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## Stop and Smell the Roses: Incorporating smell as a multisensory learning tool in the university English classroom

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# Stop and Smell the Roses: Incorporating smell as a multisensory learning tool in the university English classroom

## Summary

Traditionally, most university instructors – particularly those in English departments – use didactic, or “chalk-and-talk,” teaching methods organized around readings and lectures. Yet numerous studies suggest that incorporating multisensory learning techniques in the classroom can more effectively promote student learning. Research shows that smell is a particularly powerful learning tool, as the olfactory sense is deeply connected to memory and emotion. However, most instructors – including those invested in multisensory learning – often overlook scent as a learning tool. Research also shows that smell also has a unique relationship to language and representation. Scents are typically constructed as purely visceral, subjective phenomena that escape our linguistic system, yet in spite of the apparent limits of representing smell in language, writers often describe scents in literature. This seminar combines research on scent as a multisensory learning tool with studies on smell’s relationship to language to explore how instructors can productively use scent in the university English classroom. However, olfactory learning tools need not be limited to teaching texts or ideas that deal explicitly with scent. This seminar specifically explores how smell can be incorporated into teaching literary concepts at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced level, and suggests that scent is particularly useful for teaching concepts that deal with issues of language and representation. Students can therefore reap the benefits of smell as a multisensory learning tool even if they are not studying topics or texts that deal directly with scent.

## Keywords

Smell, multisensory learning, English, literary concepts

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## **Stop and Smell the Roses: Incorporating smell as a multisensory learning tool in the university English classroom**

### SUMMARY

Traditionally, most university instructors – particularly those in English departments – use didactic, or “chalk-and-talk,” teaching methods organized around readings and lectures. Yet numerous studies suggest that incorporating multisensory learning techniques in the classroom can more effectively promote student learning. Research shows that smell is a particularly powerful learning tool, as the olfactory sense is deeply connected to memory and emotion. However, most instructors – including those invested in multisensory learning – often overlook scent as a learning tool. Research also shows that smell also has a unique relationship to language and representation. Scents are typically constructed as purely visceral, subjective phenomena that escape our linguistic system, yet in spite of the apparent limits of representing smell in language, writers often describe scents in literature. This seminar combines research on scent as a multisensory learning tool with studies on smell’s relationship to language to explore how instructors can productively use scent in the university English classroom. However, olfactory learning tools need not be limited to teaching texts or ideas that deal explicitly with scent. This seminar specifically explores how smell can be incorporated into teaching literary concepts at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced level, and suggests that scent is particularly useful for teaching concepts that deal with issues of language and representation. Students can therefore reap the benefits of smell as a multisensory learning tool even if they are not studying topics or texts that deal directly with scent.

**Keywords:** Smell, multisensory learning, English, literary concepts

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

- distinguish and compare the benefits and limitations of didactic lectures and multisensory learning techniques;
- describe and discuss smell’s value as a multisensory learning tool;
- identify the utility of smell as a mechanism for teaching literary concepts; and
- formulate strategies for using smell as a learning tool when teaching a range of literary concepts

### REFERENCE SUMMARIES

Gardner, H., & Hatch, T. (1989). Multiple intelligences go to school: Educational implications of the theory of multiple intelligences. *Educational Researcher*, 18 (8), 4-9.

This article traces Gardner's influential theory of multiple intelligences and explores its application in primary, elementary, and secondary school systems.<sup>1</sup> First developed in the 1970s, Gardner's theory suggests that linguistic, numerical, pictorial, gestural, and other symbolic systems seemed to involve separate psychological processes. Gardner developed the theory because he was troubled by the emphasis educators placed upon two particular symbolic systems – the linguistic and the logical-mathematical. Although these systems are clearly important, other systems of knowledge also inform human cognitive activity both in school and beyond the classroom. Gardner also found that tests overwhelmingly emphasized linguistic and logical capacities at the expense of other forms of knowledge. He thus developed his theory of multiple intelligences, defining intelligence as “the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings and detailed a set of criteria for what counts as human intelligence” (p. 5). The rest of the article outlines the notion of “intelligence-fair” testing, examining how it has been implemented and the results it has produced in primary, elementary, and secondary school classrooms organized according to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences.

This article's discussion of Gardner's influential theory of multiple intelligences is useful for illustrating the traditional forms of knowledge that have historically been privileged by the education system. In this seminar, I use the article to discuss how the development of multisensory learning techniques emerged after scholars recognized the importance of catering to a broader range of intelligences.

Lang, J. M. (2006). Beyond lecturing. *Chronicle of Higher Education* 53 (6), 69.

Lang's essay encourages university instructors to move beyond lecturing in their teaching practice. He notes that professors are often angered by this idea and lament the decline of the didactic lecture style. It is important to realize, as Lang does, that most professors learned from educators who relied primarily upon lecturing.

