

Collaborative Online International Learning report

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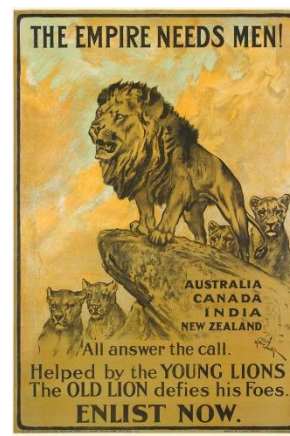
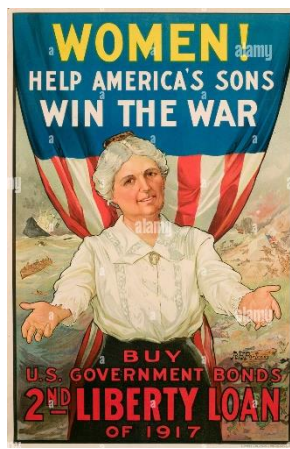
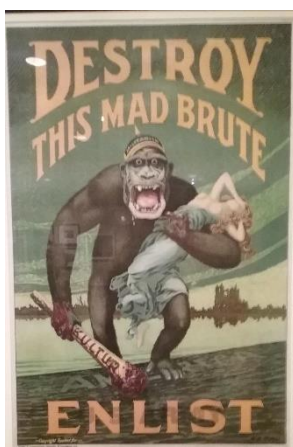
The second Collaborative Online International Learning project is an online program for learning interdisciplinary subjects. The course has also helped us to understand the word interdisciplinary, which involves two or more different subjects or areas of knowledge. The focus of this course was on combining literature and history. During the four sessions, we looked at different works and writers. We put them into the context of the time period and its influence on the works.

The first lesson, led by Maria Hrickova, was a very interactive introduction to the life and work of Herman Melville. We started with an analysis of a thought-provoking quote, "It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation," which I agree with because succeeding in imitation makes you a fraud and carries with it a kind of shame. It's much better to try and fail at something you've invented because even though you've failed, there's a sense of pride that comes from staying true to yourself rather than copying someone else's ideas. Then we had to link the main stages of the writer's life to events that allowed us to get to know him better. Later we discussed a letter written to his eleven-year-old son Malcolm. This letter highlights Herman Melville's maritime experiences during his 1860 voyage on the Meteor and his role as a storyteller to his family. It reveals his empathy for sailors, his keen powers of observation, and his fascination with the power of nature. As a biographical source, however, it is limited by its selective focus, possible embellishment, and lack of wider personal context, and offers only a brief glimpse into his life. In the second letter, written during his 1860 voyage, Herman Melville describes warm weather, a visit to a whaling ship with hired Raratongan crew, and preparations aboard the Meteor for arrival in San Francisco. He details the route the letter will take to reach Malcolm, providing a geography lesson, and advises Malcolm to be obedient and respectful to his mother. Melville expresses affection for his family, mentioning how he misses them and cherishes their picture, ending with a blessing and a small gift for his daughter Fanny. I enjoyed the lesson and how it was structured, and it helped to understand Melville's work and the context behind it.

The next session, also led by Maria Hrickova, focused on the epic poem Beowulf and Anglo-Saxon culture. Together we'll explore the world of magic, mystery, and imagination that

has inspired many fantasy writers, including JRR Tolkien. The text given is the Prologue, which introduces Shield, a legendary Danish king who rose from orphanhood to greatness, and his descendants: Grain, Healfdene, Hrothgar, Halga, Heorogar, and a daughter who married Onela, King of the Swedes. Shield and his line exemplify values such as bravery, generosity, and loyalty. Kings are expected to share treasures to build alliances, secure loyalty, and ensure the prosperity of their people. Leadership is seen as divinely ordained, requiring strength, wisdom, and the ability to inspire respect and fear. Funeral rites involve sending the king out to sea on a treasure-laden ship, symbolizing honor and preparation for the afterlife. The Beowulf manuscript, dating back to the 10th–11th century, is one of the earliest known texts in Old English and a cornerstone of early English literature. Preserved by the British Library, it tells the heroic tale of Beowulf and his battles, blending history and legend. Unlike modern poetry, Beowulf is composed in alliterative verse, relying on rhythm and repetition rather than rhyme, reflecting its roots in oral storytelling traditions. Its writing style is characteristic of Old English, with minimal punctuation, and the absence of capital letters for proper nouns. This becomes connected with history by the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial. It was discovered in Suffolk, England, and is a significant archaeological site linked to the Anglo-Saxon period and the epic Beowulf. Dating to the early 7th century, the burial's rich grave goods, including weapons, treasures, and the iconic Sutton Hoo helmet, reflect the heroic warrior culture depicted in the poem. The helmet, adorned with intricate designs, symbolizes the martial and ceremonial importance of its owner, possibly a king. Other artifacts like the Ruthwell Cross, a monumental stone carved with Christian imagery and inscriptions, and the Franks Casket, a small whalebone chest depicting scenes from myth and scripture, illustrate the blending of pagan and Christian traditions in this era. Together, these relics offer a glimpse into the cultural and literary world that shaped works like Beowulf. These two sessions were full of information and a lot of group projects.

The third session was led by Erik György and its focus was on Poetry And World War I. We discussed the changing attitudes to the war, from its outbreak to its gruesome conclusion, as seen through the lens of poets who witnessed (and often participated in) the events. The three



World War I propaganda posters convey powerful messages reflecting themes of war, duty, and national pride that often overlap with literature of the same period. The first poster, "Destroy This Mad Brute", depicts Germany as a monstrous ape invading America, creating fear and an urgency to enlist. This echoes the dehumanization of the enemy and destroying cultures. The second poster, urging women to help by buying Liberty Bonds, appeals to the role of the home front in the war effort and how women have to sacrifice their sons so that they can go and fight for their homes. The third poster, "The Empire Needs Men", symbolizes the unity of the British colonies through the image of a lion and his cubs. This calls for the help of young and old men also to not to ignore the war but to help them win it. These posters highlight the intersection of visual and literary propaganda in shaping public perceptions and fostering nationalist passion during the First World War.

The performances gave us a deeper insight into what exactly is behind each work and how certain events have influenced the works. The combination of literature and history is a combination that can always offer something new to those who are genuinely interested in the subject. Overall, the lectures were well put together, sometimes requiring more interactivity, sometimes less, with more and less attention-grabbing themes and their elaborations. In any case, the lecture series was useful for me and I learned a lot that I will be able to apply in my future studies.