Moser English 111 Spring 2019

**Paper One: Fiction**

Minimum Length: 1100 words (>4 double-spaced pages).

Final Draft Due: Feb 18 all essays must be submitted online at mosera@bethelu.edu

Prompt: Your task is to provide a literary analysis of one short story you select our Bedford book. You should analyze the use of symbolism in the story and how it supports a larger theme. (The theme is the important part, how you will write a thesis and unite the various symbols together into an analysis.)

Objective: This assignment is intended to force you to slow down and spend a lot of time with your story, to take a detailed look at not just what the author is saying, but how and why it is written this way. (The key thing to remember here is that observation answers questions like what, where, who, and when; analysis

answers questions with a why or a how.) You will need to employ a healthy dose of critical thinking to explore and experience the text. You will find Foster's explanations in our assigned chapters very helpful.

Sources: To complete this assignment, you may use any of the chapters from our Foster book as guides; you must select and use one of the following seven stories from our Bedford book:

Hawthorne: “The Minister’s Black Veil” (p. 324); Hawthorne: “The Birthmark” (p. 333)

O’Connor: “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” (p. 356); O’Connor: “Revelation” (p. 381)

Twain: “The Story of the Good Little Boy” (p. 484); London: “To Build a Fire” (p. 518)

Poe: “The Cask of Amontillado” (p. 536)

Documentation: You must provide proper MLA documentation. This means a complete reference listing for your story at the end of the paper, as well as in-text citations (with page numbers) whenever you quote the story in your paper. If you quote from a different part of the text (for example, something the editor has

written about the story), this will also need a reference listing and in-text citation(s). You will do the same for anything you use from the Foster book.

Analysis: I noted this above, but it bears repeating here: I am looking for analysis in this essay. Any summarization of the text should be minimal; I already know what the story’s plot is. What I need to see is that you can answer why it was written the way it was written, and how that supports a larger theme for the piece. Make sure that every paragraph makes this clear, and that each point you make ties back into the larger thesis for your essay.

Final Note: Think carefully and well in advance about which story you select. It needs to have enough text for you to be able to sustain and support your line of inquiry, and should offer enough questions for you to propose answers. Choose a piece that moves you or fascinates you, or perhaps one which confuses you. Keep in mind the words of Margaret Atwood:

*"The answers you get from literature depend upon the questions you pose."*

Suggested Essay Development: Your essay should describe how the author uses some of the symbols discussed in this course to build the theme for their story. As such, your discussion of each symbol should point clearly back to the story’s theme. Here as an example is a basic outline for this essay using the novel *The Great Gatsby*:

I. Introduction

a. Short synopsis of the novel

b. A brief discussion of the primary theme of the novel

c. A thesis statement (e.g. Fitzgerald ironically inverts the classic tale of the poor boy who falls for the rich girl to demonstrate that fate is inexorable and those who strive against it will be destroyed.)

II. Vampirism

a. the Buchanans and their whole set - Tom and Myrtle; Gatsby's partygoers; Wolfowitz; Daisy

III. Communion

a. How the sharing and withholding of food works in the story

- Nick at Buchanans'; Nick with Tom in city, Nick with Gatsby and Wolfowitz; etc.

IV. Greek Mythology

a. Gatsby as an Icarus figure - parties; of course you can repeat the past; the fast cars; etc.

b. Underworld - valley of ashes; crossing over/Charon; Myrtle's death; etc.

V. Irony

a. How Fitzgerald uses irony to twist the classic story of poor boy loves rich girl

- Gatsby's backstory up to his death

VI. Conclusion

Tips for This Assignment:

1.) Large chunks of text do not lend themselves to close analysis, and it almost always works better to cite a line or two at a time. If your citation covers less than four lines, you can quote it within your sentence. For example: Fitzgerald ends his book ambiguously, noting that “we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (p. 180). Page numbers always appear after the quotation, in parenthesis. If the quotation has more than three lines, you must indent it, like this:

“He smiled understandingly-much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced--or seemed to face--the whole eternal world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor.” (p. 48)

2.) After a block quotation like above, a rule of thumb is to follow it with at least as much explication and analysis as the quote takes. You have to earn taking up that much space with a quotation.

3.) It is your job to organize your reading of the story: the story cannot serve to organize your argument. In other words, you must introduce and contextualize what you quote. This is true even if you read the story in order. You must demonstrate to readers the connections between the different parts of the story.

4.) While it is possible to put your thesis at the end of the essay, usually it is easier and works better in a short essay to put the thesis in the opening paragraph. Whether it contains the thesis or not, the opening paragraph should serve to introduce your reading of the story. It is not a good idea to engage in close reading here: save that for the body of the essay.

5.) The conclusion of your essay is not a place to rephrase what you’ve already said. Use your conclusion to spell out the implications of your findings, to raise further questions, or to bring in a new interpretive angle to the story. Don’t bore the reader by repeating yourself.