

Making A Connection

By Angela L. Davis

The first part of this project is a short story, the second part contains two poems (one is free verse and the other is in sonnet form) and the third and final part is a play or script. Each written work encompasses one of many genres that fall under the English/Language Arts heading. The idea for this project came from Dr. William Morgan, a former professor at Illinois State University, who wanted his students to understand the diversity of the English department at the university.

As stated, part one of this project is the writing of a short story, which can be related to both novel reading and creative writing. Students' stories should be at least five pages, double-spaced—page-length specification is to ensure that the students write more than a paragraph or two of simple text. The stories should include essentials in writing such as setting, imagery and description of characters. Part two is poetry. Students are required to relate their poems to one or more characteristic(s) of their short stories. They must create two poems, one can be free verse, but the other must comprise meter, such as in the sonnet. Poetry also encompasses creative writing, as well as intertextuality. The final step in this process is drama. Students are asked to rewrite their short stories into a short one- or two-scene play. They should include stage direction, background information about characters and any reworking of their stories to help the audience understand the plot. This part is by far the most tedious facet of this project and will take the longest amount of time to complete.

By creating fiction and developing it into a play, students can understand the difficulties faced by both authors and the writer(s) of the screenplay. Just one of these frustrations includes ways in which the text should be adapted for the stage in order for the audience to feel and understand the message(s) portrayed by the book. Students should be able to relate to both sides after completing this task. By creating poetry based upon their stories and plays, students see how they might be adapted to the musical scores and lyrics developed especially for particular films and/or stage productions, since many songs are closely related to poems. This project will give students the opportunity to see the connectivity of the many aspects of the English/Language Arts, and the three selected (novels, poetry and drama) are only a small percentage. Students should gain understanding about the association between the study of English/Language Arts and its relationship to authors, filmmakers, singers and songwriters, as well as the many other people involved in the Arts.

Angela L. Davis
Dr. Robert L. Broad
ENG 297.02: Short Story
November 25, 2002

The Quilt

In her dark bedroom, Leigh's fingers swept across the surface of the nightstand. Locating her eyeglasses, she balanced them onto her small, petite nose, as her almond-shaped chestnut eyes attempted to focus. She maneuvered her body down the hallway and into the living room. Shrills from the ringing telephone pierced her still-sleepy eardrums as she lifted the receiver.

"Hello?" she inquired.

The voice on the other end of the receiver squealed, "Oh my God! You are never going to believe it—I'm in love!"

It never failed. Whenever Grace fell in love, she made it a point to discuss it with Leigh as soon as it happened, which, in most cases, occurred sometime between 3:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings. Grace was the type of person who threw away boxes and boxes of half-eaten chocolates without ever deciding if she liked any of them at all.

"I met him Friday night at Blarney's. He looked like a little lost puppy standing there all by himself, so I started a conversation," said Grace.

"Mmm..." replied Leigh, her eyes adjusting to the light.

As Leigh fumbled for the switch on the small terracotta lamp located beside her favorite chair, she told Grace to fill her in. Half-listening Leigh made her way back down the hallway. Once inside the bathroom, she settled herself over the calm, placid water of her white porcelain American Standard, placed the telephone between her left shoulder and left ear, and used both hands to grasp a wad of Charmin.

"Anyway," Grace said, "I was at Blarney's with the girls after work, and he was at the bar. We ended up talking most of the night, and, then, he asked me out for Saturday!"

Trying to be attentive to the lively chatter on the other end of the receiver, recalling each detail of the previous evening's events, Leigh firmly pressed and held down the small silver lever, briefly apologizing to Grace for the noisy interruption.

Grace continued, "Well, you know how I can never decide what to wear, right? Well, I settled on that slinky white mini-dress—you remember? The one you hate? Anyway, I finally decided that I would wear it, but I couldn't find those strappy high-heeled sandals I bought in Chicago, and I definitely could not wear *that* dress without *those* shoes, so I had to make a trip to Famous at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon. I mean, I only had *six* hours to get ready before he was supposed to pick me up!"

"Hmm..." Leigh replied, flipping the switch to turn on the fluorescent bulbs that hung from her kitchen ceiling. Her eyes paused on the microwave's digital clock—3:23 a.m. She sighed, opened the door of the refrigerator and pulled out a Diet Coke®. As she popped the top of the can, her heel kicked the refrigerator door shut, and she trudged back into the living room. Plopping herself onto the big, comfy reading chair, Leigh pulled the quilt that was draped over its arm across her bare legs and rested her head against the back of the chair.

