UPDATED: ENG3407—Gothic Literature, Prof. Scanlan

Midterm Essay Details

Fall 2020

Primary Goal: Write a 4-page essay (800 words minimum) in which you compare at least one character from Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to at least one character from one of the following:

“The Lottery” -Jackson

“The Black Cat” -Poe

“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” –Bierce

“Prologue to Invisible Man” –Ellison

\*“Young Goodman Brown” -Hawthorne

\*“The Yellow Wallpaper” -Gilman

\*“The Veldt” -Bradbury

\*“The Enormous Radio” -Cheever

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 (up to four) characters in order to address some (not all) of these key ideas:

* Alan 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? Are certain characters engaged in the SOP?
* Do actions, events, or scenes in the story fall under the definition of Todorov’s three terms: uncanny, fantastic, or marvelous? Do they reflect Freud’s ideas of the uncanny?
* Does the narrator or the style of narration or changes in the focal point alter reader sympathy or understanding?
* Do the actions/emotions of the character lead readers to consider redemption or how they provide an allegory for our present world?

Essay Details:

1. Make sure to begin with a strong thesis supported by evidence from the text. Also, use direct quotations that from the original text. Be careful not to summarize too much.

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

3. Minimum 800 words.

4. You should not use outside sources—use notes from our class, the stories, and handouts such as my handout on gothic definitions -- plus the handouts on Todorov, Lloyd-Smith, and Freud.

5. If you have questions about format, writing a thesis, paragraph structure, conclusions, or citations, please study the Purdue OWL website—on OpenLab. 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.

\* See my format handout for guidance\*

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, SOP, betrayal of innocence, and Todorov’s concepts, Freud’s concepts, Lloyd-Smith’s concepts (there are others) (25 points)

Important Dates:

\* Two-page draft due: October 19 (posted to OpenLab)

\* Final Draft due: October 26 (posted to OpenLab)

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