

ENG 217¹ Doc McGrail Spring 2018

Instructions for “Not Reading a Victorian Novel”

Distant Reading Project: **Due Dates:** Sunday May 6 (Grace period Monday May 7 at midnight)

Note on our purpose and objectives for this week:

Our purpose in “not reading”—or, really, using digital tools to “read” or perform operations on texts—has to do with the limitations of using a tiny group of texts (“the canon”) to draw conclusion about “literature” as a whole.

This isn’t to say you shouldn’t keep reading closely! But with digital tools we can now read at a distance too.

So before you begin this project, you should watch my (Doc McGrail’s) video on Franco Moretti’s two articles, “The Slaughterhouse of Literature” and “Conjectures on World Literature.”

That video is in Moodle and here: <https://screencast-o-matic.com/watch/cFfUrfbb6j>

In that video, I explain about Moretti’s method. You should *at least try to read them along with my notes*. The video and those essays will give you’re the context for *why* you would even be trying out all Voyant tools! They will also help you to write up your reflections and to be “methodologically bold” as Moretti says we must be.

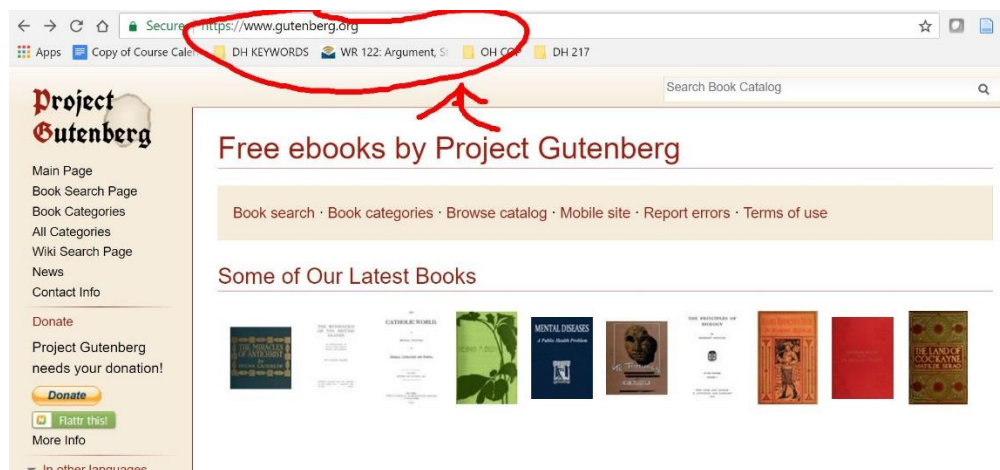
1. Choose a work “not to read”

The first thing you need to do is to go to Project Gutenberg and select a novel that you are *not* going to read. (If you don’t know what I mean by “not” read—go back to my note above.

Here’s the link to Project Gutenberg where you will find the novel and be able to download it and save it as a txt file.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/>

Here’s what it looks like:



¹ This assignment relies on multiple other scholars’ work with Voyant Tools, including [Professor Ryan Cordell](#), Francesca [Gianetti](#) and the documentation for Voyant and the [DWRL at UTexas](#). The screenshots are my own. Information and steps are adapted with permission under a Creative Commons license.

2. There are different kinds of books, but for this course you'll choose a work of **fiction**. You need to go to "Book Categories" and Find "Fiction." The most choices in English are in "Mystery" and "Detective" Fiction. Here's what it looks like (next page):

The first screenshot shows the Project Gutenberg main page with the 'Book Categories' link highlighted in the left sidebar. The main content area displays 'Category:Booksshelf'.

The second screenshot shows the 'Category:Fiction Booksshelf' page, with the title circled in red. It includes a definition of fiction and a list of pages in the category.

The third screenshot shows the 'Mystery Fiction (Booksshelf)' page, with the title circled in red. It features a definition of mystery fiction, nearby categories, and a list of books with an 'Editor's Choice' badge for 'The Moonstone' by Wilkie Collins.

3. Once you have chosen the book you are **NOT** going to read, **save** it as a "txt" file. That's Plain Text. Save it as a ".txt" file not a WORD document. I chose Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. **Do not choose *Dracula* as your text for this assignment since that's the demo text. (You may use it as a comparison text if you're ambitious).** Look at the screenshots below. You'll see first I clicked on "Dracula" and I could download many versions of the book. Notice that I chose "Plain Text".

Dracula by Bram Stoker

Download Bibrec

Download This eBook

Format	Size
Read this book online: HTML	918 kB
EPUB (with images)	388 kB
EPUB (no images)	387 kB
Kindle (with images)	1.5 MB
Kindle (no images)	1.5 MB
Plain Text UTF-8	862 kB
More Files...	

When you try to save as Plain Text, you may get a dialogue box popping up that warns you that you'll lose all the formatting. This is fine. We're not analyzing *formatting*—we're analyzing *text*.

File Conversion - The Project Gutenberg EBook of Dracula.txt

Warning: Saving as a text file will cause all formatting, pictures, and objects in your file to be lost.