"So," Grace said, "after two exhausting hours of searching the mall—and running into Brad—I finally bought these really cute plum slingbacks, which meant that wearing that slinky little white dress was out, but finding a great pair of shoes was worth another hour of choosing a different outfit, right?"

"Absolutely," Leigh said absentmindedly. Grace was a year younger than Leigh and continually fantasized and daydreamed about Prince Charming, who would come and whisk her

away to his 2500-square-foot, four-bedroom, two-bath, three-car garage mansion, with a perfectly landscaped, privacy-fenced yard, positioned on a cul-de-sac.

“Finally,” sighed Grace, “I settled on those khaki capri-style slacks and my periwinkle-blue sweater. You were with me when I bought that outfit in St. Louis at Dillard’s. It was the same day I bought that great pair of canvas wedge-heeled sandals and met that guy, Mike, at The Landing, remember?”

“Uh-huh,” murmured Leigh, deep in thought, her index finger tracing the outline of one of the hand-embroidered Southern-belle’s shawls on her quilt. (With Grace, Leigh could carry on a full conversation, especially one of this nature, without really paying much attention.)

How Leigh loved her quilt! The day she received it was still fresh in her memory. Her grandmother had given each of her granddaughters a quilt on her wedding day; however, she decided to give Leigh hers on her twenty-sixth birthday. Grandma said that it was because it was Leigh’s “Golden Birthday,” but Leigh knew better. The connection between her and her grandmother was remarkable. It was like two separate human bodies who shared one essence, one being; they knew each other’s thoughts—Leigh thought that they were *exactly* alike!

“I could not believe it!” said Grace. “There it was, twenty minutes before he was supposed to arrive, and I could not find that stupid purse! And, then, guess what?”

“What?” asked Leigh.

“Duh,” exclaimed Grace, “it was buried in the corner of my closet, still in the bag from Marshall Fields, with the receipt and those darn strappy high-heeled sandals! Can you believe it?”

“Wow!” replied Leigh, nestling deeper into the chair, pulling the quilt up to her chin.

Grandma had always said that Leigh would make something of herself and that nothing—not even marriage or a family—could stand in her way. When her grandmother presented the quilt on her 26th birthday, Leigh had the feeling that, when and if she did marry, her grandmother would not be there. Leigh was saddened by this thought as she tried to catch up with Grace’s story.

“Then,” Grace continued, “he opened the door of his car—did I mention that he drives a black Camry[®] just like the one that Sam drove when he and I dated two years ago? Well, right there on the seat was a long-stemmed red rose! I mean, my mouth dropped open, and I’m sure I looked like a total geek, but I picked it up, thanked him and slid into the seat. As he shut my door and walked around the car to the driver’s side, I had already begun to debate the goodnight kiss; I mean, should I or shouldn’t I? After all, it was *only* our first date.”

“Exactly,” Leigh said without thinking, her thoughts focused on her grandmother. Now, even her twenty-sixth birthday seemed like a lifetime ago.

It had only been about two weeks since grandma’s diagnosis—lung cancer. A surgeon made every attempt to remove the diseased portions of her grandmother’s lungs, but to no avail. He estimated that the tumor had been growing inside her now 75-year-old body for more than three years, and he told the family that she probably only had about three more months to live. It was then that Leigh began to regret her decision to pursue her education and her career versus settling down, getting married and starting a family like her cousins and her younger sister. Her grandmother was in all of those wedding pictures and family photographs, but, at that moment, Leigh’s heart sank knowing that Grandma would not be in her wedding album.

“You should have seen him, Leigh,” said Grace. “I could tell that he was quite irritated, but he kept his cool. He explained to the maître d’ that we had an eight o’clock reservation, and we expected to be seated immediately. I was definitely impressed with how calm he was about the whole situation.”

“Definitely impressive,” replied Leigh, as visions of her cousins’ wedding albums and pictures of their children flashed through her head.

Leigh’s grandmother’s peaceful, composed demeanor surrounding the news about her growing cancer was unprecedented. Leigh had always been amazed at how valiant and resilient her grandmother was, but now, confronted with her approaching fate, Grandma did not falter. In fact, she only spent four days in the hospital recovering from her surgical procedure, and, then, returned home where she could settle unfinished business and watch her beloved “Cubbies” on television.

