

# Critical Reading and Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



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Edited by

Semin Kazazoğlu

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## FOREWORD

*“To succeed in the 21st century, all students will need to perform to high standards and acquire mastery of rigorous core subject material. All students also will need to gain the cognitive and social skills that enable them to deal with the complex challenges of our age.”*

(Rebecca Stobaugh, 2013)

The phrase “critical thinking” was first used to define an educational purpose by American philosopher John Dewey (1910), who mainly called it “reflective thinking.” A dominant prescription of foreign language teaching at the time was to hear before speaking, speak before reading, and read before writing. Until recently, reading and writing skills were not considered as a learning experience requiring active thinking. Nowadays, the goal of teaching these skills is to help students form the habit of critical thinking. Accordingly, they are to undergo the intense mental activity involved in selection, organization, and production. For these reasons, it may be claimed that the combination of thought and activity is more suited to 21st century approaches to teaching reading and writing.

It follows that contemporary linguists suggest that teaching how to write essays is bound to include judging various written pieces on a logical basis in an involved process, recognizing the relevant similarities or differences between facts, looking for fallacies, finding sounder evidence in an argument, and making assertions. Reading also requires the skill of critical thinking, that is, the ability to solve the problem of unlocking meanings by adding together a number of associations and interpretations. Developing the critical thinking skills of students is one way of bringing out creativity. Since creativity is also a cognitive term covering tasks that involve generating new ideas and unique solutions to a problem. Indeed, it is more significant to talk about creativity skills than the four skills that are prominent in learning a foreign language. Accordingly, educators should find ways to identify the mindsets of critical thinkers and provide ways to improve critical thinking and creativity.

This book aims to point out the logical relationships between reading and writing and to suggest some approaches and activities that develop the particular critical thinking abilities of 21st century students. Given that critical thinking is a relatively new term in the domain of teaching languages, educators should give more attention to finding the “most useful” and “most common” ways of teaching it.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Semin KAZAZOĞLU  
İstanbul, Turkey  
20.02.2022

# CHAPTER I

## PROMOTING CRITICAL THINKING IN EFL CLASSES

SEMIN KAZAZOĞLU

*“Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider.”*

Francis Bacon, English essayist

### **Preliminary Questions:**

1. Why is critical thinking necessary in language learning?
2. How can literature foster critical thinking?
3. What is the distinction between reading and critical reading?
4. What are the phases of critical writing?

### **Introduction**

Formal education is supposed to assist the growth of autonomous and critical thinkers who would eventually become self-conscious and reflective individuals. According to Walker & Kettler (2020), critical thinking involves “analyzing arguments, evaluating arguments and claims for aspects such as plausibility and relevance, drawing conclusions about the claims, constructing one’s own arguments, and reflecting on one’s own reasoning” (p. 22). However, there is some debate as to whether critical thinking is intuitive or needs to be taught. Abrami et al., (2008) suggest that instructional approaches can influence the outcomes of critical thinking and that students often need instruction, scaffolding, and different contexts to develop this skill. Walsh and Paul (1988) assert that critical thinking does not automatically come with maturity and it should be taught to be improved, either as a process and/or in context. Literature is one such context where the reader tries to

understand an author's vision as they meet the focal characters, discover new settings, and begin to interpret the story in their own mind. This exploration encourages innovative and systematic problem-solving along with the ability to identify various viewpoints and approaches (Facione, 2007).

Integrating literature into language learning dates to the beginning of the 20th century and significant bodies of research continue to affirm the benefits of doing so (Carter, 2007; Carter & Long, 1991; Hall, 2005; Kim, 2004; Maley, 2001; Paran, 2008; Parkinson & Reid-Thomas, 2000; Vandrick, 2003). The approach is thought to foster critical literacy (Thompson, 2000) and critical thinking (Jones & Ratchcliff, 1993; Gajdusek & van Dommelen 1993; Diaz-Santos 2000). In the same vein, Langer (1997) states that literature provides a locus for reflection, interpretation, connection, and exploration. Hall (2000) defines a communicative and humanistic role for literature in language teaching settings. Paran (2008), claims that language learning involves not only language but also training and education as well. At the heart of this triangle, the notion of critical thinking sparkles like a mid-point that provides all possibilities of learning at ease. In this frame, literature is a medium of critical thinking that enables students to acquire language through interpretation, exploration, and comprehension. Lazar (1993) states that it facilitates understanding of the human condition and fosters linguistic and cognitive skills. However, Duff and Maley (1990, p. 6) emphasize the importance of "linguistic, methodological, and motivational " criterion for successful integration of literature into the language class.

