

## Research Essay Assignment

This assignment asks that you analyze one or more pieces of American Literature from the 1860 to the Present. You may choose a piece we have discussed in class for this discussion, or you may make your own choices as long as the primary materials fall into the appropriate category of **19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Century American Literature**. I would highly recommend speaking with me about your topics as soon as you have an idea about what you would like to write about. **Essays must focus on the literature!**

### Approaches to consider:

1. Traditional Paper – Examine themes and the way that characters, imagery, irony, or other literary devices are developed in the piece to depict and imply themes. Know the differences between a close reading of the plot and an interpretation of the theme. For texts that are not poetry or fiction, demonstrate how the primary text or texts apply to general concepts of the era or modern times.
2. Current Discussion – This is an examination of the work and how it is relevant to today, to our situations, problems, etc. Be specific in your analysis, and provide details from current issues to support your applications. Remember, the paper must always focus its points on the piece of literature. Do not provide a running list of current situations that are similar. Do not make the paper about the current issues, either. Make sure that your paper focuses on the primary literature and how it works the way your paper claims.
3. Historical Analysis – Consider the social, political, or religious events that influenced the writer's piece. Apply that information in your paper in order to explain how the piece expresses its figurative meanings. Consider examining other works during the same period. This is not a history paper. Your work must be based on the literature. Examine how the historical setting influenced the piece in the way it expresses its main ideas. Determine if the piece is relevant in this way.
4. Comparison/Contrast – Discuss how the work relates to or opposes another piece of literature. Perhaps you could consider the progression or digression of a theme by choosing two works from different periods of time. This, too, will involve deeper analysis than doing close reading or comprehensive reading of the basic texts. This could also include more evaluation. Determine which piece depicts its main purpose more effectively and explain how. This will involve setting up criteria by which to analyze each piece.

### Requirements

Each essay should be about 7 pages long, and should be written in MLA format (which means you must document any quotes from the text and include a works cited page). Use 12 point Times New Roman Font and Double Space your essays. **Remember, this is a research paper which means you must use at least 6 critical sources (4 must be literary criticism).**

All papers must be submitted to Turnitin.com (a link will be provided in the course shell).