

Activity Sheet – Model Six (*Changing Places*)

Activity 1

Pre-questions

Do you remember what metafiction is? Can you think of Romanian writers who have used metafiction in their works? Which literary trend do they belong to?

Activity 2

Read the following text:

“PHILIP: Well, you may be right, Desiree. All I'm saying is that there *is* a generation gap, and I think it revolves around this public/private thing. Our generation – we subscribe to the old liberal doctrine of the inviolate self. It's the great tradition of realistic fiction, it's what novels are all about. The private life in the foreground, history a distant rumble of gunfire, somewhere offstage. In Jane Austen not even a rumble. Well, the novel is dying, and us with it. No wonder I could never get anything out of my novel-writing class at Euphoric State. It's an unnatural medium for their experience. Those kids (*gestures at screen*) are living a film, not a novel.

MORRIS: Oh, come on, Philip! You've been listening to Karl Kroop.

PHILIP: Well, he makes a lot of sense.

MORRIS: It's a very crude kind of historicism he's peddling, surely? And bad aesthetics.

HILARY: This is all very fascinating, I'm sure, but could we discuss something a little more practical? Like what the four of us are going to do in the immediate future?

DESIREE: It's no use, Hilary. Don't you recognize the sound of men talking?

MORRIS: (*TO PHILIP*) The paradigms of fiction are essentially the same whatever the medium. Words or images, it makes no difference at the structural level.

DESIREE: 'The structural level', 'paradigms'. How they love those abstract words.' Historicism'!

PHILIP: (*TO MORRIS*) I don't think that's entirely true. I mean, take the question of endings.

DESIREE: Yeah, let's take it!

PHILIP: You remember that passage in *Northanger Abbey* where Jane Austen says she's afraid that her readers will have guessed that a happy ending is coming up at any moment.

MORRIS: (*nods*) Quote, 'Seeing in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity.' Unquote.

PHILIP: That's it. Well, that's something the novelist can't help giving away, isn't it, that his book is shortly coming to an end ? It may not be a happy ending, nowadays, but he can't disguise the tell-tale compression of the pages.

HILARY and DESIREE begin to listen to what PHILIP is saying, and he becomes the focal point of attention. I mean, mentally you brace yourself for the ending of a novel. As you're reading, you're aware of the fact that there's only a page or two left in the book, and you get ready to close it. But with a film there's no way of telling, especially nowadays, when films are much more loosely structured, much more ambivalent, than they used to be. There's no way of telling which frame is going to be the last. The film is going along, just as life goes along, people are behaving, doing things, drinking, talking, and we're watching them, and at any point the director chooses, without warning, without anything being resolved, or explained, or wound up, it can just ... end.

PHILIP shrugs. The camera stops, freezing him in mid-gesture.” (Lodge, *Changing Places*, p. 250-251)

In groups of three or four, answer the following questions:

1. Having read the book, can you place the fragment within the plot of the novel?
2. What is the subject the characters are discussing?
3. What are the metafictional elements in the excerpt?
4. Starting from the characters' discussion, draw a parallel between the modernist/ postmodernist fiction and the novelistic writing before the twentieth century.
5. Does Lodge finish the book in the tradition of the realistic novel? Support your opinion with arguments.

Activity 3 (Homework)

In groups of 4, make a Power Point Presentation about the postmodernist elements in *Changing Places*.

Activity Sheet – Model Seven (*Small World*)

Activity 1

Pre-Questions:

1. Have you heard of The Holy Grail? If yes, what do you know about it?
2. Do you know any other novels the heroes of which are really dedicated to an ideal and are searching for? (Don Quixote)
3. Do you think nowadays there are still such dedicated people who would do anything to reach an ideal? What do you think they are dedicated to?

Activity 2:

Read the following text:

“Prologue

WHEN April with its sweet showers has pierced the drought of March to the root, and bathed every vein of earth with that liquid by whose power the flowers are engendered; when the zephyr, too, with its dulcet breath, has breathed life into the tender new shoots in every copse and on every heath, and the young sun has run half his course in the sign of the Ram, and the little birds that sleep all night with their eyes open give song (so Nature prompts them in their hearts), then, as the poet Geoffrey Chaucer observed many years ago, folk long to go on pilgrimages. Only, these days, professional people call them conferences.

