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Literary Analysis Paper [Composition]

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Assignment Abstract
ENG 102 / Essay 2: Literary Analysis Paper

This ENG 102 assignment was developed in the context of CTL sponsored Learning Matters Mini-grant awarded to the English Department. The primary purpose was to assist full-time and part-time faculty in the Department with revising ENG 102 course materials to align with the Inquiry and Problem Solving (IPS) Core Competency and Written Communication Ability. This goal was achieved through several workshops, a programmatic benchmark reading, and a two-phase departmental review process that prepared assignments to be submitted to the Learning Matters Assignment Library. The mini-grant has been invaluable in helping to bring both full-time and adjunct faculty into departmental conversations about composition course requirements and how they align with LaGuardia's core competencies, the role of the competencies in the curriculum review process, and more generally the importance of the competencies and abilities in the college's general education requirements.

English 102 is a required course for almost all LaGuardia students. While most students enroll in the course in their second semester, there are some advanced students who take the course later. It is recommended that Composition I and II be taken in sequence since the latter builds upon skills acquired in the first composition course. Composition II is a process-based writing course. Students further develop the critical thinking, writing, and research skills they acquired in ENG 101. They learn close-reading techniques and study diverse texts in at least three genres (poetry, drama, and fiction). Students are required to write three out-of-class essays and one in class final exam.

This paper assignment allows students to practice the dimensions of the IPS rubric and the writing and research skills they have been learning over the course of the semester in preparation for crafting their final research paper. This is an integral part of the scaffolded research process where students begin to develop an argument about a literary text and it is worth 15% of their final grade. It should take them about two weeks to complete this assignment. The students have the choice to later build this essay into a final research paper by integrating secondary sources, and they prepare for that by crafting an annotated bibliography. The hope is that this process will prepare them for writing and researching essays for all future college courses that require low-stakes and high-stakes writing assignments. It also prepares them for writing and problem solving tasks in professional contexts.

This assignment requires students to practice two of the essential skills required in ENG 102 that align with the IPS rubric—close reading and critical thinking about a text, and formulating a claim based on a research question about problematized textual elements. In crafting this assignment, we sought to fully integrate the IPS core competency into the course in assignments scaffolded from an earlier point in the semester and to hone in on transferable skills that the students could build into an integrated final research paper. This assignment is unique to my class and the literature and requirements in my syllabus but serves the same purpose and goals as all of the analytical assignments developed by the committee. There are many examples of final assignments available in the Learning Matters Assignment Library database and this provides an example of an intermediary skill-building assignment that addresses the IPS rubric in ENG 102.

Literary Analysis Paper (1250 words)

Part I: Based on your close reading of either Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* or Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, develop an argument that analyzes a particular aspect of either of these novels. **Due on 4/20.**

Choose one of the following questions to guide your essay:

- What does the novel say about the way others see the protagonist (Edna or Lily) versus the way she sees herself? What is the significance of this perceived split between the outer self and the inner self?
- How does the novel comment on gender relations in the United States during the nineteenth century?
- How does the novel grapple with (pick one) social class/wealth/marriage/appearances/respect and reputation/morality?

Before beginning to write, examine your chosen theme as it is conveyed by the plot, the characters' actions and words, setting, and symbolism. I recommend finding a number of key quotations that deal with the theme (for example, gender relations), analyze their language and then proceed to your thesis and composition of the essay.

The task in this paper is to show – through a detailed analysis – how the language used in the novel reveals something important about your chosen theme. Remember that unlike most argumentative or informative texts, such as newspaper articles, literary texts often rely on their composition and use of language to create and communicate meaning as well as create impressions (both sensory and intellectual) for their respective audiences.

Please choose one of the questions listed above to construct an effective thesis. Remember your thesis should make an argument about your chosen topic. For example, it's **not** enough to give examples of morality in the novel. You have to **argue that the novel suggests something specific** about this theme and support your argument with specific textual evidence.

Part II: Now that you've completed your literary analysis essay, we will begin the process of integrating sources into your paper. Look for three sources on your topic; these can include contemporary cultural/historical contexts and critical pieces (secondary sources) about the novel you've chosen to write about. Then you will complete an annotated bibliography where you write a one paragraph summary and evaluation for each of your sources. Next, you will integrate these sources into your essay.

Things to remember:

1. **Introduction** – Avoid general first sentences in your introduction, such as “Women in the nineteenth century were very repressed” or “Since the dawn of time, people have pursued happiness.” If you can't think of a “hook,” start by introducing the novel, one or two main details about the plot and characters **relating to your topic**, and gradually lead the reader to your thesis. Make sure the introduction flows smoothly, that your ideas are logically connected. The reader should not be surprised to see the thesis at the end, but should be **prepared** for it by the preceding sentences. Remember the known-new contract that we spoke about.
2. **Body Paragraphs** - Each paragraph should consist of a single point that supports your thesis. Introduce your point in the **topic sentence** and support it with the **analysis** of textual evidence (quotes and plot details) within the paragraph. Don't simply insert a quote, hoping that your reader will see the connection it has to your point. **Make the connection for us. Comment on the quote – analyze the language** (word choice, metaphors, similes), imagery, particulars of the narrative, when analyzing a quote.
3. **Close reading** - involves choosing a key passage (a phrase, sentence, or few sentences) from a text, citing it, and then explaining in anything from a few sentences to a few pages what that citation means and what makes it interesting from a writerly point of view. Does it pick up on a resonant theme or topic? Does it use a startling

image or turn of phrase? What kinds of words or language does the writer use? How does he or she convey information and meaning?

4. Citation - Be sure to cite your evidence properly following MLA citation format. Your Works Cited page should contain the play and, if used, any secondary sources.