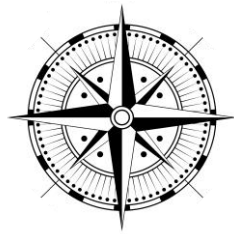


THE REMASTERED FALL 2014 EDITION

# HOUSE OF LEAVES

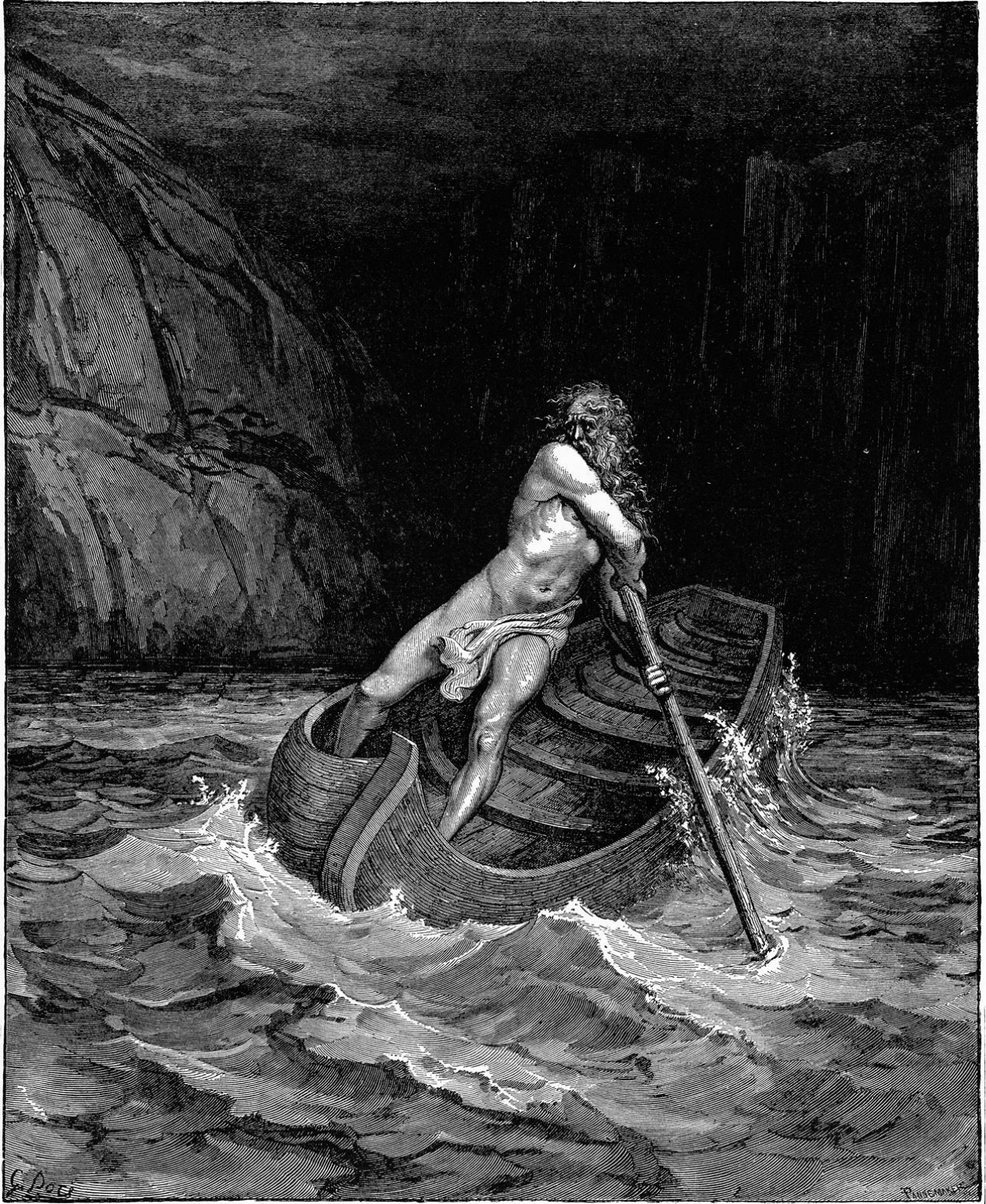


MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI

