

How to Read Literature
Like a Professor:
Christ Figures



Why study Jesus in a public school?

- ⇒ We live in a culture dominated by Christianity
- ⇒ To get the most out of European and American lit, you need to be familiar w/Old & New Testament
- ⇒ If nothing else, you need to know about the namesake of Christianity: Jesus Christ



**There are some basic features
that make him who he is:**

- 1. crucified, wounds in the hands,
feet, side, & head**
- 2. in agony**
- 3. self-sacrificing**
- 4. good w/children**
- 5. good w/loaves, fishes, water, wine**



**There are some basic features
that make him who he is:**

- 6. 33 years old when last seen**
- 7. employed as a carpenter**
- 8. known to use humble modes of transportation, feet or donkeys preferred**
- 9. believed to have walked on water**
- 10. often portrayed w/arms outstretched**



**There are some basic features
that make him who he is:**

**11.known to have spent time alone in
the wilderness (see 40 & 3 notes)**

**12.had disciples, 12 at first, but not
all were equally devoted**

13.very forgiving

14.came to redeem an unworthy world



Example: *Old Man & the Sea*

- ⇒ old not young
- ⇒ poor and engaged in a humble profession (fishing)
- ⇒ hasn't had luck fishing in awhile so people doubt him
- ⇒ one boy believes in him (good w/kids & has a disciple)



Example: *Old Man & the Sea*

- ⇒ old man is good & pure, world is not
- ⇒ takes a lone fishing trip & sea become his wilderness
- ⇒ begins to physically suffer
 - hands ripped up in struggle
 - thinks he's ripped something in his side
- ⇒ peps himself up w/little sayings



Example: *Old Man & the Sea*

- ⇒ fishing struggle lasts 3 days
- ⇒ his return is like a resurrection
- ⇒ carries his mast up a hill & it looks like a cross
- ⇒ collapses on bed w/arms outstretched, wounds facing up
- ⇒ next morning, all doubters believe & he brings hope



- ⇒ A Christ figure doesn't have to resemble Christ in every way; otherwise that character would be Christ
- ⇒ No literary Christ figure can ever be as pure, perfect, or divine as Jesus, so why put them in?



Why authors include Christ figures...

The writer wants to make a certain point...

- ⇒ Maybe the parallel deepens the sacrifice...
- ⇒ Maybe the story has to do w/ redemption, hope, or miracles...
- ⇒ Maybe ironic to make character look smaller, not greater...
- ⇒ Who knows?? But they're up to something...



Spiderman

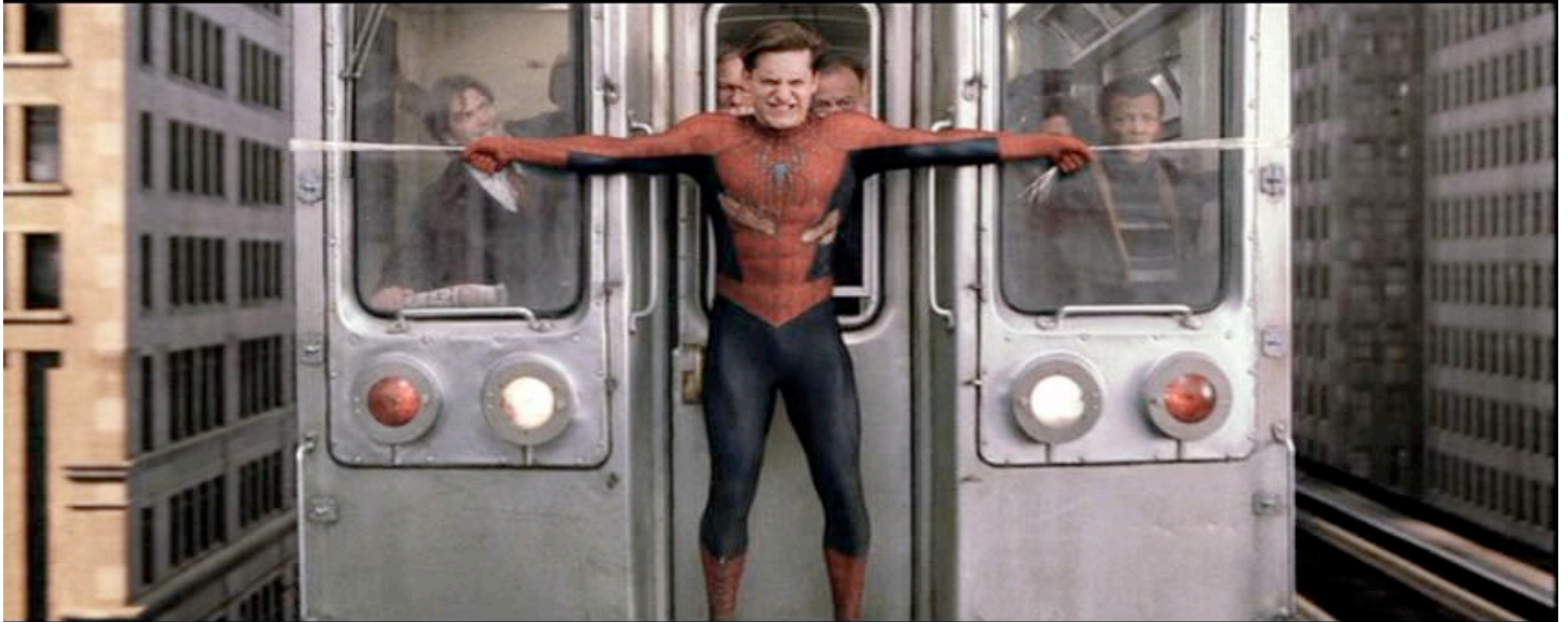


Spiderman (especially #2)

- ⇒ Good with kids
- ⇒ Humble modes of transportation (pizza delivery in beginning of movie)
- ⇒ Self-sacrificing (turned away MJ to protect her)
- ⇒ Wounds in hand
- ⇒ AND portrayed with arms outstretched...



Spiderman 2



Neo



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Neo

- ⇒ Humble job (Mr. Anderson in the cubicle)
- ⇒ Name rearranged = "The One"
- ⇒ Associated with "Trinity"
- ⇒ Performs miracles (flying, stop bullets)
- ⇒ Comes to redeem all people
- ⇒ Sacrifices himself at the end of the 3rd movie



John Coffey

The Green Mile



John Coffey

- ⇒ Initials = J.C.
- ⇒ Performed miracles (healed with hands)
- ⇒ Good with kids
- ⇒ Self-sacrificing (chose to die)
- ⇒ In agony (during execution)





Other examples

- ⇒ Santiago in *The Old Man & the Sea*
- ⇒ Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia*
- ⇒ Harry Potter
- ⇒ Optimus Prime in *Transformers 2*