**4-Week Unit on *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf**

Contents:

* Unit plan with objectives, questions, activities, standards
* Historical context
* Narrative Modes (*To the Lighthouse*: stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse)
* List of alternative activities
* 60 Passages related to the topics:
  + free indirect discourse/point of view
  + questions
  + love and immersion
  + painting
  + time
* Writing Prompts

UNIT OBJECTIVES: SWBAT identify the narrative mode of *To the Lighthouse* and discuss its purpose and value as a means of understanding love and immersion.

**SWBAT identify the narrative mode of *TTL*.**

RL. 12. 6          identify a passage that indicates point of view

            identify how the passage builds on known information and contains new information that undercuts, undermines, challenges or provides weight or significance

            infer the implications of the language and the reasons for its indirectness

Questions:    How does the narrative mode (and poetic style) of the text reflect the themes of the text - the difficulty of connecting emotionally with another person, the ability to completely understand another person's essence or experiences, the impossibility of feeling what another person feels – empathy

Activity:  close reading of various passages

**SWBAT track the topic of questions, philosophical questions.**

RL. 12. 1          determine what the text says explicitly

            determine where the text leaves matters uncertain

            identify inferences drawn from the text

            use evidence to support analysis

EQ:  What questions does the book raise?  What is the meaning of life?  Why should someone have a family or try to fall in love?  How does one overcome grief?  How does one return to a state of normalcy after loss or change?  How can people overcome the past and get along after years of conflict?  How does one stop time from moving so quickly?  How will one be remembered after death?  What is the space between people and things?  How does war break up families?  How are these questions metaphysical questions?  What is metaphysics?

Metaphysics:

being/existence/reality

determinism/free will

identity/change

mind /matter

spirituality

space and time

A:  read alouds, teacher asks question, class discussion

**SWBAT track topic of love and immersion.**

RL. 12. 3          identify evidence that displays the development of an action, place or character

EQ:  Does Lily love Mrs. Ramsay in a romantic way?  Why won't Lily marry Mr. Bankes?  How can we apply Queer Theory to our reading of the text?  What is the nature of love and how can it "take a thousand shapes"?  How can loving mean being one with the universe?

A:  explicate/take marginal notes on passages - work with partner and then present findings under document camera - class takes notes

**SWBAT track topic of  painting.**

RL. 12. 5          identify 3 or 4 passages or scenes that are connected thematically

            determine how patterns in a passage connect to structural and thematic patterns in the text

            determine how language patterns in a passage contain an aesthetic quality

            analyze the effects of structural patterns and ordering of action

EQ:  How is Lily’s act of painting and the painting itself symbolic?  How does Woolf’s style imitate the painting style of Lily?

A:  Read a passage aloud and then rewrite one sentence that examines the syntax and literary devices that reflect its meaning.  Write the sentence on a poster board and in a different color, highlight the syntax and literary devices that show how the sentence attempts to ""paint.""

**SWBAT track topic of time.**

RL. 12. 3          identify evidence that displays the development of an action, place or character

            consider the function of literary devices that portray the action, place or character

            analyze the purpose of the author's choices regarding setting, action, or character

EQ:    How does the text examine how the mind can alter the continuous stream of time?  How can consciousness slow down the passage of time?  Explication of the passage where Mrs. McNab cleans the house - how does the cleaning of the house and the syntax and literary devices in the passage imitate the mind's attempt to return to a state of normalcy after death?  How can a family be unconsciously connected even when they are physically apart?  Why is it hard work to restore family bonds?

A:  explicate with partner first, then go over with the entire class under the document camera; read passages related to topic aloud and discuss

**Historical context**

WWI – 1914-1918

* most mobilized soldiers
* highest casualties
* mass bombardment of civilians from the sky
* chemical weapons – chlorine, mustard gas, phosgene
* machine guns, tanks, aircrafts, Zeppelins, flamethrowers, armored cars, U-boats
* telephone, wireless communication
* trench warfare
* exploding shells and fragmentation

Pre-Modern (Romantic, Victorian) Modern (early 20th Century)

order chaos

meaningful futile

optimistic pessimistic

stable unstable

faith loss of faith

morality/values loss of morality/values

clear sense of identity confused sense of identity/place in world

feeling thinking

unity fragmentation

tranquility noise

Historical context of *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf (written 1926, published 1927)

PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS:

Who am I? What is reality? What is truth? What is the relationship between objects or subjects? What is the relationship between an individual and their society, and between an object and its surroundings? What is the essence of an object or person? What is the relationship between consciousness and/or unconsciousness and reality? How do mental processes affect how an individual sees reality? How can individuals communicate? Is there a collective consciousness? How do multiple minds interact? How does time influence identity? Is reality determined or do we have free will? What causes an event to happen? How are human events connected, and related? Does God exist? What is God or spirituality? How does the idea of God fit into an individual’s worldview? What is love? How does time impact an individual’s view of reality? Does an individual possess free will or is existence deterministic? How can an individual find meaning in life? What do individuals long for? How do physical and natural laws impact how we experience reality?

**SCIENCE – QUANTAM MECHANICS**

principle of uncertainty

“The Actual Content of Quantum Theoretical Kinematics and Mechanics” (Heisenberg 1925):

In this case it is obviously pointless to talk of the velocity at a certain position, since the velocity can be defined only by means of two positions and consequently and inversely two different velocities corresponded to each point.

[relativity: the dependence of various physical phenomena on relative motion of the observer and the observed objects, especially regarding the nature and behavior of light, space, time, and gravity. (dictionary.com)]

*Relativity: The Special and the General Theory* (Einstein, 1905):

Let us consider now a second two-dimensional existence, but this time on a spherical surface instead of on a plane. The flat beings with their measuring-rods and other objects fit exactly on this surface and they are unable to leave it. Their whole universe of observation extends exclusively over the surface of the sphere. Are these beings able to regard the geometry of their universe as being plane geometry and their rods withal as the realisation of “distance”? They cannot do this. For if they attempt to realise a straight line, they will obtain a curve, which we “three-dimensional beings” designate as a great circle, *i.e.* a self-contained line of definite finite length, which can be measured up by means of a measuring-rod. Similarly, this universe has a finite area, that can be compared with the area of a square constructed with rods. The great charm resulting from this consideration lies in the recognition of the fact that *the universe of these beings is finite and yet has no limits…*

In order to arrive at the idea of an objective world, an additional constructive concept still is necessary: the event is localized not only in time, but also in space…

In this, the essential thing is that “physical reality,” thought of as being independent of the subjects experiencing it, was conceived as consisting, at least in principle, of space and time on one hand, and of permanently existing material points, moving with respect to space and time, on the other. The idea of the independent existence of space and time can be expressed drastically in this way: If matter were to disappear, space and time alone would remain behind (as a kind of stage for physical happening).

particle-wave duality (Bohr, 1920)

*Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature*, Niels Bohr, 1925

I hope, however, that the idea of complementarity is suited to characterize the situation, which bears a deep-going analogy to the general difficulty in the formation of human ideas, inherent in the distinction between subject and object.

*Matter and Light: The New Physics*, deBroglie, 1939, particle-wave duality 1924:

The more deeply we descend into the minutest structures of Matter, the more clearly we see that the concepts evolved by the mind in the course of everyday experience especially those of Time and Space must fail us in an endeavour

to describe the new worlds which we are entering…

And I think that another reason can be found for admiring scientific effort: we can learn to admire it by appreciating

the value of that for which it stands. For it is with Science as it is with all the greatest values in life: it is only on the spiritual plane that its full stature is attained. Science exacts our admiration because it is one of the great works of the human spirit….

The curious fact is that, in each individual case, the one idealization departs from Reality in proportion as the other approaches exact agreement; qualitatively, this is the meaning of Heisenberg's famous Uncertainty Principle. We can now see the way in which the complementary descriptions by waves and corpuscles complete, by excluding, each other. They complete each other, in the first place, because we must appeal to each in turn according to the phenomenon which we have to describe, but, in the second place, they exclude each other because the better one of them is adapted to Reality, the worse is the other and conversely.

entanglement

“Can Quantam Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?” Einstein, Podolsky, Rosen (1935):

If, without in any way disturbing a system, we can predict with certainty (i.e., with probability equal to unity) the value of a physical quantity, then there exists an element of physical reality corresponding to this physical quantity.

*To the Lighthouse*:

For the great plateful of blue water was before her; the hoary Lighthouse, distant, austere, in the midst; and on the right, as far as the eye could see, fading and falling, in soft low pleats, the green sand dunes with the wild flowing grasses on them, which always seemed to be running away into some moon country, uninhabited of men.

Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke, for watching them in this mood always at this hour one could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw; and this thing, the long steady stroke, was her stroke. Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at--that light, for example.

The place was gone to rack and ruin. Only the Lighthouse beam entered the rooms for a moment, sent its sudden stare over bed and wall in the darkness of winter, looked with equanimity at the thistle and the swallow, the rat and the straw. Nothing now withstood them; nothing said no to them. Let the wind blow; let the poppy seed itself and the carnation mate with the cabbage. Let the swallow build in the drawing-room, and the thistle thrust aside the tiles, and the butterfly sun itself on the faded chintz of the arm-chairs. Let the broken glass and the china lie out on the lawn and be tangled over with grass and wild berries.

For the Lighthouse had become almost invisible, had melted away into a blue haze, and the effort of looking at it and the effort of thinking of him landing there, which both seemed to be one and the same effort, had stretched her body and mind to the utmost.

**PHILOSOPHY - METAPHYSICS**

Alfred Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 1927:

A traveler, who has lost his way, should not ask, Where am I? What he really wants to know is, Where are the other places? He has got his own body, but he has lost them.

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1797:

That all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt. For how is it possible that the faculty of cognition should be awakened into exercise otherwise than by means of objects which affect our senses, and partly of themselves produce representations, partly rouse our powers of understanding into activity, to compare to connect, or to separate these, and so to convert the raw material of our sensuous impressions into a knowledge of objects, which is called experience? In respect of time, therefore, no knowledge of ours is antecedent to experience, but begins with it…

When Galilei experimented with balls of a definite weight on the inclined plane, when Torricelli caused the air to sustain a weight which he had calculated beforehand to be equal to that of a definite column of water, or when Stahl, at a later period, converted metals into lime, and reconverted lime into metal, by the addition and subtraction of certain elements; a light broke upon all natural philosophers. They learned that reason only perceives that which it produces after its own design; that it must not be content to follow, as it were, in the leading-strings of nature, but must proceed in advance with principles of judgement according to unvarying laws, and compel nature to reply its questions.

Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 1925:

It may be cherished, nurtured, developed into a cultivated consolatory detachment from the affairs of life, ending in the delusion of the superiority of the private inner life to all else, or in the illusion that one can really succeed in emancipating himself in his pure inwardness from connection with the world and society. It may express itself in elaborated schemes of self-pity and in bursts of defiant exclamation: Here I stand and cannot otherwise. It may lead to unreasoned loyalty to seemingly lost causes and forlorn hopes – and events may sometimes justify the faith.

William James, *The Meaning of Truth*, 1909:

In the whole field of symbolic thought we are universally held both to intend, to speak of, and to reach conclusions about—to know in short—particular realities, without having in our subjective consciousness any mind-stuff that resembles them even in a remote degree. We are instructed about them by language which awakens no consciousness beyond its sound; and we know WHICH realities they are by the faintest and most fragmentary glimpse of some remote context they may have and by no direct imagination of themselves.

*To the Lighthouse*:

Whenever she "thought of his work" she always saw clearly before her a large kitchen table. It was Andrew's doing. She asked him what his father's books were about. "Subject and object and the nature of reality," Andrew had said. And when she said Heavens, she had no notion what that meant. "Think of a kitchen table then," he told her, "when you're not there."

So now she always saw, when she thought of Mr. Ramsay's work, a scrubbed kitchen table. It lodged now in the fork of a pear tree, for they had reached the orchard. And with a painful effort of concentration, she focused her mind, not upon the silver-bossed bark of the tree, or upon its fish-shaped leaves, but upon a phantom kitchen table, one of those scrubbed board tables, grained and knotted, whose virtue seems to have been laid bare by years of muscular integrity, which stuck there, its four legs in air. Naturally, if one's days were passed in this seeing of angular essences, this reducing of lovely evenings, with all their flamingo clouds and blue and silver to a white deal four-legged table (and it was a mark of the finest minds to do so), naturally one could not be judged like an ordinary person.

But now, he felt, it didn't matter a damn who reached Z (if thought ran like an alphabet from A to Z). Somebody would reach it--if not he, then another.

**MUSIC**

Wagner *Trsitan and Isolade*, 1859

Debussy, *5 Poèmes de Baudelaire*, 1888

Arnold Bax *Symphony No. 3*, 1929

*To the Lighthouse*:

She could see the words echoing as she spoke them rhythmically in Cam's mind, and Cam was repeating after her how it was like a mountain, a bird's nest, a garden, and there were little antelopes, and her eyes were opening and shutting, and Mrs. Ramsay went on speaking still more monotonously, and more rhythmically and more nonsensically, how she must shut her eyes and go to sleep and dream of mountains and valleys and stars falling and parrots and antelopes and gardens, and everything lovely, she said, raising her head very slowly and speaking more and more mechanically, until she sat upright and saw that Cam was asleep.

With a curious physical sensation, as if she were urged forward and at the same time must hold herself back, she made her first quick decisive stroke. The brush descended. It flickered brown over the white canvas; it left a running mark. A second time she did it--a third time. And so pausing and so flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related; and so, lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines which had no sooner settled there than they enclosed ( she felt it looming out at her) a space. Down in the hollow of one wave she saw the next wave towering higher and higher above her. For what could be more formidable than that space? Here she was again, she thought, stepping back to look at it, drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers--this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her, emerged stark at the back of appearances and commanded her attention. She was half unwilling, half reluctant.

**PAINTING**

A picture containing outdoor, grass, standing, large

Description automatically generatedA group of people posing for the camera

Description automatically generated

Cezanne, *Picnic on a River*, 1873

Picasso, *Woman with Mustard Pot*, 1910

Henri Rousseau, *Carnival Evening*, 1886

*To the Lighthouse*:

Nothing could be cooler and quieter. Taking out a pen-knife, Mr. Bankes tapped the canvas with the bone handle. What did she wish to indicate by the triangular purple shape, "just there"? he asked.

It was Mrs. Ramsay reading to James, she said. She knew his objection--that no one could tell it for a human shape. But she had made no attempt at likeness, she said. For what reason had she introduced them then? he

asked. Why indeed?--except that if there, in that corner, it was bright, here, in this, she felt the need of darkness. Simple, obvious, commonplace, as it was, Mr. Bankes was interested. Mother and child

then--objects of universal veneration, and in this case the mother was famous for her beauty--might be reduced, he pondered, to a purple shadow without irreverence.

But the picture was not of them, she said. Or, not in his sense. There were other senses too in which one might reverence them. By a shadow here and a light there, for instance. Her tribute took that form if, as she vaguely supposed, a picture must be a tribute. A mother and child might be reduced to a shadow without irreverence. A light here required a shadow there.

