

**Welcome to this
Short Course:**

**Heartaches and hard-won wisdom:
Exploring Coming of Age Short Stories**

**led by Patty Payette, Ph.D.
University of Louisville**



The logo for "My LIBRARY U". The text "My" is in a white, cursive script font, "LIBRARY" is in a white, bold, sans-serif font, and "U" is in a white, bold, sans-serif font with a black outline. The logo is set against a dark grey rectangular background that is overlaid on a blurred image of a bookshelf with various colored books.

Welcome!



- Introductions

(name & why you chose to attend this short course)

Roadmap:

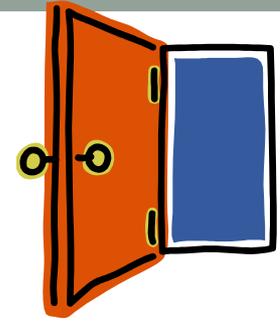
- Goals for our session & this month of sessions
- Overview of coming of age genre
- Approaches for interpreting literature
- Review and discussion of short pieces from “House on Mango Street”
- Questions for active reading in preparation for our next session

Goals for the short course



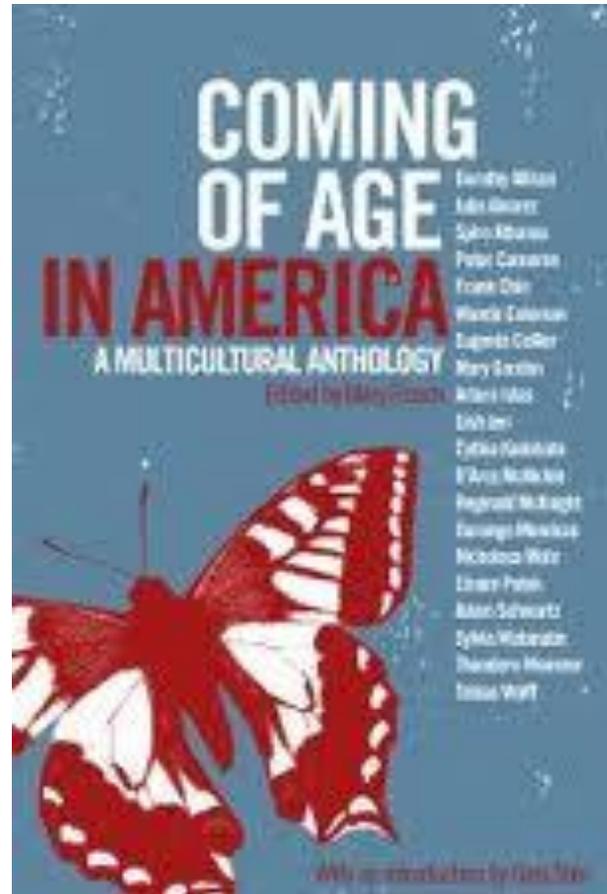
- Explore the literary coming of age genre
- Read, discuss, analyze the texts individually and as a set
- Deepen the meaning of the text through active reading
- Realize new insights about the texts, the genre and the human condition
- Have fun!

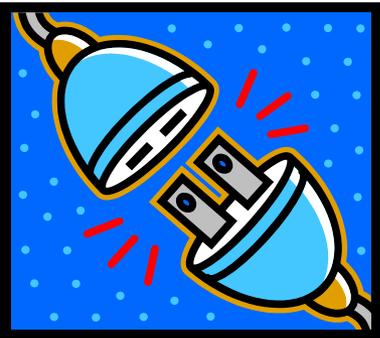
Guidelines for our group



- Come with the spirit of ongoing learning
- Primary focus will be on the texts and active inquiry, not our “life texts”
- Raise your hand with questions, contributions
- We won’t be comprehensive in our conversations, but we can “park” questions and issues
- I will keep us moving forward with attention to time and our goals

Coming of Age in America: A Multicultural Anthology (Frosch)





