Writing for Significance:
The Multigenre Project in the Literature Classroom

NCTE Convention
B. 37 – 11:00 – 12:15
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Presented by: Michelle Wood, M.A.
Cedarville University
251 N. Main St.
Cedarville, OH 45314
Http://people.cedarville.edu/Employee/woodm/index.htm
Writing for Significance: The Multigenre Project in the Literature Classroom

I. Origins and Resources for the Multigenre Project

II. The Assignment

III. The Process

IV. The Assessment

V. The Significance

Michelle Wood
Assistant Professor of English
Cedarville University
Works Cited


Michelle Wood

Assistant Professor of English

Cedarville University
The Multigenre Research Project - 20%  
LIT 2390 - Survey of American Literature 1620 to 1900  
Fall 2004

"The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly oriented toward a future answer-word; it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not been said but which is needed and in fact is anticipated by the answering word. (Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination 280).

"Writing about the past put(s) students (and teachers) in the ethical position of interpreting the past for future generations" (Mack, "The Ins, Outs, and In-Betweens of Multigenre Writing," 94).

GOALS:
1. To create an artistic expression interpreting the past for the future.
2. To interpret a novel from a New Historical/Cultural perspective and to render a new reading of the novel in a creative multigenre project.

PROCESS:
1. Select a novel that interests you from the Reading list. (You will need to select a novel that you have never read!)
3. Research 5 historical sources; primary or secondary, written during the time of your novel or about the time of your novel and research 5 critical sources about your novel. This is just a minimum; you may need to do more research as your project dictates.
4. Complete a 5 page review of the literature explaining how your research will inform your project. Your Literature Review will need to discuss 10 sources.
5. Using a New Historical/Cultural perspective, select a theme within the novel itself to analyze from multiple perspectives in a multi genre project.

REQUIREMENTS:
1. Develop (5) historically and contextually accurate perspectives utilizing 5 different genres.
2. Perspectives may be written from first or third person.
3. The perspectives may be fiction or non-fiction but always historically accurate.
4. Genre possibilities - original music, newspaper articles, diary entry, poetry, a conversation, a one-act play, a stream of consciousness monologue, an interview, a eulogy, a textbook page, a pamphlet, poem for two voices, a letter, an obituary, or a letter of commendation.
5. The author must cite information and include end notes to explain how 5 outside sources have informed the various pieces in the project.
6. The author must include cohering devices that make the artistic work a unified analysis of the thematic idea analyzed in the pieces.
   a. Introductory Letter
   b. Table of Contents - Titles of Each Selection, Page Numbers, and Genre
   c. Concluding Piece
7. Multigenre checkpoints are listed in your syllabus. You will need to turn in all required checkpoint material in order to turn in and receive credit for a completed project.
8. HAVE FUN AND BE CREATIVE!
Novel List

1. *The Blithedale Romance*. Author: Nathaniel Hawthorne

2. *The House of the Seven Gables*. Author: Nathaniel Hawthorne

3. *Billy Budd*. Author: Herman Melville

4. *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass: An American Slave: Written By Himself*. Author: Frederick Douglass

5. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Author: Mark Twain


7. *The Awakening*. Author: Kate Chopin

8. *The House of Mirth*. Author: Edith Wharton

9. *The Age of Innocence*. Author: Edith Wharton


11. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Author: Harriet Beecher Stowe

*Denotes helpful books on reserve for historical and cultural analysis of the novel. A person could use the *House of Mirth* book on reserve for accurate historical and cultural information about *The Age of Innocence*. 
1. List 3 main characters in your novel.

2. Summarize 3 prominent discourses in your book.

3. What discourse(s) does your author seem to promote? Why do you think so?

4. Does your author seem to empower oppressed people or not? Where?

5. What scene remains indelible stamped on your mind? Why?

6. Would you teach this book to a middle school or a high school class? Why or why not?

Michelle Wood
Assistant Professor of English
Cedarville University
THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Due: Friday, October 1, 2004

Research:

A. 5 historical sources written near the time the novel was written or historical sources from a historian’s perspective interpreting the time the novel was written. (You could use mainly primary sources or a blend of the primary and secondary sources.)

