



FOUR STOREYS FOUR STORIES

TEACHERS' GUIDE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TOUR GRADES 9 – 12

INTRODUCTION

Getting students excited about reading nineteenth-century literature can be challenging. However, with the right spark, students can be inspired to both read deeply and write energetically about now distant eras. The purpose of this field trip is to provide English Language Arts students with a first-hand experience of the Victorian era through a visit to and customized tour of Dalnavert Museum. This house, built in 1895 in the Queen Anne Revival style, will transport the students into the setting of nineteenth-century novels that they may read, such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Great Expectations*, *Wuthering Heights*, or *Frankenstein*, and will also serve as a laboratory for emerging creative writers.

On this tour, created specifically for Gr. 9 to 12 ELA students, small groups will move through the four storeys of the museum. On each storey, they will pause and listen to recordings of works by celebrated nineteenth-century authors. They will also learn about aspects of daily life in the nineteenth century and major social issues related to, for example, gender and class. During the readings, students will have time to listen, observe and connect their surroundings with major themes of celebrated literary works.

A guiding goal of the tour will be to afford students with an opportunity to observe the setting and atmosphere of a Victorian home. By observing the physical spaces and artifacts, students will come to a better understanding of the appearance, values, and daily lives of the characters they read about in fiction as well as the real people who lived during this time period. Students will be introduced to numerous rooms of the home and will be encouraged to make their own observations and ask questions about the space and artifacts in relation to this time period. Through this careful study, students will develop an understanding of setting and hone their own skills for creative writing.

A secondary goal of the tour is to introduce students to three important themes: gender, age and class. The roles of men, women and children, upper and lower classes, marriage and the gentleman ideal are just some of the underlying concepts that can be explored while touring Dalnavert. The home provides an excellent view of Victorian domestic spaces where men, women and children were or were not allowed access; the den, the solarium and the dining rooms are three such rooms that had prescribed gender and age rules. In terms of class, members of the lower classes, for example, would not be allowed to enter through the front door, while upper classes would avoid places of “work”, such as the kitchen. The gender, age and class stereotypes are often in stark contrast to 21st-century custom, and through observing these discrepancies, students will have many opportunities to discuss and consider the themes/concepts of gender, age and class in their own lives.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

General Outcome 1:

- 1.1 Discover and Explore- Express Ideas, Consider Others' Ideas
- 1.2 Clarify and Extend – Develop Understanding, Extend Understanding

General Outcome 2:

- 2.1 Use strategies and Cues – Prior Knowledge, Textual Cues
- 2.2 Respond to Texts – Experience Various Texts, Appreciate the Artistry of Texts

General Outcome 3:

- 3.1 Plan and Focus – Ask Questions, Contribute to Group Inquiry
- 3.2 Select and Process – Assess Information, Make Sense of Information

General Outcome 4:

- 4.1 Generate and Focus – Generate Ideas, Choose Forms
- 4.2 Enhance and Improve – Enhance Artistry

General Outcome 5:

- 5.1 Develop and Celebrate Community – Relate Texts to Culture, Appreciate Diversity

FIELD TRIP OUTLINE**TIMELINE: 1 – 1.5 HOURS****Arrival & Introduction (10 mins)**

- Students arrive; put away outerwear etc. (5 mins)
- Congregate in Visitors' Centre
- A brief introduction to the house and the tour (5 mins)
- Divide up into four groups

Program (50 – 60 mins)

- Students will rotate between four stations in different areas of the house: kitchen, basement, parlor and second floor/attic.
- In each area, students will discuss different themes of Victorian culture: gender, age and class. They will also listen to a short audio reading from a Victorian novel.
- Through the lens of each theme, students will learn about aspects of daily life and about a piece of creative writing from the late Victorian period that is related to the room. Students are encouraged to take pictures (flash off) and ask questions throughout the tour.

Conclusion (10 mins)

- Students will congregate back in the Visitors' Centre.
- Interpreters will debrief with questions and discussion.

ACTIVATION ACTIVITY

In preparation for the tour, familiarize your students with some examples of nineteenth-century fiction. The following is a list of Victorian short stories and excerpts well-suited to this task:

- "Mrs. Manstey's View," by Edith Wharton, published 1893

http://www.eastoftheweb.com/cgi-bin/version_printable.pl?story_id=MrsMans.shtml

- "The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, published in 1892

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1952/1952-h/1952-h.htm>

- Excerpts from novels that can also assist with this task:
 - *Great Expectations*, by Charles Dickens, published 1860, Excerpt

<http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/133/136269/grtexpt.pdf>

- *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austin, published in 1813, **Excerpt attached**
- *An American Girl in London*, by Sara Jeannette Duncan, published in 1891, **Excerpt attached**

When reading these short stories or excerpts, ask students to highlight aspect of writing such as:

- **Setting:** time, place, weather, and details of surroundings
- **Description:** artifacts and character
- **Themes:** gender, age, class, marriage, the gentleman ideal, identity, etc.

