

Ben Koyama

Mr. Ahumada

ENG4U1-03

September 25, 2018

(Half) White Teeth

White Teeth is the debut novel from British author Zadie Smith. It follows best friends Archibald Jones and Samad Iqbal and their families through multiple generations finding their way in London. Smith's novel offers a perspective on being an immigrant in a multicultural city as well as finding one's identity as a mixed-race person. Zadie Smith was born in London, England in 1975 to an English father and a Jamaican mother. After studying English at Cambridge, Smith began writing her critically acclaimed debut novel *White Teeth*. Throughout her career, Smith has written many works of fiction ranging from erotica to short stories. In addition, she has published 4 full length novels including her most recent: *Swing Time* (2016). Smith's method of storytelling through multiple viewpoints is one I became comfortable with after reading Joseph Boyden's *Three-Day Road* (2005) as well as Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *Year of the Flood* (2009). Although sometimes long winded, Smith intertwines her witty sense of humor with her ability to vividly describe the most mundane situations to create lively settings and well-developed characters. From the beginning of the novel, Smith constructs passages such as "scrunched up in each fist were his army service medals (left) and his marriage license (right), for he had decided to take his mistakes with him." (Smith 3) Her use of parentheticals to describe the contents in Archie's hands exemplifies her willingness to flesh out the most forgettable of details. As a half-Japanese half-Caucasian person, I sometimes find myself not able to fit in with either community. In reading this novel I hope I am able to better understand the children's struggle to

fit in as well as help find my own identity as a mixed person. Zadie Smith started her career off on the right foot as *White Teeth* won the Whitbread and Guardian awards for an outstanding debut novel. The novel is worthy of literary study because it is “an astonishingly assured debut, funny and serious” (Rushdie), “quirky, sassy, and wise” (Kakutani), and is an ambitious, epic tale (Syal). Although *White Teeth* is already in Mr. Ahumada’s “top five”, I hope it can help propel English into my “top six.”

Works Cited

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Non-Linear Road to the Deep North

Narrow Road to the Deep North is an epic wartime love story by Australian author Richard Flanagan. The novel follows the life of Australian doctor Dorrigo Evans, an engaged man who has an affair with his Uncle's wife. Upon joining the war effort Evans is captured and placed in a prisoner of war camp at which he feels a moral duty to care for his fellow inmates. The predominating themes surround postwar Japan and existentialism. Flanagan, a descendant of Irish convicts, was born in Tasmania in 1961. He graduated with honors from the University of Tasmania in 1982 and subsequently attended Oxford. Flanagan wrote 4 history books before embarking on a career writing fiction. He has written 6 works of fiction including his most recent: *Narrow Road to the Deep North*. This novel first caught my eye when it was recommended to me by a former English teacher. He promised me a well written novel packed with lively settings and passages that evoke strong emotions. Furthermore, I am familiar with the Matsuo Bashō text of the same name. Flanagan uses ambiguous sentences that must be decoded and interpreted such as "Horror can be contained within a book, given form and meaning. But in life horror has no more form than it does meaning." (Flanagan 19) Passages such as this in *Narrow Road to the Deep North* offer abundant opportunity for analysis in essay form. I decided to read this novel because, after reading the synopsis, I was immediately engaged by the plot and I want to experience Dorrigo's life as told by Richard Flanagan in full detail. Along with the prestigious Booker Prize in 2014

Flanagan's latest novel has garnered critical acclaim. The novel is worthy of study because it is an "excruciating, terrifying, life-altering story," (Kakutani) a "magnificent novel of passion and horror and tragic irony" (McGrath) and is a "masterpiece." (Grayling) Although *Narrow Road to the Deep North* will not be my first novel I hope my May exam will be poetic.

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Flanagan, Richard. *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Vintage International, 2014.

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