Your turn: think, pair share

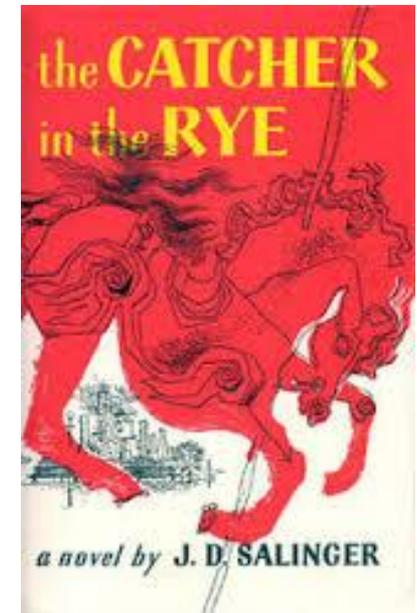
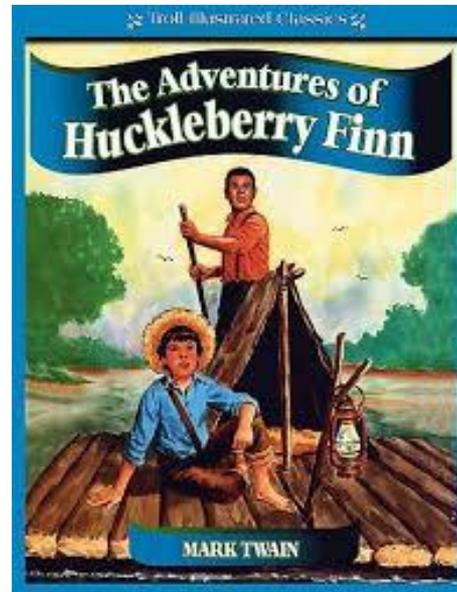
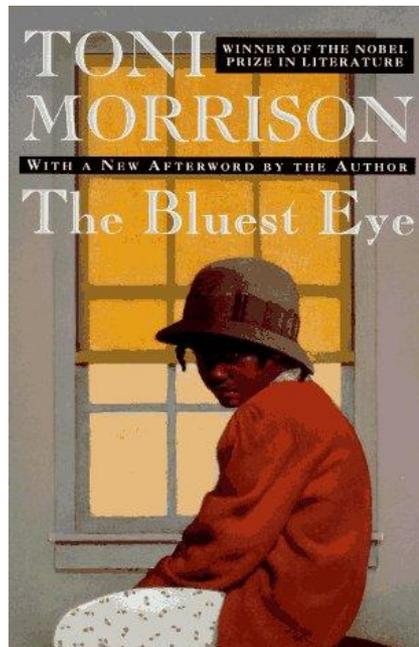
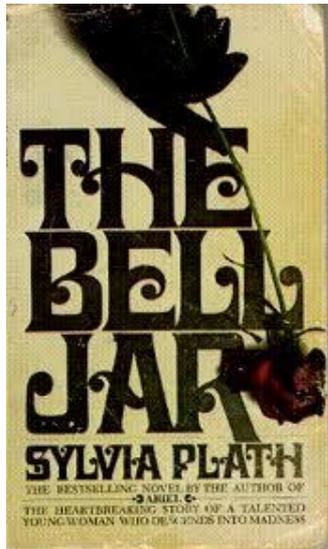
Write down an answer to these prompts on each side of your index card....

What I hope to **gain** from participating in this short course is:

The **question (or concern)** about the topic or the course that I am bringing with me tonight is:

Coming of age genre—what is it?

Coming of age: a story that relates an adolescent's movement toward adulthood and the corresponding awakening to a new understanding of his or herself and the world around him or her.

