

English Lit/Comp  
Hathaway

Bringing it all together...  
*Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*

Write a 3-page typed paper that responds to the following assignment. Include details from the novel and the film. Direct quotes are obviously not necessary, but concrete details and commentary are required.

Approach the assignment somewhat like an out of class timed write. Think about the prompt for however long you wish and make some notes. Give yourself about 45 minutes to compose your draft on the computer and then spend about 15 minutes revising your writing. This is not intended to be an arduous task.

Prompt:

Mary Joe Hughes in her article "Love and Its Concretions" from *The New Arcadia Review* writes:

Michael Cunningham takes up these...themes in *The Hours*, including the...interconnectedness between people, the life of one human spirit animating that of another, the permeable boundaries between life and death, and the burst bonds of time, and allows them to ripple out in wider and wider circles.

How do the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* and the film version of *The Hours* explore a similar theme? Identify the common theme each explores and then compare and contrast its handling of the theme. While there are numerous themes both explore, please limit your discussion to one theme. Feel free to borrow a theme from the Hughes quote.

Note: It goes without saying, but I will say it, that you are to do this assignment without using outside resources, other than the suggestions on the back of this sheet. Use your mind, discussion but not collaboration with your PHS peers, and the two texts themselves.

If you were not in class for the film, you may find a way to watch it at home, or plan to stay after and watch it in school. I would also be willing to loan the film for viewing on a school computer during a learning center.

Visit the back of this sheet for some potential insights into theme in case you'd like to veer off into less familiar landscape.

From

*The Mrs. Dalloway Reader*. Francine Prose, ed. Orlando: Harcourt, 2003.

“I think what I learned [from reading Virginia Woolf’s work] was her conviction that the whole of human existence, while it is copiously contained in . . .the . . .big subjects for big novels, is also contained in every hour in the life of everybody. . . .Virginia Woolf understood that every character, no matter how minor, in a novel she wrote was visiting the novel, from a novel of his or her own, where he or she was the hero of another great tragic and comic tale.” (Michael Cunningham. “First Love.”)

“[Laura Brown] . . .is a fully real woman. . .’a vessel in which all sorts of spirits and forces are coursing and flashing perpetually’ (Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own*). Throughout *The Hours*, as throughout *Mrs. Dalloway*, it’s the women who are strong, who choose life, who survive.” (Daniel Mendelsohn. “Not Afraid of Virginia Woolf.”)

Visit the foreword of the novel using Google Books (may be blocked at school although I requested it be unblocked) – both the foreword by Maureen Howard from our edition and by Francine Prose from another printing. Prose is considered by many critics as superior to Howard. Use their ideas as jumping off points for your own thinking.

Ask what both say about women, their creative potential, and the constraints on that potential.

And just in case I have given you a wrong impression of Virginia Woolf who, although she struggles with mental illness much of her life, should by no means be defined by that part of herself.

“But it is still a serious problem that little about this frumpy cinematic Woolf suggests just why she loves London so much; you get no sense of Woolf as the confident, gossip-loving queen of Bloomsbury, the vivid social figure, the amusing diarist, the impressively productive journalist expertly maneuvering her professional obligations – and relationships. (There’s a lot more of the real Virginia Woolf in her *Clarissa Dalloway* than this film [*The Hours*] would ever lead you to believe.)” (Daniel Mendelsohn. “Not Afraid of Virginia Woolf.”)