**Novel Assignment & Criteria**

Having selected a novel within the guidelines your instructor has given, write a critical essay about it. The essay requires that you document three outside sources, have three full pages of text, and follow MLA format just as you have done in previous essays you’ve written during the course. Consider these points as you plan and write your paper.

* The critical essay is informative; it emphasizes the literary work being studied rather than the feelings and opinions of the person writing about the literary work; in this kind of writing, all claims made about the work need to be backed up with evidence.
* The difference between feelings and facts is simple--it does not matter what you believe about a book or play or poem; what matters is what you can prove about it, drawing upon evidence found in the text itself, in biographies of the author, in critical discussions of the literary work, etc.
* Criticism does not mean you have to attack the work or the author; it simply means you are thinking critically about it, exploring it and discussing your findings.
* In many cases, you are teaching your audience something new about the text.
* The literary essay usually employs a serious and objective tone. (Sometimes, depending on your audience, it is all right to use a lighter or even humorous tone, but this is not usually the case).
* Use a "claims and evidence" approach. Be specific about the points you are making about the novel you are discussing and back up those points with evidence that your audience will find credible and appropriate. If you want to say, "The War of the Worlds is a novel about how men and women react in the face of annihilation, and most of them do not behave in a particularly courageous or noble manner," say it, and then find evidence that supports your claim.
* Using evidence from the text itself is often your best option. If you want to argue, "isolation drives Frankenstein's creature to become evil," back it up with events and speeches from the novel itself.
* Another form of evidence you can rely on is criticism, what other writers have claimed about the work of literature you are examining. You may treat these critics as "expert witnesses," whose ideas provide support for claims you are making about the book. In most cases, you should not simply provide a summary of what critics have said about the literary work.
* In fact, one starting point might be to look at what a critic has said about the book 1) ask if the same thing is true of another book and 2) ask what it means that it is or is not true.
* Do not try to do everything. Try to do one thing well. And beware of subjects that are too broad; focus your discussion on a particular aspect of a work rather than trying to say everything that could possibly be said about it.
* Be sure your discussion is well organized. Each section should support the thesis. Each section should logically follow and lead into the sections that come before it and after it. Within each paragraph, sentences should be logically connected to one another.
* Remember that in most cases you want to keep your tone serious and objective.

**How do you conduct an "in-depth" examination of a text?**

1. Before reading the work, make sure to examine the title carefully. Often the title is a clue to  
an important idea in the work.

2. Make sure you look up in the dictionary any words with which you are not familiar.

3. After reading the work the first time, ask yourself the following questions:

* What is the geographical, historical and social setting? How does this affect the story or poem?
* Who is (are) the main character(s)?
* Who are the secondary characters, and how are they linked to the main characters?
* Does the main character change? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
* What is the conflict? Can you trace the development and resolution of the conflict?
* Who is telling the story? How does this influence the story or poem?
* In poetry, can you find a pattern of rime and meter?

4. As you re-read the work, make sure you can answer these questions. Then ask yourself the following questions, which may help you to discover deeper meanings that will lead you to an interpretation.

* Can you summarize the author's meaning in one paragraph?
* Can you state a theme of the work in one sentence?
* Can you identify any symbols or metaphors? What do they mean?

http://lrc.sierra.cc.ca.us/writingcenter/litcrit.htm

Research Paper *(Novel Analysis)* Requirements

* MLA format
* Cover page
* MLA Outline
* Three complete pages of text
* Include in-text citations of the sources where required
* Works Cited page (minimum of three sources)

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