B. 5 critical sources about your novel.

C. Begin reading your research and begin taking notes for the Literature Review. Read specifically considering the requirements for the Literature Review written below.

Citation: Create an Annotated Bibliography of these 10 sources using MLA form. List the citation of the source first as you would for a Works Cited page. Then double-space and add 2-3 sentences that explain how this source potentially could inform your creative work in the Multigenre project.

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Due: Monday, October 11, 2004

Length: 5 pages typed and double spaced

Process:

1. Briefly note your own response to the multiple discourses you are encountering in your research and in your novel.
2. Discuss how your research informs your answers to the New Historical/Cultural criticism questions Tyson asks on pages 297-298 in her book chapter on electronic reserve. Different sources may inform your perspectives for different questions.
3. After considering your interpretation of the novel from a New Historical/Cultural perspective, consider how you might reflect your interpretations of the novel creatively with multiple genres.
   a. What specific voices, characters, and genres could you create to reflect a multi-layered, dynamic discourse of social power and cultural identity?
   b. What makes your novel meaningful now? What discourses from the novel are potential readers rejecting, supporting, and/or ignoring in 2004? How can you write your creative pieces to question current attitudes readers may have toward these discourses?
   c. With what significant theme/themes of interpretation could you unify your project?
4. Use MLA citation within your text and on your Works Cited page.

Michelle Wood
Assistant Professor of English
Cedarville University
First Creative Piece

Emily Arimura
Cedarville University

Novel: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
... the chains clang together like bells on a cow as he leads me dawn the street... down the street.

Mud seeps through the holes in my tattered shoes that Master gave me months ago. Master... that man... who has now sold me to this flesh peddler... I am passed from one to another and the world continues on without change. The sunsets on one day and rises on the next, the world sleeps and awakens as usual while I--I am sold away from my home and my family. The sun burns, it beats on me, it beats... I am faint. I will faint. I will fall down into the mud... I will ... I am falling...

falling... mud.. the mud is cool...

cool like the water from the stream that ran behind our home... Days were spent there when I was a girl, playing with the master's boy... as if we were just that, just girls, just boys, just children. Playing. We would romp on the banks of that stream far hours, letting the sun play games with our skin, making mine a darker brown and honing his red.. But that would net last; soon we would learn the truth about the world. Soon we would be slave and master. Black and white. Then a boy, he would pull my hair... now a man... he has sold me... he has forgotten that once we could giggle with the gurggle of the water, that once our eyes met each other and that once we saw each other, not as slave and master, as black and white, but as two friends, spending the daylight hours in the mud of the river. .. the mud..

the mud is cool... he is pulling me up, tearing at my arms to get me out of the road I am standing. Now. I am standing. I ma standing but my shoulders droop and my legs sway... but I must... I must stay standing... Standing... before this wretched man. This man with the black cold eyes... this man who now leads me further down the muddy road...

He is leading me... pulling hard against my chains... I am on the platform... most of my muddy clothes are ripped away to reveal my young, strong body. A chill shakes my body, although the sun is a torch to my black skin. I shiver... fear. I am afraid. He prods me, he grabs at my body. His fingers are in my mouth, pulling at my teeth... on my head, pulling at my hair... he examines me, all of me in front of these men. These men with their jeering laughs. There are no
words, only ringing... Me yelling echoes in my ears, filling my head. why? why am I here... when am I going am I not a woman? Can you not see my tears? Can you not hear my cries? Please... have merry on me... merry... lam helpless... Please, I am alone. Is there not one who care for me?... is there nothing?... nothing in this life to which I can hold onto? ...7

