

FRST 101: Freshman Studies II Winter 2012
Instructor: Stoneking
Handout #8: GOULD, BULLY FOR BRONTOSAURUS

Wednesday 8 February 2012:

Read the assigned essays (twice). Think about the following topics/questions and be prepared to discuss them in class.

- Essay #25, **The Godfather of Disaster:**
 - As always ... identify the thesis and/or main point(s) of this essay and be ready to read specific quotations that exemplify it/them.
 - Summarize the reasons why William Whiston latched onto comets as an all-purpose explanation for cause of catastrophic global events. Why does Gould have such sympathy for him?
 - In *The Creation Myths of Cooperstown*, Gould argues that we are attracted to origin stories that identify significant moments in history as being the most important, as opposed to an origin that has evolved slowly over time. In this essay he seems to be praising the other side of this dichotomy. Is he being inconsistent?
 - Look up:
 - Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and the Laputans
 - Charles Lyell
 - Christopher Wren
 - Others?

- Essay #14, **Red Wings in the Sunset:**
 - Identify the thesis and/or main point(s) of this essay and be ready to read specific quotations that exemplify it/them.
 - What "common path to perdition," a route that is "distressingly common among intellectuals," did Abbot Thayer take?
 - Why did scientists and others (including Teddy Roosevelt) object to Thayer's ultimate version of his theory of animal coloration?
 - Gould says, on page 225, that "nothing but habit and tradition separate the 'two cultures' of humanities and science." What does he mean by this and do you agree?
 - What rhetorical or stylistic devices does Gould use in this essay? I noticed substantial use of alliteration.

- Generate a list of common themes that have arisen in multiple essays by Stephen Jay Gould. Identify the essays in which they are found.

- Rank the Gould essays we have read from most favorite to least favorite:
 - #3 The Creation Myths of Cooperstown
 - #4 The Panda's Thumb of Technology
 - #8 Male Nipple and Clitoral Ripples
 - #9 Not Necessarily a Wing
 - #11 Life's Little Joke
 - #12 The Chain of Reason versus the Chain of Thumbs
 - #14 Red Wings in the Sunset
 - #18 To Be a Platypus
 - #25 The Godfather of Disaster
 - #29 An Essay on a Pig Roast
 - #31 The Streak of Streaks
 - #34 The Face of Miranda