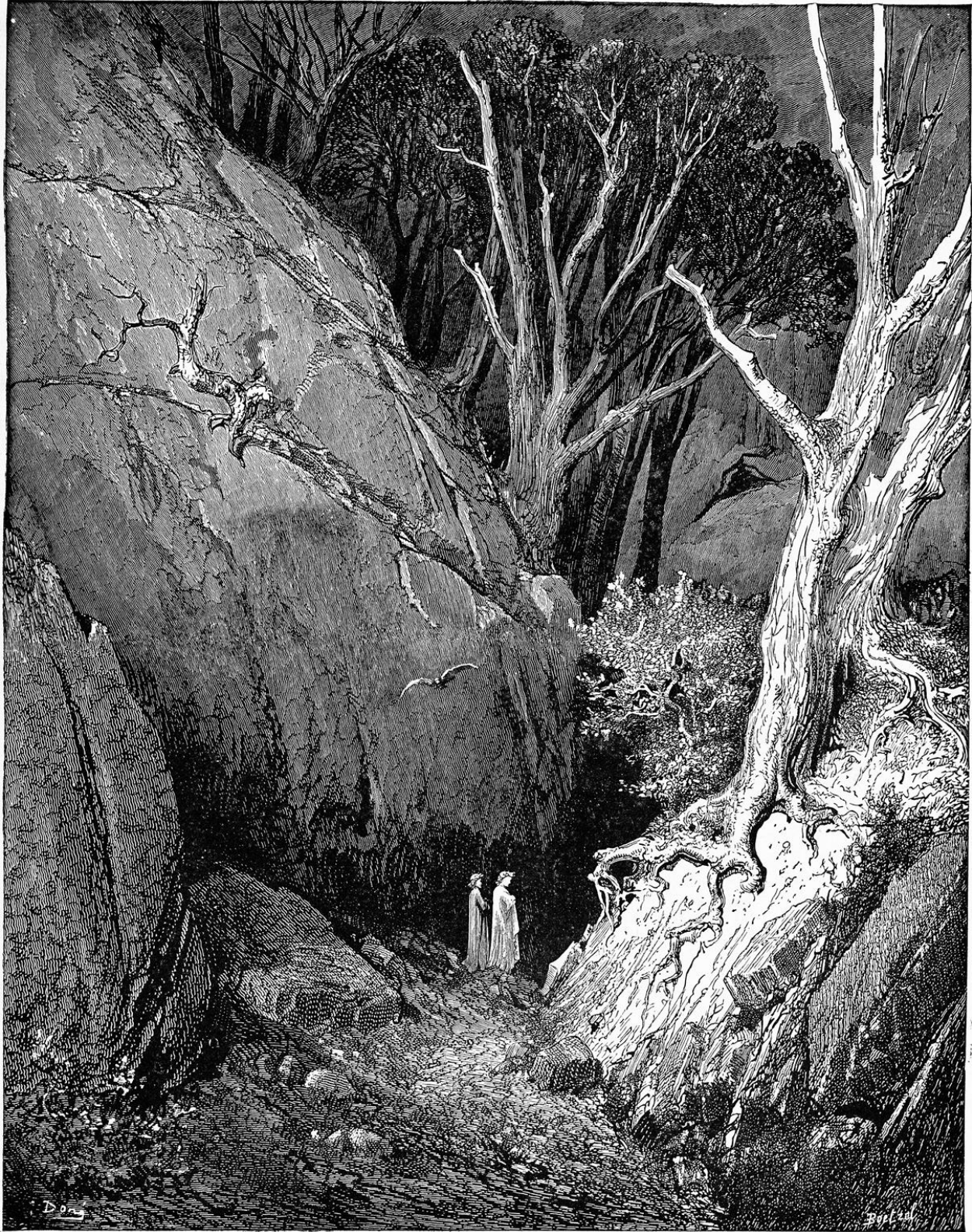
*A Novel*

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(Charon on the Acheron River by Gustave Doré, 1860. — Ed.)



