

## Sánchez Assignment Sheets for Critical Reading and Writing I: Fiction and Nonfiction Prose

Please click on the links below to read the assignment sheets for the major assignments covered in this course.

[Reflection Essay on Frederick Douglass's \*Narrative\* or Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's \*The Sorrows of Young Werther\*.](#)

[Director's notes for Octavia Butler's \*Kindred\*.](#)

[Comparison Essay between Katherine Mansfield's \*Stories\* and Joseph Conrad's \*The Secret Sharer\*.](#)

[Academic Essay on Brian Malloy's \*The Year of Ice\*.](#)

## Unit 1

### The Reflection Essay

You will write a story of your experience as a reader of either *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* or *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.

#### Goals:

- To practice close reading
- To think about and practice reading as a process
- To think about and practice writing as a process
- To begin recognizing the elements of rhetoric as a reader and a writer (ethos, audience, purpose, language)

#### Process:

As you read *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, you will annotate your text according to the guidelines laid out in Erika Scheurer's handout, "How to Read in College." You will then choose at least four quotes per reading session (we will read the two books in four chunks, so that's a minimum of 16 quotes in all) to expand upon in your Triple Entry Journal (see Low Stakes Writing Assignments handout for more information).

After completing exploratory writing, you will choose a focus for your essay: some aspect of your experience as a reader of either *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* or *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Maybe you would like to focus on your response to a certain character throughout the course of the books. Or maybe you will focus on your response to a recurring theme, image, or event, or on something the authors do with language as writers. Whatever you choose, you will need to focus closely on one aspect of your experience as a reader encountering this text, reflecting on the significance of what you have noticed about your reading experience:

Some questions that you could explore: what might your experience with the text say about you as a reader? What might it say about Douglass or Goethe as writers? How did you feel while reading the text and why do you think you felt that way? Could you identify with what you were reading? Why? Were there certain times that you felt the author's rhetoric was effective in conveying a point or a message to you? If so, what was that message? Based on what in the text? Why do you think you "got it"? If not, what do you think the author needed to do in order to help his readers follow him more effectively? The "evidence" supporting your essay will come directly from your TEJ: the quotes from the text and, most importantly, quotes from your second and third response entries.

The questions above are prompts. I do not expect you to answer all or any of them. Invent your own! Basically, I would like you to answer the question, "what did you notice as a reader of the text—both on the page and in yourself, and how are they related?" You can take your audience in any direction you would like as long as you refer back to the text in order to back up your statements. In your enthusiasm to express your thoughts and ideas, do not neglect to analyze the author's prose. For example, think about what the author is trying to say to and evoke from you. Based on what in the text? Whatever you decide to do, think of your essay as your part of a

conversation that should be well-organized: make sure you transition smoothly from one topic/observation/passage to the next.

All drafts must be written in Times New Roman 12pt font and double spaced.

### Evaluation Criteria:

#### Focus

- 3 Precisely defined and interesting focus on some aspect of your experience as a reader.
- 2 Reasonably clear focus; topic sentences relate in language and idea to the focus.
- 1 Focus not yet strongly defined, gets lost in the paper.

#### Evidence

- 3 Strong and engaging details from your TEJ support the focus.
- 2 Evidence connects to the focus and is logical; may lack detail.
- 1 Evidence is limited, poorly selected, not thoroughly described.

#### Idea Development

- 3 Discussion of the significance of what you have discovered about yourself as a reader and/or Douglass or Goethe as writers shows interesting complexity and in-depth analysis.
- 2 Discussion is solid and logical, just not as complex or in-depth.
- 1 Discussion is skimpy or lacking.

#### Organization

- 3 Ideas ordered with care; reader moves through a logical sequence of points; smooth transitions; strong opening and closing.
- 2 Reader moves fairly well through a series of ideas; focus threads throughout the paper through the language and topic sentences; introduction, transitions, and conclusion are adequate but not particularly original.
- 1 Lacking direction; connections between ideas are confusing or uneven.

