

Final Essay: Ethics and the Short Story (ENG1121, fall 2024. Prof. Scanlan)

Directions: This essay asks students to analyze one story from an ethical standpoint (using our handout on Five Types of Ethics). Students should consider, especially, what characters decide to do in important moments. Therefore, in order to write a successful essay, students should select major characters and key scenes. When characters make decisions at turning points in the story, that is when we can make a claim that they are acting according to some ethical principle. The following questions might help you to generate a thesis: Does a character (or characters) act to help others or herself or nobody? Does a character follow a strict set of rules or break away from rules? Does a character strive for equality or strive to help those in need or seek a final result independent from the steps taken? What forces lead a character to act/react according to a certain ethics type? Which characters are more empathic than others?

Select One of the Following Texts:

- “Thank You Ma’am” by Langston Hughes (published 1958)
- “The Veldt” by Ray Bradbury (published 1950)
- “Assimilation” by E.L. Doctorow (published 2010)
- “The Interpreter of Maladies” by Jhumpa Lahiri (published 1999)
- “The Enormous Radio” by John Cheever (published 1953)
- “An Arranged Marriage” by Nell Freudenberger (published 2010)
- “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” by Gabriel García Márquez (published 1955)

Helpful Plan:

- Begin by selecting a story that you like. Then decide which characters make important decisions.
- Then select one, two, or three important scenes in which characters make decisions.
- Next, trace out the type of ethics the characters seem to follow and what their ethics leads them to do.
- Use the thesis blueprint; be sure to fulfill your thesis’s promise.
- Research and select an appropriate essay, speech, or interview by the story’s author (use the City Tech library database) and use at least one quotation from it to help explore character or ethics in the story. See “Weaving an Author Essay into Your Own Essay” in the Readings menu tab.

Note 1: Using generative AI to write text is **not** allowed. Grammar and spellcheck are allowed.

Note 2: Characters may change ethics quickly, and characters might use multiple types of ethics, so it is up to the critic (you), to trace changes and/or overlaps.

This 100-point essay consists of two components:

Essay:
800 words
(85 point)

1. Title, thesis, well-structured sentences, clear paragraphs, proper length, and free from typos (25 points)
2. Accurate understanding of the story; inclusion of at least 4 direct quotes; accurate in-text citations; and a Works Cited page in APA style (25 points)
3. Clear understanding and use of ethics/empathy handouts, literary terms, and the author essay, speech, or interview (35 points)

3-5
Minute
Presentation
(15 points)

- Students will present a 3-5-minute summary of their essay worth 15 points. Students should not read from their essay. Instead, students should present (two note cards may be used). The presentation should provide the following information at minimum:
1. A brief summary of the story, including author and title of story
 2. How do ethics work in the story? (describe the character(s), scene(s), and ethic(s))
 3. How does the story end?
 4. What did you learn about ethics?

Monday, Dec 16: Presentation Day. Early submission is worth 5 points (print submission)

Wednesday, Dec 18: Last day to present: regular submission of essay (print submission) (last day of class)