<sup>1</sup>Illustration by Gustave Doré from Dante's *Inferno*, Canto III, lines 7-9. In 1939, some guy named John D. Sinclair from the Oxford University Press translated the Italian as follows: "Before me nothing was created but eternal things and I endure eternally. Abandon all hope, ye that enter here." —Johnny Truant

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

Who is Mark Danielewski? How did the relationship with his sister, Anne Danielewski (Poe), help to bring about *House of Leaves*?

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What effect does Danielewski's use of varied fonts and unconventional page layouts in *House of Leaves* have on readers?

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How does Danielewski renew elements of Gothic literature in *House of Leaves*?

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How does having three different storytellers in *House of Leaves*—Zampanò, Johnny, and Pelafina—change the meaning of the novel as a whole?

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What is postmodernism? Explain this artistic movement in relation to one of the works we read, watched, or played during our *House of Leaves* unit.

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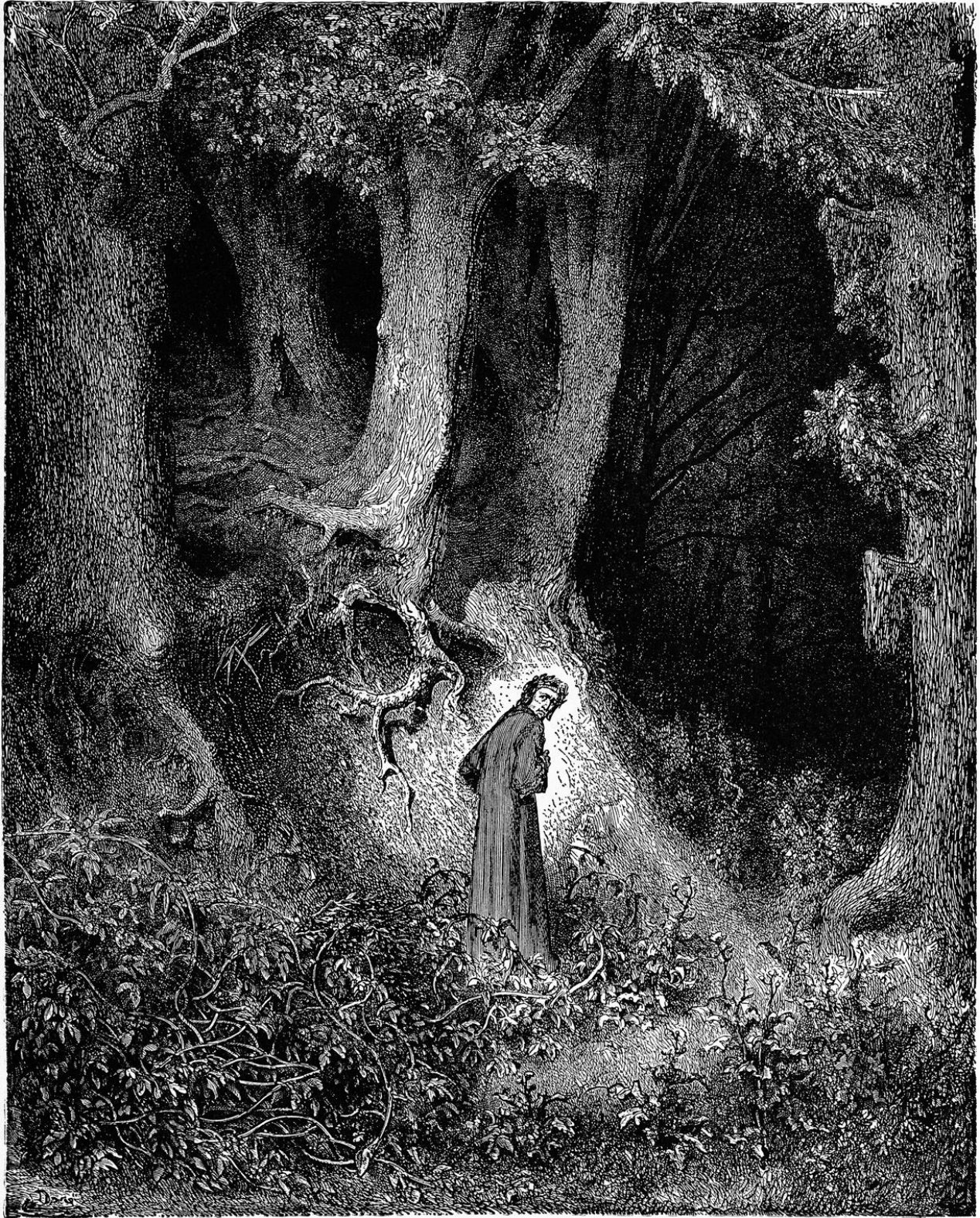
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<sup>2</sup>Doré and Dante again. Again translated by Sinclair. Inferno, Canto II; lines 31-32: "But I, why should I go there, and who grants it? I am not Aeneas; I am not Paul." A question I'm often asking myself these days. Though not the Aeneas/Paul part. -Johnny Truant

