Essay 1: Close Reading Analysis | Due: Draft - Fri. Sept 18, Peer Review - Sun. Sept 20, Final - Fri. Sept 25

Goal:

The goal of this assignment is to explore and practice close reading of a primary source and forming an argument about a text's meaning.

Assignment:

This is a formal academic essay. **Your assignment is to select a passage from one of the texts we've read (prior to the due date of the paper) and perform a *close reading* of that passage. You will write an essay making an argument regarding what the author is trying to achieve (poetically, philosophically, dramatically, etc.) with that passage through your analysis, presenting supporting evidence from the text.**

In this essay, you will need to engage closely with the text and write a paper analyzing the meaning of the passage (or the larger work, if it is short enough). You must clearly state your claim regarding your reading of the text (your thesis) and provide justification for your position with supporting evidence from the text. Write so that your reader clearly understands your claim and attempt to persuade the reader to accept that claim through your supporting arguments. No outside sources should be used (except for the *Oxford English Dictionary* when appropriate). This paper will require keen analytical insight and clear textual evidence cited in your paper.

The final essay should do the following, in **two to three double-spaced pages** (12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins on all sides, no extra space between paragraphs, no superfluous spacing)**:**

- Include an introduction that frames and defines the scope of your essay;
- Articulate and develop a clear and compelling thesis that argues the meaning/significance of your selected passage;
- Develop your argument in interesting and persuasive body paragraphs, which are logically arranged to help your reader follow your argument;
- Persuade your audience to accept your claim by grounding your arguments (and response to possible counterarguments) in evidence from the text, through quotation, and compelling analysis of that evidence that ties it to your claims;
- Include a conclusion that culminates your argument and leaves your reader with a greater understanding of the text;
- Properly and accurately cite the text within the essay <u>and</u> a works cited page using MLA style.

Invention and Inquiry:

In preparing this assignment, select a short passage of about 10-20 lines (if you are choosing a shorter poem, you may work with the entire text). Perform a close reading on these lines—read the passage and carefully annotate it. Analyze the passage's technical and narrative elements—such as diction, sentence patterns, tone, figurative language, structure, plot, character, setting, etc. What observations about the passage and its meaning/significance do you have?

You may wish to consider questions such as: How do these elements impact the meaning/significance of the passage/text? How does the scene or passage illuminate a crucial element of the work as a whole? What in the passage adds light to our understanding of the themes developed in the text? What does the passage tell us about identity, power, class, race, gender, etc.? Is the passage especially indicative of the values of the era/location in which it was written?

When you have a firm grasp of the specific elements of the passage, develop an outline for your essay in which you propose a (hypo)thesis about the effects/implications/significance of the elements in this passage on the meaning of the text. Develop your argument to persuade your reader to accept your analysis. Draft topic sentences that represent the reasons for accepting your claim and include quoted evidence from the text that support those reasons.

Once you have a sense of your evidence and arguments, write a rough draft in which you develop your point fully. Be sure to provide analysis of your textual evidence and explain to your reader how that piece of evidence supports your topic sentence and your thesis statement.

In creating an argumentative essay with an "arguable" thesis (i.e., someone could have a different interpretation), it is important to know the difference between observation and argument. Move beyond observations and description/summary toward a unique, interesting assertion about meaning. Make your keen observations, then explain to your readers why those observations are meaningful. What evidence from the text supports your interpretation?

Audience and Tone:
This is an academic paper so it should be written using professional and authoritative language to present your findings. Your tone should be formal and informative. Your audience is your academic peers.

Specifications for Satisfactory:
To be considered Satisfactory, the essay must do the following:

Thesis/ Claim	☐ Present a strong and arguable thesis statement that clearly answers the prompt—not just an observation about the passage but an argument regarding the effects/implications/significance of the elements in this passage on the meaning of the text or how they contribute to a deeper understanding of the passage/text ☐ Provide a clear indication of where the rest of the paper is headed and reasons for accepting the claim (a plan of development) ☐ Weave the central claim throughout the essay as a clear thread of argumentation tying ideas to the thesis statement
Content/ Ideas/ Support	☐ Break ideas up into separate body paragraphs (at least 2) with clear topic sentences for each paragraph ☐ Incorporate compelling and relevant textual evidence (providing examples/quotations—at least 1 per paragraph) to support the close reading in each paragraph ☐ Provide strong and clear analysis of the significance of the examples/quotations and explanation ☐ Provide a clear and persuasive explanation of how each example/quotation supports the topic sentence and/or thesis statement ☐ Present a clear and consistent explanation of ideas ☐ Exhibit a clear understanding of the text and the evidence
Organization	☐ Includes description, explanation and analysis, and consistently blends them effectively ☐ Organization is coherent, and consistently smooth and logical ☐ Clear, logical and smooth transitions ☐ Clear progression of ideas
Writing and Rhetorical Context	☐ Be written in a clear and interesting manner ☐ Exhibit strong control of language ☐ Demonstrate clear signs of revision/proofreading ☐ Contain few or no sentence structure, grammar, spelling, or other mechanical errors ☐ Demonstrate clear audience awareness ☐ Maintain an appropriate and consistent tone for the audience/purpose/genre
Assignment Criteria	☐ Be submitted on Canvas by the due date and time specified ☐ Consist of at least 2 full pages ☐ Contain no unnecessary filler or padding (i.e., fluff) ☐ Meet formatting and assignment requirements (12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins on all sides, no extra space between paragraphs, no superfluous spacing) ☐ Contains completely correct in-text citations following any quotation or paraphrase ☐ Includes a works cited page for any texts referenced in the essay that is correct, precisely following MLA citation format, and in correct alphabetical order

———

If you have any questions or concerns about this essay, I encourage you to e-mail me or come see me during my office hours. Also consider visiting the Miller Writing Center for help.