Lang does not suggest that lectures should be completely eliminated from university teaching; indeed, he believes that lectures are an important part of learning. Lectures are particularly useful for providing a strong foundation in the facts and concepts necessary for students to apply their knowledge in active learning sessions. However, Lang asserts that lectures should not be the only – or even the dominant – teaching technique in a university classroom. Research has shown that students recall 70 percent of material taught in the first 10 minutes of a lecture, and only remember 20 percent of the material taught in the last 10 minutes. Most effective teachers use multiple approaches to learning by mixing lectures with discussions, buzz groups, problem-solving sessions, and other active learning activities. Lang cites Michelle Jones-Wilson's approach to teaching university-level organic chemistry as an alternative to the didactic lecture style. Jones-Wilson's classes involved a 20 minute “highlights” lecture on readings, an in-class session to work through problems in groups, and a concluding session addressing common problems. Compared to her previous

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<sup>1</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion of the different multiple intelligences theorized by Gardner, see Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

didactic approach, this method of teaching improved student performance and generated stronger student investment in the course.

Lang's article is useful for outlining the benefits and limitations of the chalk-and-talk method traditionally used in university English classrooms. I use the article to discuss how academia perpetuates a specific teaching style that privileges auditory and visual learners. I also use it to highlight the benefits of incorporating active learning activities into teaching.

Young, M. S., Robinson, S., & Alberts, P. (2009). Students pay attention!: Combating the vigilance decrement to improve learning during lectures. *Active Learning in Higher Education* 10 (1), 41-55.

This article provides a more in-depth examination of how different teaching styles affect student learning. According to the authors, one of the primary problems with the didactic lecture is that it promotes a passive form of learning that negatively affects students' ability to pay attention and retain information. This passivity may impede "deep learning" and student concentration. In recent years, there has been a shift towards incorporating techniques that encourage students to actively engage in learning experiences rather than passively absorb information. Numerous studies note that during traditional lectures, attention declines after 10-30 minutes. Research shows that if teachers change the level of stimulation every 10-15 minutes, they can offset the "vigilance decrement" – that is, the drop in performance that occurs when people are given tasks that involve a shift from active to passive modes of information processing. Offsetting the vigilance decrement could involve giving students a short break or a new task, or changing the presentation style or medium.

However, studies also indicate that alternating teaching styles only temporarily refocuses students, and concentration may decline even more after such a shift. The active learning philosophy thus suggests that educators break up lectures by incorporating activities that are constructive and task-related, such as buzz groups. Studies suggest that such active learning techniques facilitate deep learning among students. The authors ask, however, whether deep learning necessitates that students maintain attention and actively participate, or merely requires that educators use teaching methods that keep attention up – something which may be achieved by simply taking short breaks.

The authors describe a study they conducted that examined different teaching styles at the university level, including the chalk-and-talk method, guest lecturers, buzz groups, and case studies using video media. The authors' findings support the ideas outlined above. However, they note that active learning activities also have disadvantages, such as decreased lecture time and less control over the material. The authors also claim that "true interactivity is not necessarily a criterion for deep learning to occur," and suggest that Frye et al.'s broader definition of active learning as "a process of engaging with the learning task at both the cognitive and affective level" is more appropriate based on their study (p. 53). The authors conclude by arguing that methods that interrupt the vigilance decrement – such as taking short breaks – may be just as effective as interactive learning techniques.

I use this article primarily for its more in-depth overview of the limits of the chalk-and-talk lecture as a traditional mode of instruction and the potential benefits of active learning activities. Although it illustrates the limits of active learning activities, it does not really account for differences in learning styles among students. I thus discuss this article in relation to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and the work of Dunn and Dunn (2005).

Dunn, R. & Dunn, K. (2005). Thirty-five years of research on perceptual strengths: Essential strategies to promote learning. *The Clearing House* 78 (6), 273-276.

Dunn and Dunn trace the emergence of multisensory learning as a concept and outline its benefit when teaching a range of elementary, junior, and high school children. Attention to multisensory learning emerged in the early 1960s after researchers began investigating inadequate student performance in the traditional chalk-and-talk method of teaching. Studies found that auditory and visual learners flourished in traditional lecture-style settings, while low-auditory and low-visual learners did not. In the 1970s, research showed that "low-auditory" and "low-visual" learners often performed better when they learned through hands-on activities. The authors describe these learners as "tactual" and "kinesthetic" learners. Tactual learners learn by using their hands to manipulate materials, while kinesthetic learners learn by engaging in full-body activities or by relating topics to real-life experiences. The authors discuss multisensory learning methods for teaching tactually-strong elementary and secondary students. They also explain how to identify and teach low-tactual elementary and secondary students, and discuss why such methods improve learning among tactual and kinesthetic learners. The article highlights the importance of catering to a range of students' learning styles.