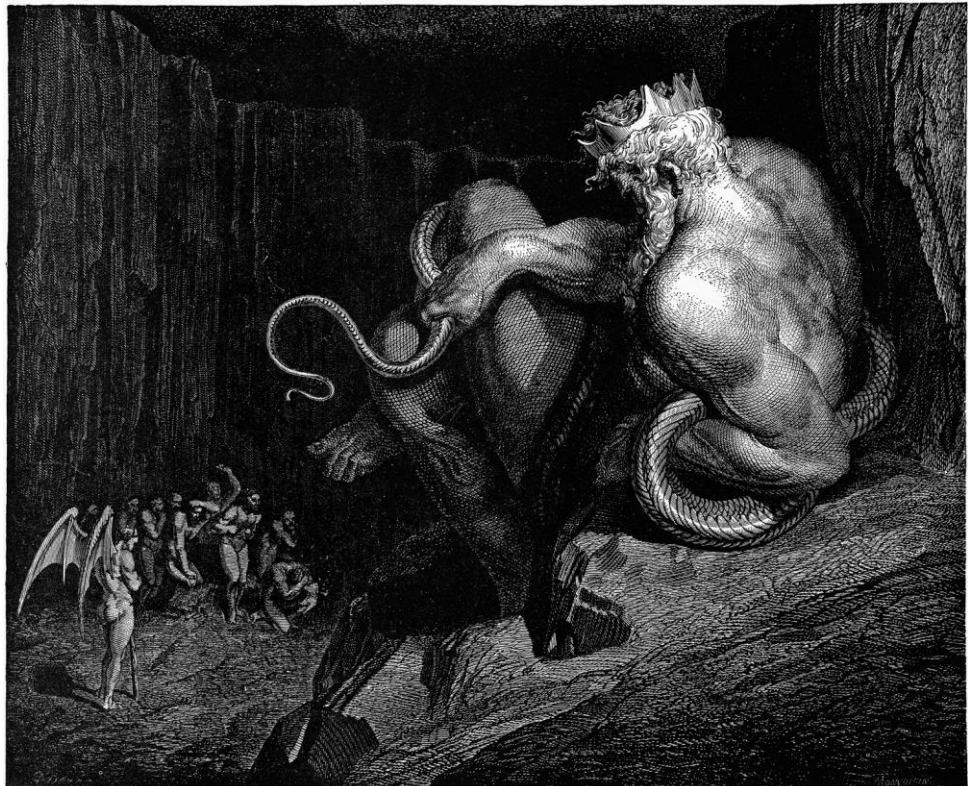
## **VOCABULARY**

These words which appear in *House of Leaves* have been identified as words or derivatives of words that have appeared on past SAT tests. The vocabulary words are listed here in the order in which they appear in the novel.