Also, her beauty offended people probably. How monotonous, they would say, and the same always! They preferred another type--the dark, the vivacious. Then she was weak with her husband. She let him make those scenes. Then she was reserved. Nobody knew exactly what had happened to her. And (to go back to Mr. Carmichael and his dislike) one could not imagine Mrs. Ramsay standing painting, lying reading, a whole morning on the lawn. It was unthinkable. Without saying a word, the only token of her errand a basket on her arm, she went off to the town, to the poor, to sit in some stuffy little bedroom. Often and often Lily had seen her go silently in the midst of some game, some discussion, with her basket on her arm, very upright. She had noted her return. She had thought, half laughing (she was so methodical with the tea cups), half moved (her beauty took one's breath away), eyes that are closing in pain have looked on you. You have been with them there.

**Narrative Modes**

EPISTOLARY NARRATIVE

Narrative told in the form of letters (1st person) or other documents

UNRELIABLE NARRATOR

Narrator (usually 1st person) that fabricates and misrepresents the events of the story and their own perspective and sensory perception either consciously or unconsciously

FIRST PERSON NARRATOR - protagonist, participant (character in subsidiary role), observer (character without an essential function)

NAIVE NARRATOR– knows less about the story than the reader or author

SECOND PERSON – addresses the main character in the form of a personal pronoun (usually “you”)

DIRECT INTERIOR/INTERNAL MONOLOGUE

Sometimes indicated by quotation marks, a narrative style where a character (1st person) semi-logically expresses their actual thoughts and mental processes

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The authentic, untranslated, unfiltered, fragmented, conscious or semi-conscious, recorded thoughts and mental processes of a character or narrator (usually 1st person)

THIRD PERSON SUBJECTIVE or THIRD PERSON LIMITED OMNISCIENT

Narrator conveys the thoughts and feelings of one or more of the characters (but not all of them) and is able to convey voice of character

THIRD PERSON OMNISCIENT

Narrator describes any events in the story and the thoughts of *all* the characters and is able to convey voice of the character

FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE or NARRATED MONOLOGUE (\*see 3 options below)

Third-person narrator is able to shift points of view from objective narrator to psychonarrator to any character in the story which sometimes makes the various points of view indistinguishable from one another (may be omniscient or limited omniscient narration)

THIRD-PERSON OBJECTIVE (\*1st option)

Narrator tells the external story without relating internal thoughts and feelings of characters (not omniscient)

PSYCHONARRATION (\*2st option)

“Narrator’s description of what a character is thinking” (omniscient narrator but does not convey voice of character)

Dorice Williams Elliot from “Teaching About Free Indirect Discourse”; term from Dorritt Cohn’s *Transparent Minds*

CHARACTER’S POINT OF VIEW IN 3RD PERSON (\*3rd option)

Third person narrator takes on the qualities of a character’s voice (example: Joey’s point of view)

HOW FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE WORKS:

The 3rd person omniscient or limited omniscient narrator takes the point of view of any of the following (or makes them indistinguishable from each other):

1. objective narrator – narrator describes external world

“Joey sat down, closed his eyes, and rubbed his temples with his thumbs.”

2. psychonarrator – omniscient narrator describes internal world of characters

“Joey, frustrated with his inability to close the deal, became anxious and worried.”

3. character – omniscient narrator conveys actual voice of any character in the story (has qualities of 1st person narration)

“He came so stinking close to convincing the ignorant balding freak to sign -- but he was just *too* stubborn!”

INDICATORS OF POINT OF VIEW

1. STYLE/VOICE

A. Word choice, diction

B. punctuation – quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks, periods, commas, semi-colons, colons, dashes, and ellipses.

C. Any literary devices (grammatical, rhetorical, poetic, literary) that indicate emotion or personality

2. modal auxiliaries (helping verbs) –

can, may, must, ought, shall, should, will, would

(probability, possibility, condition, likelihood, ability, permission, obligation)

3. Hedge words

a word used to help a speaker or writer avoid making an absolute statement

Examples: seems, kind of, imagine, alleged, suppose, sort of, somewhat, perhaps, maybe, nearly, probably, possibly

4. verbal clause process types (M.A.K. Halliday):

(one verb may involve multiple types)

a. **material** (external world): doing and happening (ex: walk, empty, paint, repair, send, burn)

b. **behavioral** (external/internal world): physiological and psychological behavior (ex: laugh, cry, breathe, sigh, blush, burp, stare)

c. **verbal** (external/internal world): saying and the symbolic exchange of meaning (ex: say, tell, warn, argue, yell, praise, insult, report, threaten)

d. **mental** (internal world): sensing and consciousness (ex: perceive, feel, believe, consider, imagine, forget, desire, refuse, adore, enjoy, dread, rejoice)

5. “Gesture … small physical actions, often unconscious or semi-reflexive, including what is called body language and excluding larger, more definite or momentous actions … language – that is, word choice – can function as a gesture … [Gestures] are like windows opening to let us see a person’s soul, his or her secret desires, fears or obsessions, the precise relations between that person and the self, between the self and the world” from *Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People who Love Books and for Those who Want to Write Them* by Francine Prose

**Possible activities:**

* 1-PAGER OR MIND MAP POSTER REQUIREMENTS (independent or in groups)

- draw at least 2 symbols/objects

- 5-10 quotes – may be a few sentences, one sentence, a phrase, or a series of connected phrases, words/topics, descriptive details, or literary devices

- informal interpretation of quotes using words, phrases, or sentences

- a question related to the topic, and an answer to the question

- creative shape, structure, borders, and organization of images/quotes/ideas

- highlight important words or phrases with variety of color, size, calligraphy

- your name, title of text, author’s name, topic

* Students work in pairs to take notes on all passages and then write a response to one of the questions on an index card, the board, or online. Volunteers can then present their answer to the class.
* Assign pairs one or a few passages and have them present on their passage while the rest of the class takes notes.
* Go through the entire handout with the entire class – ask for a volunteer to read each passage out loud (sometimes read a passage yourself) and then ask a question for each passage related to the topic.
* Assign larger groups 4 or 5 quotes and have them present a google PowerPoint that contains an interpretation of each quote.
* Create a google document for the entire class where pairs interpret a quote from their passage. Individual students can then read the document and write a paragraph on the topic.
* Students work in groups to create a poster on 3-4 quotes and then present an interpretation of those quotes to the class.
* Pairs complete the handout and then the class creates a graphic organizer on the board using their ideas
* Create one Google Drawing for the entire class and enlarge the size to leave room to create a graphic organizer with quotes and analysis.
* Students record dramatic readings of their passages.
* Student work independently to read and take notes on each passage.

**Free Indirect Discourse/Point of View**

4 Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed

a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would

have seized it. Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr. Ramsay excited

in his children's breasts by his mere presence; standing, as now, lean as

a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with

the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife,

who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was

(James thought), but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of

judgement. What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable

of untruth; never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word

to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all of

his own children, who, sprung from his loins, should be aware from

childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising; and the passage to

that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished, our frail

barks founder in darkness (here Mr. Ramsay would straighten his back and

narrow his little blue eyes upon the horizon), one that needs, above all,

courage, truth, and the power to endure.

11 "Let's go," he said, repeating her words, clicking them out, however, with

a self-consciousness that made her wince. "Let us all go to the circus."

No. He could not say it right. He could not feel it right. But why not?

she wondered. What was wrong with him then? She liked him warmly, at the

moment. Had they not been taken, she asked, to circuses when they were

children? Never, he answered, as if she asked the very thing he wanted;

had been longing all these days to say, how they did not go to circuses.

It was a large family, nine brothers and sisters, and his father was a

working man. "My father is a chemist, Mrs. Ramsay. He keeps a shop." He

himself had paid his own way since he was thirteen. Often he went without

a greatcoat in winter. He could never "return hospitality" (those were

his parched stiff words) at college. He had to make things last twice the

time other people did; he smoked the cheapest tobacco; shag; the same the

old men did in the quays. He worked hard--seven hours a day; his subject

was now the influence of something upon somebody--they were walking on and

Mrs. Ramsay did not quite catch the meaning, only the words, here and

there ... dissertation ... fellowship ... readership ... lectureship. She

could not follow the ugly academic jargon, that rattled itself off so

glibly, but said to herself that she saw now why going to the circus had

knocked him off his perch, poor little man, and why he came out,

instantly, with all that about his father and mother and brothers and

sisters, and she would see to it that they didn't laugh at him any more;

she would tell Prue about it. What he would have liked, she supposed,

would have been to say how he had gone not to the circus but to Ibsen with

the Ramsays. He was an awful prig--oh yes, an insufferable bore. For,

though they had reached the town now and were in the main street, with

carts grinding past on the cobbles, still he went on talking, about

settlements, and teaching, and working men, and helping our own class,

and lectures, till she gathered that he had got back entire

self-confidence, had recovered from the circus, and was about (and now

again she liked him warmly) to tell her--but here, the houses falling

away on both sides, they came out on the quay, and the whole bay

spread before them and Mrs. Ramsay could not help exclaiming, "Oh,

how beautiful!" For the great plateful of blue water was before her;

the hoary Lighthouse, distant, austere, in the midst; and on the right,

as far as the eye could see, fading and falling, in soft low pleats,

the green sand dunes with the wild flowing grasses on them, which always

seemed to be running away into some moon country, uninhabited of men.

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Always, Mrs. Ramsay felt, one helped oneself out of solitude reluctantly

by laying hold of some little odd or end, some sound, some sight. She

listened, but it was all very still; cricket was over; the children

were in their baths; there was only the sound of the sea. She stopped

knitting; she held the long reddish-brown stocking dangling in her

hands a moment. She saw the light again. With some irony in her

interrogation, for when one woke at all, one's relations changed, she

looked at the steady light, the pitiless, the remorseless, which was so

much her, yet so little her, which had her at its beck and call (she

woke in the night and saw it bent across their bed, stroking the

floor), but for all that she thought, watching it with fascination,

hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed

vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she

had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it

silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and

the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which

curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in

her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and

she felt, It is enough! It is enough!

He turned and saw her. Ah! She was lovely, lovelier now than ever he

thought. But he could not speak to her. He could not interrupt her.

He wanted urgently to speak to her now that James was gone and she was

alone at last. But he resolved, no; he would not interrupt her. She

was aloof from him now in her beauty, in her sadness. He would let her

be, and he passed her without a word, though it hurt him that she

should look so distant, and he could not reach her, he could do nothing

to help her. And again he would have passed her without a word had she

not, at that very moment, given him of her own free will what she knew

he would never ask, and called to him and taken the green shawl off the

picture frame, and gone to him. For he wished, she knew, to protect her.

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He had been to Amsterdam, Mr. Bankes was saying as he strolled across

the lawn with Lily Briscoe. He had seen the Rembrandts. He had been to

Madrid. Unfortunately, it was Good Friday and the Prado was shut. He

had been to Rome. Had Miss Briscoe never been to Rome? Oh, she

should--It would be a wonderful experience for her--the Sistine

Chapel; Michael Angelo; and Padua, with its Giottos. His wife had been

in bad health for many years, so that their sight-seeing had been on a

modest scale.

She had been to Brussels; she had been to Paris but only for a flying

visit to see an aunt who was ill. She had been to Dresden; there were

masses of pictures she had not seen; however, Lily Briscoe reflected,

perhaps it was better not to see pictures: they only made one

hopelessly discontented with one's own work. Mr. Bankes thought one

could carry that point of view too far. We can't all be Titians and we

can't all be Darwins, he said; at the same time he doubted whether you

could have your Darwin and your Titian if it weren't for humble people

like ourselves. Lily would have liked to pay him a compliment; you're

not humble, Mr. Bankes, she would have liked to have said. But he did

not want compliments (most men do, she thought), and she was a little

ashamed of her impulse and said nothing while he remarked that perhaps

what he was saying did not apply to pictures. Anyhow, said Lily,

tossing off her little insincerity, she would always go on painting,

because it interested her. Yes, said Mr. Bankes, he was sure she would,

and, as they reached the end of the lawn he was asking her whether she

had difficulty in finding subjects in London when they turned and saw

the Ramsays. So that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman

looking at a girl throwing a ball. That is what Mrs. Ramsay tried to

tell me the other night, she thought. For she was wearing a green

shawl, and they were standing close together watching Prue and

Jasper throwing catches. And suddenly the meaning which, for no

reason at all, as perhaps they are stepping out of the Tube or

ringing a doorbell, descends on people, making them symbolical,

making them representative, came upon them, and made them in the dusk

standing, looking, the symbols of marriage, husband and wife. Then,

after an instant, the symbolical outline which transcended the real

figures sank down again, and they became, as they met them, Mr. and Mrs.

Ramsay watching the children throwing catches. But still for a moment,

though Mrs. Ramsay greeted them with her usual smile (oh, she's thinking

we're going to get married, Lily thought) and said, "I have triumphed

tonight," meaning that for once Mr. Bankes had agreed to dine with them

and not run off to his own lodging where his man cooked vegetables

properly; still, for one moment, there was a sense of things having

been blown apart, of space, of irresponsibility as the ball soared

high, and they followed it and lost it and saw the one star and the

draped branches. In the failing light they all looked sharp-edged and

ethereal and divided by great distances. Then, darting backwards over

the vast space (for it seemed as if solidity had vanished altogether),

Prue ran full tilt into them and caught the ball brilliantly high up in

her left hand, and her mother said, "Haven't they come back yet?"

whereupon the spell was broken. Mr. Ramsay felt free now to laugh out

loud at the thought that Hume had stuck in a bog and an old woman

rescued him on condition he said the Lord's Prayer, and chuckling to

himself he strolled off to his study. Mrs. Ramsay, bringing Prue back

into throwing catches again, from which she had escaped, asked,

"Did Nancy go with them?"

85

He was really, Lily Briscoe thought, in spite of his eyes, but then

look at his nose, look at his hands, the most uncharming human being

she had ever met. Then why did she mind what he said? Women can't

write, women can't paint--what did that matter coming from him, since

clearly it was not true to him but for some reason helpful to him, and

that was why he said it? Why did her whole being bow, like corn under

a wind, and erect itself again from this abasement only with a great

and rather painful effort? She must make it once more. There's the

sprig on the table-cloth; there's my painting; I must move the tree to

the middle; that matters--nothing else. Could she not hold fast to

that, she asked herself, and not lose her temper, and not argue; and if

she wanted revenge take it by laughing at him?

"Oh, Mr. Tansley," she said, "do take me to the Lighthouse with you. I

should so love it."

She was telling lies he could see. She was saying what she did not

mean to annoy him, for some reason. She was laughing at him. He was in

his old flannel trousers. He had no others. He felt very rough and

isolated and lonely. He knew that she was trying to tease him for some

reason; she didn't want to go to the Lighthouse with him; she despised

him: so did Prue Ramsay; so did they all. But he was not going to be

made a fool of by women, so he turned deliberately in his chair and

looked out of the window and said, all in a jerk, very rudely, it would

be too rough for her tomorrow. She would be sick.

It annoyed him that she should have made him speak like that, with Mrs.

Ramsay listening. If only he could be alone in his room working, he

thought, among his books. That was where he felt at his ease. And he

had never run a penny into debt; he had never cost his father a penny

since he was fifteen; he had helped them at home out of his savings; he

was educating his sister. Still, he wished he had known how to answer

Miss Briscoe properly; he wished it had not come out all in a jerk like

that. "You'd be sick." He wished he could think of something to say to

Mrs. Ramsay, something which would show her that he was not just a dry

prig. That was what they all thought him. He turned to her. But Mrs.

Ramsay was talking about people he had never heard of to William

Bankes.