## **Literature Review**

### **Linking Critical Thinking and Reading**

When decoding the meaning of a text the reader reaches for background information or "shared knowledge" sufficient to aid their comprehension. The same is necessary for critical analysis. In this vein, Umberto Eco (cited in Hendricks, 1981) observes that readers infer things about a text through intertextual frames. In his view "no text is read independently of the reader's experience of other texts" (p. 21). Similarly, Tomasek (2009) explains that "good readers connect their past experiences with a text:

interpreting, evaluating, and considering alternative responses or interpretations” (p. 127). Eco describes an open-closed distinction for texts whereby “open ones constitutes a flexible type of which many tokens can be legitimately realized whereas closed texts cannot sustain such interpretation” (p. 372). Bernstein (1972) employs the same notion for speech, defining elaborated code as “universalistic, explicit, and less tied to a given context”; whereas a restricted one is “particularistic, implicit, and tied to a given context” (Hendricks, 1981, p. 372).

Although seen as an “alternative way of reading”, McDonald (2004), believes that critical reading requires a more cognitive and detailed analysis. Larkin’s 2017 study identified items used in survey questions that differentiated critical reading strategies from comprehension-based ones, see Table 1 for a comparison of these approaches.

**Table 1. Survey Question Items Divided by Critical and Comprehension-Based Reading Strategies**

Critical Reading Strategies	Comprehension-Based Reading Strategies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distinguish main and supporting ideas.</li> <li>2. Evaluate the credibility of the claims.</li> <li>3. Make relevant inferences about the text.</li> <li>4. Make judgments about how the text is argued.</li> <li>5. Question the author's assumptions.</li> <li>6. Decide how to use the text for your own study.</li> <li>7. Identify rhetorical devices.</li> <li>8. Identify power relations.</li> <li>9. Evaluate the quality of the text.</li> <li>10. Distinguish between fact and opinion.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preview a text.</li> <li>2. Scan a text for specific information.</li> <li>3. Recognize topics in the text.</li> <li>4. Locate topic sentences.</li> <li>5. Guess the meaning of unknown words from the context.</li> <li>6. Skim a text for the overall idea.</li> <li>7. Paraphrase parts of a text in your own words.</li> <li>8. Read faster by reading phrases rather than single words.</li> <li>9. Reread a text for deeper understanding.</li> <li>10. Understanding the relationship of ideas by recognizing the structure of a text.</li> </ol>

(Adapted from Larkin, 2017, p. 60).

Pardede (2007) suggests that “unlike basic literal comprehension, critical reading requires the reader to interact with the writer. The reader must understand the writer’s message, question it, and react to it in terms of his own knowledge and experience ”(p. 5). McLaughlin & DeVogd (2004) claim that in the process of critical reading, “the readers have the power to analyze the hidden message”. According to Angeletti (1990), integration of reading and writing, class discussions, and the use of questioning are effective ways of improving critical skills. Novels, particularly classic ones, provide different stories and perspectives that encourage students to practice higher level thinking skills.

Manarin et al (2015) assert that critical reading requires the following skills:

- Sifting through various forms of rhetoric
- Recognizing power relations
- Questioning assumptions
- Engaging with the world
- Constructing new possibilities (p. 6).

According to Tomasek (2009) students can critically read in a variety of ways as follows:

- When they raise vital questions and problems from the text,
- When they gather and assess relevant information and then offer plausible interpretations of that information,
- When they test their interpretations against previous knowledge or experience and current experience,
- When they examine their assumptions and the implications of those assumptions, and
- When they use what they have read to communicate effectively with others or to develop potential solutions to complex problems.

