

Week 2 Maryse Condé *Le Coeur à rire ou à pleurer*

A. Reading: Please read from p. 86 to the end.

B. Narrative Strategies

The role of reading and literature in the text

1. Research the term 'conte' and draw up a list of its associations.
2. Think about how the definitions found help us to understand Condé's writing project (the text is subtitled 'Contes vrais de mon enfance').
3. What other kinds of literature are alluded to in this text? Make a note of some examples. Why, in your view, does Condé make these intertextual references?
4. Prepare a detailed analysis of the chapter 'Chemin d'école' (p. 113 ff). Think particularly about the interplay between literature and education here. Think also about the significance of referencing other texts.

C. (Auto)biography and identity

5. Examine the portrait of Maryse's mother. Think particularly about:
 - i. How the portrait is developed in the course of the text (pinpoint key moments).
 - ii. The tools Condé uses: can the portrait be called a biography?
6. Is *Leçon d'histoire* (p. 45) the most powerful example of Maryse's movement from ignorance to knowledge about race?
7. How does Condé use the idea of memory to explore issues of self and identity?
8. How is the theme of memory linked with wider cultural, political and social questions in the text?

D. Forum work

Reading: 14 – 15 of your *Study Skills Handbook*, on *Preparing a Literary Commentary*; *Beginning Theory*, p. 51 on Structuralism.

Study group work for class: after reading the above, prepare a detailed commentary on the following passage:

Ch 'The Bluest Eye', from 'Après cela, son amour ayant été officiellement déclaré' to 'Nos guides étaient des romans français de quatre sous.'