Students can discuss their findings as a class or in small groups. If students read multiple examples, they can compare and contrast the effectiveness of the writing or style and the themes the passages raise.

Excerpt from Chapter 34, *Pride and Prejudice*, By Jane Austen

Published 1813

Themes: Marriage, Class & the Gentleman Ideal

In spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection, and though her intentions did not vary for an instant, she was at first sorry for the pain he was to receive; till, roused to resentment by his subsequent language, she lost all compassion in anger. She tried, however, to compose herself to answer him with patience, when he should have done. He concluded with representing to her the strength of that attachment which, in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to conquer; and with expressing his hope that it would now be rewarded by her acceptance of his hand. As he said this, she could easily see that he had no doubt of a favourable answer. He *spoke* of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security. Such a circumstance could only exasperate farther, and, when he ceased, the colour rose into her cheeks, and she said:

“In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed, however unequally they may be returned. It is natural that obligation should be felt, and if I could *feel* gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot—I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly. I am sorry to have occasioned pain to anyone. It has been most unconsciously done, however, and I hope will be of short duration. The feelings which, you tell me, have long prevented the acknowledgment of your regard, can have little difficulty in overcoming it after this explanation.”

Mr. Darcy, who was leaning against the mantelpiece with his eyes fixed on her face, seemed to catch her words with no less resentment than surprise. His complexion became pale with anger, and the disturbance of his mind was visible in every feature. He was struggling for the appearance of

composure, and would not open his lips till he believed himself to have attained it. The pause was to Elizabeth's feelings dreadful. At length, with a voice of forced calmness, he said:

"And this is all the reply which I am to have the honour of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little *endeavour* at civility, I am thus rejected. But it is of small importance."

"I might as well inquire," replied she, "why with so evident a desire of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I *was* uncivil? But I have other provocations. You know I have. Had not my feelings decided against you—had they been indifferent, or had they even been favourable, do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man who has been the means of ruining, perhaps for ever, the happiness of a most beloved sister?"

As she pronounced these words, Mr. Darcy changed colour; but the emotion was short, and he listened without attempting to interrupt her while she continued:

"I have every reason in the world to think ill of you. No motive can excuse the unjust and ungenerous part you acted *there*. You dare not, you cannot deny, that you have been the principal, if not the only means of dividing them from each other—of exposing one to the censure of the world for caprice and instability, and the other to its derision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind."

She paused, and saw with no slight indignation that he was listening with an air which proved him wholly unmoved by any feeling of remorse. He even looked at her with a smile of affected incredulity.

"Can you deny that you have done it?" she repeated.

With assumed tranquillity he then replied: "I have no wish of denying that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards *him* I have been kinder than towards myself."

Elizabeth disdained the appearance of noticing this civil reflection, but its meaning did not escape, nor was it likely to conciliate her...

Elizabeth felt herself growing more angry every moment; yet she tried to the utmost to speak with composure when she said:

"You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner."

She saw him start at this, but he said nothing, and she continued:

"You could not have made the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it."

Again his astonishment was obvious; and he looked at her with an expression of mingled incredulity and mortification. She went on:

"From the very beginning—from the first moment, I may almost say—of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form the groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry."

"You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness."

And with these words he hastily left the room, and Elizabeth heard him the next moment open the front door and quit the house.

