

NOVEL ESSAY

Your essay is due during our Final Exam period on Tuesday May 7 from 10:40 a.m. – 1:10 p.m. If you have an idea for a topic that is not listed below, talk to me about it as soon as possible.

Requirements of the essay:

- Your essay should be 3-4 full pages.
- Provide page number citations (19) for any quotes or specific references.
- Your essay needs an introduction with a thesis statement and well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences, and it must be carefully revised and proofread. You might want to review the essay-writing documents from the Short Story folder for reminders on writing about literature.

Topics:

1. What does the novel imply about how tragedy affects people and the different ways people might respond to it? If you choose this option, try to focus *not* just on Rachel, or maybe not on Rachel at all. I also encourage you to refer to characters from other stories we have read this semester to help make your point.
2. We have read a lot of stories and poems about parents and families this semester. Use *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* as your main text for this essay, but also draw upon other relevant readings from the semester to help you make your argument for this topic. How do you think the reader is supposed to feel about Rachel's parents? Are readers supposed to understand them? Forgive them? Don't focus so much on how Rachel feels about her parents but on how you think Durrow wants us to feel. Use evidence from the novel to support your opinion.
3. Why does Durrow narrate the novel as she does? Questions you might consider: Why use multiple perspectives (and why is only Rachel's in the first person)? Why doesn't Grandma, a very significant character, get her own sections/chapters? How do the multiple points of view affect the reader's understanding of the story and characters? Where do we get extra insight, and where are we denied it? Is there a character you wish had their own sections so we knew more about them? Would knowing that information make the novel better?
4. Look at some of the motifs Durrow uses in the novel—the color blue, references to birds and flying, the urge to “tell a story” vs. the impulse to stay silent, alcoholism/addiction, and/or any other recurring image or symbol or theme you see in the narrative. How does the motif contribute to the reader's experience of the novel? How do they help us to better understand the characters and their experiences?