

Short Story Essay

Directions.

Pick any short story that appears on our syllabus (or in our textbook) and write an essay that poses an argument about how one should interpret your chosen short story. Your essay should answer one of the following questions:

1. What is the meaning of the text?
2. What is the significance of the text?

Note that the scope of the questions above are wide and vast, especially when one recalls that a single text contains *multiplicities*. It's up to you, the writer, to narrow the scope of the questions, as informed by your own reading of a short story. And. If one has been paying attention, narrowing the scope of the questions as informed by your own reading should sound vaguely familiar: it is the first step that one needs to take in order to view a literary text as an opportunity to engage in the art of academic argument building and making. To that end, you may find that using the elements of fiction as a frame of reference may be helpful (though not required).

Again: the meaning or the significance of the text depends on how **you** choose to interpret the literary text in question. How one chooses to interpret a literary text is directly connected to how one reads the text.

The nitty gritty:

Papers should observe MLA format.

Your essay must be at least 4 full typed pages.

Font size: Times New Roman 12 pt

Lines: Double Spaced

Margins: 1 inch top, bottom, sides

Title: Centered at top of page

Essays should have an introduction, thesis, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Thesis statements must assert a worthwhile, explore-able, claim. Since essays will build an argument, body paragraphs should go about the work of providing evidence that justifies and supports your thesis.

Essays must integrate, analyze, or refer to specifically to the text analyzed. In other words, the argument you assert should **examine** the contents of the text; the text is your primary source of

evidence. Essays submitted without quotes (or any interpretation of quotes) will face a significant grading penalty.

Hamlet Essay Questions

4 pages

MLA Format

1. Choose any soliloquy and discuss its function (not just its meaning) in the play. Close analysis is expected. Do not just paraphrase it. Soliloquies: Act I, ii; Act II, ii; Act III, i; Act III,iii (Claudius) or Act III, iii (Hamlet); Act IV, iv 1.34-68.
2. What does this play say about thinking carefully versus taking action? Hamlet discusses this issue in several speeches; in addition, his and other characters' actions make statements about this issue.
3. Does Hamlet live and die by making free choices, or are his choices all controlled by forces larger than himself?
4. "Everything that happens in this play occurs because of a woman." Do you agree with that statement or not? Write an essay that explores the extent that female characters in this drama are pivotal to the play's plot.
5. What do you feel hurt Hamlet more: his father's death or his mother's quick re-marriage?
6. Consider the staging of the crucial "bedroom" scene (between Gertrude and Hamlet). What do we find out about Hamlet's family (they all show up in the bedroom) in this scene?
7. In the play "Hamlet" the ghost of Hamlet's father appears briefly, but has a significant presence. Write an essay that demonstrates how the ghost is important in the work, especially as the ghost may serve to motivate the actions of those in the play.
8. Compare Act I scene ii with Act I scene i. What do we learn about Gertrude, Claudius, and Hamlet in each scene?
9. What is "rotten" in the state of Denmark?

10. In Act II, Hamlet delivers a soliloquy that begins "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I..." Do the words Hamlet speaks move him to action? Why?

11. Read Act III scene iv. Based on what you've read (and watched in the Gibson-Zefferrelli film version of the play): do you think Gertrude knew about the murder? Why or why not? How might Gertrude's knowledge about the murder affect the events that occur in the play?

12. A foil is a character who is like the protagonist in some respects but who has contrasting qualities that reflect or "illuminate" the traits of the main character (protagonist). Think about the characters that are on stage in Act IV. Choose a character that might function as one of Hamlet's foils and explain how the character sheds light on Hamlet?

13. Many people die at the end of the play. Often, when there is death, people try to make sense of it and understand it. What sense can be made of the staggering number of deaths in Hamlet? Has justice been served? Or is something more perverse and horrific afoot? Use Act V to help pose a response.