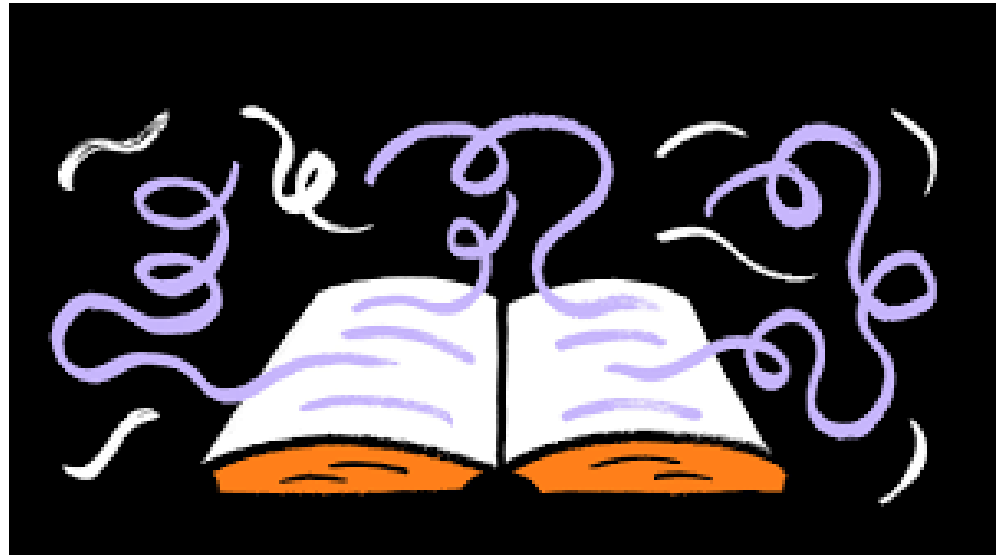


WRITING
ABOUT
LITERATURE



ESSAY 2:
FICTION OR
POETRY
ANALYSIS
(YOUR
CHOICE)

- For this 2nd essay in our class you are being asked to write an essay that explores an issue in the poetry or fiction we have read.
- As you know from reading the prompt sheet you have already received, there are three options (two for fiction, one for poetry)

STRUCTURING YOUR ESSAY: SUGGESTIONS, NOT REQUIREMENT S

- **Introduction:** in your introduction you should do three things:
 - Introduce the issue set forth in the prompt, using the language of the prompt in explaining the concern or issue it raises.
 - Then briefly introduce the text(s) in light of this issue,
 - And conclude with a thesis statement, a single generalization that reveals some insight into human nature based on what you have discovered in the course of writing your essay. This should be thematic in nature: “Courage really only becomes true courage when tested under duress and adversity.” Thus it would make sense that for the 1st prompt the key concept ‘sympathy’ is central to this statement, that for the second the key concept ‘mortality’ is central to this statement, and that for the third prompt the key concept ‘humility is central to this statement.
- **Body Paragraphs:** In each of your body paragraphs you should analyze some aspect of the text(s) under study
 - Typically, for such a paragraph you should introduce the part of the work you will examine here and then link it to the issue identified in the prompt.
 - Then in the middle of the paragraph you should explain how the text(s) treats the issue, providing specific, concrete examples.
 - End the paragraph with a concluding generalization that connects back to your overall argument
- **Conclusion:** identify your overall conclusion/generalization/takeaway about what this text(s) suggests about the topic.

