

**Department of English
2017 Assessment
Gen Ed**

Contents

Composition 2
Freshman World Literature 8

Our Introduction to World Literature and Introduction to Creative Writing have not yet been in the Core long enough for meaningful data collection.

PROGRAM IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION
2017 ASSESSMENT REPORT
Re: WLIT 1113: World Literature I & WLIT 1123: World Literature II

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Prepared for the Dean of the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences
University of Arkansas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment report confirms the current effectiveness of WLIT 1113: World Literature I, and WLIT 1123: World Literature II, two core-curriculum course options under the purview of the Program in Rhetoric and Composition (PRC). The report describes the methods used in the PRC's most recent assessment of these courses, discusses the ramifications of the results of the assessment, and offers suggestions to improve assessment strategies.

This report is based on data generated from 249 students enrolled in the 19 sections of WLIT 1113: WLIT I, and WLIT 1123: WLIT II, that were taught in the Department of English during the spring 2017 semester.

The data indicate an improvement of 4.5% in students' abilities to analyze literature after taking WLIT 1113 or WLIT 1123, and a 5.3% improvement in their abilities to organize their thoughts when expressing them in writing, with marginal improvement across all assessed categories (i.e., formal structure, analysis, source synthesis, mechanics and citations, organization and coherence). Given that the focus of these courses is to promote literature appreciation more so than to teach particular analytical models or the teaching of writing focusing on literary texts, it is hypothesized that the relatively small degree of improvement shown in this assessment is mainly the result of inadequacies with the assessment method itself. While the intervention model used herein has yielded excellent results when assessing composition courses, it is less capable, in its current form, of demonstrating many of the stated learning outcomes of WLIT 1113 and WLIT 1123, particularly the second stated transferable skill (to "engage with differing cultural and historical perspectives"). More suitable assessment methods, as described in this report, are being considered for future assessment studies.

INTRODUCTION

The Program in Rhetoric and Composition (PRC) submits the following report in fulfillment of the self-assessment mandated by Fulbright College. This report is based on data generated from 249 students enrolled in the 19 sections of WLIT 1113: World Literature I, and WLIT 1123: World Literature II, which were taught in the Department of English during the spring 2017 semester. The data indicate a clear, although modest, improvement in students' abilities to engage and write about literature from disparate cultures and historical periods—especially with regard to skills in paraphrasing and quoting sources and in analyzing written texts. The following report will describe the methods used for this assessment, discuss the ramifications of the results of the assessment, and offer suggestions to improve teaching and assessment strategies.

ASSESSMENT METHODS AND RESULTS

Methods

All 19 sections of WLIT I and II taught during the spring 2017 semester participated in this assessment. These 19 sections were taught by 14 teachers (12 Graduate Teaching Assistants and 2 full-time instructors) and had a total enrollment of 449 students at the beginning of the semester, 342 (76% of the students enrolled across all sections) of whom completed the Pre-Intervention Assessment. Since WLIT 1113 and WLIT 1123 both teach the same skills, and only differ in the historical periods covered (world literature written before 1665 in WLIT 1113, and world literature written since 1665 in WLIT 1123), the PRC chose to treat them as a single course for the purposes of this assessment. Performance data from all WLIT 1113 and WLIT 1123 sections were collected and averaged together to determine the results.

The Pre-Intervention Assessment was designed to assess students' abilities to analyze the devices used in a literary text, prior to the intervention of WLIT 1113 or WLIT 1123. Students responded to a prompt requiring them to analyze a brief poem and form an original argument about the literary devices employed by the poet. Students enrolled in WLIT 1113 received the prompt located in APPENDIX A, while those enrolled in WLIT 1123 received the prompt located in APPENDIX B. The instructor of record for each section proctored the assessment activity during the first two weeks of classes in spring 2017 during each section's regular meeting time. Computer labs were reserved for these assessments so that students could type their answers and submit them to their instructors via Blackboard, the online course-management system used across all sections of WLIT 1113 and WLIT 1123. The instructors then forwarded the completed essays to the PRC office for processing and analysis.

