

# LITERARY RESEARCH ESSAY

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Choose two or three literary works (poems, short stories, plays) that share a common theme and develop a thesis-driven essay of five to seven pages using at least two academic (peer-reviewed) sources. Your essay should explore the theme through one of the critical approaches we have discussed this semester (i.e. formalism, Marxism, feminism, new historicism, or psychoanalysis) and argue for a particular interpretation of the works in light of that theoretical approach.

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**Due Date:** May 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>, on the day of our final exam (TBA- as soon as I know for sure). If you want to submit multiple drafts, I will need to see a first draft no later than Monday, April 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Format:** As always, format the paper using the MLA guidelines (see owl.english.purdue.edu) including: one inch margins, a heading in the upper left-hand corner of the first page containing your name, your professor's name, the course number and section, and the date, as well as a page heading in the upper right-hand corner of every page listing your last name and the page number. The document needs to be double-spaced and in 12 point font. MLA format also includes guidelines for in-text citations and works cited pages.

**Audience:** Imagine your audience to be a group of students and professors who are not familiar with the theory or literature under discussion. Keep this audience in mind as you draft your paper—focus on illustrating examples with quotes and explaining their context and meaning. Be sure to give background details where needed.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this essay is to present an interpretation of the literary works you chose in terms of a theoretical approach (such as Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, etc.). You will construct a thesis that explores a theme common to the works and argues for a particular interpretation. The body of your essay should present evidence and discussion which supports your thesis.

**Structure and Conventions:** There are some common expectations when writing an argument. Your essay should contain both an introductory and concluding paragraph to introduce, summarize, and draw conclusions from your main ideas. Your essay will need to be “driven” by a thesis statement which indicates the paper's direction and limits its scope. Your essay's body should be constructed of a series of discrete points supported by evidence (quotations) from the poem. Lastly, all papers need a Works Cited page that provides bibliographic information for the sources you have quoted from in your paper.

**Sources:** You will need to incorporate at least two scholarly sources into your interpretations. These might range from discussions on the critical approach you are using to alternative readings of the works of literature you chose. Such sources can be located in our library and on the databases we discussed earlier in class.

**Citations:** Include a properly formatted Works Cited page at the end of your essay, and remember the MLA method for citing works within a text.