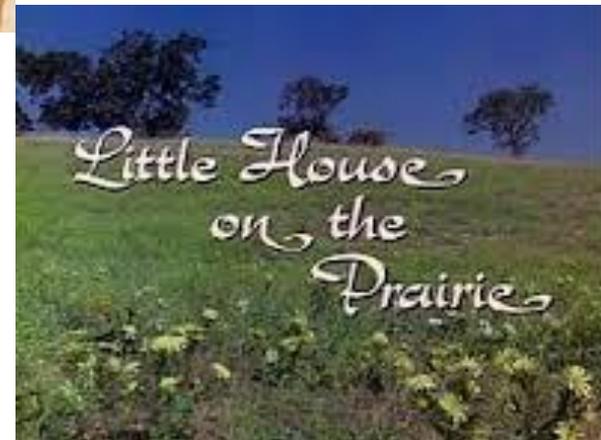
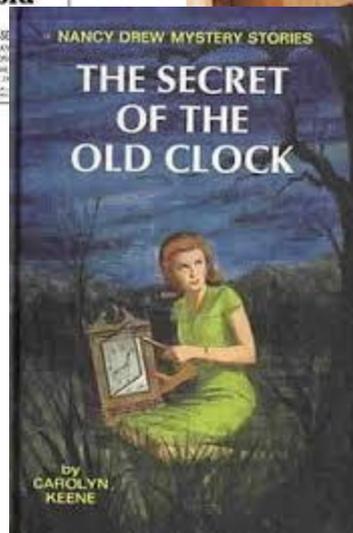
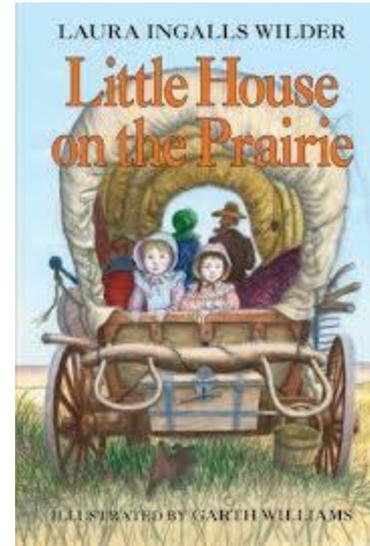
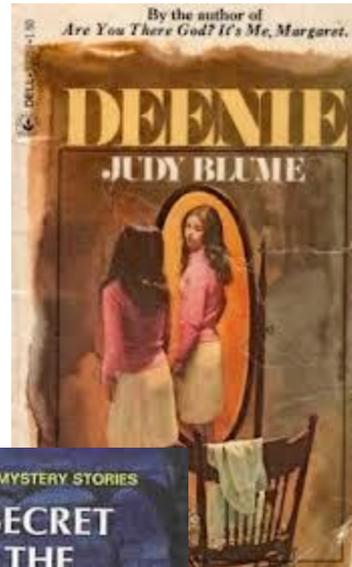


Concept of genre

Genre: a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content (Merriam-Webster)

- Romance
- Mystery
- Tragedy
- Comedy
- Western
- Coming of age
- Memoir
- Poem
- Novel
- Play
- Novella
- Short Story

Coming of Age: my guiding texts



The coming of age genre: think, pair, share



- Why is this genre compelling and even personally powerful for the reader?
- Can you think of an example from your own adolescence or early adulthood of a coming of age text (film, book, TV show, etc.) that had an impact on you?
- What may be the limits of looking to the genre to shape one's sense of self?

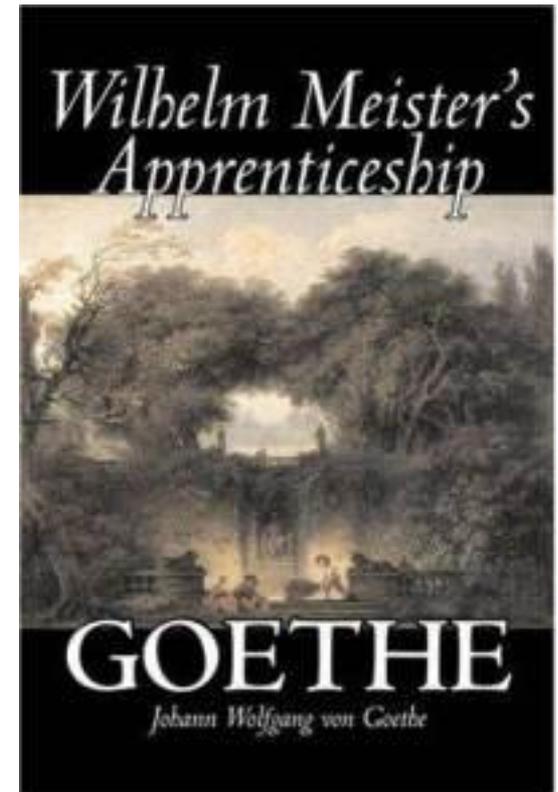
Coming of age genre—historical context

Rooted in the

Bildungsroman

Education/novel

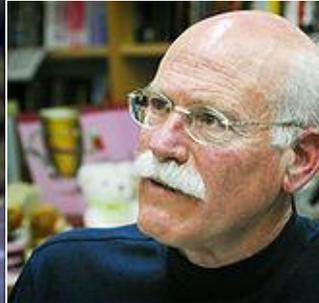
- Moral growth
- Formation of the self
- Movement is to social success & self-realization