The Post-Intervention Assessment was designed to assess students' abilities to analyze the devices used in a literary text, after to the intervention of WLIT 1113 or WLIT 1123. Students responded to a prompt requiring them to analyze a brief poem and form an original argument about the literary devices employed by the poet. Students enrolled in WLIT 1113 received the prompt located in APPENDIX C, while those enrolled in WLIT 1123 received the prompt located in APPENDIX D. In order to ensure student engagement with the assessment task, students were offered the chance to earn extra credit worth 3% of their course grade for participating in and expending their best efforts on the Post-Intervention Essay. The instructor of record for each section proctored the assessment activity during the last two weeks of classes in spring 2017 during each section's regular meeting time. Computer labs were reserved for these assessments so that students could type their answers and submit them to their instructors via Blackboard, the online course-management system used across all sections of WLIT 1113 and WLIT 1123. The instructors then forwarded the completed essays to the PRC office for processing and analysis. Of the original 19 sections selected, 17 participated in the Post-Intervention Assessment; two sections encountered technical difficulties during the pre-intervention

phase and were unable to complete the assessment. Across these 17 sections, 249 students (56% of the 447 students enrolled in WLIT 1113 and WLIT 1123 at the end of the semester) completed the Post-Intervention Assessment. Only the 249 students who completed both Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention essays were assessed.

Once the essays were received by PRC, they were reformatted to be consistent in font, spacing, and margins. No features indicative of students' grasp of writing conventions were altered. Twelve Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) from the English department were hired to serve as raters to evaluate the essays. These raters were drawn from both M.A and Ph.D. programs in literature and composition and rhetoric, and from the M.F.A program in creative writing. The PRC ensured that each student's pre-intervention and post-intervention essays were scored by the same raters, in order to ensure continuity in grading attitudes and therefore to more accurately to reflect each student's progress

Each essay was scored according to the standard rubric, located in APPENDIX E, by which the raters assigned a score from 1 to 4 to each of five criteria—1) Introduction, thesis, and conclusion; 2) Analysis; 3) Paraphrasing and quoting; 4) Mechanics and citations; 5) Organization and coherence—for a maximum of twenty points. To assure consistency in scoring, each essay was scored by two separate raters. A third rater then added the two scores to derive the essay's official score out of 40. The third rater also intervened when there was a discrepancy between two raters' scores of more than one point on any specific criteria; in such cases, the third rater read the essay and decided which score was appropriate for that criteria. Once the essays were scored, the scores were averaged each for the Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention essays.

Results

The average Pre-Intervention total score was 25.5 (out of 40), while the average Post-Intervention total score was 26.4 (out of 40), an improvement of 3.5%. Using a one-tailed *t*-test, the results were determined to be statistically significant with a confidence level of 95%: $t = 2.03$, $df = 248$, $p < .05$.

When assessing student *scores by skill category*, the PRC found that students improved the most in their abilities to quote and paraphrase, a 5.3% increase. Using a one-tailed *t*-test, the results were determined to be statistically significant with confidence level of 95%: $t = 2.56$, $df = 248$, $p < .05$. Students' essays also showed significant improvement in their analytical skills, a 4.5% increase. Again using a one-tailed *t*-test, the results were determined to be statistically significant with a confidence level of 95%: $t = 1.89$, $df = 248$, $p < .05$.

Students also demonstrated some improvement in the other three categories, improving scores by 4.2% with regard to the structural components of an argumentative essay (presenting an adequate introduction, thesis, and conclusion); 0.7% with regard to mechanics and citations; and 3.03% with regard to organization and coherence.

INTERPRETATION

The results show a clear, if slight, improvement on average across all assessed sections. The 3.5% overall improvement indicated by the assessment was statistically significant. Overall, the data suggest that WLIT 1113 and WLIT 1123 do contribute to student improvement with regard to the skills and knowledge identified in the stated course objectives.

The relatively modest improvement shown in this assessment, however, may be a result of the inadequacy of the assessment instrument rather than of any lack of effectiveness of the WLIT course design or the teaching methods implemented by individual instructors. With hindsight, a single essay written over an isolated prompt is more conducive to measuring growth in writing skills than

specifically measuring improvement in literary analysis and engagement with disparate cultural and historical worldviews. Given the nature of the course design, in which each instructor is given certain leeway to choose which readings to assign, an intervention model assessment may not be the most effective method by which to evaluate the course design.

PLANS FOR CHANGES IN FUTURE ASSESSMENT

Future assessment will focus largely on improving assessment instruments, as the method used in this assessment may not have most adequately demonstrated what students learned in WLIT 1113 and WLIT 1123. Specifically, the PRC's Curriculum Specialist recommends one or more of the following options, to be employed on a rotating schedule:

1. A very effective, if time-consuming, assessment model to be applied is the portfolio model. Student portfolios consist of course documents that students generate over the course of the semester, including class notes, minor writing assignments, exams, drafts of papers and projects, and any other material which would demonstrate their expanding knowledge of literary analysis in relation to the cultural and historical backgrounds of specific texts. This model has the benefit of observing the gradual development of each student's competencies with regard to the stated learning objectives, while removing the problems inherent in an intervention model that relies on two essays written under time constraints and in artificial conditions.

