

Portfolio Introduction

I have decided to do a portfolio because I feel like I have done many essays in the years I have been at school, so trying something different would be beneficial to me. In this portfolio I plan to explore why Spenser has added the many mounts that he has, and how they personify the characters that are riding these mounts. In this portfolio I have included things that I have done over the semester, such as my notes, portions of my reading journals, a small annotated bibliography, and other short essays about the mounts. I will mainly focus on books 1 and 2, as those are the most interesting moments of mounted characters. I believe that all of these things together will not only show my growth over the semester, but my increased capacity for asking questions. At the beginning of the semester, I noticed that I was not asking very many questions, and if I was, they were very broad and didn't explore deeper into the text, but through gathering the different materials for this portfolio I have noticed my questions have become much more specific, trying to dig deeper into the text. Also through the semester I have noticed my writings have gone from very focused on what the text is trying to say to a mix of both that and trying to figure out how Spenser is using these things that I am writing on as commentary for the world. This project has helped me see how I have grown over the semester in ways that an essay would not have.

Through doing this portfolio I also noticed that Spenser uses many of the mounts present in the text to discuss the idea of the Great Chain of Being. When doing this, he questions the idea of it, but also continues to use it, almost like he is unsure if it should be the dominant idea, or if he should attempt to break free from this constraining idea. When I first started the portfolio, I was talking very broadly about how the mounts personify each character, and how this shows chivalry and/or virtue, but as I have assembled this portfolio, I realized that this is not all he is

doing, as he is also questioning the very idea of life, and where we belong in the universe. Through giving the mounts distinct personalities and personifying them as he does, he is breaking down the idea of the Great Chain of Being subtly, trying to see if he can break out of the constraints or if he is stuck subscribing to this idea that he is trying to de-construct.

Notes

I have included some of my notes in this portfolio, because I noticed a large change in how I was taking notes. At the beginning of the semester, when I had done my discussion question, my notes were very generalized and said almost nothing about what Spenser was trying to achieve with what I was looking at. I asked very few questions and made no attempt at answering them, but as the semester went on, I noticed a large change in how my notes turned out. There are only three examples in here that are related to the topic, but I believe they show my growth through the semester well, as the last example is much more organized, it draws comparisons between different books, and also asks many more questions than at the start of the semester.

The first two inclusions in this portion of the portfolio were discussed in class. One was used for my discussion question, and one I used in my reading journal, but the journal was much briefer than my notes were on the subject. In the last example I noticed some similarities between the Mutability cantos and the first book, so I decided to explore that a little further, as it shows the relation between the 7 books in a different way. In this last example you can see that I relate the things that I am talking about to what Spenser is trying to say about the world and I am not just attempting to display what he has said. Through the questions that I ask I attempt to dig

deeper into the text than before, trying to uncover the more ambiguous things that Spenser is writing about. I believe these notes show my progress through the semester while also helping to show that Spenser is using mounts for a larger purpose, helping to personify and explicate characters and ideas.

Short Essays

I have decided to include two small essays in my portfolio because both Arthur's horse, Spumador, and Guyon losing his mount interest me. In these essays I attempt to describe what Spenser's purpose in giving, or taking away, these mounts does to the characters, and why he may have done this. I believe these essays belong in my portfolio because they help to highlight the messages that Spenser includes with the mounts that he gives each character.

The Guyon essay is far from polished, as I could not seem to get exactly what I wanted to say into the essay format. I used a previous reading journal to inform this essay, as I discussed Evans' "Fall of Guyon," which I found interesting because it discussed a character which I hated, Guyon, and made me like him much more, because it put things into context more than I could hope to understand alone. Though this essay did not come out the way that I wanted it, I still found it important to include, so that I could show that in writing not everything is perfect, and that I did at least try to discover the use of Guyon's mount.

The Arthur essay, I feel, is much better than the Guyon essay. The beginning paragraph is not the best, but I had to introduce Arthur and his mount in some way. This essay became really interesting in the second and third paragraphs, because I could really link how Spenser uses Arthur's mount to the rest of this portfolio. We see that Spenser is questioning the Great Chain of Being, and he may consider a horse to be as noble as the greatest person in Faerie Land. This is

interesting to me because it really challenges the beliefs of the time, so I feel like this was an essential component to my portfolio.

Revisions

In the portfolio I have included a couple of my revisions that I feel describe my process over the semester. In the first revision, the discussion question that I did at the very start of the term, there is a real, noticeable growth between the paper then and now. At the beginning of the semester I was solely looking at what Spenser was meaning in the context of the book, and so it was very narrow in scope, and did not go very in depth about what it could mean in a greater context. With the revision, however, you can see that I go much further into the worldly meaning of the text. I no longer focus on just what Spenser is saying in the text, but I now shift my gaze to focus on what it means in a broader sense, relating the text that I am discussing to the world. This really shows me where I have improved and that looking more closely to a text of this depth is really rewarding in the sense that I can now begin to look at the societal contexts of what was occurring during the 1500's.

In the second revision there is much less change, but that is because during the course of the semester I gradually became more and more able to ask questions that had a more societal implication. This shows that I have changed greatly between my first and second assignments in the revision section of my portfolio, even without doing the actual revision.

In each revision I have added more discussion about what I feel Spenser was saying about the time period, and it really helped concretize the idea that even through the mounts in the book, Spenser is capable of creating and discussing questions about his society and what it means to be human.