Clearly, the reader’s task is to perceive what is objectively present and to do so in a pragmatic way that affords opportunity to broaden their own sense and intuition. Thus, critical reading can be practiced by observing the following criteria:

1. Having necessary background information for the relevant topic
2. Skilled at using clues for making relevant inferences
3. Recognizing foreshadowing ideas
4. Having intertextual competence
5. Distinguishing facts and opinions
6. Using rhetorical devices skillfully
7. Following traces for the references
8. Marking the propositions
9. Identifying the tone of the writer
10. Recognizing speech-acts

Wallace and Wary (2011) offer a useful survey that students can use to evaluate their critical approach and practices in relation to reading and producing academic texts, see Table 2, along with questions they can ask during critical reading such as:

- A Why am I reading this?
- B What are the authors trying to do in writing this?
- C What are the authors saying that is relevant to what I want to find out?
- D How convincing is what the authors are saying?
- E In conclusion, what use can I make of this?

**Table 2. Linking a critical approach to your reading with a self-critical approach to writing**

**How critical a reader and self-critical a writer are you already?**

A Tick each element of critical reading in the list below that you already employ when you read academic literature.

B Tick each element of self-critical writing that you already employ when you write. (You may find it helpful to look at assessors' comments on your past work, to see what they have praised and criticized).

C Then add up the number of ticks for each column, and consider your response to our statement at the end of the exercise.

Element of critical reading	Element of self-critical writing
When reading an academic text:	When writing an academic text:
1. I try to work out what the authors are aiming to achieve;	1. I state clearly what I am trying to achieve;
2. I try to work out the structure of the argument;	2. I create a logical structure for my account, to help me develop my argument and to help the reader to follow it
3. I try to understand the main claims made;	3. I clearly state my main claims;
4. I adopt a skeptical stance towards the authors' claims, checking that they are supported by appropriate evidence;	4. I support my claims with appropriate evidence, so that a critical reader will be convinced;
5. I assess the backing for any generalizations made;	5. I avoid making sweeping generalizations;
6. I check how the authors define their key terms and whether they are consistent in using them;	6. I define the key terms employed in my account, and use the terms consistently
7. I consider what underlying values may be guiding the authors and influencing their claims;	7. I make explicit the values guiding what I write;
8. I keep an eye open mind, willing to be convinced;	8. I assume that my readers can be convinced, provided I can adequately support my claims



9. I look out for instances of irrelevant or distracting material, and the absence of necessary material;	9. I sustain focus throughout my account, avoid irrelevancies and digressions, and include everything relevant;
10. I identify any literature sources to which the authors refer, that I may need to follow up.	10. I ensure that my referencing in the text and the reference list is complete and accurate so that my readers are in a position to check my sources.
Total number of ticks:	Total number of ticks:

The more ticks you have for both columns, the further you have already progressed in becoming a critical reader and self-critical writer. Look back at any items that you have not ticked. Consider how you might incorporate these elements of critical reading and self-critical writing into your habitual approach to study (Wallace & Wray, 2011, p. 13).

## Critical Thinking and Writing in the EFL Context

The distinction between writing and critical writing can be made neither through its content nor its form but the discursive argument it conveys. Writing is often decontextualized. Therefore, writers are bound to “make inferences about the relevant knowledge possessed by the reader, and decide what to include and what to omit from their text” (Nunan, 1991, p. 86). Traditionally, writing is generally seen as a three-stage process: pre-writing, writing, and rewriting. However, writing in the 21st century is increasingly the product of critical reading. Paul and Elder (2007) suggest that “writing which is not based on critical reading might well be merely personal and exist without either context or wider purpose. It may include ‘prejudices, biases, myths and stereotypes’” (p. 40). Indeed, “CT in EFL is not born out of research, literature or global trends. It is born out of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001), in which an independent user (B1-B2) develops a clear

argument, expanding and supporting his/her points of view at some length with subsidiary points and relevant examples, constructs a chain of reasoned argument, explains a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options (Marin & Pava, 2017). Accordingly, students' writing is being evaluated in terms of their CT skills such as:

- giving reasons for supporting or being against a particular point of view,
- obtaining information, ideas and opinions from different sources,
- evaluating alternative proposals, making and responding to hypotheses,
- participating actively in routine and non-routine discussions,
- speculating about causes, consequences and hypothetical situations,
- helping along the progress of work by inviting others to join in, say what they think,
- negotiating in order to reach a goal, coping linguistically to resolve a dispute,
- evaluating different ideas and solutions to a problem, synthesizing information and arguments from a number of sources,
- correcting slips and errors if he/she becomes conscious of them or if they have led to misunderstandings, making notes of "favorite mistakes" and consciously monitoring speech for them, correcting errors in use of tenses and expressions that lead to misunderstandings,
- using circumlocution and paraphrasing to cover gaps in vocabulary and structure, defining the features of something concrete for which he/she cannot remember the word, planning what is to be said and the means to say it, considering the effect on the recipient/s, rehearsing and trying out new combinations and expressions, inviting feedback (p. 85).

### **Critical Reading and Writing Activities**

Critical thinking should also be examined as apart and parcel of EFL reading and writing, asides from specific language content. In this frame Stobaugh (2013) states that critical thinking is a skill that "prepares students to adapt to changing circumstances in the 21st century "(p. 4) and that "it is easy to

define what critical thinking is not—a memorized answer or reactive thinking. Critical thinking is not a simplistic recalling of previous information or illogical and irrational thinking’’. Therefore, she considers a weak critical thinker as being incapable of comprehending, assessing, finding the relevant parts of the problem, focusing on minor details and providing bootless solutions.

The following activities may be given as an example for developing the critical reading skills of language students.

**Activity 1:** While reading a book, students examine the concept of theme in the text. To assess their understanding of theme, students describe a fairy tale that has a similar theme or, in a multiple-choice format, select the title of another text they have already read that has a similar theme.

**Activity 2:** When writing a research paper, students could create a list of sources that provide support for their thesis. In order to complete this task, students must be able to read each source and identify if it provides relevant information to support the thesis. Many sources may be discarded before the final list of sources is determined.

**Activity 3:** In Charlotte’s Web, there are two clearly different points of view—the farmer’s and the pig’s. Students can pinpoint the perspectives and biases in the text.

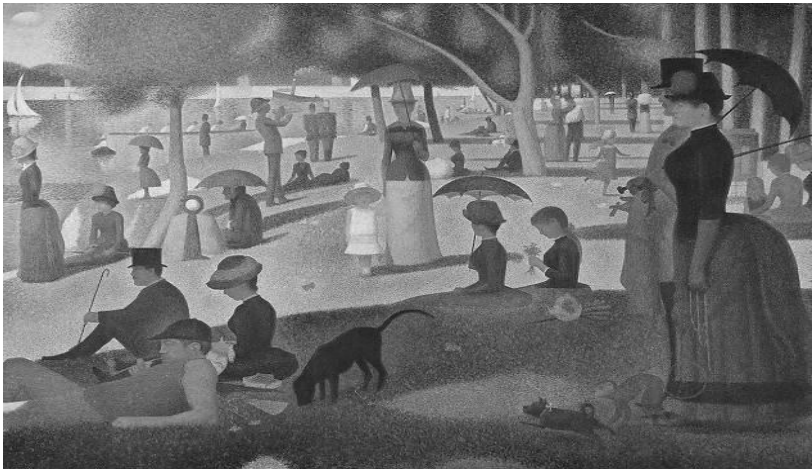
**Activity 4:** When studying historical figures or characters in a novel, students could identify who would be their friend based on criteria.

**Activity 5:** Students rewrite the ending of a book by brainstorming possible endings or listing various modern-day adaptations to an older text.

**Activity 6:** As an employee of a publishing company, select one book that was published fifty or more years ago by your company but is not widely known and would be appealing to the young adult market today. Prepare a persuasive presentation to convince the editor to reprint it (Stobaugh, 2013).

**Activity 7:** Illustrations may be used as an authentic tool for promoting critical skills:

Using the painting as a reference answer the following questions:



A Sunday on La Grande Jatte — 1884, by Georges Seurat  
(<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/27992/a-sunday-on-la-grande-jatte-1884>)

1. What emotions do you have when you look at the painting or photograph?
2. What details most appeal to you?
3. What do you think happened at the time and place this scene was captured? Why?