While this model would most thoroughly demonstrate how well the course achieves its stated learning objectives, it would require much more intensive review and evaluation than the current intervention model. A portfolio model would also constitute an imposition on the assessment instructors, who would be required to incorporate this assignment into their course structures. However, it might also be worth considering the inclusion of a portfolio as a standard required course assignment in WLIT 1113 and WLIT 1123.

2. An alternative instrument to the portfolio is the final exam. The final exam may be designed to generate the same data with regard to core competencies and requires less time and energy to evaluate than do portfolios. In this model, the PRC would devise a final exam that would more thoroughly address the course's stated learning objectives than does the current intervention model.

There are also predictable shortcomings of the final exam model. Like the portfolio model, the final exam model would require an imposition on instructors, who would have to incorporate the exam into their course structure and possibly supplanting an exam of their own design. The standard final exam model would also offer no basis for comparison with regard to student improvement over the course of the term.

3. A third assessment option is the use of a standard writing project as the basis for comparison across sections. Students in assessment sections will generate two separate response papers to material covered in the courses. The prompts (see Appendixes A, B, C, and D) for the response papers will be the same as those used in the current intervention model, but the response papers will be treated as normal class writing projects, allowing students more time to research and engage with a text's cultural/historical context. Requiring that the first paper be due during the first three to four weeks of the semester and the second to be due near the end of the semester would then demonstrate student progress.

APPENDIX A: WLIT 1113 Pre-Intervention Prompt

Directions

Read the prompt below, and then compose the required essay in the time allotted. When you have finished, upload the essay to the link your instructor has created on your course's Blackboard shell.

Assignment

Carefully read "Plums are Falling" from the ancient Chinese *Classic of Poetry*. Then write a coherent, well-developed essay **analyzing the literary devices the poet uses to express meaning in the poem**. Your goal here is not to critique the poem or to argue its merit, but to **explain its use of imagery, symbolism, speaker, central metaphor, or any other device you choose**.

Remember that your essay should contain an introduction (with a precise thesis), a body, and a conclusion. Make sure your analysis is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the poem. Support your claims with direct textual evidence and quotations, and clearly explain the textual evidence you use. Remember to attribute both direct and indirect references. You may cite the source as "Plums."

"Plums are Falling," from the Chinese *Classic of Poetry*

Plums are falling,
seven are the fruits;
many men want me,
let me have a fine one.

Plums are falling,
three are the fruits;
many men want me,
let me have a steady one.

Plums are falling,
catch them in a basket;
many men want me,
let me be bride of one.

APPENDIX B: WLIT 1123 Pre-Intervention Prompt

Directions

Read the prompt below, and then compose the required essay in the time allotted. When you have finished, upload the essay to the link your instructor has created on your course's Blackboard shell.

Assignment

Carefully read "The Panther" by Rainer Maria Rilke, an Austrian poet of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Then write a coherent, well-developed essay **analyzing the literary devices Rilke uses to express meaning in the poem**. Your goal here is not to critique the poem or to argue its merit, but to **explain its use of imagery, symbolism, speaker, central metaphor, or any other device you choose**.

Remember that your essay should contain an introduction (with a precise thesis), a body, and a conclusion. Make sure your analysis is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the poem. Support your claims with direct textual evidence and quotations, and clearly explain the textual evidence you use. Remember to attribute both direct and indirect references. You may cite the source as "Rilke."

"The Panther," by Rainer Maria Rilke

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,
has grown so weary that it cannot hold
anything else. It seems to him there are
a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.

As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,
the movement of his powerful soft strides
is like a ritual dance around a center
in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.

Only at times, the curtain of the pupils
lifts, quietly--. An image enters in,
rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,
plunges into the heart and is gone.

APPENDIX C: WLIT 1113 Post-Intervention Prompt

Directions

Read the prompt below, and then compose the required essay in the time allotted. When you have finished, upload the essay to the link your instructor has created on your course's Blackboard shell.

Assignment

Carefully read "An Empty Garlic" by Jalâloddin Rumi, a Persian poet of the 13th century. Then write a coherent, well-developed essay **analyzing the literary devices Rumi uses to express meaning in the poem**. Your goal here is not to critique the poem or to argue its merit, but to **explain its use of imagery, symbolism, speaker, central metaphor, or any other device you choose**.

Remember that your essay should contain an introduction (with a precise thesis), a body, and a conclusion. Avoid merely summarizing the poem. Support your claims with direct textual evidence and quotations, and clearly explain the textual evidence you use. Remember to attribute both direct and indirect references. You may cite the source as "Rumi."

