

Essay 1: Textual Analysis

Description: Rough Draft Tues, 5 March 2013 5–6 pages 25 points (completion credit) 3 copies
Final Draft Thurs, 7 March 2013 4–5 pages 150 points
Submit 1 copy of final draft, 1 copy of rough draft, and the completed peer review sheets.

Assignment

Make an argument about how Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* represents gender.

Alternatively, you may choose any of the novels or stories we have read so far and make an argument about how that text portrays an issue or theme of your choosing. *Your choice must be cleared with me via email before 5:00 on Monday 2/25.*

Strategies

While it is important to identify an issue for your essay to focus on, your thesis must move beyond that identification. The strongest thesis statements will make an argument answering these questions: how *specifically* does this story represent this issue, and what is this story's message, perspective, or argument about this representation? Do not consult outside sources—this paper's argument should be your own, and it must move beyond what we cover in class discussion. Avoid excessive plot summary so that you can spend more time focusing on the "juicy" details.

Choose a few key elements (like character, setting, dialogue, etc.) of the story and discuss them in depth, using close readings to address evidence that both supports and complicates your argument. Explain yourself clearly—every time you quote the text, your essay should be explicit about how that quotation helps to support (and/or complicate) your argument.

In the conclusion, don't merely restate your argument. Instead, briefly gesture towards the stakes of your argument and the novel's representation of this issue or theme. Why does your argument matter?

Format

Paper formatting, citations, and works cited list follow MLA style: 12-point Times New Roman font; double-spaced; stapled; header on first page including your name, course, instructor name, date, and assignment title. Acknowledgements section, if any, should appear as a footnote on the first page.

Criteria for Evaluation

- Does it present a thoughtful, specific thesis that moves beyond (or complicates) class discussion and surpasses what someone who quickly read the story would say about it?
- Does it use close reading to provide clear and compelling explanations of how each piece of evidence supports and/or complicates the thesis?
- Does it effectively select and incorporate quoted evidence?
- Do the organization, paragraph development, and transitions contribute to a logical flow of ideas?
- Does it demonstrate revision from rough to final draft?
- Does it include an acknowledgements section describing any assistance you had developing ideas or polishing the essay?
- Does it demonstrate attention to language and clarity (i.e. readable style with correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and MLA citation)?