While some of the multiple intelligences outlined by Gardner intersect with particular senses, Gardner's theory does not explicitly frame different intelligences in terms of sensory perception the way that Dunn and Dunn's work does. I thus use Dunn and Dunn's article to make the connection between learning and sensory perception. However, while Dunn and Dunn provide useful insight into multisensory learning methods that extend beyond didactic lectures, their work focuses solely on forms of learning connected to audition, vision, touch and movement; it does not account for smell or taste. I therefore use their work to underscore the sensory bias that informs conventional approaches to multisensory learning.

Stanley, L. (1997). What does purple smell like? *Childhood Education* 73 (4), 240-242.

Stanley's article – one of the few studies that examines smell as a multisensory learning tool – focuses on how multisensory experiences help children learn. Numerous studies on childhood education indicate that engaging in multisensory learning allows children to experiment, investigate, and discover the world around them. Stanley describes a successful project in which early childhood educators used a range of sensory modalities to

teach colours to two-year-olds. Stanley focuses on how educators used smell and taste to complement visual representations of colour. For example, educators matched the colour purple with the smell and taste of grapes and played blindfold games such as “Smell the Colour.” The children enthusiastically and successfully learned their colours and paid closer attention to the colours in their environment. Stanley concludes that children can benefit from a multisensory environment that facilitates exploration, discovery, and understanding beyond the traditional mode of sight.

I use Stanley’s study to show how studies of smell as a multisensory learning tool tend to focus upon its benefits for children in preschool, kindergarten, or primary school rather than for young adults at the university level.<sup>2</sup>

Burmark, L. (2011). Engaging the Senses. In *They Snooze, You Lose: The Educator’s Guide to Successful Presentations*. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). (pp. 195-212). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Burmark recommends moving beyond auditory and visual forms of multimedia and developing more engaging, multisensory learning experiences to maintain interest among learners of all ages. Burmark is particularly interested in incorporating smell into the learning process. Research suggests that 75 percent of emotional response is based on smell. Studies also show that when presentations cater to multiple senses, their effectiveness increases by 300 percent. Burmark emphasizes the strong connection between smell and memory, and is mainly concerned with how educators can use scent to improve student learning by strengthening memory. The “Proust effect” – a term drawn from Marcel Proust’s influential multi-volume novel *In Search of Lost Time* – describes smell’s ability to trigger involuntary memories. I use this concept to illustrate literature’s crucial role in shaping our understanding of how smell works.

Crucially, Burmark notes that engaging multiple senses also engages multiple intelligences, a connection I aim to make in this seminar. He also notes that by repeating multisensory learning techniques, students can experience the Proust effect themselves, reliving the past experience through its application in the present. One of Burmark’s sample multisensory activities, which involves giving students fresh-cut roses and asking them to describe their “experience” of the flower, informs my multisensory teaching demonstration “My love is like a red, red rose’: Learning Similes Through Scent.”

Sprinkle, R. (1999). The power of aroma and the olfactory experience in the classroom. *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, 27 (2), 188-193.

Sprinkle’s essay is one of the few scholarly articles on incorporating smell in the university English classroom. He argues that smell is useful for teaching olfactory readings of literary

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<sup>2</sup> A large body of work explores the benefits of incorporating multisensory learning tools when teaching students with disabilities, although I do not address that work in this seminar. Sprinkle (1999) briefly addresses this research in his work.

works and stimulating creative writing. Sprinkle provides a useful overview of the benefits of multisensory learning. Research shows that “the more senses we involve in a particular experience, the more vivid that experience remains in our memories” (p. 189). Students learn best when new information is presented through a variety of senses. Although teachers often try to incorporate as many senses as possible into the learning process, they often neglect smell as a learning tool, because the olfactory sense has historically been marginalized in Western society.

Drawing on the work of Diane Ackerman, Sprinkle discusses scent’s power as a learning tool from a biological perspective. He describes how the brain developed out of a bundle of olfactory tissue and nerves and discusses the close connection between smell and memory. Sprinkle cites research indicating that children recall information more easily and retain it better in memory when given olfactory cues. He also notes that because smell is intimately linked to the limbic system, the part of the brain that processes feelings and emotions, “aromas can provide creative inspiration as well as access to emotions that we cannot gain through visual, tactile, or even auditory cues” (p. 190).

Although some schools use smell to teach deaf and mute children, most educators do not capitalize on smell as a learning tool. Sprinkle argues that this is because olfaction is culturally unacceptable and makes us uncomfortable. However, he contends that smell is powerful when combined with the study of literature, which is also connected to evoking memories and awakening dormant emotions. He thus recommends harnessing the power of smells rather than repressing them.