"An Empty Garlic," by Jalâloddin Rumi

You miss the garden,
because you want a small fig from a random tree.
You don't meet the beautiful woman.
You're joking with an old crone.
It makes me want to cry how she detains you,
stinking mouthed, with a hundred talons,
putting her head over the roof edge to call down,
tasteless fig, fold over fold, empty
as dry-rotten garlic.

She has you right by the belt,
even though there's no flower and no milk
inside her body.
Death will open your eyes
to what her face is: leather spine
of a black lizard. No more advice.

Let yourself be silently drawn
by the stronger pull of what you really love.

APPENDIX D: WLIT 1123 Post-Intervention Prompt

Directions

Read the prompt below, and then compose the required essay in the time allotted. When you have finished, upload the essay to the link your instructor has created on your course's Blackboard shell.

Assignment

Carefully read "What Are Years?" by Marianne Moore, a 20th-century American poet. Then write a coherent, well-developed essay **analyzing the literary devices Moore uses to express meaning in the poem**. Your goal here is not to critique the poem or to argue its merit, but to **explain its use of imagery, symbolism, speaker, central metaphor, or any other device you choose**.

Remember that your essay should contain an introduction (with a precise thesis), a body, and a conclusion. Avoid merely summarizing the poem. Support your claims with direct textual evidence and quotations, and clearly explain the textual evidence you use. Remember to attribute both direct and indirect references. You may cite the source as "Moore."

"What Are Years?" by Marianne Moore

What is our innocence,
what is our guilt? All are
naked, none is safe. And whence
is courage: the unanswered question,
the resolute doubt, —
dumbly calling, deafly listening—that
in misfortune, even death,
encourage others
and in its defeat, stirs
the soul to be strong? He
sees deep and is glad, who
accedes to mortality
and in his imprisonment rises
upon himself as
the sea in a chasm, struggling to be
free and unable to be,
in its surrendering
finds its continuing.
So he who strongly feels,
behaves. The very bird,
grown taller as he sings, steels
his form straight up. Though he is captive,
his mighty singing
says, satisfaction is a lowly
thing, how pure a thing is joy.
This is mortality,
this is eternity.

APPENDIX E: ESSAY EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Introduction, thesis, and conclusion	The introduction provides context for the rest of the paper, and directly and briefly states the significance of the literary devices used in the poem. The conclusion underscores the significance of these devices in light of the analysis presented.	The introduction provides some context for the rest of the paper. The significance of the literary devices used in the poem is implicitly stated but clear. The conclusion reiterates this significance with little acknowledgement of the analysis offered.	The introduction provides little context for the paper. The significance of the literary devices used in the poem is implicit and hard to find. The conclusion makes little reference to this significance.	The introduction provides no context for the paper. The significance of the literary devices used in the poem are not explicit or not present. The conclusion does not refer to these devices and does not clarify the significance of the analysis or commentary offered in the body of the essay.
Analysis	The essay offers a cogent, sustained analysis of one or more literary devices used in the poem, with substantial supporting evidence and discussion. The analysis develops into a discussion about the significance of these devices to the meaning of the poem.	The essay offers an analysis of the poem's literary devices, but there is less sufficient supporting evidence and discussion.	The poem's literary devices are discussed, but may be more summarized than analyzed, with little supporting evidence and discussion. The writer may also veer at times into critique instead of analysis.	The essay is basically a paraphrase of the poem, or an argument that does not engage in analysis of the poem's literary devices.
Paraphrasing and quoting	Supporting points for the central analysis are well-selected. Quotations are used effectively to demonstrate the poet's use of the devices under analysis, and paraphrasing and quoting are correctly done.	Paraphrasing and quoting of the poem are correctly done but do not always clearly demonstrate the use of the devices under analysis. Supporting points are not the best possible choice.	Paraphrasing and quoting of the original text are incorrect and do not clearly demonstrate the use of the devices under analysis.	Paraphrasing and quoting have no bearing on the devices under analysis, or the writer includes no direct quotations at all in support of the analysis.
Mechanics and citations	Impeccable spelling, grammar, word order, word usage, and punctuation; proper citation of texts.	Very few errors in spelling, grammar, word usage, and punctuation; few errors in citations.	Several errors in spelling, grammar, word order, word usage, punctuation, and citation.	Many errors in spelling, grammar, word order, word usage, punctuation, and citation.
Organization and Coherence	Logical order of supporting points for the main idea. Transition sentences and cohesion markers used effectively throughout paper.	Order of supporting points for the main idea could be better organized. Some transition sentences and cohesion markers are used but could be more effective.	Sequence of supporting points makes sense in some of the paper but not all. Transition sentences and cohesion markers are rarely used.	Paragraphs seem to be out of order and haphazard. Practically no transition sentences or cohesion markers are used.