University of Waterloo

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ENGLISH 108E

WOMEN IN LITERATURE

RESEARCH PAPER TOPICS

Fall 1989
Due: November 15
Length: 12-15 pages

You have been given a substantial amount of time to choose, research, organize and write your term paper on one of the following topics:

1. Draw upon one of the bibliographies presented on page 267 of James D. Lester's Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide, fifth edition, under the general category of "Women's Studies," to initiate your research into Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" as a medieval feminist text.

2. Lester's "Religion" compilation on pages 265-66 should provide you with some starting ideas for an exploration of the religious foundations and symbolism in Chaucer's "The Man of Law's Tale" and "The Clerk's Tale."

3. Beginning with the "Psychology" section on pages 264-65 of Lester's Guide, examine Shakespeare's use of psychological techniques used by some of the dramatic characters in The Taming of the Shrew and Antony and Cleopatra to achieve the outcomes they desire. How successful are these techniques in terms of the results of the dramatic actions?

4. Discuss the education of women as represented in The Rover and examined in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman in conjunction with the "Education" section on page 256 of Lester's text.

5. Draw upon the extensive "Language and Literature" section on pages 255-59 of Writing Research Papers to assist you in formulating and researching a comparative discussion of Roughing It in the Bush and The Bostonians as literary evocations of two moments in the lives of North American women.
Study the principal arguments for and against sex equality presented in Shaw's The Philanderer and Sarton's The Small Room.

"When we seek the literature of mothers and daughters, we are looking for a lineage not traced in any genealogy." (Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner).

Bernard Shaw in Mrs. Warren's Profession and Louis Al斯顿 in Maria Chapdelaine wrest from historical anonymity some of the realities of this important inter-generational relationship. How credible are their evocations of this fundamental human bond?

"Although feminist historians agree that social factors determine our conceptions of the sexes, scholars emphasize different aspects of the social context." (Elizabeth Abel and Emily K. Abel)

What major social factors are emphasized in the fictional construction of the sexes in The Bostonians and Surfacing?

"We have to try . . . to free ourselves from the entangling myths which attach us to the past - a past that may never have existed outside our heads - and which prevent us from looking realistically at the present." (Elizabeth Janeway)

What steps are taken by some of the characters of The Philanderer and Surfacing to free themselves and each other from such debilitating myths?

"[N]o one will admit that he can possibly mistake a novel written by a man for a novel written by a woman. There is the obvious and enormous difference of experience in the first place; but the essential difference lies in the fact that men describe battles and women the birth of children, but that each sex describes itself." (Virginia Woolf)

Maria Chapdelaine is written by a man, The Small Room by a woman. Attempt to apply the above observation to a comparative study of these two novels.