

Assignment One: A Close Reading Essay

For the first essay, you will examine one of the following texts: Alexie's "Indian Education," Yeziarska's "Soap and Water," or Tamar's "Up from the Holler." Using the evidence from your chosen text, you will construct an argument about what it has to say about class. Does your author seem to support the idea that class is restrictive, for example, or does your author seem to be saying that people move freely into and out of various social classes? What does your author have to say about interactions between people of various social classes? About education and class?

Remember that an essay is an *argument*. You should have something definite to argue in relation to your chosen text. Do not tell me how you feel about your chosen text. Use a close reading of the text to support a position in regard to it.

You may, if you wish, consult the Scott and Leonhardt essay or other texts, but the bulk of your paper should be about the essay you have chosen to analyze. Your evidence should come from a close reading and analysis of the arguments, language, and tone of the essay.

This paper should be between 3 and 4 pages in length, exclusive of the works cited page and the cover letter. Be sure to consult the formatting and citation rules laid out below.

Your Goals:

--**Write a thesis that argues coherently and convincingly about some aspect of your chosen essay.** Your argument must take into account not only the evidence which supports your interpretation, but also the evidence which seems to refute it. Why do you find the latter unconvincing? A well-rounded essay not only presents positive evidence, but also refutes the negative evidence; such an essay is much more convincing to the reader.

--**Support your thesis with relevant examples .** Close reading should provide you with a wealth of details with which to support your argument; pick the ones which best support your arguments and demonstrate the examples you have chosen. Read your chosen essay closely and make sure that your argument fits the evidence that you are seeing. Put each example and quote in context in your paper and ensure that it is relevant to your argument. And last but not least, make sure that you understand not only the events of the essay, but also the tone of the author and what the author seems to be attempting to convey.

--**Structure your essay in such a way that each point leads naturally to the next and provides not only a good flow for the reader, but a build-up of convincing arguments.** The way an essay is put together affects how the reader responds -- be sure to pay attention to transitions and to the logical flow of your argument. Every example and quotation should help the overall argument and contribute to the paper, not distract the reader. Don't start out your essay arguing for one position but end the essay arguing for the other! Outlines can be very helpful in terms of diagramming this part of the essay (even when the essay is already written or partly written).

--**Use correct and clear language.** Repetitious or redundant sentences, run-on sentences, and just plain dull writing are all to be avoided. Vary the length of your sentences (a paragraph consisting only of little short sentences reads as very choppy) and use active and interesting verbs and adjectives. Conversely, be sure that you know the meaning of multisyllabic words that you use, lest you accidentally reverse the meaning of a sentence by using "inflammable" (flammable) when what you meant was "non-flammable" (not flammable). Malapropisms may amuse your reader, but do not inspire confidence in your argument.

--**Use appropriate formatting and citation.** The formatting protocols for the class are set out in the syllabus, but I will reprise them briefly here for your convenience:

--All papers must be typed or word-processed *and printed out*. No email submissions will be accepted.

--Three (3) copies of each rough draft must be brought to class for peer review.

--Your full name must appear on the first page of the paper and your last name in a

header or footer in subsequent pages.

--All papers must be spell checked; they must have page numbers; they must use in-text citation; they must have a correctly formatted Works Cited page; they must have a title; they must be written in 12-point font and have margins of one inch; they must be double-spaced; **and all of these things are required for every draft.** (Please refer to the handouts on citation and essay style)

--Every paper must have a *cover letter*. (Please refer to the handout on cover letters)

--A peer review letter must be provided for every paper you review during the peer review cycle.

--Written work submitted later than fifteen minutes after the beginning of class on the due date will be counted as a day late. Late papers are lowered by a third of a grade for each day late (i.e. a B+ paper will be graded B), except in cases of illness or emergency.

--**All sources MUST be cited.**

Your **first draft is due on 9/16**. Please remember to bring three copies (four if you wish to retain one) to class, and to prepare a cover letter for each one.

Your **final draft is due on 9/25**. You need bring only one copy, but do not forget the cover letter.

Feel free to email me if you have any questions!