

Susan Farrell  
English 346  
Fall 2018

### Final Exam Preview

**I. Short quotes—Identify author/work** (answer 8 out of 9; 4 points each; 32 points total)

**II. Short Essays—Choose 4 quotes from the previous section and discuss context and significance. Each quote must be from a different author** (answer 4; 7 points each; 28 points total)

**III. Take-Home Essay Question** (40 points)

Choose one of the following questions and write a well-organized essay in response. Be sure to include a thesis and to use multiple examples and details. You must use at least one work from the first half of the semester (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, *White Noise*, *The Things They Carried*, *Song of Solomon*) and at least three works we've read since the mid-term in your response (*Tracks*, *A Thousand Acres*, *Maus*, *Fun Home*). Your response may be **no more** than 3 typed, double-spaced pages. It is due at the Final Exam (Wednesday, December 12, 12-3 p.m.).

**1. Fathers:** All of the works we have read in the second half of the semester have focused at least partly on fathers and fatherhood, whether on absent/missing fathers, adoptive fathers, abusive fathers, troubled/complex fathers, etc. **Discuss what you believe the various authors are saying about fatherhood in their works.** Do these authors present fathers who fulfill traditional gender roles? What is the relationship between fathers and patriarchal society/authority? What are fathers' responsibilities to their families? Are definitions of fatherhood affected by specific cultural or historical considerations? Do the authors re-imagine or reform traditional notions of fatherhood and family in their works?

**2. Stories from the Past:** All of the authors we have read in the second half of the semester use stories from the past in their work. These stories may include earlier, canonical western texts, actual historical events, or they may be mythic tales or folklore. **Discuss why you think the various authors include these stories from the past.** What particular stories do these writers use? Do they look back at history? Do they rely on Western myths and stories, on cross-cultural archetypes, or on material associated with a particular ethnic background? A combination? Why these choices? Do they rewrite or revise (or "signify on") older stories in any way? If so, to what purpose? What do such stories add to the work of the writers we have read?

**3. The Postmodern Void.** Postmodern literature often revolves around what Toni Morrison has called "unspeakable things unspoken"—these things can involve some kind of horror, atrocity, fear, or trauma that is often represented through silences, blanks, or as an emptiness that lies at the center of stories. We've seen many books that explore the pull between silence and speaking, for instance, that question whether trauma and atrocity are communicable, if, in the words of Vonnegut, "there is anything intelligent to say about a massacre." Using examples from works we've read this semester, explore this motif. Why do you think this depiction of traumatic silence is such a common postmodern trope? How is this trope possibly tied to ideas about meaning and truth in postmodern thought? Do you think this trope reflects, as well, the social/political history of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> C? How so?