



Researched Critical Essay on a Short Story

In Essay #3, you will choose one of two stories to write about: either “Battle Royal” by Ralph Ellison or “Young Goodman Brown” by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The foundation for a strong essay will be the quality of your reading and thinking about your chosen story. You will need to apply all the strategies of close, interactive, and critical reading as well as reflective thinking to be successful.

Essay Requirements:

You are to write a “critical essay” on your chosen story using one of the Essay Questions below. Your essay should be 1000-1250 words and include supporting information from the story as well as from a minimum of two critical sources found from the SAC Library Databases (in the databases I designate). One of your research sources should be an “Overview” article and the second should be an article of literary criticism you choose (article or book). Students desiring an “A” will include at least three research sources (in addition to the story). The final draft should be turned in MLA Manuscript format using MLA Documentation Style (7th or 8th) to document sources.

Developing your “Argument”

As you develop YOUR interpretation of the short story, you will incorporate support for your thinking from both the short story AND the academic articles you have read about the story. You are encouraged to explore alternative interpretations (like we did in the Think Pieces) and handle them as point-counterpoint sections or paragraphs where you express and fairly summarize the alternative interpretation, and then counter or refute it.

What is a “Critical Essay?”

You will be writing a more traditional argument/persuasion academic essay which I am referring to as a “critical essay.” An important part of doing well in this essay is learning and

studying the characteristics and features of a critical essay so that you can reproduce them in your own essay. You will find two sources as essential to assisting you this inquiry:

- 1) Guide to the Characteristics of a Critical Essay
-- <http://www.lirvin.net/WGuides/critical.htm>
(be sure and follow links that explain each feature)
- 2) "What is Academic Writing" <http://www.parlorpress.com/pdf/irvin--what-is-academic-writing.pdf>

Select ONE of the Essay Questions listed below to write your paper on:

Essay Questions on "Young Goodman Brown"

- 1) Young Goodman Brown is described in the story as a convert (as is his wife Faith). What sort of conversion happens for Young Goodman Brown in the story?
- 2) Is Young Goodman Brown a critique of human nature or a critique of religion? Or is it a critique of both?
- 3) How does the setting and imagery of the story contribute to the theme?

Essay Questions on "Battle Royal"

- 1) If "Battle Royal" is an initiation story, what is the narrator being initiated into?
- 2) What does a close analysis of the battle royal as a symbol reveal about the theme of the story?
- 3) What is the significance of the grandfather in the story?

Strategies for Developing Your Essay

1. Clarify your "logical skeleton" of your essay
--Essay Questions:
--Thesis:
--Primary Supports (at least three)
2. Create "data sheets" for each of your Primary Supports
--put the THESIS + REASON/SUPPORT at the top of each page
--review your short story and your research sources for "evidence" that supports that reason/support and "collect" it on the data sheets
--remember when you write the body paragraphs on each Primary Support that you will need at least THREE secondary supports with textual evidence for each Primary Support

Hint: "Good writers write from a surplus of information." Donald Murry