    My eyes wander... they wander... all I see is mud.. mud on my hands, drying in the scorching heat... mud surrounding the platform... this entire land is a land of mud and we are off sinking... sinking in the mud. My eyes wander... they wander...and catch the eyes of another. A man in chains, a slave. Ma eyes are old but bright... they look deep into my own eyes... Silence surrounds me... all that exists an my eyes and his... We are one, for a moment. He is my brother, my uncle, my father. A moment, and it is gone... a moment only, but I know... then is power. I look up again. I catch the eyes of one. And another-my sister, my aunt, my mother. Again I feel it. We are one, we are a body, we are a people. We are man, we are woman in the eyes of one another. Them is power in this connection... it renews my hope 8 I let my downcast eyes rise to the sun which beats... my eyes rise... to the clouds that no one owns, like the part of me that no one owns--the part that is hidden from the man who holds my chains, hidden from anyone who has ever spit on me, hidden from the world that tries to break. But I will not be broken. I will not be broken. I raise my eyes... 9

    I straighten, I become rigid 1 stand taller. I stand. He parades me around the stage... men yell.. deals are made... the words are spoken... SOLD! I lower my eyes, hiding away my strength like a secret jewel, but my shoulders stand tall and my legs stand firm. I am a proud banner of courage, a tower of unchangeable vitality. I am a woman, I have dignity, I have power, I have hope.. Behind these eyes I am free, and no man can break me.
End-Notes

Emily Arimura
Cedarville University

Novel: Uncle Tom’s Cabin
Endnotes

1. Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas. London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002. This source contains a picture of male slaves in the spoon picture, one I could not shake from my memory, thus giving me the idea that I had to first come to grips with how these slaves could survive slavery.


3. Thomas, Velma Maia. Lest we Forget. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1997. This source contains the most haunting image, one of a slave male with a mutilated back. Like the others, this helped me realize that I didn't comprehend how slavery could have been survived.

4. Boyle, David. African Americans. Lewes: The Ivy Press Limited, 2002. Contained in this source is one of my favorite images, because the boys are slaves but seem more to me like kids I would meet on the street. Their eyes are truly piercing and spoke to my heart, pleading with me to understand their experience.


6. Thomas, Velma Maia. Lest we Forget. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1997. This source inspired me to write about the conflict that occurs between a slave and a master's son who are childhood friends but then later must fill their respective roles in society. Until I reading this book, I had never contemplated the relationship between the children-something which I felt inclined to touch upon in my own writing.

8. Berlin, Ira, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller, ed. *Remembering Slavery*. New York: The New Press, 1998. This source was quite informative on the family and community life of slaves in the southern United States. It was from this source that I discovered that the unity of the slaves themselves was a power source. This was a new and incredibly interesting idea to me, and I chose to focus on it a few times throughout my works.


10. See endnote 9.

11. Walvin, James. *Slave and the Slave Trade*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983. This source presented me with the concept that not all physical abuse was successful in breaking the slaves and perhaps was even counterproductive. I took this idea then and gave it a character, a slave who is not broken despite being beaten, instead rising up to a new power.

12. Thomas, Velma Maia. *Lest we Forget*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1997. This source helped me understand the slaveholder's theory on how to "season" slaves or break them in, essentially. The author focuses on how they aimed to break the slave physically and psychologically. I was then able to take this idea and the contrasting idea that slaves were not broken by physical abuse and juxtapose them in a dramatic way.

13. Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1852. Tom actually does memorize scripture with the help of Master George in the novel, and I used this concept, conveniently, to present scripture in this piece despite the fact that Tom would not have been able to read it on his own. Also, I studied Tom's speech patterns and tried to mimic the sound of his voice. This way, the reader can hear the prayer just as if it is rolling of Tom's lips which I believe makes the piece much more effective.
14. Thomas, Velma Maia. **Lest we Forget**. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1997. I got the idea for this genre after reading a passage from this source which spoke of the slaves crying out and raising their voices in prayer. This worked for me because since my characters are generally illiterate, I had to confront the issue of how to portray their emotions and thoughts without them actually writing anything. Tom's audible prayer lets the reader feel what he is feeling in a personal and natural manner.

