

# Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

## Snapfile 14 The Hours

Virginia Woolf writing p. 167

She will write for an hour or so, then eat something. [...] She sips her coffee, sets it down, stretches her arms. This is one of the most singular experiences, waking on what feels like a good day, preparing to work but not yet actually embarked. At this moment there are infinite possibilities, whole hours ahead. Her mind hums. This morning she may penetrate the obfuscation<sup>1</sup>, the clogged<sup>2</sup> pipes, to reach the gold. She can feel it inside her, an all but indescribable second self, or rather a parallel, purer self. If she were religious, she would call it the soul. It is more than the sum of her intellect and her emotions, more than the sum of her experiences, though it runs like veins of brilliant metal through all three. It is an inner faculty that recognizes the animating mysteries of the world because it is made of the same substance, and when she is very fortunate she is able to write directly through that faculty. Writing in that state is the most profound satisfaction she knows, but her access to it comes and goes without warning. She may pick up her pen and follow it with her hand as it moves across the paper; she may pick up her pen and find that she's merely herself, a woman in a housecoat holding a pen, afraid and uncertain, only mildly<sup>3</sup> competent, with no idea about where to begin or what to write.

She picks up her pen.

Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*, 1998

1. action of making something unclear 2. blocked 3. slightly

*Mrs. Dalloway's incipit p. 168*

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges<sup>1</sup>; Rumpelmayer's<sup>2</sup> men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning—fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

What a lark<sup>3</sup>! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton<sup>4</sup> into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks<sup>5</sup> rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, "Musing<sup>6</sup> among the vegetables?"—was that it?—"I prefer men to cauliflowers"—was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace—Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished—how strange it was!—a few sayings like this about cabbages.

She stiffened a little on the kerb<sup>7</sup>, waiting for Durtnall's van to pass. A charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought her (knowing her as one does know people who live next door to one in Westminster); a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious, though she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness. There she perched, never seeing him, waiting to cross, very upright.

For having lived in Westminster—how many years now? over twenty,—one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or waking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush<sup>8</sup>, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense (but that might be her heart affected, they said, by influenza) before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable.

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 1925

1. *gonds (d'une porte)* 2. a famous London café with a delivery service 3. amusing time 4. a place where Clarissa Dalloway has many memories 5. black birds 6. reflect, ponder 7. edge of the pavement 8. silence

## Clarissa in *The Hours* p. 169

There are still the flowers to buy. Clarissa feigns exasperation (though she loves doing errands<sup>1</sup> like this), leaves Sally cleaning the bathroom, and runs out, promising to be back in half an hour.

It is New York City. It is the end of the twentieth century.

The vestibule door opens onto a June morning so fine and scrubbed Clarissa pauses at the threshold as she would at the edge of a pool, watching the turquoise water lapping at the tiles, the liquid nets of sun wavering in the blue depths. [...]

What a thrill, what a shock, to be alive on a morning in June, prosperous, almost scandalously privileged, with a simple errand to run. She, Clarissa Vaughan, an ordinary person (at this age, why bother trying to deny it?), has flowers to buy and a party to give. As Clarissa steps down from the vestibule her shoe makes gritty contact with the red-brown, mica-studded<sup>2</sup> stone of the first stair. She is fifty-two, just fifty-two, and in almost unnaturally good health. She feels every bit as good as she did that day in Wellfleet, at the age of eighteen, stepping out through the glass doors into a day very much like this one, fresh and almost painfully clear, rampant with growth. There were dragonflies<sup>3</sup> zigzagging among the cattails<sup>4</sup>. There was a grassy smell sharpened by pine sap. Richard came out behind her, put a hand on her shoulder, and said, "Why, hello, Mrs. Dalloway." The name Mrs. Dalloway had been Richard's idea—a conceit<sup>5</sup> tossed off<sup>6</sup> one drunken dormitory night as he assured her that Vaughan was not the proper name for her. She should, he'd said, be named after a great figure in literature, and while she'd argued for Isabel Archer or AnnaKarenina, Richard had insisted that Mrs. Dalloway was the singular and obvious choice. There was the matter of her existing first name, a sign too obvious to ignore, and, more important, the larger question of fate<sup>7</sup>.

Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*, 1998

1. buying things for the house 2. *recouvert de minerai* 3. *libellules* 4. plants  
5. imaginative idea 6. say casually 7. destiny

## Laura Brown reading p. 170

It is Los Angeles. It is 1949.

Laura Brown is trying to lose herself. No, that's not it exactly—she is trying to keep herself by gaining entry into a parallel world. She lays the book face down on her chest. Already her bedroom (no, their bedroom) feels more densely inhabited, more actual, because a character named Mrs. Dalloway is on her way to buy flowers. Laura glances at the clock on the nightstand. It's well past seven. Why did she buy this clock, this hideous thing, with its square green face in a rectangular black Bakelite sarcophagus—how could she ever have thought it was smart? She should not be permitting herself to read, not this morning of all mornings; not on Dan's birthday. She should be out of bed, showered and dressed, fixing breakfast for Dan and Richie. [...]

She will make up for breakfast by baking Dan a perfect birthday cake; by ironing the good cloth; by setting a big bouquet of flowers (roses?) in the middle of the table, and surrounding it with gifts. That should compensate, shouldn't it?

She will read one more page. One more page, to calm and locate herself, then she'll get out of bed. [...]

She inhales deeply. It is so beautiful; it is so much more than... well, than almost anything, really. In another world, she might have spent her whole life reading. But this is the new world, the rescued world—there's not much room for idleness. [...]

So now she is Laura Brown. Laura Zielski, the solitary girl, the incessant reader, is gone, and here in her place is Laura Brown.

One page, she decides; just one. She isn't ready yet; the tasks that lie ahead (putting on her robe, brushing her hair, going down to the kitchen) are still too thin, too elusive. She will permit herself another minute here, in bed, before entering the day. She will allow herself just a little more time. She is taken by a wave of feeling, a sea-swell<sup>1</sup>, that rises from under her breast and buoys<sup>2</sup> her, floats her gently, as if she were a sea creature thrown back from the sand where it had beached<sup>3</sup> itself—as if she had been returned from a realm<sup>4</sup> of crushing gravity to her true medium, the suck and swell of saltwater, that weightless brilliance.

Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*, 1998

1. *houle* 2. cheer up 3. land 4. domain, area