Week 2 Literary Reflections: Academic Success though Resilience, Courage, and Fortitude

In this segment we shall consider the notions of Resilience, Courage, and Fortitude. These fundamental virtues lead to true success in life, whether academic or otherwise.

Say not the Struggle Naught Availeth

Arthur Hugh Clough. 1819–1861

Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke conceal'd,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright!
The World Is Too Much With Us

William Wordsworth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I’d rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.
Ulysses

Alfred Tennyson, 1st Baron (1809–92)

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match’d with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy’d
Greatly, have suffer’d greatly, both with those
That lov’d me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro’ scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vex’d the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known: cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honor’d of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro’
Gleams that untravell’d world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish’d, not to shine in use!
As tho’ to breathe were life. Life pil’d on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is sav’d
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-lov’d of me, discerning to fulfil
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro’ soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls’ that have toil’d, and wrought, and thought
with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and oppos’d
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
’T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho’ much is taken, much abides; and tho’
We are not now that strength which in old days
Mov’d earth and heaven, that which we are, we
are:
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

JERUSALEM (from 'Milton')
William Blake (1757-1827)

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.
Questions for Consideration:

1. What is the difference between cockiness and resilience? How do the readings selected for this week clarify and affirm this distinction? How does this translate into the college experience?

2. What ways can you develop resilience as, if not quite a spiritual virtue, at least as a spiritual pursuit? What might be the difference between how Gerard Manley Hopkins might suggest one should develop and embody resilience as compared to how one might imagine Clough or, to a far gloomier extent, Eugene O’Neil suggesting that one might become resilient?