In mid-sentence, Grace interrupted herself abruptly, “—do you have any idea what a bottle of Chardonnay costs in that place?” She didn’t give Leigh time to answer, “—too much, that’s how much! But, he ordered one anyway, which got me thinking that this guy must be pretty loaded to blow that much cash on a bottle of wine. Anyway, after dinner—and dessert—we went to this *great* club!”

“Ahhh...” Leigh commented, her thoughts turning back to her grandmother.

Grandma loved the Chicago Cubs! Leigh could remember three Christmases ago when her grandmother mentioned to Leigh’s father and his sisters that all she wanted from “Santa” was a new 27-inch television set because she couldn’t see the game very well from her favorite chair on her current one. Dad and Leigh’s Aunts laughed, but they bought one for her anyway! Leigh smiled thinking about the telephone call yesterday to see how her grandmother was feeling. Grandma “politely” reminded Leigh that it was spring training, and WGN was televising a live game “all the way” from Florida, which meant that Leigh should call her later. Perhaps it was the way that she enjoyed such simple pleasures that Leigh would miss the most about her grandmother.

“Scott was such a gentleman, not like some of the other men I have dated,” Grace stated. “First of all, he did not leave me alone for two hours to stand at the bar with his buddies, watching the second half of the ballgame. Secondly, he did not get so stinking drunk that he had to be dragged to the car, driven home and put into bed after christening the ceramic tile in my foyer—not mentioning any names!”

“Scott?” inquired Leigh.

“YES! Scott—you know, the incredible man that I went out with tonight? Have you been listening to a word I’ve said?” asked Grace.

Leigh then realized that Grace was surprisingly a lot like grandma. Grace didn’t have the high aspirations that Leigh constantly sought; she was purely simplistic. All Grace wanted was the life that Leigh’s grandmother had spent her whole life living—serene and uncomplicated, one that contained a loving and thoughtful husband, healthy children and a practical lifestyle. This was, feasibly, the life that Leigh was running from—a life that through continuance of simple daily routines (like Grandma’s beloved baseball games) might very well be the “meaning of life.” Perhaps both Grace and Leigh’s grandmother knew the key to true happiness.

“So, can you believe it?” asked Grace.

“Believe what?” inquired Leigh.

“That I kissed him goodnight, silly,” replied Grace.

“Oh, *that*. No, I can’t,” said Leigh.

“I can’t either. I mean, I know he’s the one, but I don’t want to let *him* know that *I* know, you know?” asked Grace.

And, even though she knew it was a rhetorical question, Leigh answered softly from underneath the comfort and warmth of the quilt, “Yeah, I know.”

Angela L. Davis
Dr. Robert L. Broad
English 297.02: Poetry (Free Verse/Sonnet)
November 25, 2002

Grace...

Like dandelion seeds
 suspended from silvery silk hairs
 floating on the warm, early-summer breeze,
 an unknown journey beckons
 with the rise and fall of the wind.

Friends are made along the way, some
 insignificant, but some unforgettable,
 with quirky, erratic personalities
 that brand a heart like cow hide,
 our lives forever engaged in Grace.

Geraldine

Leigh's placid dream replaced by ringing bells,
the squeals of Grace pierce through peaceful repose;
her body succumbs to a forceful inner urge,
inevitable release to surging water's wells.
Parched by thirst, movement led by toes,
eyes squinting at new light from up above,
the can's top is popped, her arid senses surge.
Oh, the stories each square pattern tells,
embroidered and stitched, tied with satin bows,
tender hands and fingers with thread converge,
to create a memory recalled with affection and love.
Devoted years of commitment behind Grandma now,
perhaps been reincarnated as a dove,
"incentive" dropped on each Cub's sweaty brow.

Angela L. Davis
 Dr. Robert L. Broad
 English 297.02: Play/Script
 November 25, 2002

The play is set in two separate apartments in two different medium-sized mid-western cities during the mid-1990's, and the stage is divided to portray two separate dwellings. On one side of the stage is the modern, contemporary décor of the living room of *GRACE FULLER*; her sofa is white leather and boldly printed paper covers the walls. *GRACE* is a 25-year-old, single receptionist, who resides in Central Illinois, not far from her family, friends and her old high school. She is also a cheerleader for the city's minor-league hockey team and a local model for John Casablanca Modeling Agency—she is an extraordinarily attractive young woman. Normally, *GRACE FULLER* is the type of person who throws away boxes and boxes of half-eaten Valentine's Day chocolates without ever deciding if she likes any of them at all.