#### Proofreading and Editing

- 3 Conventions of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, usage, spelling, and paragraphing are used effectively; errors are few and minor.
- 2 Reasonable control is demonstrated over punctuation and grammar.
- 1 Errors in conventions distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.

**Advanced** 15 (A) | 14 (A-)  
**Very good** 13 (B+) | 12 (B) | 11 (B-)

**Basic** 10 (C+) | 9 (C) | 8 (C-)  
**Minimal** 7 (D+) | 6 (D)

## Unit 2

### Essay Assignment: Directing a film version of *Kindred*

#### Overview

This essay will be non-traditional in format—director’s notes to an actor in a film adaptation of *Kindred*—but you will be using some of the same skills that you use for a traditional essay: close reading of the text, a main point you want to support (thesis), evidence to support your point, and reader-friendliness (clear organization and language).

Imagine that you are the director of a film being produced based on Octavia E. Butler’s *Kindred*. Making a film is a form of interpretation: the filmmaker has to decide how to interpret and then depict character, setting, the pace of the plot, the overall message of the film, etc. As the director, it is your vision (based on your interpretation) that will guide the making of the film, so you must be clear about this vision to everyone involved.

In this project you will focus on character, choosing one important scene in the novel connected to a character of your choice and writing director’s notes to the actors playing the characters involved in this scene (they are your reader). Assume that the actors all have their own interpretations of the characters in *Kindred* and it is your job as the film’s director to define your interpretation and vision for them, persuading them to see it as valid and explaining how it will work in the scene you have chosen.

Here are the questions you want to address in your director’s notes:

- ✚ What is your view of this character and his/her role in the novel? Where do you get this interpretation? (cite from the text)
- ✚ Why is the scene you chose crucial for film viewers to understand your character as you are interpreting it?
- ✚ How exactly do you want the actor to play his/her part in order to convey the character and his/her relationships to other characters in the scene as you have interpreted them? Be sure to be detailed: actions, gestures, expressions, tone and volume of voice for different lines and even words, attitude, etc.

## Evaluation Criteria:

### Focus and thesis

- 3 The director's notes remain focused on your chosen character/scene throughout. Early on we find a clearly defined, complex thesis--your interpretation of your chosen character in the context of your chosen scene. The thesis is interesting and complex, not obvious.
- 2 Reasonably clear focus and thesis; topic sentences relate in language and idea to the focus. Thesis is clear, but not as complex as it might be.
- 1 Focus not yet strongly defined, gets lost in the paper. Weak or nonexistent thesis.

### Evidence

- 3 Strong and engaging details from *Kindred* support the thesis.
- 2 Evidence connects to the focus and is logical; may lack detail.
- 1 Evidence is limited, poorly selected, not thoroughly described.

### Idea Development

- 3 Discussion of the significance of your thesis shows depth and complexity. It is clear to readers (the actor) why it is important for him/her to adopt your interpretation of this character.
- 2 Discussion is solid and logical, just not as complex or in depth.
- 1 Discussion is skimpy or lacking.

### Audience and Voice

- 3 The audience for the essay is well-defined (actors in the scene). The needs of the audience are met consistently throughout the essay. You answer their differing viewpoints as you persuade them to see the character your way. The voice addresses the audience directly and responds to their needs.
- 2 The audience is well-defined. Attention to the needs of the audience may be less evident in some parts of the essay than in other parts. For the most part, the voice addresses the audience directly and responds to their needs (there may be slips).
- 1 The audience is not clear or attention to the needs of the audience is minimal. There is little connection between the voice in the essay and the audience's needs.

### Organization

- 3 Ideas ordered with care; reader moves through a logical sequence of points; smooth transitions; strong opening and closing.
- 2 Reader moves fairly well through a series of ideas; focus threads throughout the paper through the language and topic sentences; introduction, transitions, and conclusion are adequate but not particularly original.
- 1 Sense of direction lacking; connections between ideas are confusing or uneven.

### Proofreading and Editing

- 3 Conventions of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, usage, spelling, and paragraphing are used effectively; errors are few and minor.
- 2 Reasonable control is demonstrated over punctuation and grammar.
- 1 Errors in conventions distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.