QUOTE INTEGRATION

- Regardless of whatever prompt option you choose, you should **use MLA form in composing your essay.**
- For our purposes the main element here is that you integrate your quotes (typically **four lines or less in the body paragraph** in accord with simple MLA format. This entails the following **three-step sequence:**
 - **introducing the quote** with a lead-in sentence or signal phrase [“At this point in the poem/story the speaker states:”]
 - Then **supplying the quote:** for poetry use a backslash between lines and identify the line numbers [“instead of the cross/ the albatross around my neck was hung”(210-12)]; or if it from fiction, just put in the quote. Note, you can use ellipsis—three periods ...—to omit the less essential middle part of a long quote and make it fit better for your paragraph.
 - Then providing a sentence or so of specific **commentary about the quote** connected to your developing argument. [The fact that the Mariner now must wear the albatross suggests ...] [Note: no works cited or bibliography page needed for this essay—just cite the lines or page numbers in parentheses for the quotes]

SAMPLE PARAGRAPHS

- For the next three slides you will find:
 - A sample introductory paragraph
 - A sample body paragraph for fiction analysis
 - A sample body paragraph for poetry analysis

SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH FOR MORAL GROWTH IN JANE EYRE

- Charlotte Bronte's 19th century bildungsroman *Jane Eyre* follows a young woman's struggles to adapt to the constraints of her society. Because of her naturally argumentative personality, Jane often finds herself at loggerheads with what is expected of a young lady of the time period. Both penniless and friendless, Jane finds herself in the demoralizing position of relying on her begrudging aunt and the harsh charity school to which she is sent. Despite the bleakness that surrounds her, Jane's vibrant imagination and tenacious wit mold her into a fearlessly adventurous spirit. Jane's maturation is characterized by her increasing ability to employ her past challenges to act as armor in new conflicts at hand. This transformation of circumstance at one's own hand, learning from experience, is a true mark of personal growth and maturation.

SAMPLE BODY PARAGRAPH: FICTION

- While living under her Aunt Reed at Gateshead House, Jane feels perpetually thrust outside the family circle: orphaned by her parents and ostracized by her aunt and cousins. A child of quiet and moody airs, her family finds her “unnatural” and brooding, traits not at all becoming of a child of the time period. Suffering both emotional and physical bullying at the hands of her cousins, Jane becomes increasingly downtrodden and full of hardly contained bitterness. After a particularly poignant altercation between Jane and her cousins, Mrs. Reed decides to send Jane to a charity school for friendless girls and informs the superintendent that Jane is a miserable and deceitful child. The agony and injustice of the situation proves too much for Jane as she confronts her aunt: “I am glad you are no relation of mine... if anyone ever asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty... You think I have no feelings, that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity” (44). Growing in the absence of love and affection left Jane emotionally barren and raw, she knew nothing of how to effectively employ her passions. Jane’s childhood isolation leaves her without the comfort of familial support and the knowledge of how to interact with peers. Her true strength then is tested in her adolescence as she attempts to confront the emergence of a romantic passion for which her youth has left her seemingly unprepared.

SAMPLE BODY PARAGRAPH FOR POETRY

- **In terms of similarities**, both Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" and Baudelaire's "Spleen" focus on the individual's perception of his surroundings, including his projections of his own sorrow onto the world. **First**, the passive speaker in "Ode to a Nightingale" finds himself melancholy and even apathetic, stating, "My heart aches, / and a drowsy numbness pains my sense, as though of hemlock I had had drunk" (1-3). Here, the speaker reacts to the world by distancing himself emotionally through external depressants (alcohol and opiates). **Similarly**, Baudelaire states, "When low, heavy sky weighs like a lid on the groaning spirit / victim of long ennui, the all-encircling horizon spreads over us a day gloomier than the night" (12-13). Here, the speaker also expresses a numb feeling and a perception of an ongoing pain, although its exact cause is unknown and thus frustrating. **Secondly**, in the third stanza of Keats' poem, the speaker states, "The weariness, the fever, and the fret, here, / where men sit and hear each other groan" (21-22). Here, Keats elaborates not only on the state of the world as he perceives it but how other have fallen prey to it others as well. **Similarly**, in the second stanza of Baudelaire's poem, the narrator states, "When the earth is changed into a humid dungeon, in which Hope like a bat goes beating the walls with her timid wings" (22-4), he speaks of the reaction of others to the loss of in a world that is hostile and limiting. Both texts, then, focus on the emotional downside of depression: how such a condition colors one's view of the world, including others who are a part of it.