ENG 3407 Gothic Literature and Culture, Prof. Sean Scanlan

Essay 1 Assignment

Fall 2015

Primary Goal: Write a three-page essay (750 words) in which you compare two or three characters from the following stories that we have read so far:

\* “The Lottery” -Jackson

\* “The Black Cat” -Poe

\* *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* -Stevenson

\* “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” -Irving

\* “Young Goodman Brown” -Hawthorne

\* “Afterward” -Wharton

\* “The Yellow Wallpaper” -Gilman

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 and propriety. Do some characters reveal what we should do and some reveal what we should not do? More specifically, this essay asks you to compare and contrast two or three characters in order to address some (not all) of these key ideas:

* Allan Lloyd-Smith encourages readers to ask about the frontier, 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” (5). Do the characters you compare follow this idea or go against it?
* David Stevens ask how artists, philosophers, and religious ideas (especially Catholicism) have influenced gothic texts. How do these influences affect characters?
* How do the characters become overwhelmed by addiction or desire or the scientific impulse?
* How do larger frames of reference for Gothic fiction such as enlightenment, romanticism, and Victorianism help readers understand the characters?

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. Three full pages (750 words—use the word count feature). Use the standard Journal/Essay format.

4. You should not use outside sources—use the texts and criticism from our class such as my lecture notes, Stevens, and Lloyd-Smith (and, possibly, a dictionary).

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.

Writing Process Guide:

1. Make sure you understand the story using the Reading Tool. (Note taking)

2. Make sure that you tell your readers why this comparison is interesting, why it makes sense, or why it is worthwhile. (Thesis)

3. Make sure to reveal the context in which characters are acting or thinking—what scenes are important? (Method)

4. Think in terms of paragraphs. Each paragraph must have a clear job to do. (Analytical paragraphs)

4. Reflect on what you have learned and/or what the characters learn about limits/gothic. (Conclusion)

Important Dates:

\* Two page draft due: March 16

\* Final Draft due: March 21

-Late essays will be penalized by one full letter-grade for each day late.