DIRECTIONS:
Literary Analysis Essay (Thematic Interpretation)

This essay is due on **Wednesday, October 20th** and is worth 25% of your course grade. Essays are graded according to the Essay Grading Rubric provided in the Week 8 link on Blackboard. Late essays cannot be accepted unless under extraordinary circumstances.

The essay must be typed in MLA format (see the reading MLA Manuscript Format). Submit as follows:

1. **DO NOT** type the essay in directly (the way you do for RBJEs). Instead, type the essay in MLA format using MS Word. Label your essay accordingly: Literary Analysis Essay.

2. When in the Assignment Submission area on Blackboard, click on the grey box titled Browse My Computer.

3. Then locate your essay on your desktop and upload it. I would advise you NOT try to upload from Googledocs, OneDrive, or any other cloud service (students have had some problems with this). It's best to save the essay to your own desktop, and upload from there.

General Information

To *analyze* a text means to examine its parts in relation to the whole. *Interpretation* is a form of analysis that seeks to explain meaning. The term *theme* is the encapsulation of what you, the reader, believes a main message of the text to be. **For this assignment, you are asked to consider various parts of a class reading and interpret its meaning (its theme).**

Specific Directions

Consider the semester's six short stories:

- Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"
- Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery"
- Tobias Wolff's "Hunters in the Snow"
- Gish Jen's "Who's Irish?"
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"
- Colson Whitehead's "The Match"

Your task is to choose *one* of the readings on which to write a five-paragraph essay of **1000-1600 words** that explains your interpretation of a plausible **theme**—what you believe to be an inherent message it illustrates. You will use textual evidence (direct quotations from the text) to support your claim. You should plan to incorporate at least three quotations *per body paragraph*.

Once you've articulated the theme, your paper will focus on *how* that theme is advanced in the reading.. Some people also escirbe a text's theme as a universal truth that bubbles to the surface of the reading.

Come up with a **thesis statement.** A thesis is a single declarative sentence (*not* a question) that encapsulates the argument about meaning you wish to make.

Here are two examples of thesis statements previous students have written for this assignment:

- In her short story, "The Lottery," Shirley Jackson suggests that the it is not always beneficial to a society to follow traditions blindly.

- Colson Whitehead's short story, "The Match," underscores the negative effects of when racism and power intersect.

See how that works? *You* get to decide what you want to focus on in the reading of your choice, so long as you write about what you believe is a theme of the text. Remember, there can be many themes! Pick just one. Also, try to **avoid** the first-person point of view ("I").

Once you've drafted a thesis, you can go back into the text to look for specific "proof" to support your claim. You should provide approximately nine direct quotations in your paper, about three per body paragraph.

To complete this assignment, you should have on hand all the Weeks 8 Lesson Materials which you should take the week to read thoroughly. These include nine lessons as listed here:

- *Writing Analytically about Short Stories*
- *MLA Manuscript Format*
- *Titles in MLA*
- *Essay Planning Sheet (optional)*
- *Student Sample Essay*
- *Integrating and Citing Quotations Using a Single Source*
- *Essay Grading Rubric*
- *Academic Writing Conventions*

Essay Structure

Follow closely the handout titled *Writing Analytically about Short Stories*. It lays out visually how your essay *must* be organized: begin with an introduction (that ends with the thesis statement), have at least three body paragraphs (with three direct quotations in each paragraph), and a conclusion. Again, this is a good basic design because it's not complicated. That's not to say that your ideas can't be sophisticated, however.

Also, use the sample essay as your model! This is an A-level essay written by a former student. At the back of that essay, I show you the structure using color-coding. Most students find it enormously helpful.

Body Paragraphs and Evidence form the Text

Avoid a retelling of the events of the reading itself. That is not the task. You should recap some of the specifics of the author's "storytelling" *only* insomuch as those markers illustrate scenes, situations, images, dialogue, or encounters that help you show why you've interpreted the theme as you have.

Make choices about the specific textual evidence to best prove your argument. You don't need to tell every detail.

You should use each of the body paragraphs for each "step" in your argument. You have a lot of freedom here. You might focus on three different scenes in the story, three different stages of the plot, or three different stages of a character's development, or three stages of the relationship between two characters.

As you can tell there are many ways to order the body paragraphs; just be sure to guide your reader using topic sentences for each.

Using Textual Evidence:

- You must quote the text directly throughout your body paragraphs (again, quote at least 3 times per body paragraph).
- You must provide context for each quotation, so the quoted material doesn't just show up out of the blue.
- You must lead into each quotations by using one of the three methods of integration as the lesson shows (see *Integrating and Citing Quotations Using a Single Source).*
- You must cite the page for each quotation in a parenthetical citation (again, see *Integrating and Citing Quotations Using a Single Source).*
- After each quotation, you must explain its *relevance* so your reader knows why you chose it.
- You should try NOT to end your paragraph with a quotation; follow up with your own commentary whenever possible.
- PLEASE use the sample essay as your model.

All evidence must come directly from the reading itself; no outside sources are to be used or consulted for this assignment.

If you have questions about how you should organize the body paragraphs, you can always email me your thesis and I can help you figure that out. The *Essay 1 Planning Sheet* can be of great use in ordering and outlining your thoughts.

Work Cited Page

At the end of your essay, on a separate page, you MUST provide the citation information for the ONE focus text you are using. Below you will find the citation information needed to create a Work Cited page at the end of your essay:

Work Cited

Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery." *Elements of Argument: A Text and Reader.* Eds. Annette T. Rottenberg and Donna Haisty Winchell, 10th ed., Bedford, 2011. pp. 291-302.

Jen, Gish. "Who's Irish?" *The Story and Its Writer.* Ed. Ann Charters, 10th ed., Bedford, pp. 614-621.

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings." *Gabriel Garcia Marquez: Collected Stories*. Trans. Gregory Rabassa and J.S. Bernstein, Harper & Row, 1984, pp. 217-225.

Whitehead, Colson. "The Match." *New Yorker,* 01 April 2019,

https://www.newyorker.com/magazine. Accessed Aug. 2020. pp. 1-10.

Wolff, Tobias. "Hunters in the Snow." *The Story and Its Writer.* Ed. Ann Charters, 10th ed.,

Bedford, pp. 671-687.

(Use *the student sample essay* as your model for how the Work Cited page should appear.)

Title

Your essay title is important because it gives your reader a first glimpse at what your paper will be about. Instead, your title should name the text in question *and* suggest your argument about it. *You will need to come up with your own title that aligns with your interpretation of the theme*. For example:

Selfish Acts: The Tragedy of Self-Serving Behaviors in Tobias Wolff's "Hunters in the Show"

Not sure what words should be capitalized or lowercased in an essay title? Refer to the handout *Titles in MLA.*

Length

Your essay must be set up in MLA format as presented in the handout *MLA Manuscript Format.*
Not including the Work Cited page, it must be ***at least* 1000 words and is not to exceed 1600 words**.

Essays that do not meet the length requirement will be returned for resubmission and will lose a letter grade.

Essay 1 Pep Talk ☺

You have been provided with *all the tools* you need to succeed. Use the lesson handouts in the Bb links to guide you. ***Study the sample essay,*** and reach out by email when you need help.

Do leave time to proofread closely for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. This *is* a *college-level* writing course.

You should get started right away so I'll be able to help you as questions arise, and surely, they will.

Relax into the process and enjoy!

Professor Faulise
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