Sprinkle suggests three ways of incorporating smell in teaching literature. First, students could perform analyses of scents described in literature or examine verbs associated with scent. This could help them learn how “sensory perceptions are ‘translated’ into language through speaking and writing” (p. 192). Second, teachers could create assignments that improve students’ facility with the “language of smell.” English has a limited vocabulary for describing odours, so scents are usually described in vague terms (such as “wonderful” or “flowery”) based on feelings and analogies. For instance, students could sniff particular scents and try to capture them in words or describe the emotions they evoke. Beyond helping students increase their vocabularies, these exercises – which I incorporate in my multisensory teaching demonstration – could improve students’ understanding of the complex relationship between smell and language, an issue I explore in the final portion of the seminar. Finally, Sprinkle suggests that students could examine the role of smell in contemporary media and popular culture. For instance, classes could discuss the relationship between smell, gender, and sexuality by analyzing women’s perfume ads. Sprinkle notes that talking about smell in the classroom leads to invigorating discussions, and since smell is an unusual topic, students are particularly engaged by it.

This seminar draws on a number of Sprinkle’s points about the benefits of incorporating smell as a multisensory learning tool in the university English classroom. While this seminar builds on Sprinkle’s examples of smell-centric learning activities, it also moves beyond them by focusing on why smell is particularly effective as tool for teaching literary concepts that deal with language and representation. I also use this article to suggest that

olfactory learning tools need not be limited to teaching texts or ideas that deal explicitly with scent, but can be effectively incorporated into teaching broader concepts covered in English courses. This allows students to reap the benefits of smell as a multisensory learning tool even if they are not studying topics directly related to scent.

Rindisbacher, H. J. (1992). Preface and introduction. In *The Smell of Books: A Cultural Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature*. (pp. 6-25). Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P.

Rindisbacher's work is the first major study of literary representations of scent, and is useful for its more in-depth analysis of smell's particular relationship to language and literature. He argues that smell is often constructed as a "surplus sense, not really 'necessary' in cultural patterning within our socio-semiotic systems" (viii). Yet as his study shows, many writers rely on language to represent smell in literature. Rindisbacher contends that representations of smell in literature are just that – "re-presentations" that are mediated by language. Rindisbacher traces the West's privileging of sight – and to a lesser extent, audition – at the expense of smell. He discusses how smell lacks the kind of nuanced classificatory system used to identify and categorize visual and aural phenomena. He also provides an extended discussion of how English speakers typically use similes to describe odours and how scents are often described as either "good" or "bad."

In this seminar, I use Rindisbacher to flesh out smell's unique relationship to language and literature. More specifically, I use his work to discuss why smell is useful for teaching literary concepts that deal with language and representation despite the myth that smell is purely visceral and non-linguistic. I also build on Rindisbacher's work by suggesting that the construction of smell as an ephemeral phenomenon that exists beyond language is, in itself, a particular way of representing smell.

Classen, C., Howes, D., & Synnott, A. (1994). Introduction: The Meaning and Power of Smell. In *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*. (pp. 1-10). New York: Routledge.

This study provides a cultural approach to smell. The Introduction outlines smell's emotional power despite its devaluation in Western culture. Crucially, the authors note that smells cannot be effectively recorded, captured, or stored – that is, except through descriptions and memories. This point highlights literature's important role in "recording" ephemeral olfactory phenomena. The authors also stress the cultural dimensions of smell, arguing that scents are invested with socio-cultural values. They also trace the devaluation of scent in the West, arguing that the repression of scent is due to smell's connection to memory and emotion and its ability to transcend boundaries, escape containment, and blend with other scents. This "excessive" sensory model contrasts with the West's rationalist worldview, which privileges linearity, distance, and detachment – all concepts associated with vision. The authors also note that smell has been treated as a trivial topic within academia, and seek to remedy this sensory bias with their study.

I use this study to discuss smell’s characteristics. I also use it to show how our approach to smell is not “purely biological,” but is shaped by certain cultural values. These cultural values seem to separate “emotional” smell from “rational” language, but this seminar shows that this is not the case.

## CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

The seminar will run for approximately 120 minutes.

Content, Activity, and Purpose	Duration (min)
<p><b>1) Welcome &amp; introduction</b></p>	<p>5</p>
<p><b>2) Lecture: “Chalk-and-Talk vs. Multisensory Learning Techniques”</b></p> <p><u>Activity:</u></p> <p>Drawing on <b>Gardner and Hatch (1989), Lang (2006), Young, Robinson, and Alberts (2009), Dunn and Dunn (2005), and Sprinkle (1999)</b>, teach participants about the benefits and limitations of chalk-and-talk lectures versus active learning activities that incorporate multisensory learning techniques. Use a traditional didactic lecture format (ie, verbally describe concepts and use common visual aids, such as PowerPoint and/or a whiteboard and marker). Make explicit the connection between different styles of learning and different sensory modalities. Also highlight the sensory hierarchy implicit in both chalk-and-talk techniques and conventional approaches to multisensory learning.</p> <p><u>Purpose:</u></p> <p>It is important to provide participants with a general background on these topics since they form the foundation of the seminar. Research shows that this method is most useful for teaching basic knowledge. Moreover, giving a didactic lecture demonstrates the teaching style that this seminar aims to move beyond. It thus provides the groundwork for the activity below.</p>	<p>10</p>
<p><b>3) Activity: Small-Group Discussion on Chalk-and-Talk vs. Multisensory Learning Techniques</b></p> <p><u>Activity:</u></p> <p>Part 1 (5 min): Break participants into small groups of 3 or 4. Give each group a handout with the following questions (see Appendix A for handout):</p> <p>1) What are some of the benefits of the didactic lecture? 2) What are some of the limitations of the didactic lecture?</p>	<p>10</p>

