



English 10A – Unit 5 Reading Workshop

Ms. Billett

Reading Success Coach

November 13, 2023

Unit 5 Test

essay question to compare

“And Yet the Books”
by Czeslaw Milosz

Poem

Pages 227-228

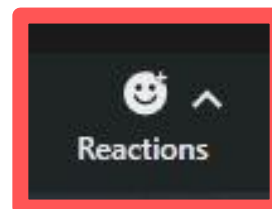
“Rhinoceros”
by Eugene Ionesco

Short story

Pages 230-246



Friday, November 17



Resources

PDF text and audio link on lesson intro page

English 10 A

Add Lesson Notes Print

Hello! I'm your teacher for this course.
Please read the information below before starting this lesson.
Contact me by [WebMail](#) if you have any questions as you complete this lesson.

Reading
Audio

Start Lesson

“Read and Think Critically” handout

- Unit 5 Lesson 6 slide 4
- *Also sent to you via WebMail by Ms. Billett on Nov. 12.

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Rhinoceros by Eugene Ionesco, pages 230–246 Short Story

Responding and Writing

When people begin turning into rhinoceroses, the narrator and his friend Daisy vow to resist the transformation. But as the rhino herds begin to outnumber humans, Daisy is unable to resist the pressure to conform. Eventually the narrator is the only human left. Though he finds his humanity odd and distasteful, he cannot abandon it.

Vocabulary

archivist person who maintains a collection of documents

banal trite; overused

humanism philosophy that stresses the power of human reason; way of life centered on human interests or values

itinerant traveling; circuit-riding

The controlling image is the rhinoceros. Answers will vary about its significance. The transformation of humans into rhinoceroses may signify the abandonment of human values for animal values. Among animals, the rhinoceros is one of the most distinctive-looking.

4. **LITERARY LENS: THEATER OF THE ABSURD**
There are many absurd transformations in this

Vocabulary and Words to Know



- **absurd** – ridiculous, illogical
- **“Theater of the Absurd”** = meaningless of existence. incl illogical actions and nonsense language. Gets reader to ask questions.
- **conformity / to conform** = to obey or agree with something. “go along”
- **theme** – the *message* of the story
- **tone** – the author’s attitude. In this story, using absurd humor to get a message across.

Vocabulary

archivist person who maintains a collection of documents

banal trite; overused

humanism philosophy that stresses the power of human reason; way of life centered on human interests or values

itinerant traveling; circuit-riding

morbid unhealthy; gloomy

mutations changes; alterations

paradoxes seeming contradictions; anomalies

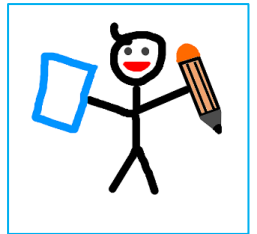
pedant person who shows off learning; stickler for details

psychosis mental derangement; loss of contact with reality

Background

Published: 1959 (as a play)

- **Setting:** a small French town
- Explores the *momentum* of Nazism before World War II
 - and the role that “conformity” played
 - “to conform” = to behave and think **in the same way** as most other people in a group or society – ‘go along to get along’



Characters

- Narrator (1st person “I”)
- Jean, narrator’s friend (French for “John”)
- The rhinoceros
- Townspeople
- Etc.



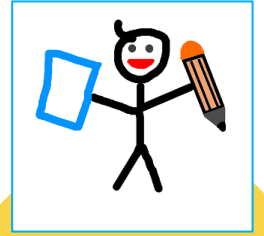
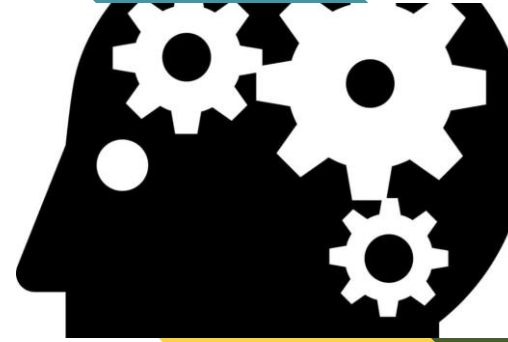
“

*How did people accept Nazism?
Why did they conform (follow along)?*

Steps to Conformity

- Using fear = emotional reaction
- “It’s not about me.”
- “That’s not my problem.”
- Cowardice
- “Putting their heads in the sand” = denial - avoiding conflict
- Pretending they don’t know what’s happening so they do not have to do anything.
- “Group think” - go along to get along.
- Making fun of those who try to stand up for what’s right.

Reading strategies



Make a movie in your head with all the senses

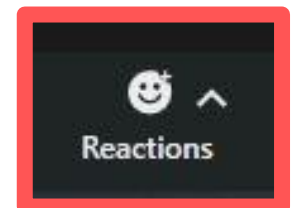


Make connections

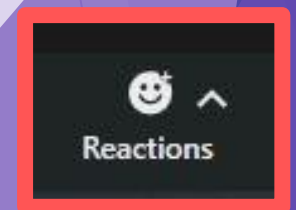
- with your own life
- with what you know about the world
- with other stories you've read (or movies you've seen)



Ask questions as you read.



