

## PSYCHOLOGY AND LITERATURE

After a two-year hiatus, I am very happy that we are able to resume classes that require conversation. I am aware that some people who will sign up for this course are old-timers while some will be joining us for the first time. I must admit that we have often had so much fun discussing the characters in a novel or play that we forgot about the psychology portion of this course. So we will begin by going back to a brief review of the theories that seem to me most helpful to our task.

The “big” theories of personality help us to understand the whole person, functioning to meet life’s demands. Similarly, good novels and plays help us to see a particular character in a particular setting. Paying attention to particularity helps us to see the limits of our theories. Our purpose is not to “explain away” a character by diagnosing his or her neuroses, as was often the case in the early application of psychoanalytic theory to literature, but to add ways of seeing that increase our understanding of human nature and behavior.

I know this is a lot of reading but ...conversation is what makes the course!

9/6: Judith Guest, Ordinary People, (1976)

9/13: Anne Tyler, Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant. (1996)

9/20: Elinor Lipman, The Family Man. (2010)

9/27: Penelope Lively, Passing On. (1999)

10/4: Jamaica Kinkaid, See, now, then. (2014)

10/11: Frances Mayes, Women in Sunlight. (2019)

10/18: Elizabeth Strout, Oh William. (2021)

10/25: TBD