1. **Insinuate** – *verb* suggest or hint (something bad or reprehensible) in an indirect and unpleasant way.
2. **Cloy** – *verb* disgust or sicken (someone) with an excess of sweetness, richness, or sentiment.
3. **Emanation** – *noun* a form of radiation given off by something.
4. **Deracinated** – *adjective* uprooted or displaced from one's geographical or social environment.
5. **Maul** – *verb* wound (a person or animal) by scratching and tearing.
6. **Immutable** – *adjective* unchanging over time or unable to be changed.
7. **Wry** – *adjective* using or expressing dry, especially mocking, humor.
8. **Arbitrary** – *adjective* based on random choice or personal whim, rather than any reason or system.
9. **Grotesque** – *adjective* comically or repulsively ugly or distorted.
10. **Austere** – *adjective* severe or strict in manner, attitude, or appearance.
11. **Iridescent** – *adjective* showing luminous colors that seem to change when seen from different angles.
12. **Summation** – *noun* the process of adding things together.
13. **Paroxysm** – *noun* a sudden attack or violent expression of a particular emotion or activity.
14. **Stalwart** – *adjective* loyal, reliable, and hardworking.
15. **Elicit** – *verb* evoke or draw out (a response, answer, or fact) from someone in reaction to one's own actions or questions.
16. **Fervent** – *adjective* having or displaying a passionate intensity.
17. **Aberrant** – *adjective* departing from an accepted standard.
18. **Spectral** – *adjective* of or like a ghost.
19. **Garrulous** – *adjective* excessively talkative, especially on trivial matters.
20. **Reticent** – *adjective* not revealing one's thoughts or feelings readily.
21. **Progenitor** – *noun* a person or thing from which a person, animal, or plant is descended or originates; an ancestor or parent.
22. **Devious** – *adjective* showing a skillful use of underhanded tactics.
23. **Impetus** – *noun* the force or energy with which a body moves.
24. **Sublime** – *adjective* of such excellence, grandeur, or beauty as to inspire great admiration or awe.
25. **Disingenuous** – *adjective* not candid or sincere, typically by pretending that one knows less about something than one really does.
26. **Bewilder** – *verb* cause (someone) to become perplexed and confused.
27. **Peculiar** – *adjective* strange or odd; unusual.
28. **Feign** – *verb* pretend to be affected by (a feeling, state, or injury).
29. **Gambit** – *noun* a device, action, or opening remark, typically one entailing a degree of risk, that is calculated to gain an advantage.
30. **Decimate** – *verb* kill, destroy, or remove a large percentage or part of.
31. **Promiscuous** – *adjective* (derogatory) having or characterized by many transient sexual relationships.

32. **Enamor** – *verb* be filled with a feeling of love for.
33. **Innocuous** – *adjective* not harmful or offensive.
34. **Laconic** – *adjective* using very few words.
35. **Rumination** – *noun* a long period of deep thought.
36. **Nettlesome** – *adjective* causing annoyance or difficulty.
37. **Transience** – *noun* the state or fact of lasting only for a short time.
38. **Uncanny** – *adjective* strange or mysterious, especially in an unsettling way.
39. **Incongruous** – *adjective* not in harmony or keeping with the surroundings or other aspects of something.
40. **Insidious** – *adjective* proceeding in a gradual, subtle way, but with harmful effects.
41. **Profound** – *adjective* very great or intense; having or showing great knowledge or insight.
42. **Disciple** – *noun* a follower or student of a teacher, leader, or philosopher.
43. **Similitude** – *noun* the quality or state of being similar to something.
44. **Resilient** – *adjective* able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.
45. **Intermediary** – *noun* a person who acts as a link between people in order to try to bring about an agreement or reconciliation; a mediator.
46. **Abscond** – *verb* leave hurriedly and secretly, typically to avoid detection of or arrest for an unlawful action such as theft.
47. **Antithetical** – *adjective* directly opposed or contrasted; mutually incompatible.
48. **Meticulous** – *adjective* showing great attention to detail; careful and precise.
49. **Labyrinthine** – *adjective* like a labyrinth; irregular and twisting.
50. **Impediment** – *noun* a hindrance or obstruction in doing something.