### **Scoring:**

<b>Advanced</b>	<b>18(A)</b>   <b>16-17(A-)</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>12(C+)</b>   <b>11(C)</b>   <b>9-10 (C-)</b>
<b>Very good</b>	<b>15(B+)</b>   <b>14(B)</b>   <b>13(B-)</b>	<b>Minimal</b>	<b>8(D+)</b>   <b>7(D)</b>   <b>6(D-)</b>

### The Comparison Essay

#### Overview

This essay will be more traditional in format. We will be comparing aspects of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer* with your choice of Katherine Mansfield's short stories. As always, you will need to start your work early by annotating your text, looking for similarities between the two authors' works. I will leave your options open as far as what aspects of a text you can examine. By now you should be well acquainted with characterization, tone, setting, and the other constructs we have been discussing in class. Your goal will be to examine similarities in any of these areas. You can use anything within the text to make your point: language, endings, beginnings, any description of the senses (smells, sights, sounds, tastes, physical sensations) and so on.

Comparing involves examining the resemblances between two or more subjects. In this instance, the two subjects will be *The Secret Sharer* and one or two works by Katherine Mansfield. As you read, see if anything sticks out at you as being worthy of mention.

There should be no pressure to try to make two dissimilar pieces fit together. After all, it is far too contrived to write 3 pages on two things that have nothing in common. For instance: "a sunny day makes people feel happy. And so does candy. Therefore, a sunny day and candy share a lot of similarities..."

Contradictorily, comparison also involves some contrasting, seeing the differences between two subjects. First, however, there must be an established sense of similarity. In the example above, one could write pages on how a sunny day is starkly different from candy, but there would be no substantial message in such an undertaking because it is so obvious that the two subjects are not similar to begin with. Remember: "the purpose of a comparison is to call attention to the unique features of something by holding it up against something similar but significantly different" (Barnet et al. 81).

A few things to keep in mind:

- ✚ What aspects do the two texts have in common? What could these similarities mean?
- ✚ In each of these similar aspects, how are the two texts different? How does this independence shape the ethos, character, setting, message, or whatever else you are examining, of the text? Essentially, how do the differences add to the "uniqueness" of each text?
- ✚ Don't be afraid to ramble in your first draft. You may not know what you are trying to say until the very end, but be prepared to make *extensive* revisions before you turn in your final draft.

**Essay must be 1,000 words, 12 point, Times New Roman font.**

## Evaluation Criteria:

### Focus

- 3 Precisely defined and interesting focus on the similarities (and differences) within the literary constructs of two (or more) texts by Conrad and Mansfield.
- 2 Reasonably clear focus; topic sentences relate in language and idea to the focus.
- 1 Focus not yet strongly defined, gets lost in the paper.

### Evidence

- 3 Strong and engaging details from your TEJ support the focus.
- 2 Evidence connects to the focus and is logical; may lack detail.
- 1 Evidence is limited, poorly selected, not thoroughly described.

### Idea Development

- 3 Discussion of the significance of what you have discovered regarding your comparison shows interesting complexity and in-depth analysis.
- 2 Discussion is solid and logical, just not as complex or in depth.
- 1 Discussion is skimpy or lacking.

### Organization

- 3 Ideas ordered with care; reader moves through a logical sequence of points; smooth transitions; strong opening and closing.
- 2 Reader moves fairly well through a series of ideas; focus threads throughout the paper through the language and topic sentences; introduction, transitions, and conclusion are adequate but not particularly original.
- 1 Sense of direction lacking; connections between ideas are confusing or uneven.

### Proofreading and Editing

- 3 Conventions of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, usage, spelling, and paragraphing are used effectively; errors are few and minor.
- 2 Reasonable control is demonstrated over punctuation and grammar.
- 1 Errors in conventions distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.