The modern conference resembles the pilgrimage of medieval Christendom in that it allows the participants to indulge themselves in all the pleasures and diversions of travel while appearing to be austere bent on self-improvement. To be sure, there are certain penitential exercises to be performed--the presentation of a paper, perhaps, and certainly listening to the papers of others. But with this excuse you journey to new and interesting places, meet new and interesting people, and form new and interesting relationships with them; exchange gossip and confidences (for your well-worn stories are fresh to them, and vice versa); eat, drink and make merry in their company every evening; and yet, at the end of it all, return home with an enhanced reputation for seriousness of mind. Today's conferees have an additional advantage over the pilgrims of old in that their expenses are usually paid, or at least subsidised, by the institution to which they belong, be it a government department, a commercial firm, or, most commonly perhaps, a university.

There are conferences on almost everything these days, including the works of Geoffrey Chaucer. If, like his hero Troilus at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, he looks down from the eighth sphere of heaven on This little spot of erthe, that with the se Embraced is and observes all the frantic traffic around the globe that he and other great writers have set in motion--the jet trails that criss-cross

the oceans, marking the passage of scholars from one continent to another, their paths converging and intersecting and passing, as they hasten to hotel, country house or ancient seat of learning, there to confer and carouse, so that English and other academic subjects may be kept up--what does Geoffrey Chaucer think?

Probably, like the spirit of Troilus, that chivalrous knight and disillusioned lover, he laughs heartily at the spectacle, and considers himself well out of it. For not all conferences are happy, hedonistic occasions; not all conference venues are luxurious and picturesque; not all Aprils, for that matter, are marked by sweet showers and dulcet breezes.” (David Lodge, *Small World*, p. 11-12)

In groups of three to five, answer the following questions:

1. What do you think is the tone of the Prologue? Do you know this from the very beginning?
2. What kind of tone is the one at the beginning?
3. How do you comment on the last sentence of the first paragraph? - *Only, these days, professional people call them conferences.*
4. How do you comment on the zodiacal sign (the Ram) mention?
5. Why do you think the author compares nowadays' conferees to pilgrims? Do you think he is serious about it?
6. What specific examples of irony do you find in the text?
7. What is the main comic device employed by the author?

Follow-up activity

Write an essay referring to another parody you have read in Romanian literature. Comment upon the writer's style and tone. Support your presentation with quotes and examples.

Activity Sheet - Model Eight (*Small World*)

Activity 1

Pre-questions:

Does your name have any significance? Do names tell you anything about the people bearing those names? What about the names of fictional characters in ten literary texts you have read in Romanian or in English?

Activity 2

Read the following text and answer the after-reading questions:

"Miraculously, the girl had materialized at his elbow.

"Hallo, what's your name?" she said, peering at his lapel. "I can't read these little badges without my glasses." Her voice was strong but melodious, slightly American in accent, but with a trace of something else he could not identify.

"Persse McGarrigle-from Limerick," he eagerly replied. "Persse? Is that short for Percival?"

"It could be," said Persse, "if you like."

The girl laughed, revealing teeth that were perfectly even and perfectly white. "What do you mean, if I like?"

"It's a variant of 'Pearce'." He spelled it out for her.

"Oh, like in *Finnegans Wake*! The Ballad of Persse O'Reilley."

"Exactly so. Persse, Pearce, Pierce--I wouldn't be surprised if they were not all related to Percival. Percival, per se, as Joyce might have said," he added, and was rewarded with another dazzling smile.

"What about McGarrigle?"

"It's an old Irish name that means 'Son of Super-valour'."

"That must take a lot of living up to."

"I do my best," said Persse. "And your own name...?" He inclined his head towards the magnificent bosom, appreciating, now, why Professor Swallow had appeared to be almost nuzzling it in his attempt to read the badge pinned there, for the name was not boldly printed, like everyone else's, but written in a minute italic script. "*A. L. Pabst*," it austere stated. There was no indication of which university she belonged to.