We were sitting outside the café, my friend Jean and I, peacefully talking about one thing and another, when we caught sight of it on the opposite pavement, huge and powerful, panting noisily, charging straight ahead and brushing against market stalls –
A rhinoceros.



Comparing rhinoceroses to Nazism

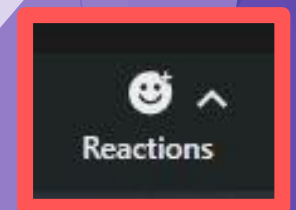
Look at how individual characters and “society” react to the rhinoceros.

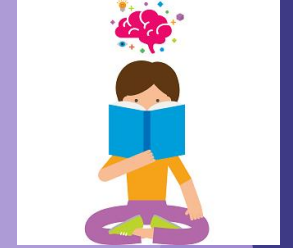


People in the street stepped hurriedly aside to let it pass.

It was all over like a flash of lightning.

People emerged from their hiding places and gathered in groups which watched the rhinoceros disappear into the distance, made some comments on the incident and then dispersed.



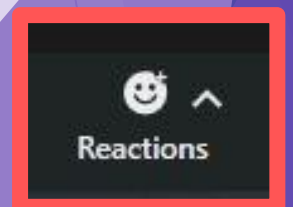


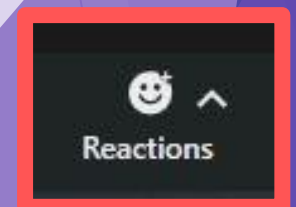
My own reactions were slowish. I absentmindedly took in the image of the rushing beast without ascribing any very great importance to it.

When the first moment of surprise was over, Jean exclaimed, “A rhinoceros at large in town! Doesn’t that surprise you? It ought not to be allowed. We ought to protest to the Town Council.”

“Perhaps it has lived here ever since, hidden in the marshy woods around about,” I answered with a yawn. “perhaps it sheltered under a pebble.”

We changed the subject of our conversation and began to talk about the weather again.





The following Sunday I met Jean once again at the same café. The discussion was about to take a disagreeable turn, when we heard a mighty trumpeting, the hurried clatter of some hoofs, cries, a cat's mewing; almost simultaneously we saw a rhinoceros appear, then disappear.

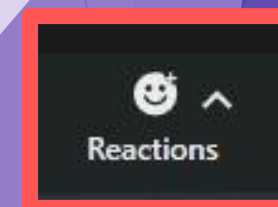
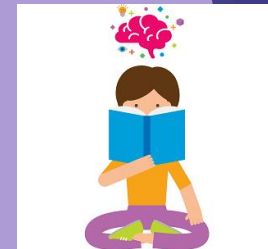
Immediately afterwards a woman appeared holding in her arms a shapeless, bloodstained little object:

"It's run over my cat," she wailed, "it's run over my cat!"

The poor disheveled woman, who seemed the very embodiment of grief, was soon surrounded by people offering sympathy.

Jean and I got up. We rushed across the street to the side of the unfortunate woman.

"All cats are mortal," I said, not knowing how to comfort her.



“It came past my shop last week!” the grocer recalled.

“It wasn’t the same one,” Jean declared. “That was an Asian rhinoceros; this one is an African rhinoceros.”

The two men argue about which kind of rhinoceros it is.

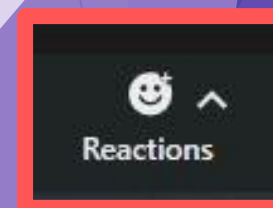
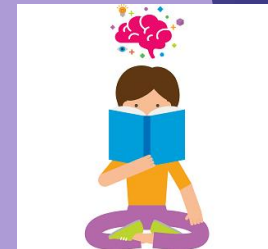
“Would you like to bet on it?” I asked.

Jean was red with fury.

...a page + is spent with people arguing about what kind of rhinoceros it is.

The few people who were there and who had been listening to us had, as a result, quite forgotten about the poor woman’s squashed cat.

The weeping woman still held and rocked in her arms the shapeless remains of what had once been her cat.



I got to the office...

“Well, so you’ve seen rhinoceroses too?” asked the chief clerk.

“Sure I’ve seen him,” I said.

“Oh, now you see, I’m not crazy!” exclaimed the typist Daisy excitedly.

“I’ve not seen it! And I don’t believe in it!” declared Botard, an ex-schoolmater who acted as archivist. These rhinoceroses have blossomed only in the imagination of ignorant women.”

The jurist exclaimed, “All the same, a cat was crushed, and before witnesses!”

“Collective psychosis,” retorted Botard.

“I believe in flying saucers myself,” remarked Daisy.

“That’ll do! Enough chatter! Rhinoceros or no rhinoceros, flying saucers or no flying saucers, work’s got to be done.”

What happens *in this story* that could be connected to what happened with people conforming to Nazism?

Steps to Conformity

- Using fear = emotional reaction
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- Pretending they don’t know what’s happening so that **they** do not have to do anything.
- “Group think” - go along to get along.
- Making fun of those who try to stand up for what’s right.



Thank you

See you in two weeks (after Thanksgiving Break) to start reading strategies with Unit 6.

Ms. Billett