15. **Ryrie Study Bible: King James Version**. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994. The passage Tom quotes is Psalm 37, one I thought perfect for Tom as it cries out to God for deliverance as slaves so often did. I allowed him to speak more formally as he most likely would have memorized the verse in proper English, therefore there is a contrasting sound between when he's reciting the scripture and when he's praying freely.


17. Raboteau, Albert J. **Slave Religion**. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. This source was extremely informative on the role of religion in the slaves' lives. More specifically, I took from it the idea that they would daily go to the Lord in prayer, offering to him all of their burdens and finding in him a source of hope to make it through the next day. This is an incredible concept which I had difficulty sounding sincere and genuine in my piece because the message is so simple that it seems almost unbelievable. The spiritual Tom sings also is derived from this source.

18. Walvin, James. **Slave and the Slave Trade**. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983. The idea of a group of people coming together to hear a story was inspired by a passages in this book which spoke of how the slave cabins were a place where the real African American culture was developed. I took this concept and blended it with the prayer meeting system of gathering, in which slaves would sneak to one cabin at night to pray and sing. I was able to then create the scene of a nighttime gathering where the slaves would enjoy the recitation of a legend or folk story, another aspect of slave culture presented in this source.

20. **Quarles, Benjamin.** "Let My People Go: Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad." *Portrait of America.* Ed. Stephen B. Oates. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company; 1999. This source provided me with all the information on Harriet Tubman and also with the fact that she was a great inspiration to her people and a definite symbol of hope for the enslaved man.

21. **Raboteau, Albert J.** *Slave Religion.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. This source informed me of the secret pot which was thought to catch the whispers of the slaves' secrets. I loved this concept and just thought it was worth adding to the piece because of its peculiarity.

22. **Walvin, James.** *Slave and the Slave Trade.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983. This source provided me with most of the historical information from this piece. Specifically, I learned about what kind of religion the slaveholders allowed to be preached to the slaves and all of the information about the secret message of the spirituals.
### Multigenre Project Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Genres</th>
<th>Awesome(3)</th>
<th>Admireable (2)</th>
<th>Average (1)</th>
<th>Amateur (0)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five (5) different genres written with integrity conveying thoughtful ideas and critical analysis. -provides a rich context for event or theme. -integrates factual information into meaningful text</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Perspectives</td>
<td>Includes multiple, conflicting perspectives -multiple voices -fiction and non-fiction -first person perspective -historically and contextually accurate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Careful documentation of sources -works cited -endnotes</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Attractive and Innovative Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Spelling and Grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cohering Devices</td>
<td>-introductory letter -table of contents -concluding piece</td>
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Grade Equivalents

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<th>Points</th>
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<td>A</td>
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</table>
### 1. Genres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Awesome (3) | 5 genres  
- pieces reflect thoughtful analysis on one theme or event from the novel  
- pieces convey relevance and significance to a modern audience  
- the project provides clear historical and cultural context  
- research informs creativity  
- pieces are creative and unique showing mastery of 5 different genres; each genre is at least one page in length |
| Admirable (2) | 5 genres  
- pieces reflect analysis on one theme or event from the novel  
- pieces somewhat relevant to a modern audience  
- project provides clear historical and cultural contexts  
- research informs creativity  
- pieces reflect student effort in creating 5 different genres |
| Average (1) | 5 genres  
- some pieces analyze and some pieces summarize  
- one theme or event from the novel reflected  
- pieces don't reflect relevance to a modern audience  
- project provides clear historical and cultural contexts  
- research informs project yet little creativity; genres are short |
| Amateur (0) | 5 or fewer genres  
- summary rather than analysis  
- pieces are not relevant to modern reader  
- project does not provide clear historical or cultural contexts  
- no research or poor integration of research  
- little risk taken in creativity |

