

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

THE SCARLET LETTER BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

1. Analyze the use of the various meanings of the letter “A” in the novel.
2. Analyze the motivation of either Arthur Dimmesdale or Roger Chillingworth in their choosing to keep secrets.
3. Both Arthur and Roger keep secrets from the community. Select either character. Analyze the motivations for his keeping secrets and the impact of the secret keeping on
 - his character and
 - the community.
4. In the conclusion of the novel, Nathaniel Hawthorne implies that Pearl is a model of the new woman. Select at least three incidents from her childhood and demonstrate that these incidents are logical precursors to her developing a character in her adulthood that is exemplary.
5. Analyze Hester Prynne’s character based on her behaviors before the novel opens, from her imprisonment until Arthur’s death, and in the discussion of her life after Arthur’s death.
6. Based on your reading of the novel, discuss the symbolism of the prison door and its foreshadowing.
 - Which characters in the novel are imprisoned, literally or metaphorically?
 - In what ways does the door capture the thematic topic of transition in the novel?

THE AWAKENING BY KATE CHOPIN

1. Discuss the issue of women’s power and lack of power in the novel by analyzing the characters of three women including Edna.
2. Contrast the characters of the three men in Edna’s life—Pontellier, Arobin, and Robert—in light of their responses to Edna.
3. Compare the thematic topics and themes of *The Awakening* and *The Scarlet Letter*.

THE GREAT GATSBY BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

1. Discuss the impact of wealth on one of the characters in the novel.
2. Discuss the role of women in the novel by considering the characters of Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Myrtle Wilson.
3. Discuss the use of parties or social gatherings throughout the narrative and how these social situations contribute to the development of a theme or themes in the novel.
4. Discuss the importance of Nick’s character—as a character and as the narrator.
5. Defend or challenge the idea that Nick is the main character of the novel.

ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN BY MARK TWAIN

1. **Jim’s heroism: ordeal and triumph in *Huckleberry Finn*.** For this essay, focus not only on Jim’s many trials and tribulations, but also on his character strengths and his role in the overall “rescuing” of Huck. Of course, there is an irony, in the last chapters where Tom and Huck endeavor to rescue Jim. Focus on the Jim’s suffering (both the necessary suffering such as separation from his family and the needless pain caused by Huck’s early pranks) and on the good things Jim does for Huck and for others.

2. **Huck as unreliable narrator: the irony of characterization.** The youthful Huck is a natural observer and teller of events. Part of the irony that Twain effects results from Huck's misreading, misinterpreting, or mistaking a situation. For example, Huck's calling Miss Watson's story, "Moses and the Bulrushers," comes both from his inattentiveness and his creative imagination. And Huck's near worship of Tom results from his misreading Tom's insecurities and his own. How does Huck's unreliable narration affect his ironic characterization?
3. **Huck's search for identity: from abandonment to independence.** There are reasons why Huck takes on all those different identities and names. First, in terms of the plot, he assumes false identities in order to save himself or Jim. Second, in terms of the theme, Twain uses the motif of the false identities in order to complement the theme of Huck's search for himself and his emerging sense of independence.

THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD BY ZORA NEALE HURSTON

1. For the purposes of this essay, voice is defined as a person's ability to speak convincingly.
 - Option A.** Discuss the use of one character's "voice" in the novel. How is the concept of voice developed? What is the relationship between voice and character development?
 - Option B.** Compare the voices of two characters in the novel.
2. Discuss the relationship between financial standing and character.

ALL THE KING'S MEN BY ROBERT PENN WARREN

1. **Deceptive narration.** Some chapters in the novel end with a reader's understanding a previously unresolved mystery. Then, this new understanding is undercut by or ironically juxtaposed with a new resolution in a subsequent chapter. Discuss the impact of this narrative deception on your understanding of one or more themes in the novel.
2. **Analysis of a minor character.** Select a character trait embodied by a minor character and discuss its relation to one or more major themes in the novel. You may select from the list below, or identify your own trait and minor character. When you consider a trait, be sure to also consider its opposite.

loyalty	Sugar Boy, Sadie
opportunism	Tiny
implacable rectitude	Montague Irwin, Adam Stanton
duplicity	Montague Irwin, Mrs. Morrell
3. **Lying.** Throughout the novel, characters lie to each other or shield others from the truth, a form of lying. Select a character and analyze the various lies that this character tells.
4. **Jack's lying to his mother.** At the end of the novel, Jack Burden gives his mother a "wedding present," a lie about the circumstances that brought about Judge Irwin's death. Analyze the character change in Jack, who had previously made such a point about historical truth and honesty.
5. **Jack as main character.** Defend or challenge the idea that Jack is the main character of the novel.

JULIUS CAESAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Composition: Comparative Analysis of Two Speeches

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion: It is an important area of classical education, and would have been an important part in the education of Brutus and Antony, who lived in the classical age. Even Shakespeare (a Renaissance man) would have known classical rhetorical theory.

Compare the two speeches of Brutus and Antony in Act III, scene 2 by discussing the three classical appeals employed in the speeches:

ethos (ethical appeal)
an appeal to the credibility of the speaker

pathos (emotional appeal)
an appeal to the emotions of the audience

logos (intellectual or logical appeal)
an appeal to the content and arrangement of the argument itself

Consider the following elements in your prewriting and in your final drafts:

1. How do the orators appeal to their own credibility and trustworthiness? Give at least one example of such an appeal. (*ethos*)
2. Discuss how the orators rhetorically try to control their audience (including hidden meanings, sarcasm, irony, hyperbole, litotes, contrast, and repetition). Include at least two examples. (*pathos*)
3. Identify what content or strategy makes one speech more effective than the other. List at least two, preferably four, reasons. For example, is there a rhetorical advantage in Antony's going second? Are there elements in each speech that make that speech effective in persuading the audience to the truth of the speaker's claims? List these in prewriting and select the best examples. (*logos*)

If you find that certain examples seem to combine two (perhaps even three) strategies, welcome to the complex world. Use your planning to arrange these combinative appeals in a logically appealing way.

Suggestion: In your introduction consider what the goals of Brutus and Antony are when each begins his speech. What does each hope to accomplish? What does each expect from the crowd (audience)?

RUBRIC FOR EVALUATION:

- ____ (10) Substantial prewriting and processed rough draft(s): prewriting (5) and drafting (5).
- ____ (30) Detailed analysis of the three appeals.
- ____ (20) Appropriate comparison that draws a conclusion (who is the more effective speaker?).
- ____ (20) An essay that grounds its analysis in the text (> one quotation with documentation).
- ____ (20) A well composed essay free of mechanical problems.
- ____ (100) TOTAL