American Literature—Unit 15

The Enemy

* What Japanese customs or values do you see exhibited in the first couple pages of the story?
  + Honor for parents
  + Marriage customs
  + Worked hard for an education
* Their moral dilemma: Helping the enemy or not helping a wounded man
* Sadao and Hana believed that it was right not to help this man—why did they anyway?
* What had made them different from the other Japanese?
* Pearl is an American. She writes the story from the perspective of the Japanese—what does this story mean for Americans?
* Assignment: Write a paragraph explaining the theme of “The Enemy.” What truths and values does Pearl want to help the reader understand through this story? What misconceptions or lies does she want to dispel? How does the story effectively bring these truths and values to light?

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

* What are the fantasies or secret longings in Walter?
  + Commander of hydroplane: authority, courage, competence, people’s admiration
  + Surgeon: knowledgeable, prestige, international acclaim, innovative, resourceful, intelligent, skillful
  + Accused killer: self-assured, cocky, strong, skillful, attractive to women
  + Captain in a WWII air force: tough, determined, fearless, able to drink without getting drunk, in command
  + Man facing an execution squad: fearless, proud, independent
* What is Mitty really like?
* How is he treated by those around him? Does he get treated this way because of the way he is or is he the way he is because of the way he is treated?
  + Wife, policeman, parking attendant, garage man, woman in store,
* What we fantasize about tells us a lot about what we really admire and who we really want to be.
* What does this story say about men in our society?
* Commentary on the effects of women’s lib movement—men are scared to really lead; when you guys are with the youth group, do y’all lead out or do you make the women take the initiative? When you start dating are you going to show up at the girl’s house with a plan or just going to show up and say, “Well, what do you want to do tonight?”
* I’m afraid that too many people live out their ideals in a fantasy world and not in the real world

Cabbages is Beautiful

* Great descriptions: a saucy wren beside a ruminant Holstein
* Colors galore: gold, jade-green, red, burgundy, russet, bronze
* Description of head turning is impressive as well as Pool’s laughter
* Characters: Selina, Klaas Pool, Widow Paarlenberg (the full-sailed frigate and sleekest of the pink porkers and a great Persian cat, full-fed and treacherous), Pervus DeJong
* What was High Prairie like? Very Dutch, very rural, close (gossipy), practical-minded, churchly (although Mrs. Pool seldom had time for such “frivolity”)
* The courtship of DeJong by Paar.: funny to watch
* What is meant by:
  + With such a start, the end was inevitable
  + The larger freedom had not yet come to High Prairie
* How much was ten dollars?
* What do you think happens in the appendix to this story?

The Baby Party

* What kind of people were the Andros’s? To what part of society did they belong?
* What did his daughter Ede mean to John? What did her mother think of her?
* What is a baby party anyway?
* This is the sanitary age
* The artificiality and pretense that pervaded this group:
  + Calling the babies cu-u-ute
  + Reproaching each other for not coming over
  + Suspicious of little jabs at each other’s babies
  + Sarcasm about the snobbery of the ladies
* Point out how the flashback works in this story
* What do you see about women’s relationships and men’s relationships in this story? How are they different?
* Can you explain how the men were able to make up so easily?
* Why do you think that the Markeys had come over at the end of the story?
* What was it that John had fought for?

**Contents of a Dead Man’s Pockets**

* What was Tom Benecke’s goal in life? What were his priorities? What did he value?
* What was the paper that flew out the window?
* Where did it land?
* How high up was he? 11 stories
* Do you understand how the ledge was set up?
* Notice how time seems to slow down as he nears the paper—author gives more details to give this effect
* Amazingly perfect descriptions—the reader can follow every motion and almost feel what Tom feels; some of the descriptions are perfectly terrifying—see p. 523
* Where does the climax of the story occur? Actually two climaxes—the one moral and the other physical
* Tell what happened with the window
* What did Tom discover he really valued in life?
* What values would change in my life were I to come face to face with death?