This is Prompt 2 for English 230, "Contemporary Media and Fiction" (Fall 2021), at the University of Victoria. It is also available in HTML at https://jentery.github.io/engl230v2/prompt2.

Responses to the prompt should be submitted via the course Brightspace. Thanks!

Prompt 2

Written on Monday, September 27th

This prompt asks you to continue practicing methods for studying what media do in fiction. It shifts your attention from "comprehension" and "apprehension" (Prompt 1) to "synthesis," and it asks you to focus on audio in fiction. You're welcome to respond to the prompt in **one** of three ways.

The Three Options

Option 1, "Get Meta": This option appeals primarily to studies of audio in terms of design and narrative. Produce video (1-2 minutes), audio (2-3 minutes), or 600 words describing how the story of *Biidaaban (The Dawn Comes)*, *Within the Wires*, or *Gone Home* is told through *audio*. Your description should give your audience a "meta" sense of how the work's audio shapes or structures its story. It should also include at least one "why" or "how" question you have for your audience about the work's audio.

Option 2, "Meaning": This option appeals primarily to studies of audio in terms of literary, social, or cultural significance. Produce video (1-2 minutes), audio (2-3 minutes), or 600 words describing how the meaning of *Biidaaban (The Dawn Comes)*, *Within the Wires*, or *Gone Home* is conveyed through *audio*. Your description should give your audience a sense of how the work's audio produces moments of significance in the story. It should also include at least one "why" or "how" question you have for your audience about the work's audio.

Option 3: "Massage or Manipulation": This option appeals primarily to studies of audio in terms of perception. Produce video (1-2 minutes), audio (2-3 minutes), or 600 words describing how *Biidaaban (The Dawn Comes)*, *Within the Wires*, or *Gone Home* massages or manipulates your senses through *audio*. Your description should give your audience a sense of how the work's audio addresses you and its audience. It should also include at least one "why" or "how" question you have for your audience about the work's audio.

Tips for Writing
- This response is not an academic essay. Think of it as an exercise in developing an idea or argument that results in an excellent question. The language should be more formal than a chat with a friend but can be less formal than most academic writing.
- Pick only one work (*Biidaaban*, *Wires*, or *Gone Home*), focus on it, and read / watch / play / listen to it multiple times. Take notes and document your experience as you go.
- Stick to thorough and detailed descriptions where possible. You don't need to analyze, review, or evaluate the work. Just describe, describe, describe. Imagine communicating

with someone who is unfamiliar with the work. Which details would you share to help them hear it?

- Your response may be communicated through video, audio, or words. Select media with which you are most comfortable *and* choose an approach that best fits the work at hand. If you need help to produce audio or video, then let me know. (Note that you can create both in Brightspace.)
- Use evidence. Include clips of audio from the work, quote what you hear, and/or describe sounds in the work. Again, help people to hear what you hear. If you need assistance with clipping audio, then don't hesitate to contact me. Don't worry if the audio is high quality. This is not an audio engineering course.
- If you produce video or audio, then acknowledge your source material (visually or verbally) at the end of your response.
- Feel free to use first-person language ("I") where appropriate.
- Your question about the work's audio should be open-ended (not a "yes or no" question), invite conversation, and encourage a rage of possible responses from multiple perspectives. Think of it as starter material for a research project about audio and fiction. What question gets you and others excited to think and say more?
- The language of "meta," "meaning," "massage," and "manipulation" in the three options above will be further explained during lecture on Wednesday, September 29th. If you'd like to get started now, then I've provided some guiding questions at the bottom of the document.
- We will begin discussing the role of audio in fiction during class on October 5th and 6th.

Assessment

I will assess your response to Prompt 1 based on the following criteria:

- Engagement with the prompt (25%): how well and to what degree the response follows the prompt
- Thoroughness of detail (25%): the degree to which the response describes audio in the work (*Biidaaban*, *Wires*, or *Gone Home*), through the selection of details and evidence
- Quality of description (25%): not just the quantity of detail and evidence (see above), but the degree to which the descriptions of audio in the work are informative or demonstrative, especially for people who may be unfamiliar with the work or haven't listened closely to it (*Biidaaban*, *Wires*, or *Gone Home*)
- Potential of question (25%): the degree to which the question sparks an interesting conversation, from multiple perspectives, about audio in the work

You will receive a mark for each of the four criteria, which will be tallied (.25 x 4) to result in your mark for Prompt 2. I will send feedback to you via Brightspace. I will use UVic's grading system for assessment, according to this rubric: "exceeds and raises expectations" (A+), "exceeds expectations" (A, A-), "exceeds some expectations" (B+), "meets expectations" (B, B-), "meets some expectations" (C+, C), "meets few expectations" (D), and

"no submission." You will have an opportunity to revise your response to Prompt 1, 2, or 3 by Friday, December 3rd. This revision can only improve your mark.

