

FMS 120-01 Assignment Sheet
Essay One
M. Elmes

At-A-Glance:

Assignment: a character or thematic analysis

Length: 2-3 pages (2 FULL pages, not 1.5; and no more than 4 including works cited)

Due date: Tuesday, October 7 in class

Weight: 15% of final grade in the class

Formatting Considerations: typed, double-spaced, Times-New Roman or similar font; MLA or Chicago format; must include a works cited and quotes/ paraphrasing from the primary text(s) to support your claims, does not require outside (secondary) sources. It is fine to print your essay on both sides of the paper. It is fine to have the works cited at the bottom of the final page of the essay. You do not need a cover page for this essay.

Reminder: you must workshop the paper in class the week before (Tuesday, September 30) or the final score on your essay can be no higher than a “C” and the final grade on the overall assignment will reflect a 10% grade penalty on top of that. This information appears on page 4 of your syllabus.

Guidelines:

This is a specific, targeted analysis of a single theme or character in any one of the texts we have studied (or are going to study) in this course. Your argument needs to be concrete and to be supported with quoted evidence from the text you are working with.

For a thematic analysis: chose any one theme (loyalty, courage, strength, honor, cowardice, guilt, betrayal, love, friendship, community, isolation, exile, prophecy, etc. etc.). You need to focus specifically on no more than 3 instances in which this theme appears in the text, in order to give yourself room to analyze. Define the term as you are using it, and then explore where in the text it is present and what it does to the narrative. Come up with an overall argument about the theme’s role in the story based on your evidence.

For a character analysis: choose any one character, explain briefly who s/he is in relation to the narrative, and then discuss how s/he is presented both directly and indirectly in the text – what does s/he do or say? What do others in the text do or say about him or her? What is his or her function in the story? Come up with an overall argument about this character based on your evidence.

For further guidelines on writing college-level literature essays, see my essay in *Lenses*, pp. 209-221, which was assigned reading for Week Four in preparation for this assignment.

I am grading this essay according to the following order of importance:

MOST important: a clear point grounded in a solid thesis that tells me specifically what you are arguing, why you are arguing it, and how you are going to prove your point. The rest of the essay will return to this statement of purpose. Your introductory paragraph also needs to include all relevant information required to situate your reader in your argument-- author, title, date of the work, and society and genre (i.e. “the twentieth century middle grade novel Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone” or, “the tenth century Anglo-Saxon epic Beowulf” & *etc.* – context matters!

SLIGHTLY less important, but not by much: ample textual evidence that clearly supports your main argument. Introduce your quotes – tell me where in the story they occur, who’s present/ what’s going on, give the quote, and then explain how it supports your argument.

Less important than that: clear, organized structure to the essay, where each point leads to the next and then back to the main argument, with a strong introduction and conclusion.

Less important than that: style, syntax, grammar, spelling, correctly formatted works cited.

How to score a “0” on this assignment:

1. Don’t turn it in
2. Don’t follow any of these guidelines
3. Don’t have a works cited with in-text citation per MLA style in the essay

Other questions? Do not hesitate to email me at maelmes@uncg.edu or stop by my office during office hours.

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Assignment Sheet, Essay Two

Melissa Ridley Emes

From the syllabus:

Essay Two: 5 pages, 20% of your final course grade Subject: compare/contrast of two Arthurian texts. Refer to assignment sheet for further instructions. (SLO 1, 2, 3; WI 1 & 2)

Directions: Choose two Arthurian texts, one from the medieval era and one from the 19th century or later. Compare and contrast these texts in terms of the following:

1. Country of origin and author's background & purpose (WHO is this person, and WHY might s/he be writing this text?)
2. Genre and form of the text, itself. Is there anything specifically medieval or modern about these? How do they compare against the other texts from their respective eras?
3. Similarities and differences in their treatment of Arthurian characters
4. Similarities and differences in their treatment of Arthurian themes

Using your comparison of the texts as a basis, write a 5-page essay that makes a bigger-picture claim about what these particular texts are doing in terms of beginning, propagating, continuing, contributing to, changing/transforming, subverting, or otherwise interacting with the greater Arthurian legend. You might want to focus specifically on the genre/form, on the characters, or on the themes, or do a more general comparison, dependent upon your argument, but you should be sure to use specific examples and citations from each text to support your claims. Consider in particular the theme of the course—the Global King Arthur tradition—as you make a claim and craft your argument.

Grading:

This essay will be graded as follows:

1. The student has a clear thesis statement and uses specific examples from the text to support his/her claims.
2. The student provides all necessary contextual information about both texts in his or her introduction (when/where/who/what).
3. The student includes at least three major points in support of his/her argument.
4. The student discusses both texts equally, rather than focusing mainly on one or the other, in making his/her argument.
5. The student includes specific citations from the texts, using correct MLA citation methods.
6. There is a correctly formatted MLA-style works cited page at the end of the essay.

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Assignment Sheet, Reflective Critical Essay

Melissa Ridley Emes

Assignment: 3-5 page critical reflection on the presence of the Arthurian legend in contemporary American culture.

Instructions:

Having kept track of Arthurian references in popular culture--such as television shows and films, cartoons, memes, stories, and images--and in everyday life, such as street signs, housing developments, and consumer products, think about the following questions:

1. *Where do most of these references occur—in media, or in real life? If in media, what kinds of media? If in real life, what kinds of spaces (consumer/retail? Homes? Parks? Places to live or places to visit?)*
2. *Are these references in advertising? What kinds of products are being advertised? Who is the target audience? (there may be more than one)*
3. *Are these references in media? What kinds of programs make use of them? Who is the target audience? (there may be more than one)*
4. *Are these references religious, political, or socio-cultural in nature? (they may be more than one at once/ hybrid in nature)*
5. *What aspect(s) of the Arthurian legend are being referenced? Particular characters or themes?*
6. *Do the references seem more attuned to the historical or romance genre? Why do you think so?*

Use your answers to these questions to construct an argument in which you make a claim about how the Arthurian legend appears in contemporary American culture, based on an answer to the following question: “What purpose does the Arthurian legend serve for a contemporary American audience?” Make sure to include specific examples from your own observations to support the claims you are making. Draw on your reading from the course as well--your essay should demonstrate your understanding of the historical uses of the Arthurian legend in order to contextualize how you are seeing it used now (is this a traditional employment of the legend, or a new way of using it?)

Grading:

This essay will be assessed as follows:

1. The student has a clear thesis statement and uses specific examples from his/her observations to support the claim s/he is making.
2. The student demonstrates a clear understanding of the historical uses of the legend in constructing his or her argument about its contemporary appearance, drawing on texts from the course as appropriate to contextualize his or her claim.
3. The essay is logically organized and demonstrates awareness of writing conventions—using proper syntax, grammar, and spelling, for example.

This essay constitutes 20% of the overall Class Participation grade for the course.