Essay 2: Literary Analysis | Due: Draft - Friday Nov 13, Peer Review - Sunday Nov 15, Final - Friday Nov 24

Goal:
The goal of this assignment is to continue to explore and practice close reading of primary sources. In particular, the goal is to trace how texts reveal underlying cultural contexts.

Assignment:
This is a formal academic essay. Understanding an underlying meaning of a text can tell us about the perspectives, politics, culture, and ideologies the author may hold and/or want to convince his reader to hold (although we can never know for certain the mind or intentions of any author). **Your assignment is to select one work we have read this semester and perform an analysis of how the text reflects some aspect of the culture in which it appeared. You will write an essay making an argument for how your selected work represents/supports/challenges (or otherwise engages with) cultural ideals, values, or norms and demonstrate how that representation establishes/impacts a reader's understanding of the work.**

In this essay, you will need to engage closely with the text and write a paper analyzing how the text you have selected represents some aspect of culture and how that representation impacts the meaning of the text. You must clearly state your claim regarding your reading of the text (your thesis statement) and provide justification for your position with supporting evidence from the text and from the theory we have explored this semester. No outside sources, besides the OED and our theoretical texts, should be used. Write so that your reader clearly understands your claim and attempt to persuade the reader to accept that claim through your supporting arguments. This paper will require keen analytical insight and clear textual evidence cited in your paper.

Your essay should consider cultural contexts, hegemony, ideology, and structures of feeling as well as one/some of the following as possible **components of cultural identity**, each of which may work to define or possibly complicate the reader's expectations about the concept:

- Nationality/Regionality (the groups to which a character belongs or identifies with),
- Government,
- Colonialism/Imperialism,
- Gender/Sex/Sexuality,
- Class (Economic),
- Social Rank,
- Exterior Qualities (physical traits),
- Interior Qualities (personality traits),
- Social Behavior,
- Aesthetics/Art,
- Religion/Spirituality,
- Science/Technology,
- Others?

The final essay should do the following, in **four to five 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 for how your selected work represents/supports/challenges (or otherwise engages with) cultural ideals, values, or norms;
- 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 is to your claims;
- Draw upon the theoretical perspectives we've encountered this semester, incorporating evidence from our theory readings;
- Include a conclusion that culminates your argument and leaves your reader with a greater understanding of the text;
- Properly and accurately cite the text(s) within the essay <u>and</u> a works cited page using MLA style.

Invention and Inquiry:
In preparing this assignment, select one of the literary texts (i.e., not the theory) we've read this semester that resonated with you. Read the text and carefully annotate it, analyzing its technical and narrative elements—such as diction, sentence patterns, tone, figurative language, structure, plot, character, setting, etc.

To develop your topic, a good place to start is to pick some component of cultural identity that seems relevant and ask questions like the following:

- How does the text represent this component?
- Does the text seem to uphold or challenge the cultural norms related to this component?
- How does the text's representation of this component impact the theme(s) of the text?
- What textual elements (e.g., characterization, setting, diction, etc.) lead me to read the text in this way? How do they lead me there?
- What theoretical concepts help me understand the text's representation of this component of cultural identity?
- What evidence from the text supports your interpretation?

Your answer to these questions will form the basis of your thesis statement.

When you have a firm grasp of the answers to these questions, develop an outline for your essay in which you propose a (hypo)thesis about the effects/implications/significance of the elements 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/theoretical 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 text but an argument regarding how the text reflects some aspect of the culture and how the elements of the text contribute to a deeper understanding of the text's theme(s) ☐ 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 4) 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 ☐ 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 4 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

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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.