[Your name here]

Opening the Discussion example: Virginia Woolf

1. Woolf, Virginia. “The Death of the Moth.” *Death*. Ed. Rachelle M. Smith. Fountainhead,

2012, pp. 79-81.

1. Virginia Woolf

* Born in England in 1882
* British author known for her feminist criticism and as a leading modernist writer
  + Feminist criticism critiques literature through a feminist lens rather than critiquing feminism itself
  + Modernism was a literary movement wherein authors veered away from traditional ways of structuring writing
* Well-known author within her lifetime, for such works as:
  + *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), which is a work of fiction
  + *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) which is a work of nonfiction
* Suffered from bouts of severe mental illness throughout her lifetime
  + Was institutionalized for a period after the death of her father
  + Became obsessed with death after WWII, which is known from her journals
  + Committed suicide at the age of 59 in 1941 by filling her overcoat pockets with stones and walking into a river near her home

1. “The Death of the Moth” was published postmortemly in a collection called *The Death of the Moth and Other Stories*, for which her husband wrote a foreword.
2. Speculation: Woolf often wrote with the audience of her friends in mind, a group of other artists now known as the Bloomsbury Group. The audience of the original publication (*The Death of the Moth and Other Stories*) was most likely established fans of Woolf, as they would have been enthused to receive more of her work after learning of her death.

* The Bloomsbury Group were an establish bunch of writers and other artists operating in and around Bloomsbury, London. According to the *Cambridge Guide to Literature*: “although its members denied being a group in any sense, they were united in the abiding belief in the importance of the arts.” Thus, Woolf’s capturing of “The Death of the Moth” in her writing may have been simply to preserve a natural phenomenon that she witnessed and that touched her emotionally by means of the arts and for the sake of art, perhaps simply for the sake of capturing the incidents of those moments.

1. Woolf with a pencil on a “pleasant morning, mid-September,” when she notices a moth (79). She contemplates the moth as it flutters around the windowpane eventually to lay and die, at which point she considers, but ultimately decides against, “help[ing] him right himself” with her pencil. Woolf reflects upon the moth’s short life and subsequent death, and life and death on a grander scale beyond moth itself.
2. An example of an argument in this text, though *not* a definitive answer to the question, as there are many arguments to be picked out even in a text as short as this: Woolf contemplates using her pencil to intercede in the moth’s struggle but ultimately decides against any action. This could represent an argument for letting nature (and death) run its course. (Though, it should be noted, “nature” in this instance is trapped inside a human-made structure and as such the moth’s death cannot be considered solely natural. Humans have interceded already with the presence of this structure, trapping the moth, despite that Woolf decides not to take any action with her pencil.)
3. Discussion questions:

* Content: Does Woolf place value (does she either value or devalue) upon the moth’s life/death?
* Style: How does Woolf’s stream-of-consciousness style of writing further or hinder any discernable argument within this piece?