"Angelica," she volunteered.

"Angelica!" Persse exhaled rather than pronounced the syllables. "That's a beautiful name!"

"Pabst is a bit of a let-down, though, isn't it? Not in the same class as 'Son of Super-valour'."

"Would it be a German name?"

"I suppose it was originally, though Daddy is Dutch."

"You don't look German or Dutch."

"No?" she smiled. "What do I look then?"

"You look Irish. You remind me of the women in the south-west of Ireland whose ancestors intermarried with the sailors of the Spanish Armada that was shipwrecked on the coast of Munster in the great storm of 1588. They have just your kind of looks."

"What a romantic idea! It could be true, too. I have no idea where I came from originally."

"How's that?"

"I'm an adopted child."

"What does the 'L' stand for?"

"A rather silly name. I'd rather not tell you."

"Then why draw attention to it?"

"If you use initials in the academic world, people think you're a man and take you more seriously."

"No one could mistake you for a man, Angelica," Persse said sincerely.

"I mean in correspondence. Or publications."

"Have you published much?"

"No, not a lot. Well, nothing, yet, actually. I'm still working on my PhD. Did you say you teach at Limerick? Is it a big Department?"

"Not very big," said Persse. "As a matter of fact, there's only the three of us. It's basically an agricultural college. We've only recently started offering a general arts degree. Do you mean to say that you don't know who your real parents were?"

"No idea at all. I was a foundling."

"And where were you found, if that isn't an impertinent question?"

"It is a little intimate, considering we've only just met," said Angelica. "But never mind. I was found in the toilet of a KLM Stratocruiser flying from New York to Amsterdam. I was six weeks old. Nobody knows how I got there."

"No, Daddy was an executive of KLM at the time. He and Mummy adopted me, as they had no children of their own. Have you really only three members of staff in your Department?"

"Yes. There's Professor McCreedy--he's Old English. And Dr Quinlan--Middle English. I'm Modern English."

"What? All of it? From Shakespeare to...?"

"T. S. Eliot. I did my MA thesis on Shakespeare's influence on T. S. Eliot." (Lodge, *Small World*, p. 34-35)

In groups of four or five, the students will answer the following questions:

1. What is the general tone the writer uses in this fragment?
2. Can you identify any sources of the comic effect the text creates?
3. What metafictional elements do you find in the text?
4. What symbols can you identify in the text?
5. What is the significance of the characters' names?
6. What do you think is the writer's attitude? Bring arguments from the text.
7. Which nineteenth century British literary work (a play, a famous comedy by a very fashionable writer, which revolves around the identity of the male character who figures in the title of the play) do you think of when you read about the character being found in a toilet of a plane?
8. What postmodernist device does the author employ?

Follow-up activity

Having read the book, write a 300-word essay about the postmodernist comic elements that appear in *Small World*.

Activity Sheet – Model Nine (*Small World*)

Activity 1

Pair work:

Match the titles of the well-known literary works in column A with their possible equivalents in column B :

A.

1. Gulliver's Travels
2. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
3. Pride and Prejudice
4. Nice Work!
5. Gone with the Wind

(Key : 1d, 2b, 3a, 4e, 5c)

B.

- a. Together at Last
- b. A Strange Dream
- c. A Strong Woman
- d. A Journey Diary
- e. Shared Experiences

Activity 2

- a. Read the following text:

"Akira introduces Persse to his circle of friends, explaining that they are all translators, who meet once a month in this bar, "to let the hair down and put the knees up." The Japanese beams proudly as he displays these idioms to Persse. All the translators give him their cards except one who is asleep or drunk in the corner. Most of them are technical and commercial translators, but, learning that Persse is a teacher of English literature, they politely make literary conversation. The man sitting on Persse's left, who translates maintenance manuals for Honda motorcycles, volunteers the information that he recently saw a play by Shakespeare performed by a Japanese company, entitled, "The Strange Affair of the Flesh and the Bosom."

"I don't think I know that one," says Persse politely.