SENSE	Jot Down Descriptive Adjectives for Each of these Senses Based on Your Response to the Painting or Photograph.
Touch	
Taste	
Sight (colors, objects, or people)	
Sound	
Smell	

7. What is the meaning or insight this image conveys to you?
8. What details in the image support your interpretation?

**Activity 8: Identify the angles of vision in the following excerpts.**

- a) Suddenly he felt himself jerked off his feet, shoved against something hard. The garage Wall. Then they were searching him  
“Hey, listen”

“Okay, stand up. What were you doing-casing that house over there?”

“Casing nothing. There is a girl”

“Some kind of nut, huh?”

He was sweating and laughing and clearing his throat. He remembered when Mr. Creel had grabbed him for stealing comics and he figured he’s wind up in jail, and this time-oh, lord- maybe he would. And who would believe him? And if they did, it would be worse.

- b) The boy held himself against the cool cement wall of the garage. A car with parking lights on turned the corner and rolled to a stop in front of her house. A cop stepped out, another from the passenger side. The boy held his breath. They started across the Street; it was too late to slip away. He stood up straight and walked casually towards them. “Evening officers”.

**Activity 9: Read the following excerpts. What makes “excerpt b” different from “excerpt a”? Explain in ONE Word.**

- a) When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old manservant- a combined gardener and cook- had seen in at least ten years.

- b) Old Emily Grierson dropped dead at last, and the whole town invited themselves to her funeral. The men kind of liked the old lady-once she was really something! The women mostly just wanted to snoop through her house- nobody but the guy who cooked for her and weeded her garden had been inside for maybe ten years.

**Activity 10: Read the following story (Desiree's Baby by Kate Chopin) carefully and answer the questions.**

- a) The point of view used in the story is.....
- b) What is the significance of the heading? Explain in one sentence.

**Activity 11: The following excerpt has 2 different functions. Identify them and say what functions it serves.**

“Oh, Armand is the proudest father in the parish, I believe, chiefly because it is a boy, to bear his name; though he says not, that he would have loved a girl as well. But I know it isn't true. I know he says that to please me. And mamma,” she added, drawing Madame Valmonde's head down to her, and speaking in a whisper, “he hasn't punished one of them- not one of them- since baby is born. Even Negrillon, who have burnt his leg that might be rest from work- he only laughed and said Negrillon was a great scamp. Oh, mamma, I'm so happy, it frightens me”.

**Activity 12: Explain the ultimate irony in the story in one sentence. What kind of irony is it?**

**Activity 13: Explain Armand's character briefly by drawing on evidence in the story.**

---

## **Desiree's Baby**

### **Kate Chopin**

As the day was pleasant, Madame Valmonde drove over to L'Abri to see Desiree and the baby.

It made her laugh to think of Desiree with a baby. Why, it seemed but yesterday that Desiree was little more than a baby herself; when Monsieur in riding through the gateway of Valmonde had found her lying asleep in the shadow of the big stone pillar. The little one awoke in his arms and began to cry for "Dada." That was as much as she could do or say. Some people thought she might have strayed there of her own accord, for she was of the toddling age.

The prevailing belief was that she had been purposely left by a party of Texans, whose canvas-covered wagon, late in the day, had crossed the ferry that Coton Mais kept, just below the plantation. In time Madame Valmonde abandoned every speculation but the one that Desiree had been sent to her by a beneficent Providence to be the child of her affection, seeing that she was without child of the flesh. For the girl grew to be beautiful and gentle, affectionate and sincere, — the idol of Valmonde.

It was no wonder, when she stood one day against the stone pillar in whose shadow she had lain asleep, eighteen years before, that Armand Aubigny riding by and seeing her there, had fallen in love with her. That was the way all the Aubignys fell in love, as if struck by a pistol shot. The wonder was that he had not loved her before; for he had known her since his father brought him home from Paris, a boy of eight, after his mother died there. The passion that awoke in him that day, when he saw her at the gate, swept along like an avalanche, or like a prairie fire, or like anything that drives headlong over all obstacles.