<p>3) Brainstorm at least one way that touch, taste, or smell could have been incorporated into the lecture. How would this aid the learning process? Assign one participant to act as Recorder and one to act as Speaker. Have the Recorder write down the group's answers on the sheet.</p> <p>Part 2 (5 min): Reconvene and ask each Speaker to present their group's responses. Engage with the responses and invite other participants to voice any other thoughts or questions.</p> <p><u>Purpose:</u></p> <p>Following a short didactic teaching session with an active learning activity allows participants to apply what they learned and engage more deeply with the material, a process that promotes learning. Since the questions test participants' ability to recall and apply the information they learned from the session, the activity also encourages participants to reflect on their own ability to learn from the didactic lecture. These issues can be addressed in the discussion period.</p>	
<p><b>4) Multisensory Learning Seminar: "Smell as a Multisensory Learning Tool"</b></p> <p><u>Activity:</u></p> <p>This seminar combines traditional auditory and visual presentation styles with multisensory learning techniques that emphasize smell.</p> <p>Part 1 (3 min): Begin the seminar with a Think-Pair-Share activity. Give each participant a small, unmarked container with playdough inside. (I recommend using playdough because it has a distinctive odour, and because its ubiquity in North American early childhood education since the 1950s means that most participants will recognize the smell and link it to their childhood). Ask participants to close their eyes and remain silent as they open the container. Give participants 1 minute to smell the Playdough and think about the feelings and memories evoked by the scent. Then give them 2 minutes to share their thoughts with a partner.</p> <p>Part 2 (12 min): Reconvene, asking participants to keep the containers open so the smell of Playdough lingers. Drawing on <b>Stanley (1997), Burmark (2011), and Sprinkle (1999)</b>, explain why smell is particularly useful as a multisensory learning tool despite its marginalization in conventional teaching environments. Emphasize smell's powerful connection to emotion and memory. When discussing the "Proust effect," ask a few participants to share their memories and feelings associated with the smell of Playdough. Discuss how using multisensory learning methods potentially strengthens participants' connection to the material.</p>	<p>15</p>

<p><u>Purpose:</u></p> <p>Incorporating a multisensory learning activity into the session demonstrates the effectiveness of the technique for participants. Introducing a scent at the beginning of the session is useful because participants can relate their experience of the scent to what they are learning as the session proceeds. Further, the modified Think-Pair-Share activity allows participants to have the time to reflect personally on the emotions and memories triggered by the scent of Playdough before sharing them with a partner. Allowing the Playdough smell to linger in the room as the session continues also helps participants connect the smell to the learning experience, which may focus their attention and promote deep learning.</p>	
<p><b>5) Multisensory Teaching Demonstration: “My love is like a red, red rose’: Learning Similes Through Scent”</b></p> <p><u>Activity:</u></p> <p>This multisensory teaching demonstration shows participants one way to incorporate smell as a multisensory learning tool in the university English classroom.</p> <p>Part 1 (2 min): Cover and remove the containers of Playdough. Give participants small bags or bowls with coffee beans. Smelling the coffee beans will help participants clear their senses.</p> <p>Part 2 (8 min): Use the traditional chalk-and-talk method to teach the concept of simile (a comparison using like or as). Define the term verbally and visually, using a board or PowerPoint. To illustrate the concept, briefly discuss Robert Burns’ poem “A Red, Red Rose” (see Appendix B for handout). Note that the opening line, “O my Luve’s like a red, red rose,” is one of the most famous similes in the English language.</p> <p>Part 3 (5 min): Break participants into small groups of 3 or 4 (or more, depending on how many roses there are). Hand out one fresh-cut rose per group. Let each participant examine the rose through their various senses. Ask them to focus specifically on its scent. Then ask participants to describe at least one way that the poet’s love might be “like” the scent of the rose (see Handout). Answers might include: his love is sweet, overwhelmingly strong, or strongest when it blooms. A more complex answer might be that it fades with distance or time. This answer demonstrates how paying close attention to a rose’s olfactory characteristics undercuts the message of the poem, which describes the poet’s undying commitment to his lover. (This answer could also be linked to Shakespeare’s “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?” sonnet. The sonnet famously critiques the convention of comparing a poet’s lover to</p>	<p>15</p>