165

Yes, the breeze was freshening. The boat was leaning, the water was

sliced sharply and fell away in green cascades, in bubbles, in

cataracts. Cam looked down into the foam, into the sea with all its

treasure in it, and its speed hypnotised her, and the tie between her

and James sagged a little. It slackened a little. She began to think,

How fast it goes. Where are we going? and the movement hypnotised her,

while James, with his eye fixed on the sail and on the horizon, steered

grimly. But he began to think as he steered that he might escape; he

might be quit of it all. They might land somewhere; and be free then.

Both of them, looking at each other for a moment, had a sense of escape

and exaltation, what with the speed and the change. But the breeze

bred in Mr. Ramsay too the same excitement, and, as old Macalister

turned to fling his line overboard, he cried out aloud,

"We perished," and then again, "each alone." And then with his usual

spasm of repentance or shyness, pulled himself up, and waved his hand

towards the shore.

"See the little house," he said pointing, wishing Cam to look. She

raised herself reluctantly and looked. But which was it? She could no

longer make out, there on the hillside, which was their house. All

looked distant and peaceful and strange. The shore seemed refined, far

away, unreal. Already the little distance they had sailed had put them

far from it and given it the changed look, the composed look, of

something receding in which one has no longer any part. Which was

their house? She could not see it.

**Questions**

24 How then did it work out, all this? How did one judge people, think of

them? How did one add up this and that and conclude that it was liking

one felt or disliking? And to those words, what meaning attached, after

all? Standing now, apparently transfixed, by the pear tree, impressions

poured in upon her of those two men, and to follow her thought was like

following a voice which speaks too quickly to be taken down by one's

pencil, and the voice was her own voice saying without prompting

undeniable, everlasting, contradictory things, so that even the

fissures and humps on the bark of the pear tree were irrevocably

fixed there for eternity. You have greatness, she continued, but

Mr. Ramsay has none of it. He is petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; he is

spoilt; he is a tyrant; he wears Mrs. Ramsay to death; but he has what you

(she addressed Mr. Bankes) have not; a fiery unworldliness; he knows

nothing about trifles; he loves dogs and his children. He has eight.

Mr. Bankes has none. Did he not come down in two coats the other night

and let Mrs. Ramsay trim his hair into a pudding basin? All of this

danced up and down, like a company of gnats, each separate but all

marvellously controlled in an invisible elastic net--danced up and down in

Lily's mind, in and about the branches of the pear tree, where still hung

in effigy the scrubbed kitchen table, symbol of her profound respect for

Mr. Ramsay's mind, until her thought which had spun quicker and quicker

exploded of its own intensity; she felt released; a shot went off close at

hand, and there came, flying from its fragments, frightened, effusive,

tumultuous, a flock of starlings.

88 "People soon drift apart," said Mr. Bankes, feeling, however, some

satisfaction when he thought that after all he knew both the Mannings

and the Ramsays. He had not drifted apart he thought, laying down his

spoon and wiping his clean-shaven lips punctiliously. But perhaps he

was rather unusual, he thought, in this; he never let himself get into

a groove. He had friends in all circles... Mrs. Ramsay had to break

off here to tell the maid something about keeping food hot. That was

why he preferred dining alone. All those interruptions annoyed him.

Well, thought William Bankes, preserving a demeanour of exquisite

courtesy and merely spreading the fingers of his left hand on the

table-cloth as a mechanic examines a tool beautifully polished and

ready for use in an interval of leisure, such are the sacrifices one's

friends ask of one. It would have hurt her if he had refused to come.

But it was not worth it for him. Looking at his hand he thought that

if he had been alone dinner would have been almost over now; he would

have been free to work. Yes, he thought, it is a terrible waste of

time. The children were dropping in still. "I wish one of you would

run up to Roger's room," Mrs. Ramsay was saying. How trifling it all

is, how boring it all is, he thought, compared with the other thing--

work. Here he sat drumming his fingers on the table-cloth when he

might have been--he took a flashing bird's-eye view of his work. What

a waste of time it all was to be sure! Yet, he thought, she is one of

my oldest friends. I am by way of being devoted to her. Yet now, at

this moment her presence meant absolutely nothing to him: her beauty

meant nothing to him; her sitting with her little boy at the window--

nothing, nothing. He wished only to be alone and to take up that book.

He felt uncomfortable; he felt treacherous, that he could sit by her

side and feel nothing for her. The truth was that he did not enjoy

family life. It was in this sort of state that one asked oneself, What

does one live for? Why, one asked oneself, does one take all these

pains for the human race to go on? Is it so very desirable? Are we

attractive as a species? Not so very, he thought, looking at those

rather untidy boys. His favourite, Cam, was in bed, he supposed.

Foolish questions, vain questions, questions one never asked

if one was occupied. Is human life this? Is human life that? One

never had time to think about it. But here he was asking himself that

sort of question, because Mrs. Ramsay was giving orders to servants, and

also because it had struck him, thinking how surprised Mrs. Ramsay was

that Carrie Manning should still exist, that friendships, even the best

of them, are frail things. One drifts apart. He reproached himself

again. He was sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay and he had nothing in the

world to say to her.

128 The nights now are full of wind and destruction; the trees plunge and

bend and their leaves fly helter skelter until the lawn is plastered

with them and they lie packed in gutters and choke rain pipes and

scatter damp paths. Also the sea tosses itself and breaks itself, and

should any sleeper fancying that he might find on the beach an answer

to his doubts, a sharer of his solitude, throw off his bedclothes and

go down by himself to walk on the sand, no image with semblance of

serving and divine promptitude comes readily to hand bringing the night

to order and making the world reflect the compass of the soul. The

hand dwindles in his hand; the voice bellows in his ear. Almost it

would appear that it is useless in such confusion to ask the night

those questions as to what, and why, and wherefore, which tempt the

sleeper from his bed to seek an answer.

[Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his

arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before,

his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.]]

129 So loveliness reigned and stillness, and together made the shape of

loveliness itself, a form from which life had parted; solitary like a

pool at evening, far distant, seen from a train window, vanishing so

quickly that the pool, pale in the evening, is scarcely robbed of its

solitude, though once seen. Loveliness and stillness clasped hands in

the bedroom, and among the shrouded jugs and sheeted chairs even the

prying of the wind, and the soft nose of the clammy sea airs, rubbing,

snuffling, iterating, and reiterating their questions--"Will you fade?

Will you perish?"--scarcely disturbed the peace, the indifference, the

air of pure integrity, as if the question they asked scarcely needed

that they should answer: we remain.

131 How long, she asked, creaking and groaning on her

knees under the bed, dusting the boards, how long shall it endure? but

hobbled to her feet again, pulled herself up, and again with her

sidelong leer which slipped and turned aside even from her own face,

and her own sorrows, stood and gaped in the glass, aimlessly smiling,

and began again the old amble and hobble, taking up mats, putting down

china, looking sideways in the glass, as if, after all, she had her

consolations, as if indeed there twined about her dirge some

incorrigible hope. Visions of joy there must have been at the wash-

tub, say with her children (yet two had been base-born and one had

deserted her), at the public-house, drinking; turning over scraps in

her drawers. Some cleavage of the dark there must have been, some

channel in the depths of obscurity through which light enough issued to

twist her face grinning in the glass and make her, turning to her job

again, mumble out the old music hall song. The mystic, the visionary,

walking the beach on a fine night, stirring a puddle, looking at a

stone, asking themselves "What am I," "What is this?" had suddenly an

answer vouchsafed them: (they could not say what it was) so that they

were warm in the frost and had comfort in the desert. But Mrs. McNab

continued to drink and gossip as before.

145 What does it mean then, what can it all mean? Lily Briscoe asked

herself, wondering whether, since she had been left alone, it behoved

her to go to the kitchen to fetch another cup of coffee or wait here.

What does it mean?--a catchword that was, caught up from some book,

fitting her thought loosely, for she could not, this first morning with

the Ramsays, contract her feelings, could only make a phrase resound to

cover the blankness of her mind until these vapours had shrunk. For

really, what did she feel, come back after all these years and Mrs.

Ramsay dead? Nothing, nothing--nothing that she could express at all.

She had come late last night when it was all mysterious, dark. Now she

was awake, at her old place at the breakfast table, but alone. It was

very early too, not yet eight. There was this expedition--they were

going to the Lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James. They should have

gone already--they had to catch the tide or something. And Cam was

not ready and James was not ready and Nancy had forgotten to order the

sandwiches and Mr. Ramsay had lost his temper and banged out of the

room.

"What's the use of going now?" he had stormed.

Nancy had vanished. There he was, marching up and down the terrace in

a rage. One seemed to hear doors slamming and voices calling all over

the house. Now Nancy burst in, and asked, looking round the room, in a

queer half dazed, half desperate way, "What does one send to the

Lighthouse?" as if she were forcing herself to do what she despaired of

ever being able to do.

What does one send to the Lighthouse indeed! At any other time Lily

could have suggested reasonably tea, tobacco, newspapers. But this

morning everything seemed so extraordinarily queer that a question like

Nancy's--What does one send to the Lighthouse?--opened doors in one's

mind that went banging and swinging to and fro and made one keep

asking, in a stupefied gape, What does one send? What does one do?

Why is one sitting here, after all?

171 Mrs. Ramsay sat silent. She was glad, Lily thought, to rest in silence,

uncommunicative; to rest in the extreme obscurity of human

relationships. Who knows what we are, what we feel? Who knows even at

the moment of intimacy, This is knowledge? Aren't things spoilt then,

Mrs. Ramsay may have asked (it seemed to have happened so often, this

silence by her side) by saying them? Aren't we more expressive thus?

The moment at least seemed extraordinarily fertile. She rammed a

little hole in the sand and covered it up, by way of burying in it the

perfection of the moment. It was like a drop of silver in which one

dipped and illumined the darkness of the past.

207 What could he see? Cam wondered. It was all a

blur to her. What was he thinking now? she wondered. What was it he

sought, so fixedly, so intently, so silently? They watched him, both

of them, sitting bareheaded with his parcel on his knee staring and

staring at the frail blue shape which seemed like the vapour of

something that had burnt itself away. What do you want? they both

wanted to ask. They both wanted to say, Ask us anything and we will

give it you. But he did not ask them anything. He sat and looked at

the island and he might be thinking, We perished, each alone, or he

might be thinking, I have reached it. I have found it; but he said

nothing.

**Love and Immersion**

5 "But it may be fine--I expect it will be fine," said Mrs. Ramsay, making

some little twist of the reddish brown stocking she was knitting,

impatiently. If she finished it tonight, if they did go to the Lighthouse

after all, it was to be given to the Lighthouse keeper for his little boy,

who was threatened with a tuberculous hip; together with a pile of old

magazines, and some tobacco, indeed, whatever she could find lying about,

not really wanted, but only littering the room, to give those poor

fellows, who must be bored to death sitting all day with nothing to do but

polish the lamp and trim the wick and rake about on their scrap of garden,

something to amuse them. For how would you like to be shut up for a whole

month at a time, and possibly more in stormy weather, upon a rock the size

of a tennis lawn? she would ask; and to have no letters or newspapers, and

to see nobody; if you were married, not to see your wife, not to know how

your children were,--if they were ill, if they had fallen down and broken

their legs or arms; to see the same dreary waves breaking week after week,

and then a dreadful storm coming, and the windows covered with spray, and

birds dashed against the lamp, and the whole place rocking, and not be

able to put your nose out of doors for fear of being swept into the sea?

How would you like that? she asked, addressing herself particularly to her

daughters. So she added, rather differently, one must take them whatever

comforts one can.

20 Looking at the far sand hills, William Bankes thought of Ramsay: thought

of a road in Westmorland, thought of Ramsay striding along a road by

himself hung round with that solitude which seemed to be his natural air.

But this was suddenly interrupted, William Bankes remembered (and this

must refer to some actual incident), by a hen, straddling her wings out in

protection of a covey of little chicks, upon which Ramsay, stopping,

pointed his stick and said "Pretty--pretty," an odd illumination in to

his heart, Bankes had thought it, which showed his simplicity, his

sympathy with humble things; but it seemed to him as if their friendship

had ceased, there, on that stretch of road. After that, Ramsay had

married. After that, what with one thing and another, the pulp had gone

out of their friendship. Whose fault it was he could not say, only, after

a time, repetition had taken the place of newness. It was to repeat that

they met. But in this dumb colloquy with the sand dunes he maintained

that his affection for Ramsay had in no way diminished; but there, like

the body of a young man laid up in peat for a century, with the red fresh

on his lips, was his friendship, in its acuteness and reality, laid up

across the bay among the sandhills.

He was anxious for the sake of this friendship and perhaps too in order to

clear himself in his own mind from the imputation of having dried and

shrunk--for Ramsay lived in a welter of children, whereas Bankes was

childless and a widower--he was anxious that Lily Briscoe should not

disparage Ramsay (a great man in his own way) yet should understand how

things stood between them. Begun long years ago, their friendship had

petered out on a Westmorland road, where the hen spread her wings before

her chicks; after which Ramsay had married, and their paths lying

different ways, there had been, certainly for no one's fault, some

tendency, when they met, to repeat.

31 Mr. Ramsay and Tennyson’s “Charge of the Light Brigade”

Some one had blundered.

Starting from her musing she gave meaning to words which she had held

meaningless in her mind for a long stretch of time. "Some one had

blundered"--Fixing her short-sighted eyes upon her husband, who was now

bearing down upon her, she gazed steadily until his closeness revealed to

her (the jingle mated itself in her head) that something had happened,

some one had blundered. But she could not for the life of her think what.

He shivered; he quivered. All his vanity, all his satisfaction in his own

splendour, riding fell as a thunderbolt, fierce as a hawk at the head of

his men through the valley of death, had been shattered, destroyed.

Stormed at by shot and shell, boldly we rode and well, flashed through the

valley of death, volleyed and thundered--straight into Lily Briscoe and

William Bankes. He quivered; he shivered.

Not for the world would she have spoken to him, realising, from the

familiar signs, his eyes averted, and some curious gathering together

of his person, as if he wrapped himself about and needed privacy into

which to regain his equilibrium, that he was outraged and anguished.

33

It was a splendid mind. For if thought is like the keyboard of a piano,

divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six

letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty

in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately, until

it had reached, say, the letter Q. He reached Q. Very few people in

the whole of England ever reach Q. Here, stopping for one moment

by the stone urn which held the geraniums, he saw, but now far, far

away, like children picking up shells, divinely innocent and occupied with

little trifles at their feet and somehow entirely defenceless against a

doom which he perceived, his wife and son, together, in the window. They

needed his protection; he gave it them. But after Q? What comes next?

After Q there are a number of letters the last of which is scarcely

visible to mortal eyes, but glimmers red in the distance. Z is only

reached once by one man in a generation. Still, if he could reach R it

would be something. Here at least was Q. He dug his heels in at Q. Q he

was sure of. Q he could demonstrate. If Q then is Q--R--. Here he

knocked his pipe out, with two or three resonant taps on the handle of the

urn, and proceeded. "Then R ..." He braced himself. He clenched

himself.