Monsieur Valmonde grew practical and wanted things well considered: that is, the girl's obscure origin. Armand looked into her eyes and did not care. He was reminded that she was nameless. What did it matter about a name

when he could give her one of the oldest and proudest in Louisiana? He ordered the corbeille from Paris, and contained himself with what patience he could until it arrived; then they were married. Madame Valmonde had not seen Desiree and the baby for four weeks. When she reached L'Abri she shuddered at the first sight of it, as she always did. It was a sad looking place, which for many years had not known the gentle presence of a mistress, old Monsieur Aubigny having married and buried his wife in France, and she having loved her own land too well ever to leave it. The roof came down steep and black like a cowl, reaching out beyond the wide galleries that encircled the yellow stuccoed house. Big, solemn oaks grew close to it, and their thick-leaved, far-reaching branches shadowed it like a pall. Young Aubigny's rule was a strict one, too, and under it his negroes had forgotten how to be gay, as they had been during the old master's easy-going and indulgent lifetime.

The young mother was recovering slowly, and lay full length, in her soft White muslins and laces, upon a couch. The baby was beside her, upon her arm, where he had fallen asleep, at her breast. The yellow nurse woman sat beside a window fanning herself.

Madame Valmonde bent her portly figure over Desiree and kissed her, holding her an instant tenderly in her arms. Then she turned to the child.

"This is not the baby!" she exclaimed, in startled tones. French was the language spoken at Valmonde in those days.

"I knew you would be astonished," laughed Desiree, "at the way he has grown. The little cochon de lait! Look at his legs, mamma, and his hands and fingernails, — real finger-nails. Zandrine had to cut them this morning. Isn't it true, Zandrine?"

The woman bowed her turbaned head majestically, "Mais si, Madame."

"And the way he cries," went on Desiree, "is deafening. Armand heard him the other day as far away as La Blanche's cabin."

Madame Valmonde had never removed her eyes from the child. She lifted it and walked with it over to the window that was lightest. She scanned the



baby narrowly, then looked as searchingly at Zandrine, whose face was turned to gaze across the fields.

“Yes, the child has grown, has changed,” said Madame Valmonde, slowly, as she replaced it beside its mother. “What does Armand say?”

Desiree’s face became suffused with a glow that was happiness itself.

“Oh, Armand is the proudest father in the parish, I believe, chiefly because it is a boy, to bear his name; though he says not, — that he would have loved a girl as well. But I know it isn’t true. I know he says that to please me. And mamma,” she added, drawing Madame Valmonde’s head down to her, and speaking in a whisper, “he hasn’t punished one of them — not one of them — since baby is born. Even Negrillon, who pretended to have burnt his leg that he might rest from work — he only laughed, and said Negrillon was a great scamp. Oh, mamma, I’m so happy; it frightens me.”

What Desiree said was true. Marriage, and later the birth of his son had softened Armand Aubigny’s imperious and exacting nature greatly. This was what made the gentle Desiree so happy, for she loved him desperately. When he frowned she trembled, but loved him. When he smiled, she asked no greater blessing of God. But Armand’s dark, handsome face had not often been disfigured by frowns since the day he fell in love with her.

When the baby was about three months old, Desiree awoke one day to the conviction that there was something in the air menacing her peace. It was at first too subtle to grasp. It had only been a disquieting suggestion; an air of mystery among the blacks; unexpected visits from far-off neighbors who could hardly account for their coming. Then a strange, an awful change in her husband’s manner, which she dared not ask him to explain. When he spoke to her, it was with averted eyes, from which the old love-light seemed to have gone out. He absented himself from home; and when there, avoided her presence and that of her child, without excuse. And the very spirit of Satan seemed suddenly to take hold of him in his dealings with the slaves. Desiree was miserable enough to die. She sat in her room, one hot afternoon, in her peignoir, listlessly drawing through her fingers the strands of her long, silky brown hair that hung about her shoulders. The baby, half naked, lay asleep upon her own great mahogany bed, that was like a sumptuous throne,

with its satin-lined half-canopy. One of La Blanche's little quadroon boys — half naked too — stood fanning the child slowly with a fan of peacock feathers. Desiree's eyes had been fixed absently and sadly upon the baby, while she was striving to penetrate the threatening mist that she felt closing about her. She looked from her child to the boy who stood beside him, and back again; over and over. "Ah!" It was a cry that she could not help; which she was not conscious of having uttered. The blood turned like ice in her veins, and a clammy moisture gathered upon her face.