<p>nature's beauty by drawing attention to the fleeting beauty of the natural world.)</p> <p>Part 4 (5 min): Reconvene and ask participants to volunteer a few answers. Solicit their thoughts on the activity. Ask how the activity enhanced the didactic lecture on simile.</p> <p><u>Purpose:</u></p> <p>Modeling a teaching session that involves a lecture and a smell-focused multisensory learning activity shows participants how they could incorporate scent when teaching literary concepts. It allows participants to experience what their students would experience as learners. It also engages participants' creativity and imagination through scent, which focuses their attention and promotes deep learning.</p>	
<p><b>6) Break</b></p>	10
<p><b>7) Lecture: "Using Smell to Teach Literary Concepts"</b></p> <p><u>Activity:</u></p> <p>This session involves teaching in a didactic lecture format (but leave the roses out in the room). Drawing on <b>Sprinkle (1999), Rindisbacher (1992), and Classen, Howes, and Synnott (1994)</b>, discuss smell's particular relationship to language and representation. Note that these issues are central to the study of English literature at the university level. Also explain that because of smells' value as a learning tool, it is important to incorporate scent when teaching texts and ideas that may not explicitly engage with smell. Suggest that smell can be used to teach a range of literary concepts covered in introductory, intermediate, and advanced classes.</p> <p><u>Purpose:</u></p> <p>Using a didactic lecture format is useful here to provide foundational information on why smell is useful for teaching literary concepts. It also gives participants a break from activities. The roses in the room continue to engage the participants' sense of smell, potentially focusing their attention and promoting deep learning.</p>	15
<p><b>8) Activity: Small-Group Discussion on Using Smell to Teach Literary Concepts</b></p> <p><u>Activity:</u></p> <p>Part 1 (15 min): Break participants into groups of 3 or 4. Ask one person to act</p>	30

<p>as Recorder and one to act as Speaker. Give each group a handout with a literary concept, a brief definition, and a short passage from a literary text (see Appendix C for sample handouts. If it is a large seminar, make copies and have some groups work on the same examples). Ask participants to read the handout then brainstorm at least one way to teach the literary concept that incorporates a) the literary work and b) smell as a multisensory learning tool. (Note that they do not need to use the exact scents mentioned in the literary texts; the point is to be creative!) Some examples include:</p> <p><u>Introductory concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flashback – Marcel Proust, <i>Swann’s Way</i>.<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Unreliable narrator – Sinclair Ross, <i>As For Me and My House</i>.</li> </ul> <p><u>Intermediate concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social construction – Aldous Huxley, <i>Brave New World</i>.</li> </ul> <p><u>Advanced concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The arbitrariness of the sign – William Shakespeare, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>.<sup>4</sup></li> </ul> <p>Part 2 (15 min): Reconvene and ask each Speaker to present their group’s responses. Engage with the responses and ask other participants to voice any other thoughts or questions.</p> <p><u>Purpose:</u></p> <p>This activity encourages participants to creatively apply what they have learned about incorporating smell as a multisensory learning tool in the university English classroom. By sharing the activities with the whole group in the discussion period, participants learn multiple ways to incorporate smell when teaching literary concepts.</p>	
<p><b>9) Summary and Questions</b></p>	<p>5</p>
<p><b>10) Seminar Evaluation</b></p>	<p>5</p>

## PRESENTATION STRATEGIES

The organization of this seminar is based on the research cited in the seminar itself. I organized the seminar so it would not only appeal to different learning styles, but also engage different sensory modalities. I particularly wanted participants to be able to experience the olfactory learning techniques discussed in the seminar. In addition to

<sup>3</sup> *Swann’s Way* is the first volume of Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*.

<sup>4</sup> The arbitrariness of the sign is a common concept in structuralist approaches to language, but other advanced concepts could be taken from theories of post-structuralism (such as Derrida’s work on deconstruction). Using a post-structuralist concept may involve challenging the claim Juliet makes in her soliloquy in *Romeo and Juliet*.

reinforcing the seminar's points about active learning and smell as a multisensory learning tool, incorporating a range of olfactory learning techniques help focus attention, promote deep learning, and – since the activities involve smell – solidify concepts by evoking memories and emotions.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A: Handout for Session #3: Small-Group Discussion on Chalk-and-Talk vs. Multisensory Learning Techniques

Appendix B: Handout for Session #5: “My love is like a red, red rose’: Learning Similes Through Scent”

Appendix C: Sample Handouts for Session #8: Small-Group Discussion on Using Smell to Teach Literary Concepts

**Appendix A:** Handout for Session #3: Small-Group Discussion on Chalk-and-Talk vs. Multisensory Learning Techniques

**Task:** Discuss the following questions with your group. Think about the content of the session, as well as your own reaction to the didactic lecture format used by the instructor.