On the opposing side of the stage is the living room and bedroom of *LEIGH MONTGOMERY*. The rooms have white walls and hardwood floors and many of the furnishings are antiques. *LEIGH* is levelheaded, practical and conservative—exactly the opposite of *GRACE*. Although she is also single, *LEIGH* is working towards a bachelor's degree in business administration, and she is a few years older than *GRACE*. *LEIGH* is currently an administrative assistant for a public records firm located in her state's capital and is enrolled in business courses at the local junior college three nights a week. *LEIGH MONTGOMERY* is the type of person who accounts for every minute of every day in her day planner—even adding those tasks she's accomplished after-the-fact.

Time: 3:15 a.m.

Place: *LEIGH MONTGOMERY'S* dimly lit bedroom, and the living room of *GRACE FULLER*, brightly lit, with Top-40 dance music playing loudly.

At Rise: It is early on a Sunday morning, and the telephone located in *LEIGH'S* living room is ringing violently. *GRACE* is dancing around, holding her telephone receiver up to her ear, while *LEIGH* is still in bed, slowly gaining consciousness. She eventually sits up (squinting), her fingers clumsily searching for her eyeglasses on the nightstand. After balancing them onto her nose, she attempts to focus while maneuvering her way into the living room—the shrills of the ringing telephone get piercingly louder as she walks. Stumbling from the bedroom, *LEIGH* lifts her receiver and flips the light switch on a small antique Tiffany lamp.

LEIGH: [somewhat hoarse] Hello?

GRACE: [flopping onto her sofa, bouncing and squealing] Oh, my God! You are never going to believe it—I'm in love! And, for sure *this* time!

LEIGH: [half asleep] Yeah?

GRACE: [using her hands to give directions] Well, I met him Friday night at that bar near the office. You know that place I told you about, Blarneys?

LEIGH: [yawning] Yes...

[*LEIGH* shuffles her bare feet while walking through a darkened doorway between the bedroom and living room. She disappears into darkness, followed by the sound of trickling water.]

GRACE: [dancing around her living room, adjusting knick knacks] Anyway, I was there with the girls after work, and he was at the bar. We ended up talking most of the evening, and, before I left, he asked me out for Saturday. I said yes!

LEIGH: [from beyond the darkened doorway, obviously a bit preoccupied] Uh-huh...

GRACE: [somewhat calmer—more snappy] You know how I can never decide what to wear, right? Well, I settled on that slinky white mini-dress—you remember? The one you hate? Anyway, I finally decided that I would wear it, but I couldn't find those strappy high-heeled sandals I bought in Chicago, and—

[The sound of a toilet flushing interrupts GRACE.]

LEIGH: [apologetically] Sorry...

GRACE: [chirping] No problem—when you gotta' go, you gotta' go! Where was I? Oh yeah, well, I definitely could not wear *that* dress without *those* shoes, so I had to make a trip to

Famous at 2:00 o'clock *that* afternoon. I mean, I only had *six* hours to get ready before he was supposed to pick me up! Don't you hate that?

LEIGH: [returning to the dimly lit living room from the darkened doorway] Mm-hmm...

[Crossing the living room, LEIGH exits through another doorway into a small room, which is immediately flooded with light.]

GRACE: [removing one of her shoes and dangling it from her index finger] Well, after two exhausting hours of searching—and running into Brad, remember him?—I finally bought these really cute plum slingbacks!

[A slamming door is heard as the small room goes dark, and LEIGH returns to the living room. Leigh pops the top of a soda can and flops herself onto an overstuffed chair, and tucks her bare feet beneath her.]

GRACE: [removing the other shoe] This, of course, meant that wearing that slinky little white dress was out, but finding a great pair of shoes was worth another hour of choosing a different outfit, right?

LEIGH: [swallowing a mouthful of Diet Coke] Absolutely...

GRACE: [decisively] Finally, I settled on those khaki capris and my periwinkle-blue sweater. You were with me when I bought that outfit in St. Louis at Dillard's—it was the same day I bought that great pair of canvas wedge-heeled sandals and met that guy, Mike, at The Landing. Remember?

LEIGH: [half-listening] Uh-huh...

[Unrecognizable chatter, barely audible to the audience, is ad-libbed by GRACE, as LEIGH pulls the quilt that is draped over the arm of the chair across her legs, and, then, slowly runs her index finger over the hand-stitched embroidery of one of the squares. Her head turns to focus on a large framed photograph of herself and her grandmother, which is lit up by track lighting above the mantle of her fireplace.]

GRACE: [exasperated and fully audible] I could not believe it! There it was, twenty minutes before he was supposed to arrive, and I could not find that stupid purse! And, then, guess what?