She tried to speak to the little quadroon boy; but no sound would come, at first.

When he heard his name uttered, he looked up, and his mistress was pointing to the door. He laid aside the great, soft fan, and obediently stole away, over the polished floor, on his bare tiptoes. She stayed motionless, with gaze riveted upon her child, and her face the picture of fright.

Presently her husband entered the room, and without noticing her, went to a table and began to search among some papers which covered it. "Armand," she called to him, in a voice which must have stabbed him, if he was human. But he did not notice. "Armand," she said again. Then she rose and tottered towards him. "Armand," she panted once more, clutching his arm, "look at our child. What does it mean? Tell me."

He coldly but gently loosened her fingers from about his arm and thrust the hand away from him. "Tell me what it means!" she cried despairingly. "It means," he answered lightly, "that the child is not white; it means that you are not white."

A quick conception of all that this accusation meant for her nerved her with unwonted courage to deny it. "It is a lie; it is not true, I am white! Look at my hair, it is brown; and my eyes are gray, Armand, you know they are gray. And my skin is fair," seizing his wrist. "Look at my hand; whiter than yours, Armand," she laughed hysterically.

"As white as La Blanche's," he returned cruelly; and went away leaving her alone with their child.

When she could hold a pen in her hand, she sent a despairing letter to Madame Valmonde.

“My mother, they tell me I am not white. Armand has told me I am not white. For God’s sake tell them it is not true. You must know it is not true. I shall die. I must die. I cannot be so unhappy, and live.”

The answer that came was brief:

“My own Desiree: Come home to Valmonde; back to your mother who loves you. Come with your child.”

When the letter reached Desiree she went with it to her husband’s study, and laid it open upon the desk before which he sat. She was like a stone image: silent, white, motionless after she placed it there.

In silence he ran his cold eyes over the written words. He said nothing. “Shall I go, Armand?” she asked in tones sharp with agonized suspense.

“Yes, go.”

“Do you want me to go?”

“Yes, I want you to go.”

He thought Almighty God had dealt cruelly and unjustly with him; and felt, somehow, that he was paying Him back in kind when he stabbed thus into his wife’s soul. Moreover, he no longer loved her, because of the unconscious injury she had brought upon his home and his name. She turned away like one stunned by a blow, and walked slowly towards the door, hoping he would call her back.

“Good-bye, Armand,” she moaned.

He did not answer her. That was his last blow at fate.

Desiree went in search of her child. Zandrine was pacing the sombre gallery with it.

She took the little one from the nurse's arms with no word of explanation, and descending the steps, walked away, under the live-oak branches. It was an October afternoon; the sun was just sinking. Out in the still fields the negroes were picking cotton.

Desiree had not changed the thin white garment nor the slippers which she wore. Her hair was uncovered and the sun's rays brought a golden gleam from its Brown meshes. She did not take the broad, beaten road which led to the far-off plantation of Valmonde. She walked across a deserted field, where the stubble bruised her tender feet, so delicately shod, and tore her thin gown to shreds. She disappeared among the reeds and willows that grew thick along the banks of the deep, sluggish bayou; and she did not come back again. Some weeks later there was a curious scene enacted at L'Abri. In the centre of the smoothly swept back yard was a great bonfire. Armand Aubigny sat in the wide hallway that commanded a view of the spectacle; and it was he who dealt out to a half dozen negroes the material which kept this fire ablaze.

A graceful cradle of willow, with all its dainty furbishings, was laid upon the pyre, which had already been fed with the richness of a priceless layette. Then there were silk gowns, and velvet and satin ones added to these; laces, too, and embroideries; bonnets and gloves; for the corbeille had been of rare quality.

The last thing to go was a tiny bundle of letters; innocent little scribbings that Desiree had sent to him during the days of their espousal. There was the remnant of one back in the drawer from which he took them. But it was not Desiree's; it was part of an old letter from his mother to his father. He read it. She was thanking God for the blessing of her husband's love: —

“But above all,” she wrote, “night and day, I thank the good God for having so arranged our lives that our dear Armand will never know that his mother, who adores him, belongs to the race that is cursed with the brand of slavery.

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