<sup>3</sup>Whether you've noticed or not—and if you have, well bully for you—Zampanò has attempted to systematically eradicate the “Minotaur” theme throughout The Navidson Record. Big deal, except while personally preventing said eradication, I discovered a particularly disturbing coincidence. – Johnny Truant





Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

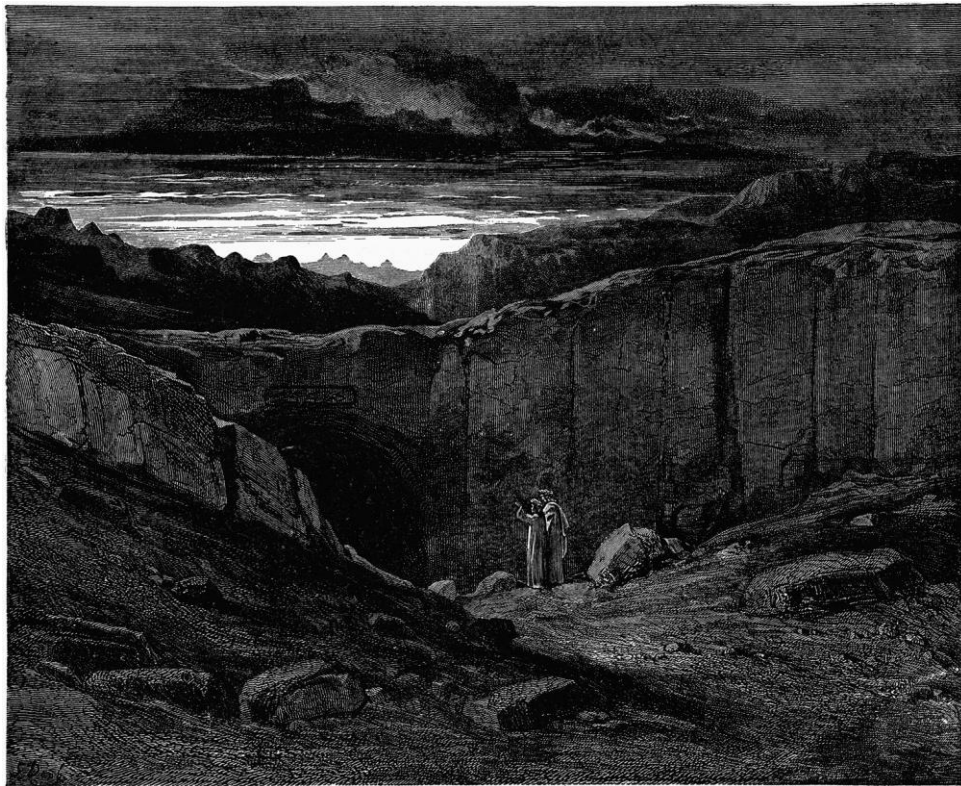
## OPEN RESPONSE

Johnny says that his friend Lude is always “surrounded by very attractive women which is pretty much the norm for hair stylists—and photographers—especially if they’re good and Lude is that...beautiful women are always drawn to men they think will keep them beautiful” (19). How Does Johnny’s comment about Lude and beautiful women shed light on the relationship between Will Navidson and Karen Green?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Exploration A: Gone Home

June 7, 1995. 1:15 AM.

21-year-old Kaitlin Greenbriar returns home—a mansion in Arbor Hill, Oregon recently willed to her father—on a stormy night after a yearlong trip abroad. She finds a note on the door from her sister, Samantha, telling her to not go looking for answers as to where she is. As she enters the house, Kaitlin realizes nobody is home, not even her parents, so she investigates the house to find out where they are. What happened here?

Similar to the team Will Navidson assembles to explore his new countryside house in Virginia, our class will be venturing into the darkness of the Greenbriar's new home in Oregon. Each member of our team will be needed—even if you only play for a few minutes—to uncover the events of one family's lives by investigating what they've left behind.

Katie expected her family to greet her, but the house is empty. Something's not right. Where is everyone? Predict what you think happened to Katie's family.

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Now that we've played through all of *Gone Home*, how does your prediction above compare to what really happened to Katie's family? Are you disappointed?

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Similar to *House of Leaves*, there are multiple storylines to follow in *Gone Home*: Katie's, Sam's, Terrance's, and Janice's. Whose story is the most interesting to you? How do the different narratives connect to form a unified story?

