

## GYC101DowLIT220

1. Greening Your Curriculum 101
2. Thomas Dow, Introduction to Fiction, LIT 220
3. Ecocriticism (in-class activity)
4. Demonstrate knowledge of a sampling of the various approaches to literary criticism, such as new criticism or formalist; reader response; feminist; gender; new historicism or pluralistic cultural; Marxist or materialist; psychoanalytic, structuralism or semiotic; deconstruction or post-structuralist; race, ethnicity, or post-colonial analyses, etc. and the ability to apply that knowledge to literary analysis.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of ecocriticism and the ability to apply that knowledge to literary analysis.
6. Students will utilize critical thinking skills as they read an excerpt from Heise's article from *PMLA*, grasp the general tenets of ecocriticism, and apply their understanding of this critical perspective to Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*.
7. This assignment affords my students the opportunity to work with this relatively complex critical perspective in relation to a text that they enjoy and have a high level of comfort and confidence with. As a result of this experience, my students will be able to then apply this theory to other texts as well as other facets of their lives.
8. The assignment is attached.
9. The assessment criteria are included at the end of the assignment.
10. I plan to use this assignment toward the end of this semester and/or next semester.

In my Introduction to Fiction course, I introduce my students to a variety of critical perspectives that can be useful ways to expand their understanding of the texts we study. For example, we discuss the ways in which a Feminist perspective would enhance their appreciation of Katniss's significance as a female hero in *The Hunger Games*, the insights that could be gained through a Marxist reading of *The Great Gatsby*, and the ways in which Freud's theories of the unconscious may help them better understand Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

Ecocriticism offers my students another useful lens through which to read literary texts. Many of the novels we read each semester, especially contemporary texts, but even Romantic texts like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, highlight in interesting ways man's relationship to the environment, nature, and the physical world.

In the past, I've not considered this relationship in light of sustainability. However, I've come to see this particular perspective as a means to engage my students in discussions of sustainability and literary depictions of the consequences of man's refusal to acknowledge that his relationship with the natural world needs to be one that promotes and ensures nature's ability to sustain itself, for without a healthy habitat, man will surely find himself written about in stories (by whom, I'm not sure) as a once-thriving species that dominated a world "once upon a time."

LIT 220  
Introduction to Fiction  
Dr. Dow

Introduction to Literary Criticism  
Part III: **Ecocriticism** (50 points)

Critical Thinking:

In “A Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism,” Ursula K. Heise offers a broad definition of ecocriticism: “Environmentalism and ecocriticism aim their critique of modernity at its presumption to know the natural world scientifically, to manipulate it technologically and exploit it economically, and thereby ultimately to create a human sphere apart from it in a historical process that is usually labeled “progress.” This domination strips nature of any value other than as a material resource and commodity and leads to a gradual destruction that may in the end deprive humanity of its basis for subsistence. Such domination empties human life of the significance it had derived from living in and with nature and alienates individuals and communities from their rootedness in place” (507).

Consider the three main settings in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games*:

District 12  
The Capital  
The Arena

Given Heise’s definition of ecocriticism, how might an ecocritical view open up and expand your understanding of Collins’ presentation of life in a post-war America-esque Panem? Given that Panem is the world that developed following large-scale war in a world that looks very much like our own, is it possible to read into Collins’ message a warning against current environmental policies and practices? Did the war or could a war result from diminishing and eventually scarce resources?

Group Work:

Working with five of your classmates, design a 2-minute commercial promoting the benefits of environmentally conscious behaviors and choices, using the guiding principles of ecocriticism as support as well as examples from *The Hunger Games* to illustrate the consequences of failing to act. You may use any of the technology resources in the smart podium as well as the digital camera and video camera on reserve in the library to prepare your commercial.

You will present your commercial during our next class meeting.

Assessment:

Your commercial will be graded based on the following criteria:

Demonstration of knowledge of ecocriticism  
Demonstration of ability to apply that knowledge to *The Hunger Games*  
Focus and Organization of the group’s commercial  
Effectiveness of the commercial’s overall argument  
Creativity and audience engagement