<b>Advanced</b>	<b>15 (A)   14 (A-)</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>10 (C+)   9 (C)   8 (C-)</b>
<b>Very good</b>	<b>13 (B+)   12 (B)   11 (B-)</b>	<b>Minimal</b>	<b>7 (D+)   6(D)</b>

Barnet, Sylvan, et al. *Literature for Composition*. New York: Longman, 1999. Print.

## Unit 4

### Essay Assignment: The Traditional Academic Essay

#### Overview

We have covered a lot this semester. So far you have written an essay based on your experience as a reader (first person “I”), a persuasive essay directed at a particular person (second person “you”), and a comparative essay making an argument bridging two texts based on literary constructs (third person, “he/she/it”). For this fourth essay, you will use the skills you have learned in essays 1, 2, and 3--how to write with focus, specific evidence, in-depth discussion and analysis, organization, audience-orientation, interpretation, and adequate editing--and add to it the concept of a thesis in order to produce a traditional academic essay.

Focus in narrowly on a theme, character, metaphor, or some other specific aspect of the literature (the role of audience, the self-presentation of the writer or speaker in the book, the way the writer uses language). You might use your questions that you share in class as great leaping off points. Your TEJs (yours and your classmates’) should be a treasure-trove of possibilities! While you can allude to other works that we have read, the goal should be to use them to complement *The Year of Ice*, not supplement it.

**Some words of caution:** it can get really tricky trying to separate a thesis from a fact. For instance, if you wrote a paper in which your thesis was that Octavia Butler wrote *Kindred* to talk about slavery across time, you would have a ton of evidence... but you would be stating a fact. The main thing to keep in mind about a thesis is that it is debatable. Somebody else (even you) would be able to have a differing opinion. Embrace this difference! You may want to argue how *some* uninformed readers may not immediately see things the way you do because they haven’t looked at the evidence closely enough. Then, present your very carefully analyzed text and show how you are reading it to get you to your conclusion. In this light, can you see how there is nothing that anyone could argue in response to the *Kindred* faux thesis above?

Also, there should not be any summary in this paper. We have all read the same text and know what the book is about. When you quote from Malloy, it should be to bolster your case, not to provide a synopsis.

Essays must be at least 1,000 words.



## Evaluation Criteria:

### Thesis

- 3 Early on we find a clearly defined, complex thesis--your response to your critical question. The thesis is not obvious.
- 2 Reasonably clear focus and thesis. Thesis is clear, but not as complex as it might be.
- 1 Focus not yet strongly defined, gets lost in the paper. Weak or nonexistent thesis.

### Evidence

- 3 Strong and engaging quotations and details support the thesis.
- 2 Evidence connects to the thesis and is logical; may lack detail.
- 1 Evidence is limited, poorly selected, not thoroughly described.

### Idea Development

- 3 Discussion of the significance of your specific pieces of evidence as well as your thesis shows depth and complexity, answering the "so what?" question. You acknowledge how others might take a view contrary to yours, based on evidence and weave that into your discussion.
- 2 Discussion is solid and logical, just not quite as complex or in depth.
- 1 Discussion is skimpy or lacking.

### Organization

- 3 Ideas ordered with care; reader moves through a logical sequence of points; smooth transitions; evidence in paragraphs connects directly to topic sentences, which connect to the thesis; strong opening and closing.
- 2 Reader moves fairly well through a series of ideas; focus threads throughout the paper through the language and topic sentences; introduction, transitions, and conclusion are adequate but not particularly original.
- 1 Sense of direction lacking; connections between ideas are confusing or uneven.

### Proofreading and Editing

- 3 Conventions of grammar, punctuation, citation, capitalization, usage, spelling, and paragraphing are used effectively; errors are few and minor.
- 2 Reasonable control is demonstrated over conventions.
- 1 Errors in conventions distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.

<b><u>Advanced</u></b>	<b>15 (A)   14 (A-)</b>	<b><u>Basic</u></b>	<b>10 (C+)   9 (C)   8 (C-)</b>
<b><u>Very good</u></b>	<b>13 (B+)   12 (B)   11 (B-)</b>	<b><u>Minimal</u></b>	<b>7 (D+)   6(D)</b>