

Fiction

Burroughs, Edgar Rice. From *Tarzan and the Apes*, p. 80.

A useful reading for discussing the topic of animal intelligence and animal rights. The editor's comments refer to the "unfortunate" slowing of the plot's action in order to "abstractly consider the evolutionary development of human reliance on reason more than senses for survival." How would we describe the author's depiction of human versus ape behavior and intelligence, and how might we view this depiction through the contemporary lens of scientific knowledge and ethics?

Related readings: Bly's introduction to *News of the Universe*. Compare to T. Boyle's short story, "Carnal Knowledge" p. 580.

Visual media: Compare to depictions of human-animal relationships in various Tarzan films or the *Planet of the Apes* series.

Internet: YouTube offerings on chimpanzee and gorilla intelligence testing and the ethical implications that derive from our greater understanding of primate intelligence.

Connecting the Green dots: There is considerable research on non-human intelligence with primates, dolphins, whales and other species that manifest extraordinary abilities. You-Tube is a good source for some of this research.

***Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Young Goodman Brown," p. 380.**

Research and discuss Hawthorne's contrast of the town as a supposed spiritual haven and the forest and wild nature as "savage" and the repository of evil. Do such views persist today and, if so, what are the ecological implications of demonizing certain elements of the natural world?

Related readings: Bly's introduction to *News of the Universe*. Blake's "The Tygre, p. 963. Compare to the depiction of Africa as the "dark continent" in Conrad's "An Outpost of Progress," and the use of irony to depict certain human assumptions regarding what constitutes "civilized."

Boyle, T. Coraghessan. "Carnal Knowledge." P. 580.

As the prompts provided by the Meyer's text suggest, Boyle's infamous dark humor and irony provide an interesting segway into sustainability related issues having to do with such topics as vegetarianism, animal rights, animal experimentation, to name a few.

Related readings: Students who find Boyle's story engaging may wish to read his novel, *When the Killing's Done*, which dramatizes the collision between protectors of the environment and animal rights activists, over efforts to save the Channel Islands off the coast of Santa Barbara from invasive species such as rats and pigs. Students can find closer to home environmental satire in the writings of Florida-based novelist, Carl Hiaasen. The writings of animal rights philosopher Peter Singer, and the Regan versus Cohen debate on animal rights featured in the *Norton Anthology* would be useful non-fiction resources.

Visual media: The documentary *Food, Inc.* covers parallel themes.

Connecting the green dots: The Regan-Cohen debate on animal rights can be found on YouTube.

T.C. Boyle discusses his novel, *When the Killing's Done*, on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XE50km7XxM>

Meinke, Peter. "The Cranes," p. 630.

Meinke has strong Florida roots having directed the Writers Workshop at Eckerd College for several decades and is currently writer/teacher at the University of Tampa's new MFA program in Creative Writing. "The Cranes" is drawn from the Florida experience and the prompts in Meyer's direct the students' attention to the use of both conventional and literary use of the symbol.

Related readings: Comparisons can be made to the poems "God's Grandeur" by Gerard Manley Hopkins (p. 929) and Mary Oliver's "Wild Geese" (p. 1293). The naturalist, Peter Matthiessen, writes eloquently about whooping cranes in Florida in his non-fiction work, *Birds of Heaven: Travels with Cranes*.

Visual media: Peter Matthiessen reads his description of whooping cranes in the documentary *The Wild Heart of Florida* in the SFC collection. The segment includes footage of the whooping crane courtship ritual described in Meinke's story.

Connecting the Green dots: Visit the SFC Teaching Zoo and spend some time observing animal behavior. Translate this observation into a poem or short work of descriptive prose.

London, Jack. "To Build a Fire," p. 725.

This classic from the naturalist movement in literature explores the theme of Man versus Nature conflict and provides vivid detail of the advantages of having an intimate understanding of one's natural environment and how to survive in it. How might one transpose this scene, say, to the deep reaches of the Florida Everglades and what knowledge of this tropical environment might be useful to survive being stranded there? What human capacities might we be losing by increasingly cutting ourselves off from the wilds of nature?

Readings: Peter Matthiessen's modern classic of life and survival in the Florida Everglades, *Shadow Country*, is a window into a time when rugged Floridians braved the harsh conditions of this untamed frontier.

Visual Media: *To Build a Fire* (DVD, SFC collection). Based on the Jack London story.

Mansfield, Katherine. "The Fly," p. 735.

This is another work that lends itself to a study of psychological "projection," and how humans looking outward at some aspect of non-human nature will connect emotionally with some aspect of inward, human nature. From an ecological and sustainability perspective, such instances of strong emotional response to the natural world may alert us to the possibility of a greater understanding and empathy for non-human nature. Interesting comparisons can be made to Virginia Woolf's "The Death of the Moth" (in the *Norton Anthology*), and Elizabeth Bishop's "The Fish" (767).