

American Literature of the Nineteenth Century before 1865
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Final paper topics

Please choose **one** of the following topics

Due by the end of class on Friday, May 3 , 2019

**** All assignments received after the conclusion of class will be considered late ****

Please **upload your paper to Blackboard** and **bring a hardcopy of your paper with you to class to give to me for grading**

1. Examine the ways are people robbed of humanity through alienation in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and "Life in the Iron Mills." For example, both Hugh Wolfe and Frederick Douglass are presented as victims of a harsh, uncaring system.
2. Discuss the setting of "Life in the Iron Mills" in relation to *Benito Cereno*. What role does setting play in the development of subject and thematic material?
3. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is the story of Linda Brent's continual pursuit of individual freedom. With this struggle comes Linda Brent's internal struggle for self-identity and preservation. Discuss these ideas in relation to *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.
4. Authors routinely use a variety of strategies to appeal to their reading audience. Discuss the use of emotion, logic, or other tactics in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and either *Benito Cereno* or "Life in the Iron Mills."
5. Examine the ways individuals are isolated from their communities (and the consequences of that isolation) in "Life in the Iron Mills" and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.
6. Discuss the ways the work of Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville were culturally informed and engaged, not isolated.
7. In what ways do *Benito Cereno* and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* address the issue of what it means to be an American? How does this literature help create conceptions of the American experience and American identity?

8. What assumptions about Americans and the nation itself have been created, challenged, and re-imagined in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and either *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* or *Benito Cereno*?
9. In 1845, Nathaniel Hawthorne complained “How slowly our literature grows up!” Discuss the ways Herman Melville and either Frederick Douglass or Harriet Jacobs sought to expand the limitations of their chosen form.

Your writing is a crucial element of your success in this course.

Please choose one of these prompts for the final paper.

Your paper should be typed double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around. Your paper should be approximately seven pages long.

You should pay particular attention to both form and content in an effort to write a thoughtfully conceived, well-constructed essay that clearly states a thesis and makes analytically specific, non-summarizing reference to the texts you are discussing.

Your objective is to use this paper effectively to present ideas you have independently developed about the text and related class discussions. This is not a research paper, so please do not construct your paper around extensive outside sources.

The writing assignment emphasizes and reinforces fundamental writing skills including argumentative coherence, precision of expression, grammatical correctness, and accurate representation of texts. You are asked to address issues of quotation, paraphrase, and the distinctions between summary, analysis, and argument.

It is entirely possible that you will have multiple deadlines and other stressors on the date assigned as the deadline for this assignment. That is not sufficient grounds for requesting an extension. Please keep in mind that the deadline applies even if you have computer or transportation trouble. **All papers received after the deadline will be considered late.**

Your paper should include the Rutgers Honor Pledge: *On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.*

Final paper checklist:

- ☐ Carefully read the texts you are assigned.
- ☐ Decide on a topic about which you would like to write. You may not combine topics, alter, or otherwise modify the prompts that you are assigned.
- ☐ Compose your paper keeping your chosen prompt and the paper grading guidelines in mind.

- ☐ Review the Writing Essays on Literature tutorial and the Thesis Statement tutorial as necessary. These tutorials are both available in the course documents section of Blackboard.
- ☐ Review your work and revise your draft paper as necessary.
- ☐ Proofread your work.
- ☐ Upload your completed paper to Blackboard **before class**.
- ☐ **Bring a hardcopy of your paper with you to class to give to me for grading.** (Papers uploaded to Blackboard after the conclusion of class will be considered late. A word to the wise: Do not wait until the last minute to upload your paper to Blackboard. If you do and there is some problem, please do not expect me to sympathize with your predicament.)
- ☐ Expect final grades to be posted by the conclusion of the grading period.