2) The striking art of Luchita Hurtado and the amazing fact that at the age of 97 her work is only now being appreciated: “The World Catches Up.” E3) The resolve and determination described in “Despite Draught” of a group of elders who overcome numerous obstacles to maintain a shared plot of land for gardening in San Pedro. E4a) The perspective of those who've been to space on

what it's like to look down on Earth: "Beyond the Blue Marble." E4b) The incredible confluence of things that make life on earth possible: "One Strange Rock."

Argument/Opinion

Characteristics: Argument/Opinion writing is characterized by a claim and an argument that supports the claim. The claim is one's opinion or position and the argument is the reasoning that supports it. That reasoning might include evidence and/or logic. The challenge for the writer and the focus of analysis and close reading is the merit of the claim and the logic of the argument. Does it all make sense. Indeed a sensible claim and argument may or may not necessarily persuade the reader to see things just like the author. However, the piece should help a reasonable (fair-minded) reader capable of close, analytic reading discern how the claim and argument makes sense, or at least make sense to the author.

Examples: A1) The Times editorial "E pluribus.." makes the claim and argues that our success as a country has been our ability to engage in healthy argument but argues that we've been successful because we've always been driven by the intent to remain one nation. A2) "Tyranny of Convenience" makes the claim and argues that convenience while thought to be such a good and important thing can actually be detrimental. A3) "Why Lee..." makes the claim and argues that public honor of historical figures should be reserved for those who strived for a more perfect union, not its break up. A4) The Times editorial "ERA roars back.." makes the claim and argues that passing ERA would be a positive and important step for the U.S. A5) In "Kill C-3" Hasen makes the claim and argues that the proposition to break up California runs contrary to the state constitution and therefore can and should be removed from the ballot by the courts.

Commentary/Column/Blog

Characteristics: This group seems characterized by the intent to put forth an opinion or point of view but not necessarily by arguing it as formally as seems true of the selections in the Argument group. Most of the examples we have come from author's who host their own column or blog and therefore are generally known to their readers—like they have a particular relationship with their readers and therefore have an acquired license to provide their comment or shed their light on current subjects and issues.

Examples: C1) In a time of division, Friedersdorf shares his appreciation for and brings to the reader's attention a recent commencement address and Lincoln speech that interprets of a common portion of the Declaration of Independence: "A Radically Woke.." C2) In a time when SoCal is wrought with uncertainty about homelessness, Lopez share the story of a social worker who for 34 years tried to help the homeless and embodied human empathy: "He never forgot..." C3) Conservative columnist, Goldberg, challenges President Trump's assertion that he can pardon himself as inconsistent with the Constitution and Framers intent. C4) The author of a principle about permissible argument—Godwin and Godwin's Law—writes to give his views about how that principle is being used and misused in current political discussions.