

Second Essay Assignment Prompt
Final draft due Fri. March 28 by 10:10am

Your second essay is worth 15% of your final grade and should be an original close-reading of a passage from one of the **literary** texts we've read since you submitted your First Essay. (You can choose any text on our course calendar from Feb. 14 through March 26, the last class session before the final draft is due. This means that you could choose a text and start working on it before we discuss it in class if you wish. If you feel strongly about working on a text from earlier in the term—it cannot be the same text from your First Essay—you need to speak with me or email me for approval first.)

Be sure to read the handouts on Canvas under Files>How to Close Read a Text. Be sure to also read the handouts “Instructions for Formatting Papers – ENGL 148” and “MLA 9 Works Cited Sample,” both of which are on Canvas under Files>Helpful Handouts and Resources.

Your essay should be clearly written, logically organized and should include a brief introduction, a clearly stated thesis, an organized body that supports your thesis, a conclusion, and a Works Cited page. (For most of you, your only source will be the specific text you are analyzing.)

Because we are working in the humanities, we will be using MLA citation style (9th edition) to cite any of your sources. Be sure to see the [UNC Library's citation guides](#). Be warned: If you use a citation builder, be sure that you enter the information correctly and are requesting MLA 9th edition citation format. Many citation builders are unreliable, out of date, and prone to user error. Always double-check what the citation builder gives you. You will be expected to include appropriate in-text/parenthetical citations as well as a complete and accurate Works Cited page for your sources.

Using AI: The use of artificial intelligence (AI), such as ChatGPT, for work in this course is not acceptable. All work completed in this course must be your own. (See the course syllabus>“Course Policies”>“Using AI for Coursework” at Canvas>Files.)

The essay should be **3-5 pages (plus your Works Cited page)**, double-spaced (approximately 1,200 to 2,000 words), with rough drafts submitted as a Word document via the appropriate Canvas discussion board (Canvas>Discussions) for us to workshop in class. Each draft must be posted before class begins on the given due date or else it will be considered late. Late submissions will, at best, negatively impact the grade in a significant manner and, at worst, will not be accepted. **You will submit your final draft for a grade via Canvas>Assignments.**

Your essay should carefully interrogate a passage in your selected text, crafting an original interpretation about that passage and how it relates to larger themes throughout the entire text.

Alternatively, you can focus on a recurring motif that appears throughout the text. This is not a research paper, nor is it a summary. Although you might have to contextualize particular moments, scenes, or characters, the emphasis of this paper is on a single passage (or other aspect of the text) and how it relates to the rest of the text. I am interested in your own interpretation, not what other critics or scholars have said.

As always, if you have concerns or questions about this assignment, please email me or visit my office hours.

Fri. March 7: Workshop #1 (post your draft before class: Canvas>Discussions)

Draft 1 is not even necessarily a draft. You should have selected your text and your passage and should have completed the process of noting all of the interesting or strange details in that passage. Ideally, you'll have a very tentative thesis and/or some kind of rough, tentative outline.

Fri. March 21: Workshop #2 (post your draft before class: Canvas>Discussions)

This should be a rough draft or at least most of it. It doesn't need to be perfectly polished, but you should have started putting together different pieces from Draft 1. You should have a tentative thesis, and you should have at least begun composing the body paragraphs as you begin analyzing various textual elements. Ideally, you'll have a complete rough draft, including your full introduction and conclusion (or plans for these). The more complete this draft is, the more you'll benefit from our in-class workshop.

Fri. March 28: Final draft due (submit your final draft before class: Canvas>Assignments)

- This is your polished, final draft you'll be submitting for a grade.
- **Note:** At the very beginning of your final draft, please indicate whether or not you consent for this final draft to be published to our [course website](#). Please indicate if you want it not to be published, if you want it to be published anonymously, or if you want it to be published with your name (first name and last initial). See "Student Work Release Form – Course Website" on Canvas at Files>Assignments for more details.

Key features of close reading:

- a. Your analysis of the text—what you noticed—is the evidence.
- b. You want the argument (or interpretation) to grow out of this evidence.
- c. Don't try to twist the evidence to support your own favorite *a priori* argument or beliefs. Your opinion or own experience doesn't matter in this kind of argument.
- d. Use the evidence to support or explain your interpretation of the text.
- e. E.g., in a scientific experiment—you might believe that drug X will cure lymphoma, but if none of the patients in the trial respond well to that drug, then you have to report the conclusions based on that evidence. Your own hunch or beliefs don't factor into the argument.
- f. Rely on the evidence to rewrite the argument as needed!