36 Who shall blame him, if, so standing for a moment he dwells upon fame,

upon search parties, upon cairns raised by grateful followers over his

bones? Finally, who shall blame the leader of the doomed expedition, if,

having adventured to the uttermost, and used his strength wholly to the

last ounce and fallen asleep not much caring if he wakes or not, he now

perceives by some pricking in his toes that he lives, and does not on the

whole object to live, but requires sympathy, and whisky, and some one to

tell the story of his suffering to at once? Who shall blame him? Who

will not secretly rejoice when the hero puts his armour off, and halts by

the window and gazes at his wife and son, who, very distant at first,

gradually come closer and closer, till lips and book and head are clearly

before him, though still lovely and unfamiliar from the intensity of his

isolation and the waste of ages and the perishing of the stars, and

finally putting his pipe in his pocket and bending his magnificent head

before her--who will blame him if he does homage to the beauty of the

world?

44 It was his fate, his peculiarity, whether he wished it or not, to come out

thus on a spit of land which the sea is slowly eating away, and there to

stand, like a desolate sea-bird, alone. It was his power, his gift,

suddenly to shed all superfluities, to shrink and diminish so that he

looked barer and felt sparer, even physically, yet lost none of his

intensity of mind, and so to stand on his little ledge facing the dark of

human ignorance, how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we

stand on--that was his fate, his gift. But having thrown away, when he

dismounted, all gestures and fripperies, all trophies of nuts and roses,

and shrunk so that not only fame but even his own name was forgotten

by him, kept even in that desolation a vigilance which spared no

phantom and luxuriated in no vision, and it was in this guise that

he inspired in William Bankes (intermittently) and in Charles Tansley

(obsequiously)and in his wife now, when she looked up and saw him

standing at the edge of the lawn, profoundly, reverence, and pity, and

gratitude too, as a stake driven into the bed of a channel upon which the

gulls perch and the waves beat inspires in merry boat-loads a feeling of

gratitude for the duty it is taking upon itself of marking the channel out

there in the floods alone.

"But the father of eight children has no choice." Muttering half aloud,

so he broke off, turned, sighed, raised his eyes, sought the figure of his

wife reading stories to his little boy, filled his pipe. He turned from

the sight of human ignorance and human fate and the sea eating the ground

we stand on, which, had he been able to contemplate it fixedly might have

led to something; and found consolation in trifles so slight compared with

the august theme just now before him that he was disposed to slur that

comfort over, to deprecate it, as if to be caught happy in a world of

misery was for an honest man the most despicable of crimes.

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Lily Briscoe went on putting away her brushes, looking up, looking down. Looking up, there he was--Mr. Ramsay--advancing towards them, swinging, careless, oblivious, remote. A bit of a hypocrite? she repeated. Oh, no--the most sincere of men, the truest (here he was), the best; but, looking down, she thought, he is absorbed in himself, he is tyrannical, he is unjust; and kept looking down, purposely, for only so could she keep steady, staying with the Ramsays. Directly one looked up and saw them, what she called "being in love" flooded them. They became part of that unreal but penetrating and exciting universe which is the world seen through the eyes of love. The sky stuck to them; the birds sang through them. And, what was even more exciting, she felt, too, as she saw Mr. Ramsay bearing down and retreating, and Mrs. Ramsay sitting with James in the window and the cloud moving and the tree bending, how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach.

Mr. Bankes expected her to answer. And she was about to say something criticizing Mrs. Ramsay, how she was alarming, too, in her way, high-handed, or words to that effect, when Mr. Bankes made it entirely unnecessary for her to speak by his rapture. For such it was considering his age, turned sixty, and his cleanliness and his impersonality, and the white scientific coat which seemed to clothe him. For him to gaze as Lily saw him gazing at Mrs. Ramsay was a rapture, equivalent, Lily felt, to the loves of dozens of young men (and perhaps Mrs. Ramsay had never excited the loves of dozens of young men). It was love, she thought, pretending to move her canvas, distilled and filtered; love that never attempted to clutch its object; but, like the love which mathematicians bear their symbols, or poets their phrases, was meant to be spread over the world and become part of the human gain. So it was indeed. The world by all means should have shared it, could Mr. Bankes have said why that woman pleased him so; why the sight of her reading a fairy tale to her boy had upon him precisely the same effect as the solution of a scientific problem, so that he rested in contemplation of it, and felt, as he felt when he had proved something absolute about the digestive system of plants, that barbarity was tamed, the reign of chaos subdued.

51 Was it wisdom? Was it knowledge? Was it, once more, the deceptiveness of

beauty, so that all one's perceptions, half way to truth, were tangled in

a golden mesh? or did she lock up within her some secret which certainly

Lily Briscoe believed people must have for the world to go on at all?

Every one could not be as helter skelter, hand to mouth as she was. But

if they knew, could they tell one what they knew? Sitting on the floor

with her arms round Mrs. Ramsay's knees, close as she could get, smiling

to think that Mrs. Ramsay would never know the reason of that pressure, she

imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was,

physically, touching her, were stood, like the treasures in the tombs of

kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them

out, would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly,

never made public. What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which

one pressed through into those secret chambers? What device for becoming,

like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the

object one adored? Could the body achieve, or the mind, subtly mingling

in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart? Could loving,

as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge

but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that

could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which

is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee.

Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing! as she leant her head against

Mrs. Ramsay's knee. And yet, she knew knowledge and wisdom were stored up

in Mrs. Ramsay's heart. How, then, she had asked herself, did one know one

thing or another thing about people, sealed as they were? Only like a

bee, drawn by some sweetness or sharpness in the air intangible to touch

or taste, one haunted the dome-shaped hive, ranged the wastes of the air

over the countries of the world alone, and then haunted the hives with

their murmurs and their stirrings; the hives, which were people.

Mrs. Ramsay rose. Lily rose. Mrs. Ramsay went. For days there hung about

her, as after a dream some subtle change is felt in the person one has

dreamt of, more vividly than anything she said, the sound of murmuring

and, as she sat in the wicker arm-chair in the drawing-room window she

wore, to Lily's eyes, an august shape; the shape of a dome.

59

Oh, but she never wanted James to grow a day older! or Cam either.

These two she would have liked to keep for ever just as they were,

demons of wickedness, angels of delight, never to see them grow up into

long-legged monsters. Nothing made up up for the loss. When she read

just now to James, "and there were numbers of soldiers with kettledrums

and trumpets," and his eyes darkened, she thought, why should they grow

up and lose all that? He was the most gifted, the most sensitive of

her children. But all, she thought, were full of promise. Prue, a

perfect angel with the others, and sometimes now, at night especially,

she took one's breath away with her beauty. Andrew--even her husband

admitted that his gift for mathematics was extraordinary. And Nancy

and Roger, they were both wild creatures now, scampering about over the

country all day long. As for Rose, her mouth was too big, but she had

a wonderful gift with her hands. If they had charades, Rose made the

dresses; made everything; liked best arranging tables, flowers,

anything. She did not like it that Jasper should shoot birds; but it

was only a stage; they all went through stages. Why, she asked,

pressing her chin on James's head, should they grow up so fast? Why

should they go to school? She would have liked always to have had a

baby. She was happiest carrying one in her arms. Then people might

say she was tyrannical, domineering, masterful, if they chose; she did

not mind. And, touching his hair with her lips, she thought, he will

never be so happy again, but stopped herself, remembering how it

angered her husband that she should say that. Still, it was true. They

were happier now than they would ever be again. A tenpenny tea set

made Cam happy for days. She heard them stamping and crowing on the

floor above her head the moment they awoke. They came bustling along

the passage. Then the door sprang open and in they came, fresh as

roses, staring, wide awake, as if this coming into the dining-room

after breakfast, which they did every day of their lives, was a

positive event to them, and so on, with one thing after another, all

day long, until she went up to say good-night to them, and found them

netted in their cots like birds among cherries and raspberries, still

making up stories about some little bit of rubbish--something they had

heard, something they had picked up in the garden. They all had their

little treasures... And so she went down and said to her husband, Why

must they grow up and lose it all? Never will they be so happy again.

And he was angry. Why take such a gloomy view of life? he said. It

is not sensible. For it was odd; and she believed it to be true; that

with all his gloom and desperation he was happier, more hopeful on the

whole, than she was. Less exposed to human worries--perhaps that was

it. He had always his work to fall back on. Not that she herself was

"pessimistic," as he accused her of being. Only she thought life--and

a little strip of time presented itself to her eyes--her fifty

years. There it was before her--life. Life, she thought--but she did

not finish her thought. She took a look at life, for she had a clear

sense of it there, something real, something private, which she shared

neither with her children nor with her husband. A sort of transaction

went on between them, in which she was on one side, and life was on

another, and she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was

of her; and sometimes they parleyed (when she sat alone); there were,

she remembered, great reconciliation scenes; but for the most part,

oddly enough, she must admit that she felt this thing that she called

life terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a

chance. There were eternal problems: suffering; death; the poor. There

was always a woman dying of cancer even here. And yet she had said to

all these children, You shall go through it all. To eight people she

had said relentlessly that (and the bill for the greenhouse would be

fifty pounds). For that reason, knowing what was before them--love and

ambition and being wretched alone in dreary places--she had often the

feeling, Why must they grow up and lose it all? And then she said to

herself, brandishing her sword at life, Nonsense. They will be

perfectly happy. And here she was, she reflected, feeling life rather

sinister again, making Minta marry Paul Rayley; because whatever she

might feel about her own transaction, she had had experiences which

need not happen to every one (she did not name them to herself); she

was driven on, too quickly she knew, almost as if it were an escape for

her too, to say that people must marry; people must have children.

63 No, she thought, putting together some of the pictures he had cut out--

a refrigerator, a mowing machine, a gentleman in evening dress--

children never forget. For this reason, it was so important what one

said, and what one did, and it was a relief when they went to bed. For

now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by

herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of--to think;

well, not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and

the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk,

with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of

darkness, something invisible to others. Although she continued to

knit, and sat upright, it was thus that she felt herself; and this self

having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. When

life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless.

And to everybody there was always this sense of unlimited resources,

she supposed; one after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must

feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish.

Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep;

but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us

by. Her horizon seemed to her limitless. There were all the places

she had not seen; the Indian plains; she felt herself pushing aside the

thick leather curtain of a church in Rome. This core of darkness could

go anywhere, for no one saw it. They could not stop it, she thought,

exulting. There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most

welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform

of stability. Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience

(she accomplished here something dexterous with her needles) but as a

wedge of darkness. Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry,

the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph

over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this

eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the

Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was

her stroke, for watching them in this mood always at this hour one

could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things

one saw; and this thing, the long steady stroke, was her stroke. Often

she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her

work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at--that light,

for example. And it would lift up on it some little phrase or other

which had been lying in her mind like that--"Children don't forget,

children don't forget"--which she would repeat and begin adding to it,

It will end, it will end, she said. It will come, it will come, when

suddenly she added, We are in the hands of the Lord.

But instantly she was annoyed with herself for saying that. Who had

said it? Not she; she had been trapped into saying something she did

not mean. She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and

it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, searching as

she alone could search into her mind and her heart, purifying out of

existence that lie, any lie. She praised herself in praising the

light, without vanity, for she was stern, she was searching, she was

beautiful like that light. It was odd, she thought, how if one was

alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt

they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a

sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that

long steady light) as for oneself. There rose, and she looked and

looked with her needles suspended, there curled up off the floor of the

mind, rose from the lake of one's being, a mist, a bride to meet her

lover.

64 Always, Mrs. Ramsay felt, one helped oneself out of solitude reluctantly

by laying hold of some little odd or end, some sound, some sight. She

listened, but it was all very still; cricket was over; the children

were in their baths; there was only the sound of the sea. She stopped

knitting; she held the long reddish-brown stocking dangling in her

hands a moment. She saw the light again. With some irony in her

interrogation, for when one woke at all, one's relations changed, she

looked at the steady light, the pitiless, the remorseless, which was so

much her, yet so little her, which had her at its beck and call (she

woke in the night and saw it bent across their bed, stroking the

floor), but for all that she thought, watching it with fascination,

hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed

vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she

had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it

silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and

the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which

curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in

her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and

she felt, It is enough! It is enough!

He turned and saw her. Ah! She was lovely, lovelier now than ever he

thought. But he could not speak to her. He could not interrupt her.

He wanted urgently to speak to her now that James was gone and she was

alone at last. But he resolved, no; he would not interrupt her. She

was aloof from him now in her beauty, in her sadness. He would let her

be, and he passed her without a word, though it hurt him that she

should look so distant, and he could not reach her, he could do nothing

to help her. And again he would have passed her without a word had she

not, at that very moment, given him of her own free will what she knew

he would never ask, and called to him and taken the green shawl off the

picture frame, and gone to him. For he wished, she knew, to protect

her.

83-84 Mrs. Ramsay, William Bankes, Lily, dinner and “no man’s land”

And so then, she concluded,

addressing herself by bending silently in his direction to William

Bankes--poor man! who had no wife, and no children and dined alone in

lodgings except for tonight; and in pity for him, life being now strong

enough to bear her on again, she began all this business, as a sailor

not without weariness sees the wind fill his sail and yet hardly wants

to be off again and thinks how, had the ship sunk, he would have

whirled round and round and found rest on the floor of the sea.

"Did you find your letters? I told them to put them in the hall for

you," she said to William Bankes.

Lily Briscoe watched her drifting into that strange no-man's land where

to follow people is impossible and yet their going inflicts such a

chill on those who watch them that they always try at least to follow

them with their eyes as one follows a fading ship until the sails have

sunk beneath the horizon.

86-87

"Oh, Mr. Tansley," she said, "do take me to the Lighthouse with you. I

should so love it."

She was telling lies he could see. She was saying what she did not

mean to annoy him, for some reason. She was laughing at him. He was in

his old flannel trousers. He had no others. He felt very rough and

isolated and lonely. He knew that she was trying to tease him for some

reason; she didn't want to go to the Lighthouse with him; she despised

him: so did Prue Ramsay; so did they all. But he was not going to be

made a fool of by women, so he turned deliberately in his chair and

looked out of the window and said, all in a jerk, very rudely, it would

be too rough for her tomorrow. She would be sick.

page 101

"It is a French recipe of my grandmother's," said Mrs. Ramsay, speaking with a ring of great pleasure in her voice. Of course it was French. What passes for cookery in England is an abomination (they agreed). It is putting cabbages in water. It is roasting meat till it is like leather. It is cutting off the delicious skins of vegetables. "In which," said Mr. Bankes, "all the virtue of the vegetable is contained." And the waste, said Mrs. Ramsay. A whole French family could live on what an English cook throws away. Spurred on by her sense that William's affection had come back to her, and that everything was all right again, and that her suspense was over, and that now she was free both to triumph and to mock, she laughed, she gesticulated, till Lily thought, How childlike, how absurd she was, sitting up there with all her beauty opened again in her, talking about the skins of vegetables. There was something frightening about her. She was irresistible. Always she got her own way in the end, Lily thought. Now she had brought this off--Paul and Minta, one might suppose, were engaged. Mr. Bankes was dining here. She put a spell on them all, by wishing, so simply, so directly, and Lily contrasted that abundance with her own poverty of spirit, and supposed that it was partly that belief (for her face was all lit up--without looking young, she looked radiant) in this strange, this terrifying thing, which made Paul Rayley, sitting at her side, all of a tremor, yet abstract, absorbed, silent. Mrs. Ramsay, Lily felt, as she talked about the skins of vegetables, exalted that, worshipped that; held her hands over it to warm them, to protect it, and yet, having brought it all about, somehow laughed, led her victims, Lily felt, to the altar. It came over her too now--the emotion, the vibration, of love. How inconspicuous she felt herself by Paul's side! He, glowing, burning; she, aloof, satirical; he, bound for adventure; she, moored to the shore; he, launched, incautious; she solitary, left out--and, ready to implore a share, if it were a disaster, in his disaster, she said shyly: "When did Minta lose her brooch?"

page 102

Lily wanted to protest violently and outrageously her desire to help him, envisaging how in the dawn on the beach she would be the one to pounce on the brooch half-hidden by some stone, and thus herself be included among the sailors and adventurers. But what did he reply to her offer? She actually said with an emotion that she seldom let appear, "Let me come with you," and he laughed. He meant yes or no-- either perhaps. But it was not his meaning--it was the odd chuckle he gave, as if he had said, Throw yourself over the cliff if you like, I don't care. He turned on her cheek the heat of love, its horror, its cruelty, its unscrupulosity. It scorched her, and Lily, looking at Minta, being charming to Mr. Ramsay at the other end of the table, flinched for her exposed to these fangs, and was thankful. For at any rate, she said to herself, catching sight of the salt cellar on the pattern, she need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation. She was saved from that dilution. She would move the tree rather more to the middle.

