ENG2001: Intro to Fiction, Prof. Scanlan

Midterm Essay Details

Fall 2019

Primary Goal: Write an 800-word essay in which between two and four characters are compared. Students should compare characters from two stories. Select from the following list:

“The Lottery” -Jackson

“The Black Cat” -Poe

“Young Goodman Brown” -Hawthorne

“The Yellow Wallpaper” -Gilman

“House of Asterion” -Borges

“A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” -Marquez

“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” –Bierce

“A Rose for Emily” -Faulkner

“Bartleby the Scrivener” -Melville

“Prologue to Invisible Man” -Ellison

“A Hunger Artist” -Kafka

By this point, there is no question that these texts are gothic, so let’s focus on what the characters teach us about gothic limits, violence, death, and a return to normalcy. Do some characters reveal what we should do and some reveal what we should not do? More specifically, this essay asks students to compare and contrast between two and four characters in order to address some (not all) of these key ideas:

* Allan Lloyd-Smith encourages readers to ask about the Puritan inheritance, fear of democracy, and fear of overturning race, gender, and sexuality codes. How do characters react when faced with these issues?
* Lloyd-Smith ultimately believes that the Gothic “explores chaos and wrongdoing in a movement toward the ultimate restitution of order and convention”—the Central Gothic Irony (5). Do the characters you write about desire normalcy or fight against it?
* Do events or scenes in the story fall under the definition of Todorov’s three terms: uncanny, fantastic, or marvelous?
* Does the narrator or the style of narration or changes in the focal point alter reader sympathy or understanding?

Essay Details:

1. Make sure to begin with a strong thesis that you support by using evidence from the text. Also, use direct quotations that you properly cite from the original text.

2. Write using clear paragraphs that contain declarative topic sentences.

3. Minimum 800 words—use the word count feature. Use the standard Journal/Essay format.

4. You should not use outside sources—use notes from our class and handouts such as Todorov and Lloyd-Smith.

5. If you have questions about format, writing a thesis, paragraph structure, conclusions, or citations, please study the Purdue OWL website that is on our OpenLab course page. If you still have questions after trying to answer questions on your own, then ask me.

6. Above all: choose characters and stories that interest you.

Grading Rubric:

1. First Page: A clear introduction, title, thesis, and method (25 points)

2. Formal Writing: Concrete nouns, well-structured sentences, and clear paragraphs (25 points)

3. Story knowledge: Accurate character, plot, narrator, and setting knowledge; correct weaving of at least four quotations from the articles (25 points)

4. Gothic terms: Accurate understanding and usage of specific gothic terms such as the gothic definition, hallmarks of the gothic, central gothic irony, betrayal of innocence, and Todorov’s uncanny, fantastic, and marvelous (there are others) (25 points)

Important Dates:

\* Two-page draft due: October 17

\* Final Draft due: October 24

-Late essays will be penalized by two full letter-grades for each day late.