

Possible topics for “Fits” papers – ENGL 1158.107 - Lennon

- This is one of a number of stories we've read in which marriage serves as a backdrop to crime– or, rather, crime serves as an instrument for exploring the nature of marriage. Compare the marriages in this story to the domestic partnerships in “The Baby In The Icebox,” *The Sour Lemon Score*, *The Likeness*, and *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.

- There's a lot of weather in this story– or, specifically, manifestations of water. Snow and ice serve as powerful metaphors, especially near the end of the story, when they cover the pile of abandoned cars, and the fence separating the road from the field. There's also a nice metaphor about people's hidden anxieties feeling, in conversation, like a submerged rock in a river. Analyze the way Munro uses water and weather here, or compare her use of same to the way other writers have (Hammett, for instance, or Crumley).

- One of the creepier details in this story is the way the Weebles' house mirrors the Kuipers', though both have been changed over the years. How does Munro use this story element to shed light upon the two marriages? Consider how other authors this semester– French, Christie, and Chesterton, for example– have employed houses as well.

- There's a strong sense here of Robert's being an outsider in Gilmore– the Weebles, too, “weren't Gilmore people, really,” as one local puts it. This notion of being an insider vs. being an outsider is important in “Fits”– it serves as a metaphor for marriage, for the impossibility of knowing other people, even your spouse. How have other writers employed this notion? Think of the criminal society in *The Sour Lemon Score*, the shunned graduate students in *The Likeness*, the angry Russian princess in “The Gutting Of Couffignal.”

- Information about the killings travels quickly through the small town in this story, and people's grim curiosity drives them to wander past the Weebles' house in their cars. “There was real kindness and consideration behind this,” Robert believes; “Nobody would want not to know.” But curiosity also shows itself, here, as a sinister force– one that drove Peg to linger in the house and examine the carnage in evidently gruesome detail. Why did Peg need to see? Why do people need to know? Consider how the human need to uncover secrets drives the stories we've read– both on the part of the characters in the stories, on our own part, as readers.

- The story's title comes from Robert's explanation of the deaths to Peg's sons: “It's a kind of fit. People can take a fit like the earth takes a fit. [...] It's a freak occurrence.” Is Munro on board with this interpretation– that this kind of anger is a “freak occurrence”? Why does she include Robert's memory of his terrible argument with his former lover? More broadly, is anyone capable of deadly violence, or is such an act limited to the criminally insane? Explore this philosophical and psychological conundrum using this and other works we've read.

- This story operates, in part, on the power of small, specific images: Peg's bloody shoes and coat, the (invented) leg sticking out into the hallway, the temporarily unidentifiable abandoned cars, “a bit like armed giants half collapsed, frozen in combat.” Investigate the power of the image in this semester's readings– how a simple description of an object or setting can speak volumes about the characters' and author's, intentions.