Such was the complexity of things. For what happened to her, especially staying with the Ramsays, was to be made to feel violently two opposite things at the same time; that's what you feel, was one; that's what I feel, was the other, and then they fought together in her mind, as now. It is so beautiful, so exciting, this love, that I tremble on the verge of it, and offer, quite out of my own habit, to look for a brooch on a beach; also it is the stupidest, the most barbaric of human passions, and turns a nice young man with a profile like a gem's (Paul's was exquisite) into a bully with a crowbar (he was swaggering, he was insolent) in the Mile End Road. Yet, she said to herself, from the dawn of time odes have been sung to love; wreaths heaped and roses; and if you asked nine people out of ten they would say they wanted nothing but this--love; while the women, judging from her own experience, would all the time be feeling, This is not what we want; there is nothing more tedious, puerile, and inhumane than this; yet it is also beautiful and necessary. Well then, well then? she asked, somehow expecting the others to go on with the argument, as if in an argument like this one threw one's own little bolt which fell short obviously and left the others to carry it on. So she listened again to what they were saying in case they should throw any light upon the question of love.

121 Mrs. Ramsay reading the sonnet

Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose,

she read, and so reading she was ascending, she felt, on to the top,

on to the summit. How satisfying! How restful! All the odds and ends

of the day stuck to this magnet; her mind felt swept, felt clean. And

then there it was, suddenly entire; she held it in her hands, beautiful

and reasonable, clear and complete, here--the sonnet.

page 123-124

And what then? For she felt that he was still looking at her, but that his look had changed. He wanted something--wanted the thing she always found it so difficult to give him; wanted her to tell him that she loved him. And that, no, she could not do. He found talking so much easier than she did. He could say things--she never could. So naturally it was always he that said the things, and then for some reason he would mind this suddenly, and would reproach her. A heartless woman he called her; she never told him that she loved him. But it was not so--it was not so. It was only that she never could say what she felt. Was there no crumb on his coat? Nothing she could do for him? Getting up, she stood at the window with the reddish-brown stocking in her hands, partly to turn away from him, partly because she remembered how beautiful it often is--the sea at night. But she knew that he had turned his head as she turned; he was watching her. She knew that he was thinking, You are more beautiful than ever. And she felt herself very beautiful. Will you not tell me just for once that you love me? He was thinking that, for he was roused, what with Minta and his book, and its being the end of the day and their having quarrelled about going to the Lighthouse. But she could not do it; she could not say it. Then, knowing that he was watching her, instead of saying anything she turned, holding her stocking, and looked at him. And as she looked at him she began to smile, for though she had not said a word, he knew, of course he knew, that she loved him. He could not deny it. And smiling she looked out of the window and said (thinking to herself, Nothing on earth can equal this happiness)--

"Yes, you were right. It's going to be wet tomorrow. You won't be able to go." And she looked at him smiling. For she had triumphed again. She had not said it: yet he knew.

133-134

At that season those who had gone down to pace the beach and ask of the

sea and sky what message they reported or what vision they affirmed had

to consider among the usual tokens of divine bounty--the sunset on

the sea, the pallor of dawn, the moon rising, fishing-boats against the

moon, and children making mud pies or pelting each other with handfuls

of grass, something out of harmony with this jocundity and this

serenity. There was the silent apparition of an ashen-coloured ship

for instance, come, gone; there was a purplish stain upon the bland

surface of the sea as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly,

beneath. This intrusion into a scene calculated to stir the most

sublime reflections and lead to the most comfortable conclusions stayed

their pacing. It was difficult blandly to overlook them; to abolish

their significance in the landscape; to continue, as one walked by the

sea, to marvel how beauty outside mirrored beauty within.

Did Nature supplement what man advanced? Did she complete what he

began? With equal complacence she saw his misery, his meanness, and

his torture. That dream, of sharing, completing, of finding in

solitude on the beach an answer, was then but a reflection in a mirror,

and the mirror itself was but the surface glassiness which forms in

quiescence when the nobler powers sleep beneath? Impatient, despairing

yet loth to go (for beauty offers her lures, has her consolations), to

pace the beach was impossible; contemplation was unendurable; the

mirror was broken.

146

Sitting alone (for Nancy went out again) among the clean cups at the

long table, she felt cut off from other people, and able only to go on

watching, asking, wondering. The house, the place, the morning, all

seemed strangers to her. She had no attachment here, she felt, no

relations with it, anything might happen, and whatever did happen, a

step outside, a voice calling ("It's not in the cupboard; it's on the

landing," some one cried), was a question, as if the link that usually

bound things together had been cut, and they floated up here, down

there, off, anyhow. How aimless it was, how chaotic, how unreal it

was, she thought, looking at her empty coffee cup. Mrs. Ramsay dead;

Andrew killed; Prue dead too--repeat it as she might, it roused no

feeling in her. And we all get together in a house like this on a

morning like this, she said, looking out of the window. It was a

beautiful still day.

153 One said--what did one say?--Oh, Mr. Ramsay! Dear Mr. Ramsay! That was what that kind old lady who sketched, Mrs. Beckwith, would have said instantly, and

rightly. But, no. They stood there, isolated from the rest of the

world. His immense self-pity, his demand for sympathy poured and

spread itself in pools at their feet, and all she did, miserable sinner

that she was, was to draw her skirts a little closer round her ankles,

lest she should get wet. In complete silence she stood there, grasping

her paint brush.

Heaven could never be sufficiently praised! She heard sounds in the

house. James and Cam must be coming. But Mr. Ramsay, as if he knew

that his time ran short, exerted upon her solitary figure the immense

pressure of his concentrated woe; his age; his frailty: his desolation;

when suddenly, tossing his head impatiently, in his annoyance--for

after all, what woman could resist him?--he noticed that his boot-laces

were untied. Remarkable boots they were too, Lily thought, looking

down at them: sculptured; colossal; like everything that Mr. Ramsay

wore, from his frayed tie to his half-buttoned waistcoat, his own

indisputably. She could see them walking to his room of their own

accord, expressive in his absence of pathos, surliness, ill-temper,

charm.

"What beautiful boots!" she exclaimed. She was ashamed of herself. To

praise his boots when he asked her to solace his soul; when he had

shown her his bleeding hands, his lacerated heart, and asked her to

pity them, then to say, cheerfully, "Ah, but what beautiful boots you

wear!" deserved, she knew, and she looked up expecting to get it in one

of his sudden roars of ill-temper complete annihilation.

Instead, Mr. Ramsay smiled. His pall, his draperies, his infirmities

fell from him. Ah, yes, he said, holding his foot up for her to look

at, they were first-rate boots. There was only one man in England who

could make boots like that. Boots are among the chief curses of

mankind, he said. "Bootmakers make it their business," he exclaimed,

"to cripple and torture the human foot." They are also the most

obstinate and perverse of mankind. It had taken him the best part of

his youth to get boots made as they should be made. He would have her

observe (he lifted his right foot and then his left) that she had never

seen boots made quite that shape before. They were made of the finest

leather in the world, also. Most leather was mere brown paper and

cardboard. He looked complacently at his foot, still held in the air.

They had reached, she felt, a sunny island where peace dwelt, sanity

reigned and the sun for ever shone, the blessed island of good boots.

Her heart warmed to him. "Now let me see if you can tie a knot," he

said. He poohpoohed her feeble system. He showed her his own

invention. Once you tied it, it never came undone. Three times he

knotted her shoe; three times he unknotted it.

169

He thought, women are always like that; the

vagueness of their minds is hopeless; it was a thing he had never been

able to understand; but so it was. It had been so with her--his wife.

They could not keep anything clearly fixed in their minds. But he had

been wrong to be angry with her; moreover, did he not rather like this

vagueness in women? It was part of their extraordinary charm. I will

make her smile at me, he thought. She looks frightened. She was so

silent. He clutched his fingers, and determined that his voice and his

face and all the quick expressive gestures which had been at his

command making people pity him and praise him all these years should

subdue themselves. He would make her smile at him. He would find some

simple easy thing to say to her. But what? For, wrapped up in his

work as he was, he forgot the sort of thing one said. There was a

puppy. They had a puppy. Who was looking after the puppy today? he

asked. Yes, thought James pitilessly, seeing his sister's head against

the sail, now she will give way. I shall be left to fight the tyrant

alone. The compact would be left to him to carry out. Cam would never

resist tyranny to the death, he thought grimly, watching her face, sad,

sulky, yielding. And as sometimes happens when a cloud falls on a

green hillside and gravity descends and there among all the surrounding

hills is gloom and sorrow, and it seems as if the hills themselves

must ponder the fate of the clouded, the darkened, either in pity,

or maliciously rejoicing in her dismay: so Cam now felt herself

overcast, as she sat there among calm, resolute people and wondered

how to answer her father about the puppy; how to resist his

entreaty--forgive me, care for me; while James the lawgiver, with the

tablets of eternal wisdom laid open on his knee (his hand on the tiller

had become symbolical to her), said, Resist him. Fight him. He said

so rightly; justly. For they must fight tyranny to the death, she

thought. Of all human qualities she reverenced justice most. Her

brother was most god-like, her father most suppliant. And to which did

she yield, she thought, sitting between them, gazing at the shore whose

points were all unknown to her, and thinking how the lawn and the

terrace and the house were smoothed away now and peace dwelt there.

"Jasper," she said sullenly. He'd look after the puppy.

page 191-192

So much depends then, thought Lily Briscoe, looking at the sea which had scarcely a stain on it, which was so soft that the sails and the clouds seemed set in its blue, so much depends, she thought, upon distance: whether people are near us or far from us; for her feeling for Mr. Ramsay changed as he sailed further and further across the bay. It seemed to be elongated, stretched out; he seemed to become more and more remote. He and his children seemed to be swallowed up in that blue, that distance; but here, on the lawn, close at hand, Mr. Carmichael suddenly grunted. She laughed. He clawed his book up from the grass. He settled into his chair again puffing and blowing like some sea monster. That was different altogether, because he was so near. And now again all was quiet. They must be out of bed by this time, she supposed, looking at the house, but nothing appeared there. But then, she remembered, they had always made off directly a meal was over, on business of their own. It was all in keeping with this silence, this emptiness, and the unreality of the early morning hour. It was a way things had sometimes, she thought, lingering for a moment and looking at the long glittering windows and the plume of blue smoke: they became illness, before habits had spun themselves across the surface, one felt that same unreality, which was so startling; felt something emerge. Life was most vivid then. One could be at one's ease. Mercifully one need not say, very briskly, crossing the lawn to greet old Mrs. Beckwith, who would be coming out to find a corner to sit in, "Oh, good-morning, Mrs. Beckwith! What a lovely day! Are you going to be so bold as to sit in the sun? Jasper's hidden the chairs. Do let me find you one!" and all the rest of the usual chatter. One need not speak at all. One glided, one shook one's sails (there was a good deal of movement in the bay, boats were starting off) between things, beyond things. Empty it was not, but full to the brim. She seemed to be standing up to the lips in some substance, to move and float and sink in it, yes, for these waters were unfathomably deep. Into them had spilled so many lives. The Ramsays'; the children's; and all sorts of waifs and strays of things besides. A washer-woman with her basket; a rook, a red-hot poker; the purples and grey-greens of flowers: some common feeling which held the whole together.

It was some such feeling of completeness perhaps which, ten years ago, standing almost where she stood now, had made her say that she must be in love with the place. Love had a thousand shapes. There might be lovers whose gift it was to choose out the elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene, or meeting of people (all now gone and separate), one of those globed compacted things over which thought lingers, and love plays.

203 Mr. Ramsay, Cam, James

But I beneath a rougher sea,

and if he did, they could not bear it; they would shriek aloud; they

could not endure another explosion of the passion that boiled in him;

but to their surprise all he said was "Ah" as if he thought to himself.

But why make a fuss about that? Naturally men are drowned in a storm,

but it is a perfectly straightforward affair, and the depths of the sea

(he sprinkled the crumbs from his sandwich paper over them) are only

water after all. Then having lighted his pipe he took out his watch.

He looked at it attentively; he made, perhaps, some mathematical

calculation. At last he said, triumphantly:

"Well done!" James had steered them like a born sailor.

There! Cam thought, addressing herself silently to James. You've got

it at last. For she knew that this was what James had been wanting,

and she knew that now he had got it he was so pleased that he would not

look at her or at his father or at any one. There he sat with his hand

on the tiller sitting bolt upright, looking rather sulky and frowning

slightly. He was so pleased that he was not going to let anybody share

a grain of his pleasure. His father had praised him. They must think

that he was perfectly indifferent. But you've got it now, Cam thought.

They had tacked, and they were sailing swiftly, buoyantly on long

rocking waves which handed them on from one to another with an

extraordinary lilt and exhilaration beside the reef. On the left a

row of rocks showed brown through the water which thinned and

became greener and on one, a higher rock, a wave incessantly broke

and spurted a little column of drops which fell down in a shower. One

could hear the slap of the water and the patter of falling drops and a

kind of hushing and hissing sound from the waves rolling and gambolling

and slapping the rocks as if they were wild creatures who were

perfectly free and tossed and tumbled and sported like this for ever.

Now they could see two men on the Lighthouse, watching them and making

ready to meet them.

Mr. Ramsay buttoned his coat, and turned up his trousers. He took the

large, badly packed, brown paper parcel which Nancy had got ready and

sat with it on his knee. Thus in complete readiness to land he sat

looking back at the island. With his long-sighted eyes perhaps he

could see the dwindled leaf-like shape standing on end on a plate of

gold quite clearly. What could he see? Cam wondered. It was all a

blur to her. What was he thinking now? she wondered. What was it he

sought, so fixedly, so intently, so silently? They watched him, both

of them, sitting bareheaded with his parcel on his knee staring and

staring at the frail blue shape which seemed like the vapour of

something that had burnt itself away. What do you want? they both

wanted to ask. They both wanted to say, Ask us anything and we will

give it you. But he did not ask them anything. He sat and looked at

the island and he might be thinking, We perished, each alone, or he

might be thinking, I have reached it. I have found it; but he said

nothing.

page 208

"He must have reached it," said Lily Briscoe aloud, feeling suddenly completely tired out. For the Lighthouse had become almost invisible, had melted away into a blue haze, and the effort of looking at it and the effort of thinking of him landing there, which both seemed to be one and the same effort, had stretched her body and mind to the utmost. Ah, but she was relieved. Whatever she had wanted to give him, when he left her that morning, she had given him at last.

