

**ENGL 668K: Intro to Digital Studies  
Spring 2004**

**Digital Humanities Assignment**

This is a modest assignment intended to be doable in one sitting. Its goal is twofold: to expose you to the rich variety of online resources available for a single major author (William Blake), and to allow you to examine—critically—the diversity of conventions, strategies, and mechanisms by which traditional literary texts are represented in digital space. You will need access to the following sites:

The Blake Digital Text Project:

<http://virtual.park.uga.edu/wblake/>

The Romantic Circles MOO (type @go Beulah upon entering with your character)

<http://www.rc.umd.edu:7000>

Digital Materials from the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/rarebook/rosenwald.html>

The William Blake Archive

<http://www.blakearchive.org>

Textarc

<http://www.textarc.org>

You will do best on a fast network connection with Java enabled and speakers turned on.

**Part One**

Answer each of the following five questions by using one of the five sites above. You may not use the same site to answer more than one question. In several cases you'll need to figure out how to navigate the interface in order to use the site properly—that's part of the assignment.

1. Many of you will know Blake's famous "Tyger, tyger burning bright" (the opening lines to the most anthologized poem in the English language). On plate 42 in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* you can see the curiously docile kitty Blake drew to accompany his famous lyrics. But where else in the *Songs* did Blake depict tigers? And do they appear in any of his other illuminated books? (Hint: you'll need to a resource that allows you to search Blake's images).
2. What are some of the most frequently used words in Blake's *Songs*? Are there particular words that are more prominent in the first half of the cycle (Innocence)?

- What about the second half (Experience)? (Hint: it's all about pattern recognition.)
3. Is "The Tiger" printed recto or verso in early copies of the *Songs*? What (if anything) is on the facing page? What about in a later copy? (Hint: if you can't go and check out the original book for yourself then you can try the next best thing.)
  4. What are some songs that have been sung to the tune of "The Tiger"? (Hint: there's more here than meets the eye, but you'll still need an especially graphic resource to find it.)
  5. How does Blake's Milton (the character) receive his inspiration? (Hint: you'll really need to step outside yourself for this one.)

## Part Two

You've seen how the "same" text can be presented in some wildly variable electronic formats and settings. Write a **blog post** (no more than 1200 words) that discusses two or more of the above resources in a comparative and critical manner. What assumptions do the different sites seem to make about the nature of the work they're reproducing? What are some of the choices, both explicit and implicit, manifest in the representational politics of each site? You'll probably want to think about such matters as interface, search mechanisms, and interactivity. Other variables to ponder might include the presentation of words versus images and archival documentation versus interpolative play. It's a very short piece, so rather than attempting to be comprehensive best to pick one or two key points and make them as cogently as you can.

**Due: Wednesday, May 5**