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[illegible]

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **WHAT DOES THE FONT SAY?**

Spoken language is so rich in its ability to express and communicate the myriad conditions of the human experience that it seems fitting an author should seek to squeeze every conceivable nuance and emotion from the fonts that make up the written word—in order to give visual speech greater feeling, depth, and power. Identify the fonts listed below that Mark Danielewski uses in *House of Leaves*. The editors mention some of the font choices on page four, footnote five. A good website for researching fonts is [www.myfonts.com](http://www.myfonts.com). The link to My Fonts is also on our class webpage. After you've identified the font and written a brief summary of its history, explain what you think that particular font reveals about the character who is represented by it. How might the font relate to the novel as a whole?

### **THE FONT USED ON THE COVER AND TITLE PAGE:**

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### ***This Font Only Appears Once—on the Cover and in Purple:***

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### **The Font the Editors Use throughout *House of Leaves*:**

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The Font Used for Johnny Truant's Commentary throughout  
House of Leaves:

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The Font Chosen for *The Navidson Record* and Zampanò's Commentary  
throughout *House of Leaves*:

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The Font Chosen for Pelafina Heather Lièvre's Letters to Her  
Son, Johnny Truant (pgs. 586-644):

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The Font Chosen for Will Navidson's Letter to Karen Green (pgs. 389-393):

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The Font Chosen for the Partial Transcript of What Some Have Thought  
by Karen Green (pgs. 354-365):

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The Font Used for the Hi 8 Transcript of Tom's  
Story (pgs. 253-273):

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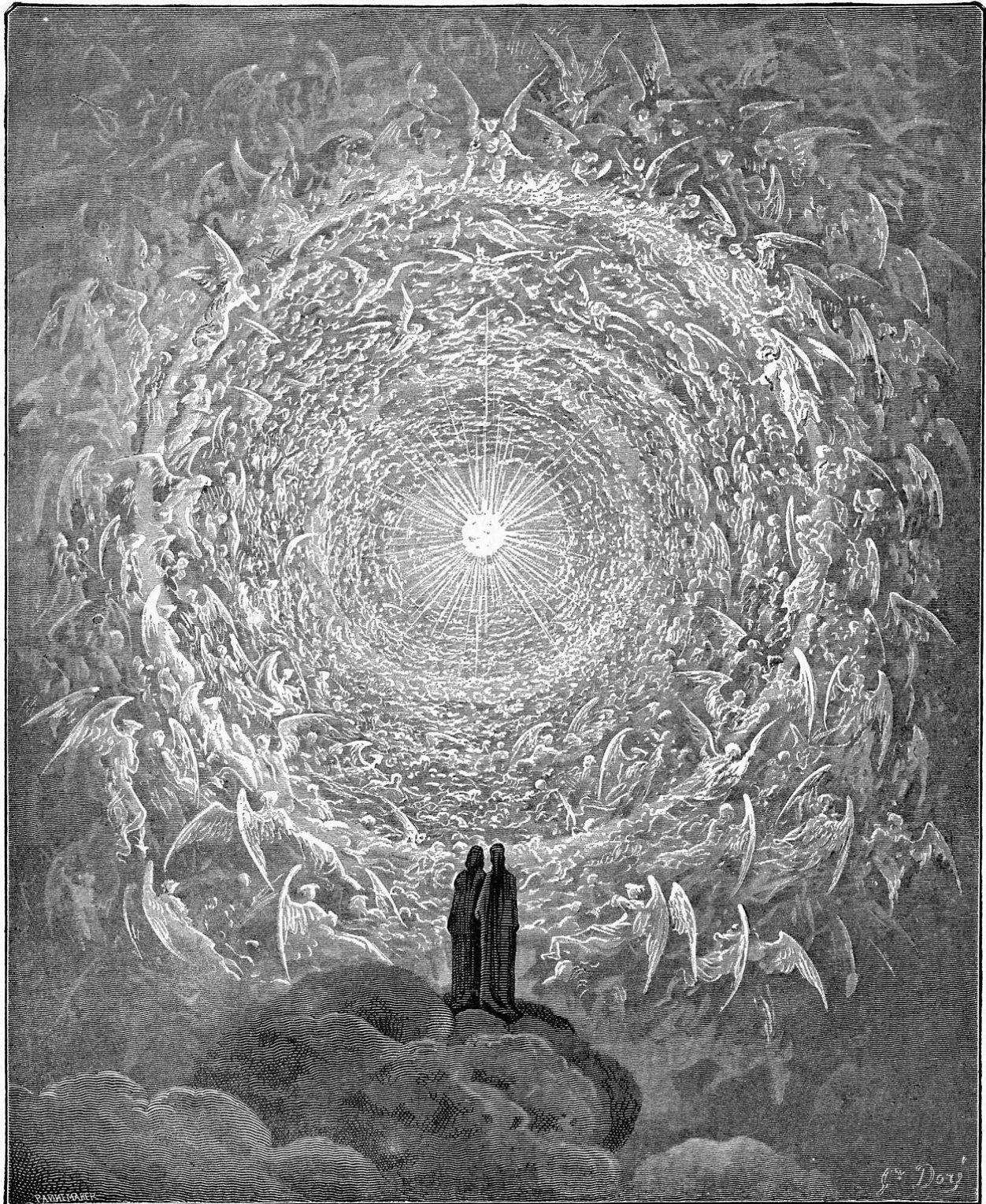
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## **A BRIEF ESSAY ON TIME**

