



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# Discussion Tools: Literature

## Author(s)

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## Year

2008

## Description

Short stories, novels, poetry, and other literary creations can often be powerful articulations of the ethical challenges that face scientists. Reading such works, some of which may already be well-known to students, can provide a richer, more complete story of how and why individuals find themselves in difficult straits. In addition, many full length non-fiction accounts about science can help to increase the sense of relevance and realism.

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## **Literature**

Short stories, novels, poetry, and other literary creations can often be powerful articulations of the ethical challenges that face scientists. Reading such works, some of which may already be well-known to students, can provide a richer, more complete story of how and why individuals find themselves in difficult straits. In addition, many full length non-fiction accounts about science can help to increase the sense of relevance and realism.

- An entire course can be devoted to working through a novel or non-fiction account that is rich in elements common to science and scientists.
- A short story or poem can be used in a single course session. The work can be read aloud, followed by discussion both of the choices the author made in writing the story and the choices open to the characters portrayed.
- Students can be assigned to read different novels, books or short stories, with each being responsible for making a presentation to the class of: (a) a brief summary of the work, (b) the ethical dilemmas represented, and (c) an analysis of how those dilemmas might be resolved.

## **Resources**

### **Fiction**

- Ariyoshi, Sawako: The Doctor's Wife
- Camus, Albert: The Plague
- Djerassi, Carl: Cantor's Dilemma
- Gilbert, David: The Normals
- Goodman, Allegra: Intuition

- Hawthorne, Nathaniel: The Birthmark, Dr. Heidegger's Experiment, and Rappaccini's Daughter
- Ishiguro, Kazuo: Never Let Me Go
- Keyes, Daniel: Flowers for Algernon
- Lewis, Sinclair: Arrowsmith
- Patchett, Ann: State of Wonder
- Shelley, Mary: Frankenstein
- Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr: Cancer Ward
- Stevenson, Robert Louis: The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

## **Nonfiction**

- Crewdson J (2003): Science Fictions: A Scientific Mystery, a Massive Cover-up and the Dark Legacy of Robert Gallo
- Hixon JR (1975): The Patchwork Mouse
- Kevles DJ (2000): The Baltimore Case: A Trial of Politics, Science, and Character
- Reich ES (2009): Plastic Fantastic: How the Biggest Fraud in Physics Shook the Scientific World
- Skloot, R. (2011): The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

## **Notes**

The Resources for Research Ethics Education site was originally developed and maintained by Dr. Michael Kalichman, Director of the Research Ethics Program at the University of California San Diego. The site was transferred to the Online Ethics Center in 2021 with the permission of the author.

## **Resource Type**

Bibliography

## **Parent Collection**

Resources for Research Ethics Education

## **Topics**

Pedagogical Approaches

## **Discipline(s)**

Research Ethics

## Teaching Ethics in STEM