What to Submit

You may submit your response to Prompt 2 via Brightspace as a video (1-2 minutes), audio (2-3 minutes), or word processing (600 words) file. Please also attached a Works Cited page in MLA format. If you have questions about how to cite a particular work, then don't hesitate to email me. Here are citations for the three works at hand (change the access dates, if you wish):

- Cranor, Jeffrey, Janina Matthewson, and Mary Epworth. *Within the Wires*, Season 1, Episode 1, Night Vale Presents, 2016, http://www.nightvalepresents.com/withinthewires. Accessed 27 September 2021.
- Fullbright Company. *Gone Home*, 2013, https://gonehome.com/. Accessed 27 September 2021.
- Strong, Amanda and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. *Biidaaban (The Dawn Comes)*, CBC Arts, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWjnYKyiUB8. Accessed 27 September 2021.

When to Submit It

I recommend submitting your response by Friday, October 8th at 10:30am, before the long weekend; however, you may submit your response as late as Friday, October 15th at 10:30am. This extra time may be especially useful if you are writing about *Gone Home*, which we will discuss on October 13th.

Meta

You may get meta about how the story is told in the work.

Here are some ways to get meta. I don't recommend trying them all during a single exercise. Maybe pick one or two?

Consider the:

- **Situation**: What's known or taken for granted in the work? How do characters understand each other (or so we assume)?
- **World**: What's the scope and scale of the setting and its systems, history, lore, or landscape? How is the world of the work bigger or more expansive than the story itself?
- **Duration**: How long does the story take to communicate certain things? How does it use abbreviation, summary, stretched time, or warped time? What moves quickly? What doesn't?
- **Frequency**: What's repeated in the work? What are its patterns or textures?

- **Sequencing**: How is the work arranged chronologically and non-chronologically? How does it flash-forward ("prolepsis") or flash-back ("analepsis")? How does it use leveling, achievements, or progressive disclosure? How does the story branch?
- **Evocation**: How does the work draw on memories and resemblances? What aspects of the past, and whose past, does it evoke?
- **Focalization**: How do we get our knowledge from characters and/or narrators (zero = omniscient narrator who knows more than characters, internal = narrator is a character and thus knows what the character knows, and external focalization = narrator or camera eye telling less than what characters know)?
- **Narration**: How is the story told? A narrative often involves abstract (summary), orientation (time and place), complicating action, resolution (climax), evaluation (commentary or elucidation), and coda (time of story meets time of narrative).

What is interesting about the work's treatment of each or any of these? What's familiar or predictable?

Getting meta prompts considerations of a work's *design and structure*.

Meaning

You may want to consider what the work means to you and others. Meaning is produced in all sorts of ways.

Here are some ways to think about meaning. Again, you may want to pick just one or two of these for a given exercise.

- Describe why the work is, or was, considered to be important in a given moment, or why people say it matters.
- Describe how the work produces multiple, even incongruous interpretations. Or, describe why people interpret it in multiple, even incongruous ways.
- Describe the effects of one of the work's devices or techniques, such as irony, allegory, metafiction, worldbuilding, collage, montage, voiceover, chance, leveling, point of view, or allusion.
- Identify what you consider to be the most important meaning of the work and explain whether that meaning is referential (points to something in or beyond the work), explicit (what it says directly), implicit (symbols or codes), or symptomatic (unstated beliefs, assumptions, or ideologies). (I am borrowing these terms from David Bordwell.)
- Identify aspects of, or moments in, the work that resist meaning or are indifferent to it.

Attending to meaning prompts considerations of *significance*.

Massages or Manipulates

You may want to consider how the work massages or manipulates people's senses.

Here are some ways to think about massage and manipulation. Again, maybe pick just one or two for a given exercise.

- Is the work attempting to secure consensus? If so, then how? And what sort of consensus? Among whom?
- Is the work a distraction? If so, then how? And from what?
- Do people consider the work to be immersive? If so, then how? What strategies does it use to immerse people?
- Does the work involve interaction? Is it responsive? Does it invite input? Or maybe dialogue? If so, then how does it change, if at all, with each interaction?
- Does the work have a rhythm? If so, then describe it. How does it encourage flow?
- Does the work involve simultaneity? Does it ask you to balance things or to multitask? If so, then to what effects?
- Does the work address you (hey you! hi there)? If so, then how? Directly or indirectly? Under what assumptions?

Asking how a work massages and manipulates people's senses prompts considerations of *discipline and pleasure* (how we are trained to perceive and also what we enjoy).