The vital elements:

1. Analysis: breaking down scenes into words, metaphors, meanings, etc.
2. Evidence: selecting bits from the analysis that help support an interpretation
3. Synthesis: combining the evidence in ways to persuade the reader; citing evidence
4. Interpretation: making sense of what is happening in the text. How is the text meaningful? What theme(s) has the author realized in writing this text?
5. Writing: clearly communicating your ideas with well-written and logically organized prose that is free of errors and formatted correctly, including appropriate citations for outside sources

Close Reading Grading Rubric, Spring 2025:

	10	7	4	1
Introduction	Introduction clearly identifies the central question or issue under study, offers helpful background or contextual information, and contains a logical progression of ideas, ending with the thesis statement.	Some information about the essay's central ideas is offered, but it is confusingly organized or summarized strangely.	Introduction is cursory at best and does not provide enough information for reader to understand the significance of the thesis statement.	Essay lacks introduction.
Thesis Statement	Thesis statement makes a strong and interesting claim regarding the central object of analysis; statement is well-worded, clear, and intriguing.	Thesis statement forwards an arguable claim but does so in confusing or unclear language.	Thesis statement makes more of an observation rather than a debatable claim.	Essay lacks thesis statement, or statement is totally unintelligible.
Body	Body includes well synthesized information drawn from sources. It is well organized and offers multiple sub-claims that support the overall argument.	Body is lacking some detail or specificity. In a few instances, more evidence is necessary to support its claims.	Body is significantly lacking in some way. Minimal or no evidence is provided to support claims.	Body contains almost no credible information drawn from scholarly sources; body is disorganized and confusing.
Paragraph Structure	Paragraphs contain an analytical topic sentence that makes one central claim and then provides evidence and analysis to support this claim. Paragraph flows well.	Paragraphs are mostly well structured with a few slip-ups; some paragraphs either do not contain adequate flow, are missing a topic or ending sentence, or do not analyze their evidence.	A few paragraphs attempt to do too much or do not advance one specific claim. Paragraphs do not contain logical flow of information.	Paragraphs are highly unorganized and very difficult to follow; paragraphs do not advance any claim at all.

Integration of Sources	Sources are excellently paraphrased and summarized and are incorporated into the writing using signals or attributions. Quotations of specific phrases, word choice, etc. are used when appropriate. Author analyzes this material and offers their own perspective.	Sources are mostly paraphrased and summarized well, as is the inclusion of quotations. Author makes some attempt to analyze this research.	Summaries and paraphrases are confusing, awkward, and do not flow well with the rest of the paragraph. Quotations are poorly integrated into the text and tend to be unnecessarily long with little comment/analysis.	Sources are pulled in as lengthy direct quotes, and almost no effort is made to paraphrase or summarize them. Author does not provide enough information to understand the importance of this material and offers no analysis of their own.
Organization	Essay is organized with a logical and explicit pattern.	Essay is mostly well-organized, but some paragraphs seem out of order or repetitive.	Essay is very confusingly organized and does not reflect an overall organizational pattern.	Essay is organized so confusingly that it impedes the author's purpose.
Style	Essay features varied and sophisticated sentence structure and diction.	Essay uses some repetitive diction, simplistic language or sentence structures but mostly maintains a professional and objective tone.	Essay occasionally lapses into casual, colloquial discourse or subjective claims. Writing appears erratic, and some sentences are hard to follow.	Major lapses into casual discourse or little attempt to maintain objectivity. Diction is highly repetitive, and syntax is confusing.
Conclusion	Conclusion clearly & definitively answers the "so what"/ "who cares" questions, indicating the significance or larger implications of the essay's argument.	Conclusion makes some effort to point to broader implications of topic.	Conclusion mostly just repeats information already stated.	Conclusion is indistinguishable from introduction.
Citations	A coherent citation system (MLA 9 th edition) is used	A citation system is systematically	It is very difficult to tell if a single citation style has	No effort at citing sources accurately and consistently is made.

	consistently throughout; Works Cited page is complete and formatted accurately.	used with some lapses in providing required bibliographical information; Works Cited does not include all sources cited in body of text.	been adopted throughout. Citations are erratic and/or Works Cited is incomplete.	
Grammar	Essay is free from typographical errors as well as spelling and grammar mistakes.	A few surface errors, but none so consistent that they obscure the writer's meaning.	Repeated surface errors.	No sign of editing or revision.
Total: /100				