LEIGH: [inquisitively] What?

GRACE: [rolling her eyes and lightly slapping her hand against the side of her head] Duh! It was buried in the corner of my closet, still in the bag from Marshall Fields, with the receipt and those darn strappy high-heeled sandals! Can you believe it?

[Grace pulls the sandals from a Marshall Fields bag and looks at them, shaking her head in disbelief.]

LEIGH: [also shaking her head, a slight grin on her face] Nope...

[Again, unrecognizable chatter, barely audible to the audience, is ad-libbed by GRACE, and LEIGH reaches out to pick up a local newspaper off of the table beside the chair. There is a full-page ad from David's Bridal featuring GRACE wearing full wedding attire. Rolling her eyes and shaking her head once more, LEIGH places the paper back onto the table.]

GRACE: [again, fully audible, holding a red rose up to her nose to smell it] Then, he opened the door of his car—did I mention that he drives a black Camry[®] kind of like the one that Sam drove when I dated him two years ago?—anyway, there on the seat, was a long-stemmed red rose! Well, my mouth dropped open and I'm sure I looked like a total geek, but I picked it up, thanked him and slid into the seat. As he shut my door and walked around the car to the driver's side, I had already begun to debate the goodnight kiss; I mean, should I or shouldn't I? After all, it *was* only our first date.

LEIGH: [somewhat distracted] Exactly...

[Again, unrecognizable chatter, barely audible to the audience, is ad-libbed by GRACE. LEIGH gets up, puts a videotape into the VCR and, then, returns to the chair. As she sits down, the videotape begins to play on the television screen. The scene is lively, containing many people—young and old

alike—with children running around, laughing and playing. It appears to be a party of some kind. Leigh uses the remote to fast forward through the scene, stopping as an older woman appears on the screen. The woman has clear tubing that is looped under her nostrils, over both ears and runs into an oxygen tank on wheels. As the camera zooms in on her face, LEIGH pauses the tape.]

GRACE: [once again, audible] You should have seen him, Leigh; I could tell that he was quite irritated, but he kept his cool. He used words I'd never heard before! He explained to the maitre d' that we had an eight o'clock reservation and that we expected to be seated immediately. I was definitely impressed with how calm he was about the whole situation.

LEIGH: [focused on the television, still holding the remote up in front of her] Yes, definitely impressive...

GRACE: [in amazement] Do you have any idea what a bottle of Chardonnay costs in that place?—too much, that's how much! But, he ordered one anyway, which got me thinking that this guy must be pretty loaded to blow that much cash on a bottle of wine. Anyway, after dinner—and dessert—we went to this great club!

LEIGH: [again using the remote to fast forward through the videotape] Ahhhh...

GRACE: [matter-of-factly] Scott was such a gentleman, not like some of the other men I have dated. First of all, he did not leave me alone for two hours to stand at the bar with his buddies, watching the second half of the ballgame. Secondly, he did not get so stinking drunk that he had to be dragged to the car, driven home and put into bed after christening the ceramic tile in my foyer—not mentioning any names!

LEIGH: [stopping the fast-forwarding action, again, as the camera zoomed in on the same older woman as before] True...

[GRACE once more ad-libs her side of the conversation—again, not fully audible to the audience. The videotape continues to play, and the camera zooms out. Many people position themselves around the woman on the screen. LEIGH is seated next to the woman, along with three other women and three other men, all holding children, all waving to the camera. As the television screen fades to black, the following words appear in large, block letters:

GERALDINE [BURTON] MONTGOMERY / 01/07/22 – 06/12/97.

The letters fade, and the tape stops, the screen fuzzy with “snow.”]

GRACE: [once more, fully audible to all] So, can you believe it?

LEIGH: [blinking] What...

[LEIGH crosses the living room to eject the tape and turn off the television set.]

GRACE: [lightly kissing the open rose, grinning from ear to ear] That I kissed him goodnight, silly!

LEIGH: [lightly shaking her head] Oh, no...

GRACE: [leaning her head against the window pane, a tear running down her cheek] I can't either. I mean, I know he's the one, but I don't want to let him know that I know, you know?

[Wrapping herself up in her quilt, LEIGH walks across the living room to the entrance of her bedroom and leans against the door frame.]

LEIGH: [a tear running down her cheek] Yeah, I know...

[LEIGH flips the light switch and the entire stage fades to black except for two illuminations: GRACE still leaning against her window and the photograph hanging above the mantle of LEIGH'S fireplace.]