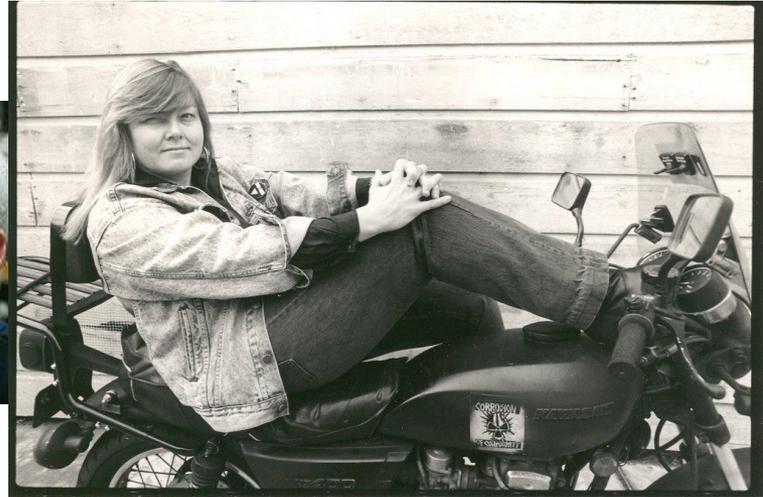
What about our authors...?



Cisneros



Wolff



Allison

What happens to the genre conventions and the process when modern writers take on the journey of the self?

What does it look like in a short story?

The Coming of Age Process: common denominators?

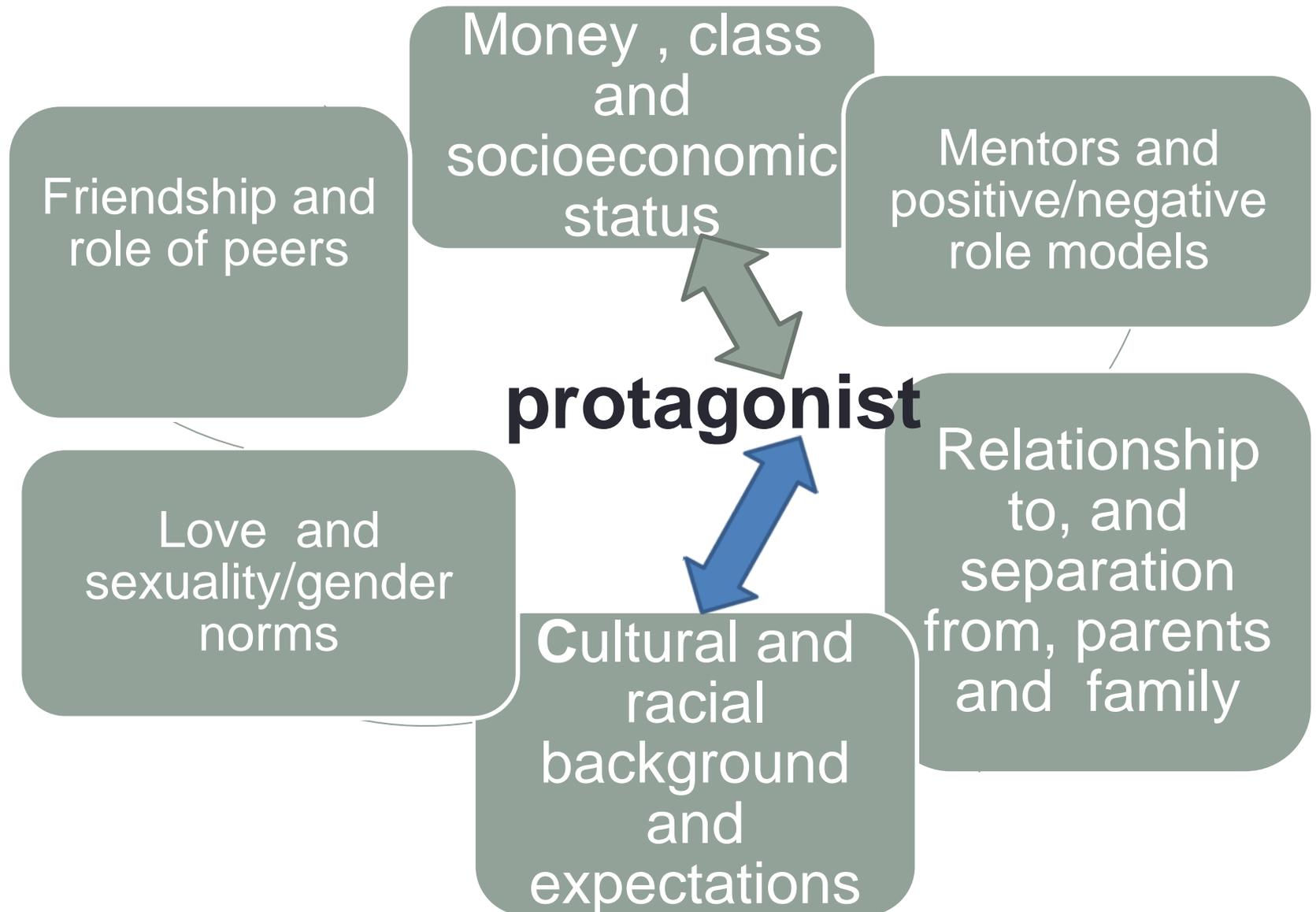
Create a focused listing of common experiences, realizations, tensions, awakenings that you think are part of the coming of age process:

Coming of Age: some characteristics

- Psychological loss of innocence of the protagonist (age 10-20)
- Confrontation with the adult world
- Moral challenges
- Individual needs and desires vs. external pressures/expectations/norms
- Failure/disappointment/awake to limitations
- Acceptance of the complexities and “grayness” of the world
- Awareness of the Self



Themes for the short course



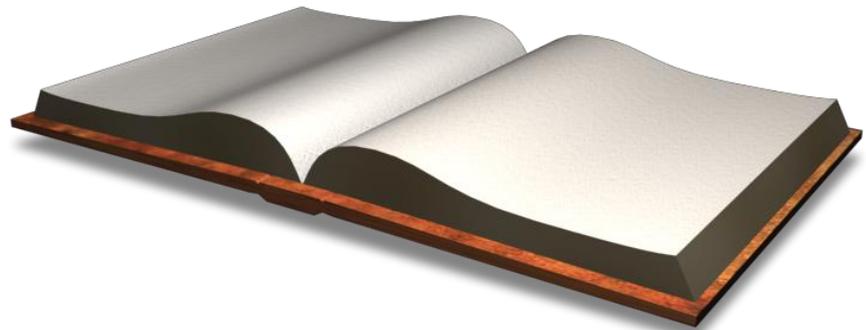
We will analyze each text with a particular focus to these themes

Text:

Something, such as a literary work or other cultural product, regarded as an object of critical analysis

Active Reading:

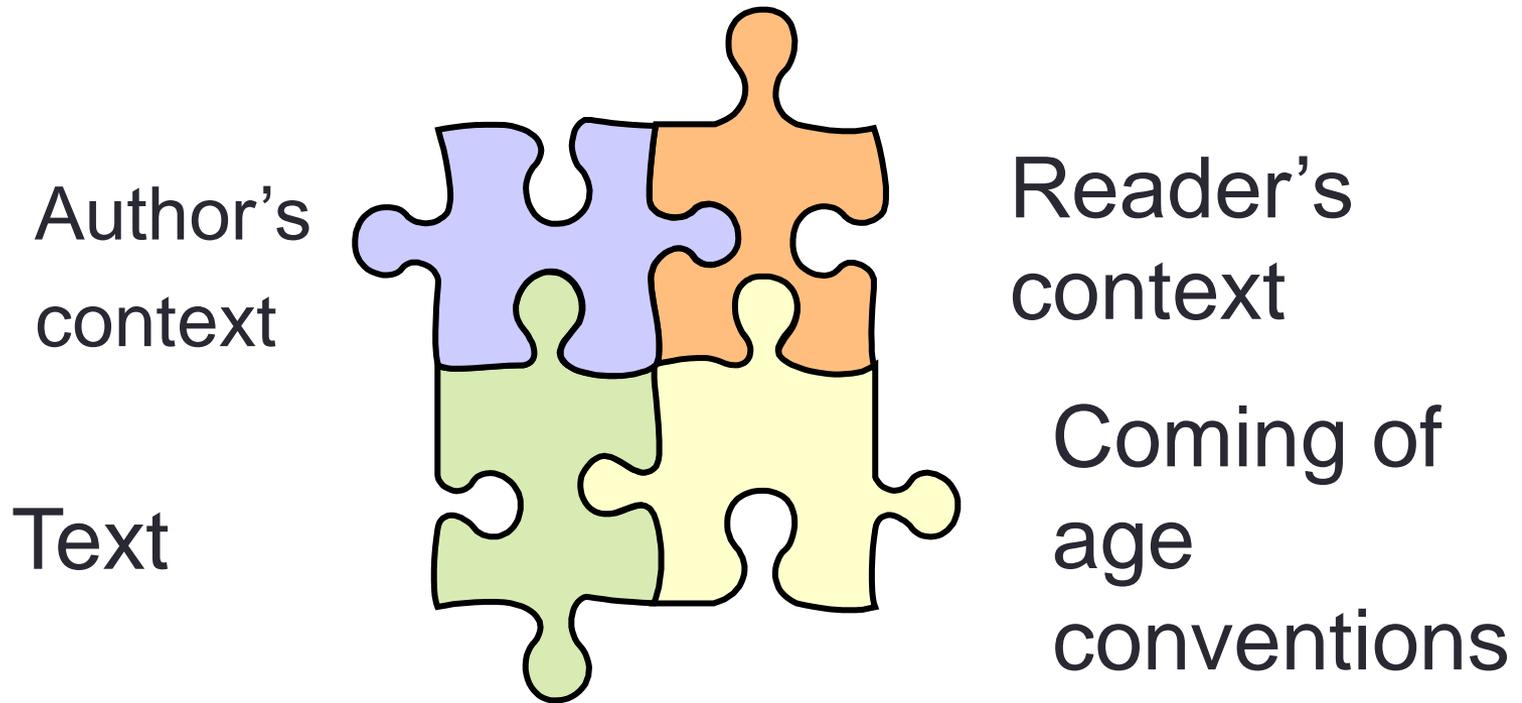
- Comment in the margins
- Consider questions before during and after
- Look for meaning, connections