"He has landed," she said aloud. "It is finished." Then, surging up, puffing slightly, old Mr. Carmichael stood beside her, looking like an old pagan god, shaggy, with weeds in his hair and the trident (it was only a French novel) in his hand. He stood by her on the edge of the lawn, swaying a little in his bulk and said, shading his eyes with his hand: "They will have landed," and she felt that she had been right. They had not needed to speak. They had been thinking the same things and he had answered her without her asking him anything. He stood there as if he were spreading his hands over all the weakness and suffering of mankind; she thought he was surveying, tolerantly and compassionately, their final destiny. Now he has crowned the occasion, she thought, when his hand slowly fell, as if she had seen him let fall from his great height a wreath of violets and asphodels which, fluttering slowly, lay at length upon the earth.

**Painting**

How is Lily’s act of painting and the painting itself symbolic?  Why does Lily paint? How is her painting style unconventional? How does the language of the novel (syntax, literary devices) imitate the painting style of Lily?

13

She paused a moment. But now, she said, artists had come here. There

indeed, only a few paces off, stood one of them, in Panama hat and yellow

boots, seriously, softly, absorbedly, for all that he was watched by ten

little boys, with an air of profound contentment on his round red face

gazing, and then, when he had gazed, dipping; imbuing the tip of his

brush in some soft mound of green or pink. Since Mr. Paunceforte had been

there, three years before, all the pictures were like that, she said,

green and grey, with lemon-coloured sailing-boats, and pink women on the

beach.

17

Indeed, he almost knocked her easel over, coming down upon her with his

hands waving shouting out, "Boldly we rode and well," but, mercifully, he

turned sharp, and rode off, to die gloriously she supposed upon the

heights of Balaclava. Never was anybody at once so ridiculous and so

alarming. But so long as he kept like that, waving, shouting, she was

safe; he would not stand still and look at her picture. And that was what

Lily Briscoe could not have endured. Even while she looked at the mass,

at the line, at the colour, at Mrs. Ramsay sitting in the window with

James, she kept a feeler on her surroundings lest some one should creep

up, and suddenly she should find her picture looked at. But now, with all

her senses quickened as they were, looking, straining, till the colour of

the wall and the jacmanna beyond burnt into her eyes, she was aware of

someone coming out of the house, coming towards her; but somehow divined,

from the footfall, William Bankes, so that though her brush quivered, she

did not, as she would have done had it been Mr. Tansley, Paul Rayley,

Minta Doyle, or practically anybody else, turn her canvas upon the grass,

but let it stand. William Bankes stood beside her.

19

The jacmanna was bright violet; the wall staring white. She would not

have considered it honest to tamper with the bright violet and the staring

white, since she saw them like that, fashionable though it was, since

Mr. Paunceforte's visit, to see everything pale, elegant, semitransparent.

Then beneath the colour there was the shape. She could see it all so

clearly, so commandingly, when she looked: it was when she took her brush

in hand that the whole thing changed. It was in that moment's flight

between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often

brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to

work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child. Such she often

felt herself--struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to

say: "But this is what I see; this is what I see," and so to clasp some

miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did

their best to pluck from her. And it was then too, in that chill and

windy way, as she began to paint, that there forced themselves upon her

other things, her own inadequacy, her insignificance, keeping house for

her father off the Brompton Road, and had much ado to control her impulse

to fling herself (thank Heaven she had always resisted so far) at

Mrs. Ramsay's knee and say to her--but what could one say to her? "I'm in

love with you?" No, that was not true. "I'm in love with this all,"

waving her hand at the hedge, at the house, at the children. It was

absurd, it was impossible. So now she laid her brushes neatly in the box,

side by side, and said to William Bankes:

"It suddenly gets cold. The sun seems to give less heat," she said,

looking about her, for it was bright enough, the grass still a soft deep

green, the house starred in its greenery with purple passion flowers, and

rooks dropping cool cries from the high blue. But something moved,

flashed, turned a silver wing in the air. It was September after all,

the middle of September, and past six in the evening. So off they

strolled down the garden in the usual direction, past the tennis lawn,

past the pampas grass, to that break in the thick hedge, guarded by red

hot pokers like brasiers of clear burning coal, between which the blue

waters of the bay looked bluer than ever.

49

But why different, and how different? she asked herself, scraping

her palette of all those mounds of blue and green which seemed to her like

clods with no life in them now, yet she vowed, she would inspire them,

force them to move, flow, do her bidding tomorrow. How did she differ?

What was the spirit in her, the essential thing, by which, had you found a

crumpled glove in the corner of a sofa, you would have known it, from its

twisted finger, hers indisputably? She was like a bird for speed, an

arrow for directness. She was willful; she was commanding (of course,

Lily reminded herself, I am thinking of her relations with women, and I am

much younger, an insignificant person, living off the Brompton Road). She

opened bedroom windows. She shut doors. (So she tried to start the tune

of Mrs. Ramsay in her head.)

52-53

This ray passed level with Mr. Bankes's ray straight to Mrs. Ramsay sitting

reading there with James at her knee. But now while she still looked,

Mr. Bankes had done. He had put on his spectacles. He had stepped back.

He had raised his hand. He had slightly narrowed his clear blue eyes,

when Lily, rousing herself, saw what he was at, and winced like a dog who

sees a hand raised to strike it. She would have snatched her picture off

the easel, but she said to herself, One must. She braced herself to stand

the awful trial of some one looking at her picture. One must, she said,

one must. And if it must be seen, Mr. Bankes was less alarming than

another. But that any other eyes should see the residue of her

thirty-three years, the deposit of each day's living mixed with something

more secret than she had ever spoken or shown in the course of all those

days was an agony. At the same time it was immensely exciting.

Nothing could be cooler and quieter. Taking out a pen-knife, Mr. Bankes

tapped the canvas with the bone handle. What did she wish to indicate by

the triangular purple shape, "just there"? he asked.

It was Mrs. Ramsay reading to James, she said. She knew his objection--

that no one could tell it for a human shape. But she had made no attempt

at likeness, she said. For what reason had she introduced them then? he

asked. Why indeed?--except that if there, in that corner, it was bright,

here, in this, she felt the need of darkness. Simple, obvious,

commonplace, as it was, Mr. Bankes was interested. Mother and child

then--objects of universal veneration, and in this case the mother was

famous for her beauty--might be reduced, he pondered, to a purple shadow

without irreverence.

But the picture was not of them, she said. Or, not in his sense. There

were other senses too in which one might reverence them. By a shadow here

and a light there, for instance. Her tribute took that form if, as she

vaguely supposed, a picture must be a tribute. A mother and child might

be reduced to a shadow without irreverence. A light here required a

shadow there. He considered. He was interested. He took it

scientifically in complete good faith. The truth was that all his

prejudices were on the other side, he explained. The largest picture in

his drawing-room, which painters had praised, and valued at a higher price

than he had given for it, was of the cherry trees in blossom on the banks

of the Kennet. He had spent his honeymoon on the banks of the Kennet, he

said. Lily must come and see that picture, he said. But now--he turned,

with his glasses raised to the scientific examination of her canvas. The

question being one of the relations of masses, of lights and shadows,

which, to be honest, he had never considered before, he would like to have

it explained--what then did she wish to make of it? And he indicated the

scene before them. She looked. She could not show him what she wished to

make of it, could not see it even herself, without a brush in her hand.

She took up once more her old painting position with the dim eyes and the

absent-minded manner, subduing all her impressions as a woman to something

much more general; becoming once more under the power of that vision which

she had seen clearly once and must now grope for among hedges and houses

and mothers and children--her picture. It was a question, she remembered,

how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left. She

might do it by bringing the line of the branch across so; or break the

vacancy in the foreground by an object (James perhaps) so. But the danger

was that by doing that the unity of the whole might be broken. She

stopped; she did not want to bore him; she took the canvas lightly off the

easel.

But it had been seen; it had been taken from her. This man had shared

with her something profoundly intimate. And, thanking Mr. Ramsay for it

and Mrs. Ramsay for it and the hour and the place, crediting the world with

a power which she had not suspected--that one could walk away down that

long gallery not alone any more but arm in arm with somebody--the

strangest feeling in the world, and the most exhilarating--she nicked

the catch of her paint-box to, more firmly than was necessary, and the

nick seemed to surround in a circle forever the paint-box, the lawn,

Mr. Bankes, and that wild villain, Cam, dashing past.

84

He is not in the least pitiable. He has

his work, Lily said to herself. She remembered, all of a sudden as if

she had found a treasure, that she had her work. In a flash she saw

her picture, and thought, Yes, I shall put the tree further in the

middle; then I shall avoid that awkward space. That's what I shall do.

That's what has been puzzling me. She took up the salt cellar and put

it down again on a flower pattern in the table-cloth, so as to remind

herself to move the tree.

147-150

Suddenly Mr. Ramsay raised his head as he passed and looked straight at

her, with his distraught wild gaze which was yet so penetrating, as if

he saw you, for one second, for the first time, for ever; and she

pretended to drink out of her empty coffee cup so as to escape him--to

escape his demand on her, to put aside a moment longer that imperious

need. And he shook his head at her, and strode on ("Alone" she heard

him say, "Perished" she heard him say) and like everything else this

strange morning the words became symbols, wrote themselves all over the

grey-green walls. If only she could put them together, she felt, write

them out in some sentence, then she would have got at the truth of

things. Old Mr. Carmichael came padding softly in, fetched his coffee,

took his cup and made off to sit in the sun. The extraordinary

unreality was frightening; but it was also exciting. Going to the

Lighthouse. But what does one send to the Lighthouse? Perished. Alone.

The grey-green light on the wall opposite. The empty places. Such were

some of the parts, but how bring them together? she asked. As if any

interruption would break the frail shape she was building on the table

she turned her back to the window lest Mr. Ramsay should see her. She

must escape somewhere, be alone somewhere. Suddenly she remembered.

When she had sat there last ten years ago there had been a little sprig

or leaf pattern on the table-cloth, which she had looked at in a moment

of revelation. There had been a problem about a foreground of a

picture. Move the tree to the middle, she had said. She had never

finished that picture. She would paint that picture now. It had been

knocking about in her mind all these years. Where were her paints, she

wondered? Her paints, yes. She had left them in the hall last night.

She would start at once. She got up quickly, before Mr. Ramsay turned.

She fetched herself a chair. She pitched her easel with her precise

old-maidish movements on the edge of the lawn, not too close to Mr.

Carmichael, but close enough for his protection. Yes, it must have

been precisely here that she had stood ten years ago. There was the

wall; the hedge; the tree. The question was of some relation between

those masses. She had borne it in her mind all these years. It seemed

as if the solution had come to her: she knew now what she wanted to do.

But with Mr. Ramsay bearing down on her, she could do nothing. Every

time he approached--he was walking up and down the terrace--ruin

approached, chaos approached. She could not paint. She stooped, she

turned; she took up this rag; she squeezed that tube. But all she did

was to ward him off a moment. He made it impossible for her to do

anything. For if she gave him the least chance, if he saw her

disengaged a moment, looking his way a moment, he would be on her,

saying, as he had said last night, "You find us much changed." Last

night he had got up and stopped before her, and said that. Dumb and

staring though they had all sat, the six children whom they used to

call after the Kings and Queens of England--the Red, the Fair, the

Wicked, the Ruthless--she felt how they raged under it. Kind old Mrs.

Beckwith said something sensible. But it was a house full of unrelated

passions--she had felt that all the evening. And on top of this chaos

Mr. Ramsay got up, pressed her hand, and said: "You will find us much

changed" and none of them had moved or had spoken; but had sat there as

if they were forced to let him say it. Only James (certainly the

Sullen) scowled at the lamp; and Cam screwed her handkerchief round her

finger. Then he reminded them that they were going to the Lighthouse

tomorrow. They must be ready, in the hall, on the stroke of half-past

seven. Then, with his hand on the door, he stopped; he turned upon

them. Did they not want to go? he demanded. Had they dared say

No (he had some reason for wanting it) he would have flung himself

tragically backwards into the bitter waters of depair. Such a

gift he had for gesture. He looked like a king in exile. Doggedly

James said yes. Cam stumbled more wretchedly. Yes, oh, yes, they'd

both be ready, they said. And it struck her, this was tragedy--not

palls, dust, and the shroud; but children coerced, their spirits

subdued. James was sixteen, Cam, seventeen, perhaps. She had looked

round for some one who was not there, for Mrs. Ramsay, presumably. But

there was only kind Mrs. Beckwith turning over her sketches under the

lamp. Then, being tired, her mind still rising and falling with the

sea, the taste and smell that places have after long absence possessing

her, the candles wavering in her eyes, she had lost herself and gone

under. It was a wonderful night, starlit; the waves sounded as they

went upstairs; the moon surprised them, enormous, pale, as they passed

the staircase window. She had slept at once.

She set her clean canvas firmly upon the easel, as a barrier, frail,

but she hoped sufficiently substantial to ward off Mr. Ramsay and his

exactingness. She did her best to look, when his back was turned, at

her picture; that line there, that mass there. But it was out of the

question. Let him be fifty feet away, let him not even speak to you,

let him not even see you, he permeated, he prevailed, he imposed

himself. He changed everything. She could not see the colour; she

could not see the lines; even with his back turned to her, she could

only think, But he'll be down on me in a moment, demanding--something

she felt she could not give him. She rejected one brush; she chose

another. When would those children come? When would they all be off?

she fidgeted. That man, she thought, her anger rising in her, never

gave; that man took. She, on the other hand, would be forced to give.

Mrs. Ramsay had given. Giving, giving, giving, she had died--and had

left all this. Really, she was angry with Mrs. Ramsay. With the brush

slightly trembling in her fingers she looked at the hedge, the step,

the wall. It was all Mrs. Ramsay's doing. She was dead. Here was Lily,

at forty-four, wasting her time, unable to do a thing, standing there,

playing at painting, playing at the one thing one did not play at, and

it was all Mrs. Ramsay's fault. She was dead. The step where she used

to sit was empty. She was dead.

But why repeat this over and over again? Why be always trying to bring

up some feeling she had not got? There was a kind of blasphemy in it.

It was all dry: all withered: all spent. They ought not to have asked

her; she ought not to have come. One can't waste one's time at forty-

four, she thought. She hated playing at painting. A brush, the one

dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, chaos--that one should not

play with, knowingly even: she detested it. But he made her. You

shan't touch your canvas, he seemed to say, bearing down on her, till

you've given me what I want of you. Here he was, close upon her again,

greedy, distraught. Well, thought Lily in despair, letting her right

hand fall at her side, it would be simpler then to have it over.

Surely, she could imitate from recollection the glow, the rhapsody, the

self-surrender, she had seen on so many women's faces (on Mrs. Ramsay's,

for instance) when on some occasion like this they blazed up--she could

remember the look on Mrs. Ramsay's face--into a rapture of sympathy, of

delight in the reward they had, which, though the reason of it escaped

her, evidently conferred on them the most supreme bliss of which human

nature was capable. Here he was, stopped by her side. She would give

him what she could.

