NAME \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_\_ value of fiction handout

**1** “Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell and hear told, those we dream or imagine or would like to tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we narrate to ourselves in an episodic, sometimes semi-conscious, but virtually uninterrupted monologue. We live immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meaning of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed.” Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*

**2** “ ’Reality comes to us in the form of stories’ (William Dowling, Jameson, Althusser, Marx): the stories we employ in interpreting it, the stories told to us every day in conversation, in the newspaper, on television, in songs, in sermons, and in innumerable books and textbooks. These ‘stories’ or narratives both describe and prescribe: they map the world in specific ways that implicitly and explicitly valorize some styles of being while denigrating others. When we assent to such stories they begin to shape our perceptions, beliefs, values, and actions. We need to understand the features of narrative, then, not only in order to understand and appreciate literature but also in order to make sense of and have some control over our lives and our communities.” English 220 Syllabus, Rutgers University

**3** “Let us suppose we are confronted by the phenomenon we call a ‘cup.’ We must understand, first of all, that a cup is not a thing, but an event; modern physics tells us that a cup is made of billions of electrons in constant movement, undergoing continuous change. Although none of this activity is perceptible to us, it is important to acknowledge it, because by so doing, we may grasp the idea that the world is not the way we see it. What we see is a summary – an abstraction, if you will- of electronic activity. But even what we can see is not what we do see. No one has ever seen a cup in its entirety, all at once in space-time. We see only parts of wholes. But usually we see enough to allow us to reconstruct the whole and to act as if we know what we are dealing with.” – Neil Postman

**4** “What is art but a way of seeing?” – Saul Bellow

**5** “The world I inhabit is conformable to my designs upon it, that it has the meaning I want it to have.” - Brian Wicker

**6** “From the time of Giambattista Vico the truth has been emerging that metaphor is not just a way of describing things but is a way of experiencing them . . . The basis for this change was the recognition that metaphor is a lamp, not just a mirror, held up to nature. This is why Shakespeare’s poetry had the effect, as Coleridge said, of making the reader himself into a kind of poet, an ‘active creative being’. To make and understand a metaphor are alike acts of the creative imagination. And furthermore, such acts are social as well as individual: for the language by which we see the world is itself a social reality. Thus insofar as language is incurably metaphorical, and what I.A. Richards called the ‘omnipresent principle’ is embedded in every utterance we make, every metaphor is a co-operative endeavor. It not only joins us to things, it joins us to each other.” – Brian Wicker

**7** “The miracle is that these arbitrary sounds — these symbols — allow us to see what's going on in other people's minds and also allows us to share what's going on in ours. For example, if I say the word "bead" you immediately have a picture in your mind of what I'm talking about. If I said beads, you'd generate a slightly different picture in your mind, that I have made your mind form. If I said glass beads — using an adjective to modify the concept — you'd immediately see something different than if I said gold beads. In this way, I make you think in your mind of a thing that I have in my mind. And once we have this ability for symbolic thought and language then all kinds of things become possible. Through language we can pass down what we've learned, organize larger and larger groups of people who can do more and more complex things like build bridges and schools and computers and practically everything else in modern life … The handful of [75,000 year old] shells Henshilwood found was an early version of the wedding band on your finger or the golden cross around your neck. The beads were symbols — symbols that indicated to the people of that community who this person was, what he believed and whether he was friend or enemy.” “When Did We Become Mentally Modern?” Alix Spiegel NPR

**8** “Beauty lay not in the thing, but what the thing symbolized.” Thomas Hardy

**9** “Away [modern man] goes, hurrying, searching .... Be very sure that this man ... -- this solitary, gifted with an active imagination, ceaselessly journeying across the great human desert … [The artist is] the last to linger wherever there can be a glow of light, an echo of poetry, a quiver of life or a chord of music; wherever a passion can pose before him, wherever natural man and conventional man display themselves in a strange beauty, wherever the sun lights up the swift joys of the depraved animal.” Charles Baudelaire

**10** excerpts from “How Should One Read a Book?” \*a paper read at a school by Virginia Woolf

In the first place, I want to emphasise the note of interrogation at the end of my title. Even if I could answer the question for myself, the answer would apply only to me and not to you. The only advice, indeed, that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusions…Where are we to begin? How are we to bring order into this multitudinous chaos and so get the deepest and widest pleasure from what we read? … Do not dictate to your author; try to become him. Be his fellow-worker and accomplice. If you hang back, and reserve and criticise at first, you are preventing yourself from getting the fullest possible value from what you read. But if you open your mind as widely as possible, then signs and hints of almost imperceptible fineness, from the twist and turn of the first sentences, will bring you into the presence of a human being unlike any other. Steep yourself in this, acquaint yourself with this, and soon you will find that your author is giving you, or attempting to give you, something far more definite. The thirty-two chapters of a novel — if we consider how to read a novel first — are an attempt to make something as formed and controlled as a building: but words are more impalpable than bricks; reading is a longer and more complicated process than seeing. Perhaps the quickest way to understand the elements of what a novelist is doing is not to read, but to write; to make your own experiment with the dangers and difficulties of words. Recall, then, some event that has left a distinct impression on you — how at the corner of the street, perhaps, you passed two people talking. A tree shook; an electric light danced; the tone of the talk was comic, but also tragic; a whole vision, an entire conception, seemed contained in that moment…To read a novel is a difficult and complex art. You must be capable not only of great fineness of perception, but of great boldness of imagination if you are going to make use of all that the novelist — the great artist — gives you… Shall we read them in the first place to satisfy that curiosity which possesses us sometimes when in the evening we linger in front of a house where the lights are lit and the blinds not yet drawn, and each floor of the house shows us a different section of human life in being? Then we are consumed with curiosity about the lives of these people — the servants gossiping, the gentlemen dining, the girl dressing for a party, the old woman at the window with her knitting. Who are they, what are they, what are their names, their occupations, their thoughts, and adventures?... We may stress the value of sympathy; we may try to sink our identity as we read. But we know that we cannot sympathise wholly or immerse ourselves wholly; there is always a demon in us who whispers, “I hate, I love”, and we cannot silence him.

**11** Virginia Woolf *Night and Day*

“Her pleasant brown eyes resembled Ralph’s, save in expression, for whereas he seemed to look straightly and keenly at one object, she appeared to be in the habit of considering everything from many different points of view.” page 23

**12** excerpt from *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens

‘You mustn’t tell us about the ring, here.  Very well, then.  Describe your father as a horsebreaker.  He doctors sick horses, I dare say?’

‘Oh yes, sir.’

‘Very well, then.  He is a veterinary surgeon, a farrier, and horsebreaker.  Give me your definition of a horse.’

(Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.)

‘Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!’ said Mr. Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the little pitchers.  ‘Girl number twenty possessed of no facts, in reference to one of the commonest of animals!  Some boy’s definition of a horse.  Bitzer, yours.’

‘Bitzer,’ said Thomas Gradgrind.  ‘Your definition of a horse.’ ….

‘Quadruped.  Graminivorous.  Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive.  Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too.  Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron.  Age known by marks in mouth.’  Thus (and much more) Bitzer.

‘Now girl number twenty,’ said Mr. Gradgrind.  ‘You know what a horse is.’