Framework for analysis

- ✓ What's going on with the protagonist? What is the tone of the text (happy, sad, resigned, content)?
- ✓ What words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs seem to be especially revealing about the protagonist's inner and outer journey?
- ✓ What are the objects, people or places that are significant on this journey? Why or how are they significant?
- ✓ What might the components in the story symbolize in the coming of age process beyond the story itself?

Analyzing—taking the text apart and seeing how the discrete components fit together to create a whole



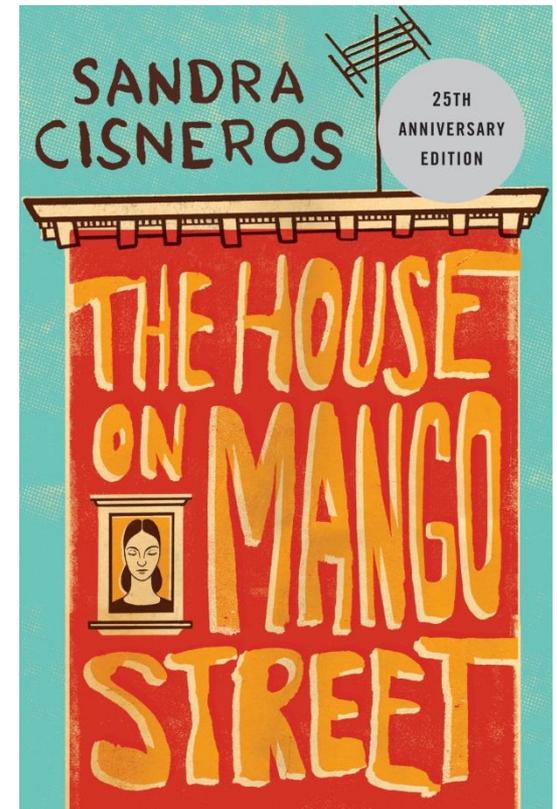
Sandra Cisneros

Background

- Born 1954 in Chicago
- Mexican father and Mexican-American mother
- Six brothers
- Writer with an international reputation
- Forged her writing by looking at intersections, borders, place and identity

The House on Mango Street

- Published in 1984
- Inspired by her coming of age neighborhood in Chicago
- Speaking her truth and unique perspective growing up
- Focus on women—Latina, Chicana and others who face her challenges
- Taught from grade school through college



For next time:

In the “Coming of Age in America” anthology--

- Read Forward by Gary Soto
- Read Introduction by Mary Frosch

- Read “The Jacket” by Gary Soto (p.3)
- Read excerpt from “Bastard out of Carolina” by Dorothy Allison (p.75)

- Themes to focus us:
 - ✓ class/money (implicit and explicit)
 - ✓ mentors (positive and negative role models)
 - ✓ parents

- ✓ How would you characterize these protagonists’ inner journeys in these short snapshots of their lives?