Excerpt from Chapter 3, *An American Girl in London*, by Sara Jeannette Duncan

Published 1891

Themes: Class & Gender

'Where is Charing Cross?' I asked one of the flower-women sitting by the big iron entrances to the station. 'Right'ere, miss, ware you be a-standin'! *Buy* a flower, miss? *Only* a penny! an' lovely they are! *Do* buy one, laidy!' It was dreadfully pathetic, the way she said it, and she had frightful holes in her shawl, and no hat or bonnet on. I had never seen a woman selling things out of doors with nothing on her head before, and it hurt me somehow. But I couldn't possibly have bought her flowers—they were too much like her. So I gave her a sixpence, and asked her where I could find an 'Ammersmith' bus. She thanked me so volubly that I couldn't possibly understand her, but I made out that if I stayed where I was an 'Ammersmith' bus would presently arrive. She went on asking me to buy flowers though, so I walked a little farther off. I waited a long time, and not a single 'bus appeared with 'Ammersmith on it. Finally, I asked another policeman. 'There!' he said, as one of the great lumbering concerns rolled up—'that's one of 'em now! You'll get it!' I didn't like to dispute with an officer of the law, but I had seen plenty of that particular red variety of 'bus go past, and to be quite certain I said: 'But isn't that a Hammersmith one?' The policeman looked quite cross. 'Well, isn't that what you're a-askin' for? 'Ammersmith an' 'Ammersmith—it's all the saime, dependin' on 'ow you pernounces it. Some people calls it 'Ammersmith, an' some people calls it '*Ammersmith!*' and he turned a broad and indignant back upon me. I flew for the 'bus, and the conductor, in a friendly way, helped me on by my elbow.

I did not think, before, that anything could wobble like an Atlantic steamer, but I experienced nothing more trying coming over than that Hammersmith 'bus. And there were no straps from the roof to hold on by—nothing but a very high and inconvenient handrail; and the vehicle seemed quite full of stout old gentlemen with white whiskers, who looked deeply annoyed when I upset their umbrellas and unintentionally plunged upon their feet. 'More room houtside, miss!' the conductor said—which I considered impertinent, thinking that he meant in the road. 'Is there any room on top?' I asked him, because I had walked on so many of the old gentlemen's feet that I felt uncomfortable about it. 'Yes, miss; that's wot I'm a-sayin'—lots o' room *houtside!*' So I took advantage of a lame man's getting off to mount the spiral staircase at the back of the 'bus and take a seat on top. It is a pity, isn't it, that Noah didn't think of an outside spiral staircase like that to *his* ark. He might have accommodated so many more of the animals, providing them, of course, with oilskin covers to keep off the wet, as you do. But even coming from a bran new and irreverent country, where nobody thinks of consulting the Old Testament for models of public conveyances, anybody can see that in many respects you have improved immensely upon Noah.

It was lovely up there—exactly like coming on deck after being in a stuffy little cabin in the steamer—a good deal of motion, but lots of fresh air. I was a little nervous at first, but as nobody fell off the tops of any of the other 'buses, I concluded that it was not a thing you were expected to do, and presently forgot all about it looking at the people swarming below me. My position made me feel immeasurably superior—at such a swinging height above them all—and I found myself speculating about them and criticising them, as I never should have done walking. I had never ridden on the top of anything before; it gave me an entirely new revelation of my fellow-creatures—if your monarchical

feelings will allow that expression from a Republican. I must say I liked it—looking down upon people who were travelling in the same direction as I was, only on a level below. I began to understand the agreeableness of class distinctions, and I wondered whether the arrangement of seats on the tops of the 'buses was not, probably, a material result of aristocratic prejudices.

Oh, I liked it through and through, that first ride on a London 'bus! To know just how I liked it, and why, and how and why we all like it from the other side of the Atlantic, you must be born and brought up, as most of us have been, in a city twenty-five or fifty years old, where the houses are all made of clean white or red brick, with clean green lawns and geranium beds and painted iron fences; where rows of nice new maple-trees are planted in the clean-shaved boulevards, and fresh-planed wooden sidewalks run straight for a mile or two at a time, and all the city blocks stand in their proper right angles—which are among our advantages, I have no doubt; but our advantages have a way of making your disadvantages more interesting.

Having been monarchists all your lives, however, you can't possibly understand what it is to have been brought up in fresh paint. I ought not to expect it of you. If you could, though, I should find it easier to tell you, according to my experience, why we are all so devoted to London.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- **Changing Perspectives:** Visiting an unfamiliar place is a prompt to students to view the world from a new perspective. Students develop a prose piece in this exercise, writing in the voice of a person who lived in the house in 1895, a master or a servant, a child or an adult. They could imagine and explore in writing a day or a moment in the life of a person from the past and connect to one of more of the themes discussed during the tour.
- **An Object Poem:** Students are invited to use their smart phones to take photographs of objects they view during their visit such as a soap dish, a kettle, or a door hinge. These photographs can be used by students as inspiration for focused writing exercises in poetry or prose, fiction or non-fiction focusing on one or more of the themes discussed during the tour.
- **A Letter Home:** in this after-visit exercise, students experiment with epistolary writing, composing a letter inspired by their visit to Dalnavert. This letter could be written to a person from the past that lived in the house, to a future visitor to the house, or to a person who has never visited the house.