

## Critical Methods Second Paper: Short Story or Drama Close Reading

Due: Tuesday 4 March start of class, in print, AND submitted to Digication

This assignment asks you once again to develop your skills of close reading, this time applying them to either a short play or a short story. We're continuing to work on building skills in close reading, analysis, and applying the various approaches offered by literary criticism. You should choose one text and one critical approach (lists of both appear below).

Choose either the play or one of the stories that we're reading for class, which include:

- Ambrose Bierce: "The Boarded Window" (handout)
- Susan Glaspell: *Trifles* (278 – 286)
- Edgar Allan Poe: "The Black Cat" (255 – 259)
- Kate Chopin: "The Storm" (224 – 227)
- Kate Chopin "The Story of an Hour (227 – 228)
- William Faulkner: "A Rose for Emily" (228 – 233)

Any one of the texts listed above will be fine. Choose one that you find interesting, confusing, exciting, maddening, or otherwise curious to you. For your choice of critical approach, I stress that you should let the theoretical argument *come out of the text*. That is, *start* with an analysis of some element or aspect of the story. You may have some idea of where you're going, but careful readings of the text will often surprise you and/or complicate your initial ideas. Start your close reading, and see which theory ends up being most useful.

Before you begin, and as you're writing & revising, I strongly recommend that you review the following sections of our textbook:

- Either Chapter 5 "Writing A Close Reading of a Prose Passage" and the Sample readings that appear in Chapter 6
- OR Chapter 8 "Writing a Close Reading of A Dramatic Passage" (as appropriate to your choice of text)
- I particularly recommend that you review the section on "Integrating quotations" on pages 184 – 185
- Consult the "Glossary of Literary Terms," Appendix 5, pages 287 – 295
- You will want to read your chosen text (the story or play) multiple times and consult it again and again as you write.

### Formatting Guidelines:

- Aim for 800-1000 words (this is longer than the previous paper). Unsure? Use the "Word Count" function in Word, under "Tools."
- 12-point font size in Times New Roman (or similar font) with double-space & 1-inch margins
- Use MLA style for citations and for your "Works Cited" page (it need not be a separate page; just put it a few lines below the end of your final paragraph). Please pay attention to these details.
- Your essay should have a title.

<b>Choose your Critical Approach</b>
<b>Reader-Response:</b> Show how the response of the reader(s) create(s) meaning(s).
<b>Historical Approaches:</b> Show how the text is in conversation with other historical texts.
<b>Marxist Literary Criticism:</b> Formulate an argument about the text in relation to class & economics.
<b>Feminist Literary Criticism:</b> Formulate an argument about the text in relation to issues of women and patriarchy.
<b>Gender Studies:</b> Formulate an argument about the text related to issues of gender (e.g. How is gender constructed for men and for women? Are there contending definitions? What kinds of masculinity/femininity are condoned and which are condemned?)
<b>Psychological/Psychoanalytic Criticism:</b> Formulate an argument about the text related to psychology or Freudian psychoanalysis.
<b>Postcolonial Studies:</b> Discuss how issues of imperialism, colonialism, and/or race inform the novel.

### **Things to Remember:**

- Unlike with the previous paper, where you perhaps went through the poem stanza by stanza, DO NOT put your paper in chronological order. Putting your paper in chronological order – matching “what happens” in the story – is a recipe for a paper full of plot summary. Focus your organization on the argument that you want to make about the story. Assume your reader knows the story.
- You don’t need to use outside sources, as what I am interested in is your interpretation of the text. You might want to use the *Oxford English Dictionary* (to look up words – available via UML library database), or the *Purdue Online Writing Lab* (for MLA format). But other than that, you don’t need to consult other sources. That said, if you do use an outside source, cite it!

### **Writing Style:**

- Language and reasoning must be clear, logical and precise; in general, a paper should be written in the simplest and **clearest** prose you’re capable of writing.
- Use **present tense** when discussing events in the story; use past tense when discussing actual historical events.  
Example: The character Candide experiences many misadventures.  
Example: The book *Candide* was published in 1759.
- The author is NOT the same thing as the narrator and/or characters:  
Example “Faulkner was born in...” vs. “The narrator of ‘A Rose for Emily’ claims that...”
- Always include page numbers according to MLA citation guidelines; pay special attention to quotes-within-quotes:  
Example: Miss Emily says, “I want arsenic” (47).  
Example: After demanding arsenic, Miss Emily “looked back at him, erect, her face like a strained flag. ‘Why, of course,’ the druggist said. ‘If that’s what you want. But the law requires you to tell what you are going to use it for’” (47).

### **Essay Structure:**

**Introduction:** Get to the point right at the start of the paper.

- In *all* literary analysis essays, in the first paragraph (the introduction) you should *always* identify the **author(s)** and **text(s)** you are discussing and your **thesis**.
- Provide a sketch of the main ideas to be explored in the paper, including anticipation of its conclusions.

### **Paragraphs:**

- Should be developed as self-contained, mini-essays discussing **one main idea** (stated in or near the first sentence)
- The body of the paragraph should offer **proof** and discussion of that idea
- The conclusion at end of paragraph should lead logically into the issue discussed in the next paragraph
- The paragraph should be well-developed – one or two sentences is NOT a paragraph
- Paragraphs should follow each other in such a way as to constitute a logical sequence of arguments leading up to certain conclusions at the end of the paper.

**Conclusion:** The end of the paper should include a paragraph where you wrap up your discussion. Bring together the different strands of your argument and discuss the implications (the “*so what?*”) of your essay.