

## Introduction to “Novel Reactions”

The world of books is a world unto itself. Emily Dickinson called a book a frigate on which we may travel to destinations unreachable in any other way (the past, the future, other worlds). My imagination thrives on stories passed down to me by great writers (and not so great ones).

Students and other human beings who read should be enthralled with the possible places they can safely (and relatively inexpensively) venture to. They should be equally attracted to the populace of the world of fiction, to characters who could easily become non-threatening and life-long friends, or at least acquaintances. Some of these characters are even worthy of love or admiration.

When you see someone reading a book, feel free to ask that person what he or she is reading. That can lead to an interesting conversation --- and possibly even a friendship supported by common interests and tastes.

There are a group of literary characters who have become my friends for my version of eternity, people I can depend on to be there for me and, through their actions and their words and even their idiosyncrasies, people who can bring me pleasant memories and associations. I count among them Dickens' Miss Havisham, who survives in my mind for her dedication albeit to a time standing still and a revenge persistent. There are so many other characters I count on to comfort me and keep me company: Fagin, Equality 7-2521, Guy Montag, Hawkeye, Silas Marner, Ethan Frome, Okonkwo, Othello, Ophelia, Piggy, Katniss, the Old Man, Wolf Larsen, Tiny Tim, Ahab, Sherlock Holmes, Robinson Crusoe and Hester Prynne, among others. Surely, you have your own favorites, people you'd enjoy having dinner or going fishing or walking with.

In any event, it is my hope that after reading “Novel Reactions” you will feel the urge to get a book and read it. And while you're at it, make sure it is the paper kind, not the electronic type. Hard copies have so much more personality, don't you think?