Text encoding:

Windows (Default) MS-DOS Other encoding:

Options:

Insert line breaks

End lines with: CR / LF

Allow character substitution

Preview:

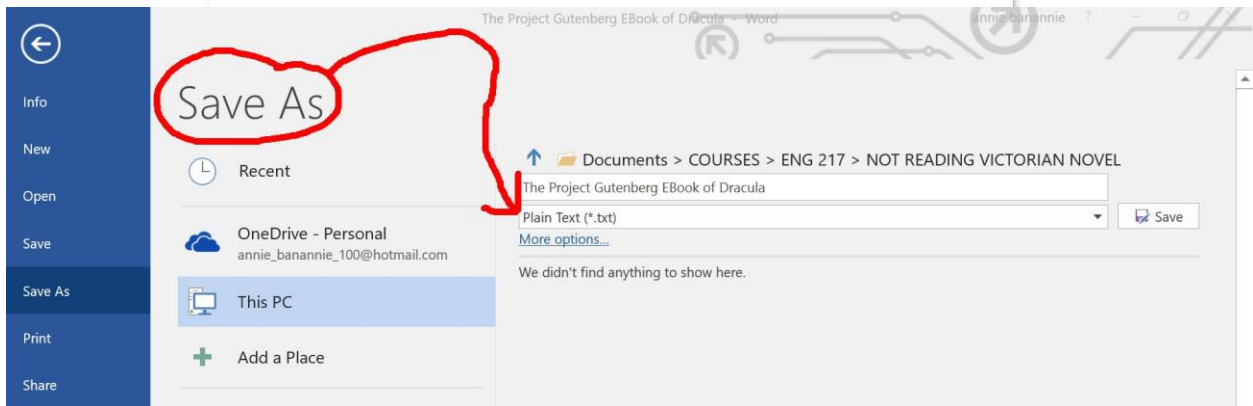
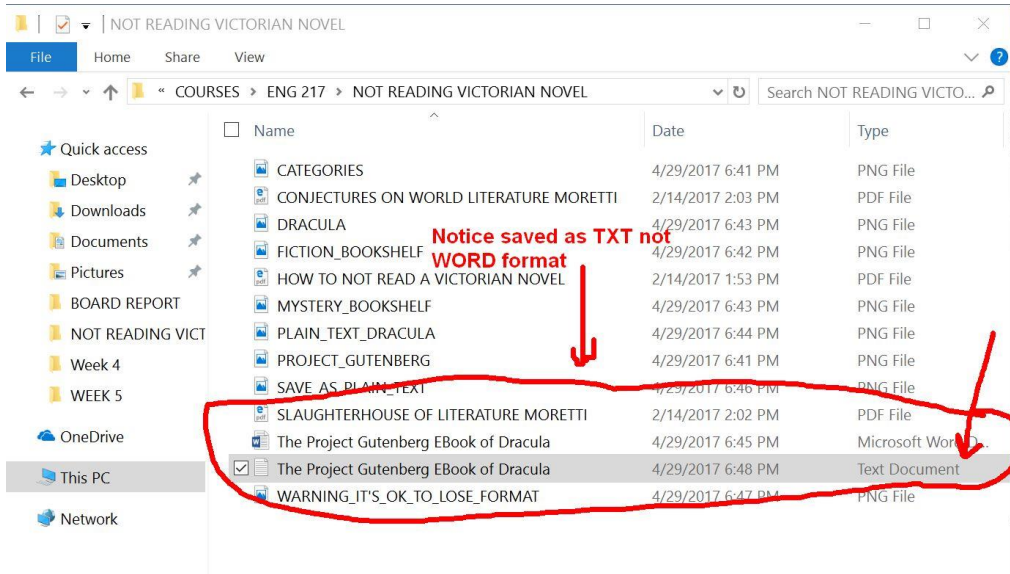
The Project Gutenberg EBook of Dracula, by Bram Stoker

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OK Cancel

It's ok to lose form...

Check to make sure that your file folder has the .txt version saved, not the WORD document version. The tools we are going to use can't read other kinds of files, so **don't skip this step**.



- Great! Now go back into your document and remove any extraneous words that might have been included. This includes the license information and stuff that was not part of the original novel. We only want to analyze the actual novel so you need to delete this. (You'll need to keep track of the citation information for your blog, but you don't want to analyze it in Voyant tools.)

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Dracula, by Bram Stoker

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Title: Dracula

Author: Bram Stoker

Release Date: August 16, 2013 [EBook #345]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DRACULA ***

Produced by Chuck Greif and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net> (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive)

5. **For ease of use and for fun: Save your document in smaller subsections (perhaps four documents—part 1, 2, 3, 4) so you can compare the different parts of your novel. This will also make it easier than uploading a single huge file.**

6. **Make Some Predictions.**

Great! Now, before you do an analysis using our Voyant tools, it's time to **"make some predictions."** Following Professor Ryan Cordell's suggestion,

"[w]hat do you think this work is about? You've never read it, but if it's a well-known book you probably have some idea what it's about. Before you begin your computational analysis, then, list some predicted themes, characters, plot elements, or stylistic characteristics of the text. Be sure to write your ideas down in a document you can refer back to later."

That last part's important: ***create a new document that you can use to write up your responses for your blog.***

Example: My predictions about *Dracula*: There will be lots of creepy details, full moons, forest settings and darkness. There will be an air of mystery and isolation. There will be a damsel in distress. There will be weak men who fall under Count Dracula's spell. I might expect the word "blood" and "death" to show up frequently.

7. **Save Your Work as Screenshots and Notes in a Document to Post in Your Blog**

Prepare to save your project. You'll create screenshots of your findings and save them. So on your computer or thumb drive, create a folder for your files: "Not Reading a Victorian Novel"—this is what I did so that I could collect all the pieces together as you work this week and then post to your blog later this week.

This is the end of Part 1 of Instructions. Click on Part 2 Instructions in Moodle to continue.