### 2. Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| Awesome (3) | Multiple voices/reflects New Historical/Cultural analysis  
- conflict/tension developed to demonstrate complex theme significant to modern reader  
- genres are all historically and contextually accurate  
- multiple first person perspectives  
- fiction and non-fiction perspectives |
| Admirable (2) | Multiple voices/reflects New Historical/Cultural analysis  
- clear development of theme  
- genres are all historically and contextually accurate  
- multiple first person perspectives  
- fiction and non-fiction perspectives |
| Average (1) | Multiple voices/reflects New Historical/Cultural analysis  
- unclear theme  
- historical and contextual accuracy  
- fiction and non-fiction perspectives |
| Amateur (0) | - no unified theme/no connection to a New Historical/Cultural Perspective on the novel  
- one single voice  
- little historical or contextual accuracy  
- mostly fiction or non-fiction |
3. Documentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awesome (3)</td>
<td>- perfect works cited in MLA form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>- appropriate end notes to explain significance of research on material with MLA</td>
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<tr>
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<td>citation of source at the beginning of the note</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 5 cited sources within the project; this does not include the novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admirable (2)</td>
<td>- 1-5 errors on works cited page or text citations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- appropriate end notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 5 cited sources within the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (1)</td>
<td>- 5-10 errors in works cited page or text citations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- appropriate end notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 5 cited sources within the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur (0)</td>
<td>- over 10 errors on works cited page or text citations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- no end notes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- fewer that 5 sources cited within the project</td>
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4. Attractive and Innovative Product

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awesome (3)</td>
<td>WOW!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admirable (2)</td>
<td>That's nice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (1)</td>
<td>I'm so glad you finished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur (0)</td>
<td>Hmmm….not yet…</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. Spelling and Grammar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awesome (3)</td>
<td>- genre forms adhere to rules in punctuation, spelling and grammar when appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admirable (2)</td>
<td>- 1-5 errors in above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average (1)</td>
<td>- 5-10 errors in above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur (0)</td>
<td>- over 10 errors in the above</td>
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6. Cohering Devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awesome (3)</td>
<td>- Introductory Letter discusses what the reader needs to know about the research and/or New Historical analysis before she reads the project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Table of Contents-includes titles of each selection, page numbers, and the genre of each piece</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- integrates narrative framing quotations or other unique cohesion devices throughout the project</td>
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<td>- concluding piece-turns readers attention to the future or puts experience into perspective through the analysis or resolution/irresolution of conflicting perspectives</td>
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<td>- envisions significance of the project for the reader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admirable (2)</td>
<td>- Introductory Letter discusses what the reader needs to know about the research and/or New Historical analysis before she reads the project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Table of Contents-includes titles of each selection, page numbers, and the genre of each piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- integrates narrative framing quotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- concluding piece-turns readers attention to the future or puts experience into perspective through the analysis or resolution/irresolution of conflicting perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average (1)</td>
<td>- little reflection or analysis in Introductory Letter or concluding piece</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amateur (0)</td>
<td>- summary for cohesive devises</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- summary for Introductory Letter</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- no Table of Contents</td>
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Concluding Poem

Kate Titus
Cedarville University

Novel: *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*
The Girl of the Painted Cohorts

Do you see her?
Strolling down the sidewalks
Through bright and glittering crowds.
She glitters herself,
With a beautiful, confident face.
She gazes at happy couples,
Winks at the gentlemen—
Some follow her walk with their eyes
And their minds.
They regain their composure
And go about their business,
Hoping no one noticed the distraction.

Do you hear her?
The friendly hellos, the “how do you do,”
The pleasant and light, cheerful laugh.
Some gentlemen answer while some look away,
Fearing the price is too high.
She wanders down to another street,
And hesitates to speak louder
When no one seems to listen.
As the world is closing in—
She wonders how she will afford to eat tomorrow.
Heaving a sigh, and crying aloud—
Or was that just in her mind?

Do you know her?
She seems slightly familiar.
But how could it be?
You could never be acquainted with a streetwalker.
But—
The look in her eyes
And the shame on her painted face
Beg for a friend in the storm.
If one hand reaches out to touch that face—
To share its warmth with a soul that is lost—
Then perhaps that soul, though tattered and torn,
Will live and reach out to another.