"He means, _The Merchant of Venice_," Akira explains.

"Is that what it's called in Japan?" says Persse with delight. "Some of the older translations of Shakespeare in our country were rather free," says Akira apologetically.

"Do you know any other good ones?"

"Good ones?" Akira looks puzzled.

"Funny ones."

"Oh!" Akira beams. It seems not to have occurred to him before that "The Strange Affair of the Flesh and the Bosom" is amusing. He ponders. "There is, 'Lust and Dream of the Transitory World,' " he says. "That is--"

"No, don't tell me--let me guess," says Persse. "_Anthony and Cleopatra?_"

"_Romeo and Juliet,_" says Akira. "And 'Swords of Freedom'..."

"_Julius Caesar?_"

"Correct."

"You know," says Persse, "there's the makings of a good parlour game here. You could make up your own... like, 'The Mystery of the Missing Handkerchief' for _Othello_, or 'A Sad Case of Early Retirement' for _Lear_." He calls for another round of drinks.

"When I translate English books," says Akira, "I always try to get as close as possible to the original titles. But sometimes it is difficult, especially when there is a pun. For example, Ronald Frobisher's _Any Road_--"

"Ronald Frobisher--have you translated him?"

"I am presently translating his nova, _Could Try Harder_. Do you know it?"

"Know it? I know him."

"Really? You know Mr Frobisher? But that is wonderful! You must tell me all about him. What kind of man is he?"

"Well," says Persse. "He's very nice. But rather irascible."

"Irascible? That is a new word to me."

"It means, easily angered."

"Oh yes, of course, he was Angry Young Man." Akira nods delightedly, and calls the attention of his friends to the fact that Persse is acquainted with the distinguished British novelist whose work he is translating. Persse recounts how Frobisher set the London literati adrift on the Thames, a story received with great pleasure by all, though they seem a little disappointed that the ship did not actually float out to sea and sink.

"You must know a lot of English writers," says Akira.

"No, Ronald Frobisher is the only one," says Persse. "Do you translate many?"

"No, only Mr Frobisher," says Akira.

"Well," says Persse. "It's a small world. Do you have that saying in Japan?"

"Narrow world," says Akira. "We say, 'It's a narrow world.' "

At this point, the man who was asleep in the corner wakes up, and is introduced to Persse as Professor Motokazu Umeda, a colleague of Akira's. "He is translator of Sir Philip Sidney," says Akira. "He will know more of the old Shakespeare titles."

Professor Umeda yawns, rubs his eyes, accepts a whisky, and, when Persse's interest has been explained to him, comes up with "The Mirror of Sincerity" (_Pericles_), "The Oar Well-Accustomed

to the Water" (_All's Well That Ends Well_) and "The Flower in the Mirror and the Moon on the Water" (_The Comedy of Errors_).

"Oh, that one beats them all!" exclaims Persse. "That's really beautiful."

"It is a set phrase," Akira explains. "It means, that which can be seen but cannot be grasped." His euphoria begins rapidly to ebb away.

"Excuse me," says Professor Motokazu Umeda, offering Persse his card, printed in Japanese on one side and English on the other. Persse stares at the name, which now rings a distant, or not so distant, bell.

"Were you by any chance at a conference in Honolulu recently?" he asks. (Lodge, *Small World*, p. 328-329)

b). In groups of three to five, answer the following questions:

1. Do you think the author agrees with Akira and Umeda ? Sustain your opinion.
2. How do you explain the meaning of "to let the hair down and put the knees up"?
3. What is the tone of the narration? Find examples in the text to sustain your answers.

Activity 3

The teacher uses a Power Point Presentation to explain to the students what intertextuality is, providing definitions and examples. He also tells the students that this device is employed by many postmodernist writers (the teacher makes sure the students are familiar with the literary movement; if they are not, the teacher will provide further information). Then, the teacher asks the students to read the following excerpt from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, chapter XI (*Who Stole the Tarts?*)

"The twelve jurors were all writing very busily on slates. 'What are they doing?' Alice whispered to the Gryphon. 'They can't have anything to put down yet, before the trial's begun.'