1) What are some of the benefits of the didactic lecture?

2) What are some of the limitations of the didactic lecture?

3) Brainstorm at least one way that touch, taste, or smell could have been incorporated into the lecture. How would this aid the learning process?

**Appendix B:** Handout for Session #5: “My love is like a red, red rose’: Learning Similes Through Scent”

**Robert Burns, “A Red, Red Rose”**

O my Luve’s like a red, red rose,  
That’s newly sprung in June;  
O my Luve’s like the melodie  
That’s sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
So deep in luve am I;  
And I will love thee still, my Dear,  
Till a’ the seas gang dry.

Till a’ the seas gang dry, my Dear,  
And the rocks melt wi’ the sun;  
O I will love thee still, my Dear,  
While the sands o’ life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve!  
And fare thee weel, a while!  
And I will come again, my Luve,  
Tho’ it were ten thousand mile!<sup>5</sup>

**Task:** Describe at least one way that the poet’s love might be “like” the scent of the rose.

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<sup>5</sup> Burns, R. (2006). A Red, Red Rose. In S. Greenblatt (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Major Authors*. (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). (pp. 1454). New York: W. W. Norton & Company. (Originally published in 1790).

## Appendix C: Sample Handouts for Session #8: Small-Group Discussion on Using Smell to Teach Literary Concepts

### Flashback

**Task:** Imagine you are teaching the concept of the flashback to an introductory-level English class. Brainstorm at least one way to teach the concept by incorporating the literary example below and smell as a multi-sensory learning tool.

**Concept:** A flashback is “[a] device by which a work presents material that occurred prior to the opening scene of the work. Various methods may be used, among them recollections of characters, narration by the characters, dream sequences, and reveries.” For example, “a work may begin with a funeral or other such terminal event and then go back to show what passed before, so that a large part of the work is technically one protracted *flashback*.”<sup>6</sup>

**Literary Passage:** Selection from Marcel Proust’s *Swann’s Way*. This passage, which comes at the end of the first section of the book, sets up the next chapter, “Combray,” an extended flashback in which the narrator describes his childhood in Combray, France.

And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the interval, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks’ windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent; perhaps because of those memories, so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the forms of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds were either obliterated or had been so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

And once again I had recognized the taste of the crumb of madeleine soaked in her decoration of lime-flowers which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where the room was, rose up like the scenery of a theatre to attach itself to the little pavilion, opening on the garden, which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated panel which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I was sent before luncheon, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. [...]<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Harmon, W. and Holman, H. (2006a). Flashback. In *A Handbook to Literature* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). (pp. 219). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.

<sup>7</sup> Proust, M. (1999). *Swann’s Way*. (C. K. S. Moncrieff, Trans.). (Originally published in translation in 1922). pp. 45.

## **Unreliable Narrator**

**Task:** Imagine you are teaching the concept of the unreliable narrator to an introductory-level English class. Brainstorm at least one way to teach the concept by incorporating the literary example below and smell as a multi-sensory learning tool.

**Concept:** An unreliable narrator is “[a] narrator who may be in error in his or her understanding or report of things and who thus leaves readers without the guides needed for making judgments.” For example, in Henry James’ nineteenth-century gothic novel *The Turn of the Screw*, “the debate over what actually happens is really over the reliability of the Governess’s narrative.”<sup>8</sup>

**Literary Passage:** Selection from Sinclair Ross’s *As For Me and My House*. The novel is a series of diary entries written by Mrs. Bentley, the wife of a Protestant minister. The couple has recently relocated to a small town on the Canadian prairies. In this passage, Mrs. Bentley describes the house that has been provided for them to live in.

It’s a depressing house anyway. The ceilings are low, the windows small and mean. White would have been just as cheap and washable, but they’ve painted the kitchen and Philip’s study gray. By way of contrast the bedroom wallpaper has a design of insistent little bright pink roses that stare at you like eyes. They’re there, I imagine, to report to Mrs. Finley<sup>9</sup> if the minister isn’t careful always first to say his prayers.

And most depressing of all is the smell of the place. Not a bad, aggressive smell, just a passive, clinging one – just the wraith of a smell. Stop a minute deliberately to sniff and it isn’t there; go on with what you’re doing and it’s back to haunt your nostrils with a vague suggestion of musty shelves, repression and decay.

Philip says it’s my imagination, but I catch him sniffing too. In a combative mood this morning I washed the floors with a strong carbolic disinfectant; but now as the reek of cleanliness subsides it comes again, this same faint exhalation of the past.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Harmon, W. and Holman, H. (2006b). Unreliable narrator. In *A Handbook to Literature* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). (pp. 537). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.