156-161

So they're gone, she thought, sighing with relief and disappointment. Her sympathy seemed to be cast back on her, like a bramble sprung across her face. She felt curiously divided, as if one part of her were drawn out there--it was a still day, hazy; the Lighthouse looked this morning at an immense distance; the other had fixed itself doggedly, solidly, here on the lawn. She saw her canvas as if it had floated up and placed itself white and uncompromising directly before her. It seemed to rebuke her with its cold stare for all this hurry and agitation; this folly and waste of emotion; it drastically recalled her and spread through her mind first a peace, as her disorderly sensations (he had gone and she had been so sorry for him and she had said nothing) trooped off the field; and then, emptiness. She looked blankly at the canvas, with its uncompromising white stare; from the canvas to the garden. There was something (she stood screwing up her little Chinese eyes in her small puckered face), something she remembered in the relations of those lines cutting across, slicing down, and in the mass of the hedge with its green cave of blues and browns, which had stayed in her mind; which had tied a knot in her mind so that at odds and ends of time, involuntarily, as she walked along the Brompton Road, as she brushed her hair, she found herself painting that picture, passing her eye over it, and untying the knot in imagination. But there was all the difference in the world between this planning airily away from the canvas and actually taking her brush and making the first mark.

She had taken the wrong brush in her agitation at Mr. Ramsay's presence, and her easel, rammed into the earth so nervously, was at the wrong angle. And now that she had put that right, and in so doing had subdued the impertinences and irrelevances that plucked her attention and made her remember how she was such and such a person, had such and such relations to people, she took her hand and raised her brush. For a moment it stayed trembling in a painful but exciting ecstasy in the air. Where to begin?--that was the question at what point to make the first mark? One line placed on the canvas committed her to innumerable risks, to frequent and irrevocable decisions. All that in idea seemed simple became in practice immediately complex; as the waves shape themselves symmetrically from the cliff top, but to the swimmer among them are divided by steep gulfs, and foaming crests. Still the risk must be run; the mark made.

With a curious physical sensation, as if she were urged forward and at the same time must hold herself back, she made her first quick decisive stroke. The brush descended. It flickered brown over the white canvas; it left a running mark. A second time she did it--a third time. And so pausing and so flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related; and so, lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines which had no sooner settled there than they enclosed ( she felt it looming out at her) a space. Down in the hollow of one wave she saw the next wave towering higher and higher above her. For what could be more formidable than that space? Here she was again, she thought, stepping back to look at it, drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers--this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her, emerged stark at the back of appearances and commanded her attention. She was half unwilling, half reluctant. Why always be drawn out and haled away? Why not left in peace, to talk to Mr. Carmichael on the lawn? It was an exacting form of intercourse anyhow. Other worshipful objects were content with worship; men, women, God, all let one kneel prostrate; but this form, were it only the shape of a white lamp-shade looming on a wicker table, roused one to perpetual combat, challenged one to a fight in which one was bound to be worsted. Always (it was in her nature, or in her sex, she did not know which) before she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting she had a few moments of nakedness when she seemed like an unborn soul, a soul reft of body, hesitating on some windy pinnacle and exposed without protection to all the blasts of doubt. Why then did she do it? She looked at the canvas, lightly scored with running lines. It would be hung in the servants' bedrooms. It would be rolled up and stuffed under a sofa. What was the good of doing it then, and she heard some voice saying she couldn't paint, saying she couldn't create, as if she were caught up in one of those habitual currents in which after a certain time experience forms in the mind, so that one repeats words without being aware any longer who originally spoke them.

Can't paint, can't write, she murmured monotonously, anxiously considering what her plan of attack should be. For the mass loomed before her; it protruded; she felt it pressing on her eyeballs. Then,as if some juice necessary for the lubrication of her faculties were spontaneously squirted, she began precariously dipping among the blues and umbers, moving her brush hither and thither, but it was now heavier and went slower, as if it had fallen in with some rhythm which was dictated to her (she kept looking at the hedge, at the canvas) by what she rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with it on its current. Certainly she was losing consciousness of outer things. And as she lost consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance, and whether Mr. Carmichael was there or not, her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues.

Charles Tansley used to say that, she remembered, women can't paint, can't write. Coming up behind her, he had stood close beside her, a thing she hated, as she painted her on this very spot. "Shag tobacco," he said, "fivepence an ounce," parading his poverty, his principles. (But the war had drawn the sting of her femininity. Poor devils, one thought, poor devils, of both sexes.) He was always carrying a book about under his arm--a purple book. He "worked." He sat, she remembered, working in a blaze of sun. At dinner he would sit right in the middle of the view. But after all, she reflected, there was the scene on the beach. One must remember that. It was a windy morning. They had all gone down to the beach. Mrs. Ramsay sat down and wrote letters by a rock. She wrote and wrote. "Oh," she said, looking up at something floating in the sea, "is it a lobster pot? Is it an upturned boat?" She was so short-sighted that she could not see, and then Charles Tansley became as nice as he could possibly be. He began playing ducks and drakes. They chose little flat black stones and sent them skipping over the waves. Every now and then Mrs. Ramsay looked up over her spectacles and laughed at them. What they said she could not remember, but only she and Charles throwing stones and getting on very well all of a sudden and Mrs. Ramsay watching them. She was highly conscious of that. Mrs. Ramsay, she thought, stepping back and screwing up her eyes. (It must have altered the design a good deal when she was sitting on the step with James. There must have been a shadow.) When she thought of herself and Charles throwing ducks and drakes and of the whole scene on the beach, it seemed to depend somehow upon Mrs. Ramsay sitting under the rock, with a pad on her knee, writing letters. (She wrote innumerable letters, and sometimes the wind took them and she and Charles just saved a page from the sea.) But what a power was in the human soul! she thought. That woman sitting there writing under the rock resolved everything into simplicity; made these angers, irritations fall off like old rags; she brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite (she and Charles squabbling, sparring, had been silly and spiteful) something--this scene on the beach for example, this moment of friendship and liking--which survived, after all these years complete, so that she dipped into it to re-fashion her memory of him, and there it stayed in the mind affecting one almost like a work of art.

"Like a work of art," she repeated, looking from her canvas to the drawing-room steps and back again. She must rest for a moment. And, resting, looking from one to the other vaguely, the old question which traversed the sky of the soul perpetually, the vast, the general question which was apt to particularise itself at such moments as these, when she released faculties that had been on the strain, stood over her, paused over her, darkened over her. What is the meaning of life? That was all--a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. This, that, and the other; herself and Charles Tansley and the breaking wave; Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together; Mrs. Ramsay saying, "Life stand still here"; Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent)--this was of the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay said. "Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!" she repeated. She owed it all to her.

171

"Is it a boat? Is it a cork?" she would say, Lily repeated, turning

back, reluctantly again, to her canvas. Heaven be praised for it, the

problem of space remained, she thought, taking up her brush again. It

glared at her. The whole mass of the picture was poised upon that

weight. Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and

evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a

butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with

bolts of iron. It was to be a thing you could ruffle with your breath;

and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses. And she began

to lay on a red, a grey, and she began to model her way into the hollow

there. At the same time, she seemed to be sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay on

the beach.

"Is it a boat? Is it a cask?" Mrs. Ramsay said. And she began hunting

round for her spectacles. And she sat, having found them, silent,

looking out to sea. And Lily, painting steadily, felt as if a door had

opened, and one went in and stood gazing silently about in a high

cathedral-like place, very dark, very solemn. Shouts came from a world

far away. Steamers vanished in stalks of smoke on the horizon.

Charles threw stones and sent them skipping.

176

She had only escaped by the skin of her teeth though, she thought. She

had been looking at the table-cloth, and it had flashed upon her that

she would move the tree to the middle, and need never marry anybody,

and she had felt an enormous exultation. She had felt, now she could

stand up to Mrs. Ramsay--a tribute to the astonishing power that Mrs.

Ramsay had over one. Do this, she said, and one did it. Even her

shadow at the window with James was full of authority. She remembered

how William Bankes had been shocked by her neglect of the significance

of mother and son. Did she not admire their beauty? he said. But

William, she remembered, had listened to her with his wise child's eyes

when she explained how it was not irreverence: how a light there needed

a shadow there and so on. She did not intend to disparage a subject

which, they agreed, Raphael had treated divinely. She was not cynical.

Quite the contrary. Thanks to his scientific mind he understood--a

proof of disinterested intelligence which had pleased her and comforted

her enormously. One could talk of painting then seriously to a man.

Indeed, his friendship had been one of the pleasures of her life. She

loved William Bankes.

201

Suddenly the window at which she was looking was whitened by some light

stuff behind it. At last then somebody had come into the drawing-room;

somebody was sitting in the chair. For Heaven's sake, she prayed, let

them sit still there and not come floundering out to talk to her.

Mercifully, whoever it was stayed still inside; had settled by some

stroke of luck so as to throw an odd-shaped triangular shadow over the

step. It altered the composition of the picture a little. It was

interesting. It might be useful. Her mood was coming back to her. One

must keep on looking without for a second relaxing the intensity of

emotion, the determination not to be put off, not to be bamboozled.

One must hold the scene--so--in a vise and let nothing come in and

spoil it. One wanted, she thought, dipping her brush deliberately, to

be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair,

that's a table, and yet at the same time, It's a miracle, it's an

ecstasy. The problem might be solved after all. Ah, but what had

happened? Some wave of white went over the window pane. The air must

have stirred some flounce in the room. Her heart leapt at her and

seized her and tortured her.

"Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!" she cried, feeling the old horror come

back--to want and want and not to have. Could she inflict that still?

And then, quietly, as if she refrained, that too became part of

ordinary experience, was on a level with the chair, with the table.

Mrs. Ramsay--it was part of her perfect goodness--sat there quite

simply, in the chair, flicked her needles to and fro, knitted her

reddish-brown stocking, cast her shadow on the step. There she sat.

And as if she had something she must share, yet could hardly leave her

easel, so full her mind was of what she was thinking, of what she was

seeing, Lily went past Mr. Carmichael holding her brush to the edge of

the lawn. Where was that boat now? And Mr. Ramsay? She wanted him.

208

Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to

her canvas. There it was--her picture. Yes, with all its greens and

blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It

would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But

what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again.

She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it

was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a

second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was

finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue,

I have had my vision.

A close up of text on a whiteboard

Description automatically generatedA paper with text

Description automatically generated

**Time**

**6**

They must find a way out of it all. There might be some simpler way, some less laborious way, she sighed. When she looked in the glass and saw her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, she thought, possibly she might have managed things better--her husband; money; his books. But for her own part she would never for a single second regret her decision, evade difficulties, or slur over duties. She was now formidable to behold, and it was only in silence, looking up from their plates, after she had spoken so severely about Charles Tansley, that her daughters, Prue, Nancy, Rose--could sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other; for there was in all their minds a mute questioning of deference and chivalry, of the Bank of England and the Indian Empire, of ringed fingers and lace, though to them all there was something in this of the essence of beauty, which called out the manliness in their girlish hearts, and made them, as they sat at table beneath their mother's eyes, honour her strange severity, her extreme courtesy, like a queen's raising from the mud to wash a beggar's dirty foot, when she admonished them so very severely about that wretched atheist who had chased them--or, speaking accurately, been invited to stay with them--in the Isle of Skye.

**58**

Oh, but she never wanted James to grow a day older! or Cam either. These two she would have liked to keep for ever just as they were, demons of wickedness, angels of delight, never to see them grow up into long-legged monsters. Nothing made up up for the loss. When she read just now to James, "and there were numbers of soldiers with kettledrums and trumpets," and his eyes darkened, she thought, why should they grow up and lose all that? He was the most gifted, the most sensitive of her children. But all, she thought, were full of promise. Prue, a perfect angel with the others, and sometimes now, at night especially, she took one's breath away with her beauty. Andrew--even her husband admitted that his gift for mathematics was extraordinary. And Nancy and Roger, they were both wild creatures now, scampering about over the country all day long. As for Rose, her mouth was too big, but she had a wonderful gift with her hands. If they had charades, Rose made the dresses; made everything; liked best arranging tables, flowers, anything. She did not like it that Jasper should shoot birds; but it was only a stage; they all went through stages. Why, she asked, pressing her chin on James's head, should they grow up so fast? Why should they go to school? She would have liked always to have had a baby. She was happiest carrying one in her arms. Then people might say she was tyrannical, domineering, masterful, if they chose; she did not mind. And, touching his hair with her lips, she thought, he will never be so happy again, but stopped herself, remembering how it angered her husband that she should say that. Still, it was true. They were happier now than they would ever be again. A tenpenny tea set made Cam happy for days. She heard them stamping and crowing on the floor above her head the moment they awoke. They came bustling along the passage. Then the door sprang open and in they came, fresh as roses, staring, wide awake, as if this coming into the dining-room after breakfast, which they did every day of their lives, was a positive event to them, and so on, with one thing after another, all day long, until she went up to say good-night to them, and found them netted in their cots like birds among cherries and raspberries, still making up stories about some little bit of rubbish--something they had heard, something they had picked up in the garden. They all had their little treasures...

**76**

It was not until they had climbed right up on to the top of the cliff again that Minta cried out that she had lost her grandmother's brooch-- her grandmother's brooch, the sole ornament she possessed--a weeping willow, it was (they must remember it) set in pearls. They must have seen it, she said, with the tears running down her cheeks, the brooch which her grandmother had fastened her cap with till the last day of her life. Now she had lost it. She would rather have lost anything than that! She would go back and look for it. They all went back. They poked and peered and looked. They kept their heads very low, and said things shortly and gruffly. Paul Rayley searched like a madman all about the rock where they had been sitting. All this pother about a brooch really didn't do at all, Andrew thought, as Paul told him to make a "thorough search between this point and that." The tide was coming in fast. The sea would cover the place where they had sat in a minute. There was not a ghost of a chance of their finding it now. "We shall be cut off!" Minta shrieked, suddenly terrified. As if there were any danger of that! It was the same as the bulls all over again--she had no control over her emotions, Andrew thought. Women hadn't. The wretched Paul had to pacify her. The men (Andrew and Paul at once became manly, and different from usual) took counsel briefly and decided that they would plant Rayley's stick where they had sat and come back at low tide again. There was nothing more that could be done now. If the brooch was there, it would still be there in the morning, they assured her, but Minta still sobbed, all the way up to the top of the cliff. It was her grandmother's brooch; she would rather have lost anything but that, and yet Nancy felt, it might be true that she minded losing her brooch, but she wasn't crying only for that. She was crying for something else. We might all sit down and cry, she felt. But she did not know what for.

**194**

Here on the grass, on the ground, she thought, sitting down, and examining with her brush a little colony of plantains. For the lawn was very rough. Here sitting on the world, she thought, for she could not shake herself free from the sense that everything this morning was happening for the first time, perhaps for the last time, as a traveller, even though he is half asleep, knows, looking out of the train window, that he must look now, for he will never see that town, or that mule-cart, or that woman at work in the fields, again. The lawn was the world; they were up here together, on this exalted station, she thought, looking at old Mr. Carmichael, who seemed (though they had not said a word all this time) to share her thoughts. And she would never see him again perhaps. He was growing old. Also, she remembered, smiling at the slipper that dangled from his foot, he was growing famous. People said that his poetry was "so beautiful." They went and published things he had written forty years ago. There was a famous man now called Carmichael, she smiled, thinking how many shapes one person might wear, how he was that in the newspapers, but here the same as he had always been. He looked the same--greyer, rather. Yes, he looked the same, but somebody had said, she recalled, that when he had heard of Andrew Ramsay's death (he was killed in a second by a shell; he should have been a great mathematician) Mr. Carmichael had "lost all interest in life." What did it mean--that? she wondered. Had he marched through Trafalgar Square grasping a big stick? Had he turned pages over and over, without reading them, sitting in his room in St. John's Wood alone? She did not know what he had done, when he heard that Andrew was killed, but she felt it in him all the same. They only mumbled at each other on staircases; they looked up at the sky and said it will be fine or it won't be fine. But this was one way of knowing people, she thought: to know the outline, not the detail, to sit in one's garden and look at the slopes of a hill running purple down into the distant heather. She knew him in that way.

