I believe Charlotte Gilman’s metaphorical tale of insanity and oppression expressed in “The Yellow Wallpaper” provides fascinating insight from the perspective of the oppressed nineteenth century woman. The entire story is a metaphor for the coercion Miss Gilman observed women were subjected to by the ignorance and insensibility of men and society during this period. The narrative constantly contradicts itself, allowing us to witness the turmoil she felt between her depraved and sullen self versus her aspiring, creative identity. “I’m feeling so much better! ¶ I don’t sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal during the daytime” (pg. 559). I experience a sense of giddiness when she exploits the use of an exclamation mark. It represents the almost childlike disposition of ignorance and thoughtlessness. This example also serves as a discernible forbearer to her impending plummet into the chasm of dementia. She ceaselessly obsesses over the intricate wallpaper, fashioning tales of wild women and morphing fungi, allowing her imagination to consume her. Such is the habit of a creative mind yearning to flash forth from the dark background of life. One must also take into consideration the context of her work; this was a time in which, aside from slavery, this was a form of despicable separatism and inequality widely accepted as the norm. Society has evolved from this amoebic understanding of the world, but there are still radical, and all too often, common examples of this in the world today. The archetypal woman-as-object relationship still finds its way into homes across the world, whether by custom or oppressive circumstance – just think of the Saudi women forbidden to expose their flesh. The idea of woman as caretaker and housekeeper is one of societal persistence. Today, certainly, the
struggle for equality has closed the gap and rational minds are prevailing. This story is a perfect reflection upon the beauty and imagination, good or bad, of a woman’s mind and expresses the power and persistence of which they are capable.

Every time I’ve read the play “A Raisin in the Sun” I’ve been ceaselessly intrigued by the character of Walter Younger. He’s representative of a variety of thematic levity. Many, if not all, of his internal struggles can be observed and related to ordinary instances. This following exemplifies Walter’s inclination with greed as he retorts to his mother’s admission that money has overtaken freedom as the most precious commodity by saying “No – it was always money, Mama. We just didn’t know about it” (pg. 752). This entry is so telling to me because it not only exhibits some of the angst he may possess as an impoverished black man in 1959 Chicago, but also his misconception of value and impressionability. I once saw a rendition of Walter Younger on film portrayed by Danny Glover. In my mind’s eye, prior to seeing the film, this was precisely as I envisioned him – tall, broad, booming. So aside from the great casting decision, this was also the captured visual essence of Miss Hansberry’s character; the juxtaposition of his imposing stature and impressionable disposition. Upon the death of his father, as is custom being the eldest male, Walter assumes the role as head of the house, which creates an enormous burden on those broad shoulders. His illusory understanding of business doesn’t quite match his ambition, which is an endearing exhibition of tenacity and heart, but also a very telling and troubling character flaw which nearly causes the family to lose his father’s insurance money. He is obsessed with the attainment of monetary compensation until his last line of dialogue, which allows us to understand that some of his values may not have changed, but circumstance may have humbled him. It is interesting to note that the women in the play
provide the stability and rationality necessary of a prosperous head of house, which only adds to the disparity and futility of Walter’s actions. Nevertheless, the story teems with resilience. It is only appropriate to correlate Langston Hughes’ poem, *A Dream Deferred*, to the struggle of Walter Younger. It is applicable to all of the characters in differing contexts, but particular to Walter, his lack of success in achieving the American dream caused him to experience a despondent lapse, or dry up like a raisin in the sun. He’s assuredly one of the most interesting characters in the piece, but his overexertion of desire and haste ultimately prove him to be a character of weak, malleable humour.

Lacy M. Johnson’s imposing narrative in “White Trash Primer” is supremely relatable and effective. She speaks to the reader from the bosom of rural, low income life, as it pertains to her. There are many variables associable with poverty and low rent districts; Miss Johnson merges the gap between reader and writer by inflicting common imagery amongst potential readers in a folksy manner. This provides for a correlative experience enabling a more profound understanding of the underlying themes. The genius in her piece lies not in the vernacular used nor the arrangement, but, rather, the evolution of a character discovering her individual identity through observational and experiential knowledge. The “white trash” connotation is in reference to the poor, classless, meager individuals sometimes associated with the term “redneck.” At its origin, it’s a direct reference to poor white people; but this term, sadly, like many others, is a racist insult that is solely meant to degrade and undermine the humanity of a population. Not only does it instigate a negative societal stigma, but, conversely, it also exists as the embraced reality for some communities that have had generations of individuals saturated by the weight and burden of poverty. Every race and ethnicity that exists in the world today has a
corresponding and malicious term. The title of this piece, “White Trash Primer”, may be metaphorically suggestive to a base coat of primer paint, underneath darker coats of equally hateful viscous liquid on the house of racism and intolerance. A stretch, I know – but plausible. Her most profound endowment upon the piece is the accentuation of terms that, when used in a “white trash” context, almost sustain an ethereal essence of unattainability or lack of understanding. For example, “…so you take the truck into town without asking and you apply for a job at the fancy Wal-Mart but they don’t call you to in for an Interview” (pg. 827). She accentuates Interview because it’s one of the sacred terms in impoverished dialect, almost otherworldly. But her perfect and inspiring transgression of fruitless ignorance enables her to evolve – she gravitates to more educated and constructive terminology. “You study real damn hard this time cause you know this is your last earthly chance to make something of yourself and you buy a dictionary at a yard sale and think you might learn every word if you have Determination and Resolve” (pg. 829). She discovers that regardless of pressures stemming from society, family, and friends, you can ascend to the highest heights in this life if you desire.

I found Paul Lawrence Dunbar’s “We Wear the Mask” to be an incredibly revealing poem. He’s striving for individuality based upon nothing other than self merit and interest. For human beings to flourish they must have an unbridled gusto to allow them to do as Pablo Picasso did – find not seek. One that seeks succumbs to all the prejudices and desires of others and never actually thinks for themself. They are individuals that are given explained information which circumvents the entire process of learning and understanding. Understanding is achieved most proficiently through experience. More precisely, though, if an individual is constantly expected to act a certain way due to societal standards, then they are inhibited from thriving by way of
their own undiscovered strengths. People neither enjoy nor take enlightenment from interaction that is unauthentic. The best we can muster is to flash our indifferent “mouth with myriad subtleties” (pg. 674), which may convey a spectrum of nonverbal cues ranging from cynicism to melancholy. This entire misconception of reality stems from the manipulation of perception. Our perception is influenced by a variety of factors, but the understanding lies in knowing the source. Being able to consciously recognize these extraneous factors allows us to differentiate our ideas from those of others. Mr. Dunbar sums it up in a rather depressing sense by calling it “this debt we pay to human guile” (pg. 674). We must walk on eggshells because of the capable and discerning human mind? I think, as Dunbar may have done himself, that casting away the desire to fancy human guile, though not totally (as to avoid sociopathic behaviour), is certainly the most constructive strategy in identifying and appeasing one’s self. This ultimately leads to increased productivity in a person’s desired field of practice which is the direct consequence of happiness. The mask of which he speaks is representative of our understanding of human sensibility and how we’re perceived displaying it – but, perhaps mischievously, we can hide behind this same mask as we seek truth and honour.