<sup>9</sup> Mrs. Finley is a devoted church-goer and a leader among the women in the town.

<sup>10</sup> Ross, S. (1981). *As For Me and My House*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. (Original work published in 1941). pp. 17-18.

## **Social constructionism**

**Task:** Imagine you are teaching social constructionism to an intermediate-level English class. Brainstorm at least one way to teach the concept by incorporating the literary example below and smell as a multi-sensory learning tool.

**Concept:** According to theories of social constructionism, seemingly “essential” qualities are not biologically determined, but are produced through social conditioning. For example, some feminist theorists argue that gender is a social construct rather than a biological given.<sup>11</sup>

**Literary Passage:** Selection from Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. In this dystopian novel, babies are produced in factories and conditioned to accept their state-sanctioned role in society. In this scene, the Director of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre uses Pavlovian techniques to condition babies to hate roses and books, so that in the future, they will not be distracted by nature or ideas that might challenge state propaganda.

Turned, the babies at once fell silent, then began to crawl towards those clusters of sleek colours, those shapes so gay and brilliant on the white pages. As they approached, the sun came out of a momentary eclipse behind a cloud. The roses flamed up as though with a sudden passion from within; a new and profound significance seemed to suffuse the shining pages of the books. From the ranks of the crawling babies came little squeals of excitement, gurgles and twitterings of pleasure. [...]

The swiftest crawlers were already at their goal. Small hands reached out uncertainly, touched, grasped, unpetalling the transfigured roses, crumpling the illuminated pages of the books. The Director waited until all were happily busy. Then, ‘Watch carefully,’ he said. And, lifting his hand, he gave the signal.

The Head Nurse, who was standing by a switchboard at the other end of the room, pressed down a little lever.

There was a violent explosion. Shriller and even shriller, a siren shrieked. Alarm bells maddeningly sounded.

The children started, screamed; their faces distorted with terror.

‘And now,’ the Director shouted (for the noise was deafening), ‘now we proceed to rub in the lesson with a mild electric shock.’

He waved his hand again, and the Head Nurse pressed a second lever. The screaming of the babies suddenly changed its tone. There was something desperate, almost insane, about the sharp spasmodic yelps to which they now gave utterance. Their little bodies twitched and stiffened; their limbs moved jerkily as if to the tug of unseen wires.

‘We can electrify the whole strip of floor,’ bawled the Director in explanation. ‘But that’s enough,’ he signalled to the nurse.

The explosions ceased, the bells stopped ringing, the shriek of the siren died down from tone to tone in silence. The stiffly twitching bodies relaxed, and what had become the sob and yelp of infant maniacs broadened out once more into a normal howl of ordinary terror.

‘Offer them the flowers and the books again.’

The nurses obeyed; but at the approach of the roses, at the mere sight of those gaily-coloured images of pussy and cock-a-doodle-doo and baa-baa black sheep, the infants shrank away in horror; the volume of their howling suddenly increased. [...]

‘They’ll grow up with what the psychologists used to call an ‘instinctive’ hatred of books and flowers. Reflexes unalterably conditioned. They’ll be safe from books and botany all their lives.’ [...]<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Code, L. (Ed.). (2000). Social constructionism. (pp. 451-2). In *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>12</sup> Huxley, A. (2007) *Brave New World*. Toronto: Vintage. (Originally published in 1932). pp. 16-7.

### **The Arbitrariness of the Sign**

**Task:** Imagine you are teaching Saussure's concept of the arbitrariness of the sign to an advanced-level English class. Brainstorm at least one way to teach the concept by incorporating the literary example below and smell as a multi-sensory learning tool.

**Concept:** Saussure's general theory of linguistics is foundational to literary theory. Saussure describes the "sound-image" (eg, the word "tree") as a "signifier." The signifier refers to a concept, or "signified" (ie, an organism with bark, branches, and leaves). The term "sign" refers to signifier and signified (sound-image and concept) as a whole. One of primary principles of Saussure's theory is that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary – that is, "it actually has no natural connection with the signified."<sup>13</sup>

**Literary Passage:** Juliet's soliloquy from Act II, Scene ii of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. In this scene, Juliet laments the fact that her love, Romeo, is a Montague, the son of her father's enemy. She is at her balcony speaking to herself, unaware that Romeo is listening in the shadows below.

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;  
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.  
What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot,  
Nor arm nor face, [nor any other part]  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other word would smell as sweet;  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,  
And for they name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself. (2.2.38-48)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Saussure, F. (2004). Course in general linguistics. In J. Rivkin and M. Ryan (Eds.), *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (pp. 59-71). Malden, MA: Blackwell. (Originally published in French in 1916). pp. 61-62.

<sup>14</sup> Shakespeare, W. (1997). *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. In G. Blakemore Evans and J.J.M. Tobin (Eds.), *The Riverside Shakespeare* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (pp. 1101-1145). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

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