'They're putting down their names,' the Gryphon whispered in reply, 'for fear they should forget them before the end of the trial.'

'Stupid things!' Alice began in a loud, indignant voice, but she stopped hastily, for the White Rabbit cried out, 'Silence in the court!' and the King put on his spectacles and looked anxiously round, to make out who was talking.

'Herald, read the accusation!' said the King.

On this the White Rabbit blew three blasts on the trumpet, and then unrolled the parchment scroll, and read as follows:--

'The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts,

All on a summer day:

The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts,

And took them quite away!

‘Consider your verdict,’ the King said to the jury.

‘Consider your verdict,’ the King said to the jury.

‘Not yet, not yet!’ the Rabbit hastily interrupted. ‘There’s a great deal to come before that!’

‘Call the first witness,’ said the King; and the White Rabbit blew three blasts on the trumpet, and called out, ‘First witness!’

The first witness was the Hatter. He came in with a teacup in one hand and a piece of bread-and-butter in the other. ‘I beg pardon, your Majesty,’ he began, ‘for bringing these in: but I hadn’t quite finished my tea when I was sent for.’

‘You ought to have finished,’ said the King. ‘When did you begin?’

The Hatter looked at the March Hare, who had followed him into the court, arm-in-arm with the Dormouse. ‘Fourteenth of March, I think it was,’ he said.

‘Fifteenth,’ said the March Hare.

‘Sixteenth,’ added the Dormouse.

‘Write that down,’ the King said to the jury, and the jury eagerly wrote down all three dates on their slates, and then added them up, and reduced the answer to shillings and pence.

All this time the Queen had never left off staring at the Hatter, and, just as the Dormouse crossed the court, she said to one of the officers of the court, ‘Bring me the list of the singers in the last concert!’ on which the wretched Hatter trembled so, that he shook both his shoes off.

‘Give your evidence,’ the King repeated angrily, ‘or I’ll have you executed, whether you’re nervous or not.’

‘I’m a poor man, your Majesty,’ the Hatter began, in a trembling voice, ‘--and I hadn’t begun my tea--not above a week or so--and what with the bread-and-butter getting so thin--and the twinkling of the tea--’

‘The twinkling of the what?’ said the King.

‘It began with the tea,’ the Hatter replied.

‘Of course twinkling begins with a T!’ said the King sharply. ‘Do you take me for a dunce? Go on!’

‘I’m a poor man,’ the Hatter went on, ‘and most things twinkled after that--only the March Hare said--’

‘I didn’t!’ the March Hare interrupted in a great hurry.

‘You did!’ said the Hatter.

‘I deny it!’ said the March Hare.

‘He denies it,’ said the King: ‘leave out that part.’

‘Well, at any rate, the Dormouse said--’ the Hatter went on, looking anxiously round to see if he would deny it too: but the Dormouse denied nothing, being fast asleep.” (Carroll, 128-130)

In pairs, answer the following questions:

1. What kind of atmosphere does the author create in the excerpt above? (Strange, queer, unreal)
2. What examples of strange things can you find? What is the writer’s purpose in using them? (students should be able to identify the author’s irony towards the facts and characters presented in order to create a comic effect)
3. What do you think about the characters’ names? (students should notice that they are strange and comic)
4. Are there any similarities between the two literary excerpts? (Both of them reveal irony and create a comic effect. In both of them we see characters with funny names meant to ridicule the character)
5. Can you find an example of intertextuality used for comic purposes? (students should be able to identify the following passages: *All the translators give him their cards except one who is asleep or drunk in the corner. (Small World)*; ‘Well, at any rate, the Dormouse said-’ the Hatter went on, looking anxiously round to see if he would deny it too: but the Dormouse denied nothing, being fast asleep. (*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*)

Activity Sheet - Model Ten (*Nice Work*)

Activity 1

Pre-questions :

1. Have you ever dreamt of being different from what you are? What prevents people sometimes from what they wish they were? (Possible answers: society, family obligations, health problems, mere lack of courage).
2. If you could change your routine life, what would you choose instead?

