

Sample of Seminar Methodology
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Upper Level/Graduate Level - Literature Course

As an instructor of literature and culture, I prompt students to articulate how narrative devices, literary genres, or material and print contexts shape potential avenues of interpretation. Articulating a written or spoken argument requires a close analysis of elements such as voice or structure. But on a broader level, this exercise productively ties into intellectual debates over form, theory, and print history.

My approach to teaching a canonical work like Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* at the upper level/graduate seminar would begin by asking students to highlight elements in the narrative that implicate the role of the narrator and issues of narration in the Romantic era. At the end of Chapter fourteen in Book two, for instance, the sounds of a harp interject into a passage of narration from the other side of a doorframe. This scene illuminates the limitations of the narrator, marginality of physical space, and kinds of medial work that were playing out in the Romantic novel at this time. Through a close analysis of this scene, students would compose an argument that addresses Romantic conceptions of language and its relationship to medial and spatial representations in literature.

Second, since Goethe's *Bildungsroman* accompanied and, in many ways, exemplified the rise of the novel in world literature, it lends itself to questions surrounding the genre's historicization. Turning to secondary texts that shaped the theoretical treatment of the novel (i.e.: Schlegel's "Letter about the Novel" or Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*), students would step back from the source text and hone a theoretical engagement with the genre.

Lastly, the diverse network of books at this time connects Goethe's novel to the more recent scholarly interest in the history of the book. To complement a reading of the novel, students would peruse brief excerpts Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as well as Goethe's earlier manuscript, *Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Calling* (1786), which was re-discovered in the early twentieth century. These works significantly factored into the final version of Goethe's novel along with numerous other poems, songs and dramatic scenes. As a final project, students would incorporate secondary scholarship into a larger argument about how the reading culture of the Romantic era informed diverse literary practices of the novel as a whole.