In this shorter, analytical essay, you are going to apply a key literary term, postmodernism, to the 1991 documentary film *A Brief History of Time* directed by Errol Morris. This assignment is not meant to be a film review. You are being asked to take a critical approach to Morris's documentary about the physicist Stephen Hawking. Your completed essay will count as a homework assignment grade. Because the length is only one to two pages, you will want your writing to be clear, concise, and focused on how Morris's film highlights distinct characteristics of postmodernist art. Also worth consideration is whether Hawking's research into black holes can help account for the spatial disparity in Danielewski's infamous house on Ash Tree Lane.

- The term **postmodernism** is often applied to the literature and art after World War II (1939-45), when the effects on Western morale of the first war were greatly exacerbated by the experience of Nazi totalitarianism and mass extermination, the threat of total destruction by the atomic bomb, the progressive devastation of the natural environment, and the ominous fact of overpopulation. Many of the works of postmodernism so blend literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, the serious and the playful, that they resist classification according to traditional rubrics. An undertaking in some postmodernist works is to subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience so as to reveal the meaninglessness of existence and the underlying "abyss," or "void," or "nothingness" on which any supposed security is conceived to be precariously suspended.
- In his "Macrobiography" on Stephen Hawking, film critic David Sterritt comments on one postmodern aspect of the film when he writes, "[Morris] felt that Hawking's book wasn't so much a science lesson as a romance novel—or even a thinly veiled autobiography—in which the birth, expansion, contraction, and eventual death of the cosmos mirror the human condition, albeit on an unimaginably larger scale. Morris was fascinated by the idea that the world's most prodigious theorist of black holes—stars that collapse in on themselves, becoming so dense that not even light can escape their gravitational pull—was a man whose body had collapsed in on itself, yet without quenching or even slowing the phenomenal intellect it contained."

**Requirements:** The essay must be at least one page long but no longer than two (1 and ½ pages). You must properly introduce and explain at least one direct quotation from the film or from critic David Sterritt. The paper must have your own original thesis in the first paragraph (usually the last sentence or sentences before the transition into the next paragraph). Remember, a thesis is not a question; it is an answer to the question. A thesis is not a fact; it is an opinion or theory—one worth arguing. As always, the paper should follow MLA format. Use white 8 ½ X 11-inch paper. Font size should be 12 and Times New Roman. Margins should be one inch around (top and bottom, left and right) on each page. Paper should be double spaced throughout. Your last name and the page number should appear in the top right corner of each page. The Purdue OWL website has sample papers written in MLA format.



“If we do discover a complete theory of the universe that should in time be understandable in broad principle by everyone, not just a few scientists, then we shall all—philosophers, scientists, and just ordinary people—be able to take part in the discussion of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason, for then we would know the mind of God.” — Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*

(Untitled Fragment)

Little solace comes  
to those who grieve  
when thoughts keep drifting  
as walls keep shifting  
and this great blue world of ours  
seems a house of leaves  
  
moments before the wind.