## CHILDHOOD IN CARIBBEAN AND AFRICAN LITERATURE

### SELF-EVALUATION 2020

A major goal of this course is to help you become confident, independent readers of Caribbean and African Literature, capable of creating a context for understanding the work of a specific author, and of articulating, in writing and in conversation with others, what interests you about that author’s work. Please use the criteria below to help you monitor your progress towards this goal over the course of the semester, and to evaluate your performance at the end of the semester. Fifty percent of your final grade will be based on your self-evaluation.

#### **PART ONE** of the evaluation asks you to rate the consistency of your performance over the course of the semester. [Note: Part 1 was removed to reduce the length of the document.]

#### **PART TWO** gives you an opportunity to comment on specific readings and ideas; to evaluate your contributions to the course; and to describe how the course contributed to your intellectual development beyond the classroom, more broadly. **Answers in this section can help boost your grade as well as someone else’s.** This section should take about an hour to complete.

NAME: Logan Deming

YEAR: 2020

MAJOR: English

CLASS PRESENTATION: (Please list the names of the members of your group here) S. [Names redacted for anonymity]

TITLE OF FINAL ASSIGNMENT: Challenging Silence

### PART TWO

**Please answer all questions with examples and discussion. Remember that your answers may help your grade as well as that of one of your classmates, so take your time with this section.**

#### Write a short paragraph about what you found most provocative or enlightening in one assigned reading.

I think “Girl,” in our first class gave me the foundation for how we would learn in the class; this is the reading I found myself returning to throughout the semester. This reading was enlightening because it became clear we would not just be learning what these authors make us feel, but how they succeed in making us feel the way we do. I still remember the cacophony as we read “Girl” aloud, the interspersed high-pitched “slut!” I felt the collapsed time, the way in which “slut!” filtered throughout, and how, even when this mother was teaching her daughter how not to become a slut, she was really unveiling its inevitability all along. This reading not only became a theme throughout the semester, (and I even saw a similar discourse in my final book, *The Other Side of Paradise,)* but it pushed me to play with the language that authors use, and constantly ask myself: why are they writing like this, what are they trying to achieve?

#### Identify one author, country, theme, or literary device and describe how you engaged with the ideas to which your exploration exposed you in your weekly papers.

I think my weekly papers worked best when I focused on a singular quote, playing with its language and using it as a medium to discuss the text. This method became clear when I worked with metaphor in my *Annie John* paper, highlighting the strange metaphor about walking through the Amazon. I parsed through the sentence, noting the minutia of detail, detailing how it added to the “strangely fantastical scene.” Analyzing this metaphor allowed me to make broader claims about how Annie John treated reality and imagination, namely that she deems them equal within her narrative, allowing her to access a fullness of emotion without shame.

#### Describe how you (or you and your group) prepared for your presentation and what you think the class learned from your presentation.

In order to prepare for our discussion, S. and I discussed the book first by ourselves. We collected quotes which “wrecked” us, the words which triggered our emotional responses to *Annie John*, and described to each other how they made us feel and why. As we discussed, we sorted and simplified our list, coming up with major themes which we thought could facilitate the group’s discussion. When we worked through these sentences in class, I think the class learned why the book made us feel the way it did: the transitional nature of the book, and how the book’s fantastical elements allowed access to emotion we often do not allow ourselves to admit to, such as the profound anger we feel at our parents.

#### Identify at least two group presentations you consider most memorable and describe what you learned from them.

The group presentations which I remember most were C.’s and C. and M.’s. Both presentations had visual elements which acted as experiential learning tools to understand something about how the book worked. When C. made us draw on the board, we learned through the experience of drawing the descriptions were in *The Dark Child*, recognizing the level of detail within the text. This instance of experiential learning enhanced our consequent discussion. Similarly, M. and C.’s illustration of a family tree showed me how confusing these relations were, illustrating through a visual experience why a “mat” is a more true medium of defining family.

#### Identify one comment you made during class that you think your classmates found useful and describe the discussion it generated within or outside of the classroom.

In our *Nothing’s Mat* second class, my comment on the rape scene sparked discussion on what is an ethical rape scene, and how women should be represented in texts. I was pleasantly surprised at how interested E. was in my paper, even asking me what I thought about instances of sexual assault in *The* *Shadow King* (unfortunately I hadn’t read it.) I think this comment made space for a character we hadn’t considered as of yet, and I’m happy people liked my paper.

#### Describe at least two comments your classmates made that helped you to understand the material or to take a concept further.

I was always impressed in class when J. read aloud his papers. They were always beautiful, but more than that I found them incredibly brave. I was nervous doing imitations of books, because it always felt harder and I worried about performing them badly, but it felt like he always tended towards imitation, working with the language of these authors.

I don’t remember anything specifically V. said, but I was always impressed in class by her vulnerability. She was willing to put her life under scrutiny, and voiced how books related to her personally, something I rarely did in class.

Describe one memorable conversation you had with someone who was not a member of this class about the ideas to which this course exposed you.

My mom actually read “Girl” about halfway through the semester, and told me I should read it which was a fun bit of serendipity. We talked about it, and she told me how the piece resonated with her and the ways in which adults spoke during her childhood in Jamaica. I relayed how discussed the book in class, and we ended up arguing about the “inevitability” that the piece portrays in regards to becoming a slut. We didn’t really reach conclusion, I think she was relating it too much to her experience and she thinks that I don’t know anything about the Caribbean. It was fun though.

#### Describe two insights about Caribbean and/or African literature that you will take away from this course.

I gained insight about what aspects of my childhood were individual, and what was a “Caribbean thing.” Every time this phenomenon occurred, such as the green lizard moment from the beginning of class, I felt seen, and a deeper sense of connection to my mother’s family. I also gained insight into the phenomenon of “departure” within Caribbean literature. In the beginning of the class, I saw this departure as a disservice, like they had to leave the island to gain knowledge. Now I see the issue as endlessly more complicated, a departure can be liberation, can be bittersweet, can be only a blip until the characters return.

#### How did the COVID-19 crisis affect what you will take away from this course?

I think I struggled to focus at the end of our course. I had trouble in virtual discussion, because the flow of the conversation worked differently, and it was so much easier to become distracted when I wasn’t sitting in a classroom. I do think this crisis made me think more about what literature means, and what I want it to mean to me during and after this crisis ends.