**116**

Instantly, for no reason at all, Mrs. Ramsay became like a girl of twenty, full of gaiety. A mood of revelry suddenly took possession of her. Of course they must go; of course they must go, she cried, laughing; and running down the last three or four steps quickly, she began turning from one to the other and laughing and drawing Minta's wrap round her and saying she only wished she could come too, and would they be very late, and had any of them got a watch?

"Yes, Paul has," said Minta. Paul slipped a beautiful gold watch out of a little wash-leather case to show her. And as he held it in the palm of his hand before her, he felt, "She knows all about it. I need not say anything." He was saying to her as he showed her the watch, "I've done it, Mrs. Ramsay. I owe it all to you." And seeing the gold watch lying in his hand, Mrs. Ramsay felt, How extraordinarily lucky Minta is! She is marrying a man who has a gold watch in a wash- leather bag!

"How I wish I could come with you!" she cried. But she was withheld by something so strong that she never even thought of asking herself what it was. Of course it was impossible for her to go with them. But she would have liked to go, had it not been for the other thing, and tickled by the absurdity of her thought (how lucky to marry a man with a wash-leather bag for his watch) she went with a smile on her lips into the other room, where her husband sat reading.

**134**

Night after night, summer and winter, the torment of storms, the arrow- like stillness of fine (had there been any one to listen) from the upper rooms of the empty house only gigantic chaos streaked with lightning could have been heard tumbling and tossing, as the winds and waves disported themselves like the amorphous bulks of leviathans whose brows are pierced by no light of reason, and mounted one on top of another, and lunged and plunged in the darkness or the daylight (for night and day, month and year ran shapelessly together) in idiot games, until it seemed as if the universe were battling and tumbling, in brute confusion and wanton lust aimlessly by itself. In spring the garden urns, casually filled with wind-blown plants, were gay as ever. Violets came and daffodils. But the stillness and the brightness of the day were as strange as the chaos and tumult of night, with the trees standing there, and the flowers standing there, looking before them, looking up, yet beholding nothing, eyeless, and so terrible.

**134**

A curious notion came to her that he did after all hear the things she could not say. He was an inscrutable old man, with the yellow stain on his beard, and his poetry, and his puzzles, sailing serenely through a world which satisfied all his wants, so that she thought he had only to put down his hand where he lay on the lawn to fish up anything he wanted. She looked at her picture. That would have been his answer, presumably--how "you" and "I" and "she" pass and vanish; nothing stays; all changes; but not words, not paint. Yet it would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be rolled up and flung under a sofa; yet even so, even of a picture like that, it was true. One might say, even of this scrawl, not of that actual picture, perhaps, but of what it attempted, that it "remained for ever," she was going to say, or, for the words spoken sounded even to herself, too boastful, to hint, wordlessly; when, looking at the picture, she was surprised to find that she could not see it. Her eyes were full of a hot liquid (she did not think of tears at first) which, without disturbing the firmness of her lips, made the air thick, rolled down her cheeks. She had perfect control of herself--Oh, yes!--in every other way. Was she crying then for Mrs. Ramsay, without being aware of any unhappiness? She addressed old Mr. Carmichael again. What was it then? What did it mean? Could things thrust their hands up and grip one; could the blade cut; the fist grasp? Was there no safety? No learning by heart of the ways of the world? No guide, no shelter, but all was miracle, and leaping from the pinnacle of a tower into the air? Could it be, even for elderly people, that this was life?--startling, unexpected, unknown? For one moment she felt that if they both got up, here, now on the lawn, and demanded an explanation, why was it so short, why was it so inexplicable, said it with violence, as two fully equipped human beings from whom nothing should be hid might speak, then, beauty would roll itself up; the space would fill; those empty flourishes would form into shape; if they shouted loud enough Mrs. Ramsay would return. "Mrs. Ramsay!" she said aloud, "Mrs. Ramsay!" The tears ran down her face.

**135**

Thinking no harm, for the family would not come, never again, some said, and the house would be sold at Michaelmas perhaps, Mrs. McNab stooped and picked a bunch of flowers to take home with her. She laid them on the table while she dusted. She was fond of flowers. It was a pity to let them waste. Suppose the house were sold (she stood arms akimbo in front of the looking-glass) it would want seeing to--it would. There it had stood all these years without a soul in it. The books and things were mouldy, for, what with the war and help being hard to get, the house had not been cleaned as she could have wished. It was beyond one person's strength to get it straight now. She was too old. Her legs pained her. All those books needed to be laid out on the grass in the sun; there was plaster fallen in the hall; the rain-pipe had blocked over the study window and let the water in; the carpet was ruined quite. But people should come themselves; they should have sent somebody down to see. For there were clothes in the cupboards; they had left clothes in all the bedrooms. What was she to do with them? They had the moth in them--Mrs. Ramsay's things. Poor lady! She would never want THEM again. She was dead, they said; years ago, in London. There was the old grey cloak she wore gardening (Mrs. McNab fingered it). She could see her, as she came up the drive with the washing, stooping over her flowers (the garden was a pitiful sight now, all run to riot, and rabbits scuttling at you out of the beds)--she could see her with one of the children by her in that grey cloak. There were boots and shoes; and a brush and comb left on the dressing-table, for all the world as if she expected to come back tomorrow. (She had died very sudden at the end, they said.) And once they had been coming, but had put off coming, what with the war, and travel being so difficult these days; they had never come all these years; just sent her money; but never wrote, never came, and expected to find things as they had left them, ah, dear! Why the dressing-table drawers were full of things (she pulled them open), handkerchiefs, bits of ribbon. Yes, she could see Mrs. Ramsay as she came up the drive with the washing.

"Good-evening, Mrs. McNab," she would say.

She had a pleasant way with her. The girls all liked her. But, dear, many things had changed since then (she shut the drawer); many families had lost their dearest. So she was dead; and Mr. Andrew killed; and Miss Prue dead too, they said, with her first baby; but everyone had lost some one these years. Prices had gone up shamefully, and didn't come down again neither. She could well remember her in her grey cloak.

**139**

If the feather had fallen, if it had tipped the scale downwards, the whole house would have plunged to the depths to lie upon the sands of oblivion. But there was a force working; something not highly conscious; something that leered, something that lurched; something not inspired to go about its work with dignified ritual or solemn chanting. Mrs. McNab groaned; Mrs. Bast creaked. They were old; they were stiff; their legs ached. They came with their brooms and pails at last; they got to work. All of a sudden, would Mrs. McNab see that the house was ready, one of the young ladies wrote: would she get this done; would she get that done; all in a hurry. They might be coming for the summer; had left everything to the last; expected to find things as they had left them. Slowly and painfully, with broom and pail, mopping, scouring, Mrs. McNab, Mrs. Bast, stayed the corruption and the rot; rescued from the pool of Time that was fast closing over them now a basin, now a cupboard; fetched up from oblivion all the Waverley novels and a tea-set one morning; in the afternoon restored to sun and air a brass fender and a set of steel fire-irons. George, Mrs. Bast's son, caught the rats, and cut the grass. They had the builders. Attended with the creaking of hinges and the screeching of bolts, the slamming and banging of damp-swollen woodwork, some rusty laborious birth seemed to be taking place, as the women, stooping, rising, groaning, singing, slapped and slammed, upstairs now, now down in the cellars. Oh, they said, the work!

**166**

But Cam could see nothing. She was thinking how all those paths and the lawn, thick and knotted with the lives they had lived there, were gone: were rubbed out; were past; were unreal, and now this was real; the boat and the sail with its patch; Macalister with his earrings; the noise of the waves--all this was real. Thinking this, she was murmuring to herself, "We perished, each alone," for her father's words broke and broke again in her mind, when her father, seeing her gazing so vaguely, began to tease her. Didn't she know the points of the compass? he asked. Didn't she know the North from the South? Did she really think they lived right out there? And he pointed again, and showed her where their house was, there, by those trees. He wished she would try to be more accurate, he said: "Tell me--which is East, which is West?" he said, half laughing at her, half scolding her, for he could not understand the state of mind of any one, not absolutely imbecile, who did not know the points of the compass. Yet she did not know. And seeing her gazing, with her vague, now rather frightened, eyes fixed where no house was Mr. Ramsay forgot his dream; how he walked up and down between the urns on the terrace; how the arms were stretched out to him. He thought, women are always like that; the vagueness of their minds is hopeless; it was a thing he had never been able to understand; but so it was. It had been so with her--his wife. They could not keep anything clearly fixed in their minds. But he had been wrong to be angry with her; moreover, did he not rather like this vagueness in women? It was part of their extraordinary charm. I will make her smile at me, he thought. She looks frightened. She was so silent. He clutched his fingers, and determined that his voice and his face and all the quick expressive gestures which had been at his command making people pity him and praise him all these years should subdue themselves. He would make her smile at him. He would find some simple easy thing to say to her. But what? For, wrapped up in his work as he was, he forgot the sort of thing one said. There was a puppy. They had a puppy. Who was looking after the puppy today? he asked. Yes, thought James pitilessly, seeing his sister's head against the sail, now she will give way. I shall be left to fight the tyrant alone. The compact would be left to him to carry out. Cam would never resist tyranny to the death, he thought grimly, watching her face, sad, sulky, yielding. And as sometimes happens when a cloud falls on a green hillside and gravity descends and there among all the surrounding hills is gloom and sorrow, and it seems as if the hills themselves must ponder the fate of the clouded, the darkened, either in pity, or maliciously rejoicing in her dismay: so Cam now felt herself overcast, as she sat there among calm, resolute people and wondered how to answer her father about the puppy; how to resist his entreaty--forgive me, care for me; while James the lawgiver, with the tablets of eternal wisdom laid open on his knee (his hand on the tiller had become symbolical to her), said, Resist him. Fight him. He said so rightly; justly. For they must fight tyranny to the death, she thought. Of all human qualities she reverenced justice most. Her brother was most god-like, her father most suppliant. And to which did she yield, she thought, sitting between them, gazing at the shore whose points were all unknown to her, and thinking how the lawn and the terrace and the house were smoothed away now and peace dwelt there.

**Prompts:**

- Write an ending (or add any scene) to the book in the style of *To the Lighthouse*: stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse, omniscient narrator, syntax, diction, figurative language, repetition, etc.

- Write a few paragraphs that elaborate on one title from the table of contents of *A Life of One's Own: A Guide to Better Living Through the Work and Wisdom of Virginia Woolf*, by Ilana Simons. Consider evidence from *To the Lighthouse*. You may also add your own chapter. Write philosophically, not analytically.

Chapter 1: Speak Up “We tend to judge others when we’re silent; we learn more about ourselves and the world when we relax our defenses and *talk*.”

Chapter 2: Accept Solitude “We join each other in memories, but, when alone, we sort though the echoing voices on our own.”

Chapter 3: Shut Down “Silence is sometimes a fabulous strategy – a way to expand the head, and to be fair to people around you.”

Chapter 4: Take on Challenging Friendships “Soulmate means a friend who understands something about you and so lives flexibly in this relationship, in which you can both risk a little, and insult a little, and dare a little, and stray a little, while something solid connects you at the center.”

Chapter 5: Find Steady Support “We’re biggest when we have a partner cheering us on, telling us to risk, accepting us even when we don’t immediately make it.”

Chapter 6: Work Hard, Even Without a Sign of Success “You move forward as if in a cloud, faithful that a life of earnest work will pay you back.”

Chapter 7: Lie to Encourage Your Friends “You can have a wonderful sense of self, and produce good work, but you simply won’t be happy about it without feeling that other people get it.”

Chapter 8: Find a Political Voice “We have to remodel conversation on the small scale to redirect a country’s larger ethics.”

Chapter 9: Be Aware of Prejudice “Stereotype Threat is an effect in which we unconsciously and unwittingly conform to stereotypes – largely because we’re struggling to avoid them.”

Chapter 10: Change Routines “The fact is that all of us are capable of rewriting ourselves if put in radically new circumstances.”

Chapter 11: Read Your Partner “A good listener needs to be highly attuned to what’s said in the *manner*, and not just the facts, of speaking; we get to new places by reading what our conversation partners don’t yet have the power to say.”

Chapter 12: Make Use of Time “She loves how our moments are full when we’re not just watching life, as if watching a mere picture show, but making connections through memories. Then life’s layered.”

Chapter 13: Read and Be More “She thinks the excitement of tapping into this record of human footsteps should remind you of your individual interpretation of things.”

- Write a short story that examines one event from multiple perspectives, and use Woolf’s techniques: free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness, parallel structure, repetition, figurative language, omniscient narrator, etc.

- Analyze the symbol of the lighthouse.

- How does Woolf’s purpose in creating this text connect to Lily’s purpose in creating her painting?

- Apply the following quote to *To the Lighthouse*: “Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure” – Jane Austen

- How is the novel about the First World War? How is the novel about moving on after losing someone?

- How does the novel examine consciousness?

- How is the novel about art and creativity? Why does Lily paint? How is Woolf’s writing style similar to Lily’s painting style?

- How do the characters communicate and express themselves in the novel?

- How does the novel explore philosophical questions and topics about the nature of reality like being, identity, faith, free will, space, time, possibility, and knowing?

- How does the novel examine the nature of love? How does Lily express her love of Mrs. Ramsay?

- Write an essay that examines the effect Mrs. Ramsay has on Lily. You may also consider Mrs. Ramsay’s effect on other characters. Consider Woolf’s style and the narrative mode.

One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with, she reflected. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with, she thought. Among them, must be one that was stone blind to her beauty. One wanted most some secret sense, fine as air, with which to steal through keyholes and surround her where she sat knitting, talking, sitting silent in the window alone; which took to itself and treasured up like the air which held the smoke of the steamer, her thoughts, her imaginations, her desires. What did the hedge mean to her, what did the garden mean to her, what did it mean to her when a wave broke? (Lily looked up, as she had seen Mrs. Ramsay look up; she too heard a wave falling on the beach.) And then what stirred and trembled in her mind when the children cried, "How's that? How's that?" cricketing? She would stop knitting for a second. She would look intent. Then she would lapse again, and suddenly Mr. Ramsay stopped dead in his pacing in front of her and some curious shock passed through her and seemed to rock her in profound agitation on its breast when stopping there he stood over her and looked down at her. Lily could see him.

- Write an essay that examines the purpose of Woolf’s writing style in *To the Lighthouse*. What is the connection between art (writing, painting) and living (human relationships)? Consider the last page:

Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to

her canvas. There it was--her picture. Yes, with all its greens and

blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It

would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But

what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again.

She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it

was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a

second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was

finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue,

I have had my vision.