Activity 2

Read the following text:

“Vic wipes the tidemark of foam from his cheeks and fingers the shaven flesh appraisingly. Dark brown eyes stare back at him. Who am I?

He grips the washbasin, leans forward on locked arms, and scans the square face, pale under a forelock of lank brown hair, flecked with grey, the two vertical furrows in the brow like a clip holding the blunt nose in place, the straight-ruled line of the mouth, the squared-off jaw. You know who you are: it's all on file at Division.

Wilcox: Victor Eugene. Date of Birth: 19 Oct. 1940. Place of Birth: Easton, Rummidge, England. Education: Endwell Road Primary School, Easton; Easton Grammar School for Boys; Rummidge College of Advanced Technology. MI Mech. Eng. 1964. Marital Status: married (to Marjorie Florence Coleman, 1964). Children: Raymond (b. 1966), Sandra (b. 1969), Gary (b. 1972). Career: 1962-64, apprentice, Vanguard Engineering; 1964-66, Junior Production Engineer, Vanguard Engineering; 1966-70, Senior Engineer, Vanguard Engineering; 1970-74, Production Manager, Vanguard Engineering; 1974-78, Manufacturing Manager, Lewis & Arbuckle Ltd; 1978-80, Manufacturing Director, Rumcol Castings; 1980-85, Managing Director, Rumcol Castings. Present Position: Managing Director, J. Pringle & Sons Casting and General Engineering.

That's who I am.

Vic grimaces at his own reflection, as if to say: come off it, no identity crises, please. Somebody has to earn a living in this family. He shrugs on his dressing-gown, which hangs from a hook on the bathroom door, switches off the light, and softly re-enters the dimly lit bedroom. Marjorie has, however, been woken by the sound of plumbing.

‘Is that you?’ she says drowsily; then, without waiting for an answer, ‘I’ll be down in a minute.’

‘Don’t hurry,’ says Vic. *Don’t bother* would be more honest, for he prefers to have the kitchen to himself in the early morning, to prepare his own simple breakfast and enjoy the first cigarette of the day undisturbed. Marjorie, however, feels that she must put in an appearance downstairs, however

token, before he leaves for work, and there is a sense in which Vic understands and approves of this gesture. His own mother was always first up in the mornings, to see husband and son off to work or college, and continued the habit almost till the day she died.” (Lodge, *Nice Work*, p. 17-18)

(Silent reading. The students are given the text and the after-reading questions. In groups of four or five, they will read the text and discuss the questions.)

After-questions:

1. Do you think the author is serious about most of the aspects presented in the text?
2. What kind of comic aspects do you find in the text?

Possible answers:

- the association of trivial things such as the hero’s official data and his own self;
 - the fact that the gravity of the moment is diminished by the location : a bathroom;
the ironic conclusion after the data is presented: “That's who I am”, drawn in a very laconic tone.
 - the conventionalism of his relationship with his wife, which is subtly ridiculed by his unexpressed thoughts (“he prefers to have the kitchen to himself in the early morning ...Vic understands and approves of this gesture”);
 - the hero’s sarcasm exploiting language : “Don't bother would be more honest”
3. What do you think is Vic’s relationship with his family like?
 4. How do you comment on: “...come off it, no identity crises, please. Somebody has to earn a living in this family.”
 5. What do you think is the hero’s attitude towards the following childhood memory: “His own mother was always first up in the mornings, to see husband and son off to work or college, and continued the habit almost till the day she died”? Does he agree to his late mother’s habit?

Activity 3 (Homework)

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the reason of the physical description at the beginning?

Possible answers:

- For the comic effect: an identity crisis is announced and at the same time put in contrast with the plainness of a physical aspect matter ;
 - The soft brown curl is meant to possibly suggest weakness and helplessness; at the same time, “the straight-ruled line of the mouth, the squared-off jaw” are brought together by contrast, which creates a comic effect as well.
 - The comparison of the two vertical furrows in the brow to a clip suggests imprisonment.
2. Write a 200-word composition analysing the relationship of the male adult character on the brink of his midlife crisis with women.