**RESEARCH/LITERARY CRITICISM PAPER: BOOK PROJECT Polnac/Willner**

You will choose from 6 books. In addition to reading the book, you will also participate in a seminar and write a paper.

We will have TWO scheduled seminars. The seminars will take place during class, lasting two class periods. You will bring a rough draft of your paper to the seminar, so that after sharing your ideas, you can revise your paper according to the responses of your cohorts.

Remember that this independent reading is above and beyond what we will be reading and discussing in class, so plan your reading and research time wisely.

You will read the work carefully, directing particular attention to details that contribute to a coherent discussion of the items that follow. Each student will be responsible for turning in his/her own paper. While the papers may be similar in nature, you must select themes, stylistic passages, and critical articles to discuss and write about in ways that differ from those your classmates use.

**BOOK CHOICES:**

*Exit West* (Mohsin Hamid) *The Leavers* (Lisa Ko)

*White Teeth* (Zadie Smith)  *Loving Day* (Mat Johnson)

*The Round House* (Louise Erdrich) *Waiting* (Ha Jin)

Here’s an outline of what your paper will cover: **(ALL SINGLE-SPACED; MAKE SURE WORD COUNT IS ALWAYS NOTED)**

1. **An introduction of some substance**

Ingredients should include the novel's title, author, setting, and date of publication. The introduction must end with the thesis: a definitive statement that reveals an attitude about the work, and an opinion that the subsequent sections will support. The thesis should make a qualitative statement about the novel's theme, particularly as that theme may relate to subsequent paragraphs of the discussion. This is based on YOUR interpretation: you’re making an argument regarding the author’s overall purpose in writing the text. Use the model essays to assist you (one included here, another available on my website). (500+ words)

1. **An investigation of literary criticism that covers the novel OR a news article that covers a topic CONNECTED to the novel’s main theme**

The lit crit/article should be as current *as* possible. Do not grab the first text you find; there are great articles and there are not-so-great articles. I suggest looking through the library databases, especially Facts on File and Gale. You can always ask me if an article is appropriate. *Attach a copy of the article to the back of your paper so I can read it.* After summarizing the lit crit/article, you are to agree and/or disagree with the major assertions of it. (600+ words)

1. **A discussion of the author's style**

Although the style is the writer's voice and personality shining through the work, you must approach an analysis and presentation of this topic on a somewhat mechanical level—an analysis of sentence structure and diction and how they connect with the work's theme(s). Choose ONE passage from your text to analyze on a close-reading level AND apply to the style of the work as a whole. The passage you analyze should recognize the tone OR whether there is a tone shift. (600+ words; word count does NOT include actual style passage)

1. **An explication of the novel's theme—the abstract concept that becomes concrete through its representation in person, action, and imagery in the work.**

The theme may generalize about the human condition, an individual's place in the universe, how people act under trying circumstances, or people's relationship with one another or with a society. You may wish to approach this section by considering the author's purpose in writing the novel and how the parts of the work support that purpose. Two special approaches to theme may be useful. Understanding the theme(s) of a fairly brief, highly structured work may make it easier for you to isolate the major conflict recognize the point at which the elements of conflict come together in the novel's climax, and determine what the resolution of that climax says. Another path to understanding—particularly in the case of a highly symbolic novel—lies in tracing the patterns of recurrent images throughout the work and in recognizing their roles as signs or exponents of theme. The fusion of these elements at some point in the work is a manifestation of the novel's theme(s). (600+ words)

1. **A conclusion that wraps up the discussion and evaluates the novel**

This section ties together the major points but also uses the observations about style, theme, and scholarly criticism to evaluate and explain judgments about the novel's literary excellence, its values, and its universality. (300+ words)

1. **A poem to connect to the novel in SOME WAY THAT HASN’T BEEN DISCUSSED ALREADY(epilogue)**

You must type the poem, explicate it and connect it to your novel. The connection may be to theme, character, setting, plot, etc., but it should be something you didn’t write about in the main paper. (600+ words: ½ min. on the poem itself and its explication, ½ min. on its connection to the novel.)

1. **A** **Works Cited page**

Follow MLA8 guidelines. You’ll need at least 4 citations (literary background, the novel itself, the lit crit OR article, and the poem – but in alphabetical order). If you do any extra research, that should also be cited correctly. You may absolutely use EasyBib! ☺

**Seminar/ Paper Dates:**

1. Bring your novel to class on Tuesday, **3/20** for a book check (you MAY start reading it whenever you want to). Bring your novel throughout the rest of our project time just in case we have extra time to read or work during class.
2. You’ll have **guaranteed** time to work for full class periods on **Monday, 4/9, Monday, 4/16, and Monday, 4/23.**
3. Seminars/Rough draft due dates: **Tuesday, 4/17** (*The Round House, Waiting, Loving Day)*

**Wednesday, 4/18** (*White Teeth, The Leavers, Exit West)*

1. Final draft: **Wednesday, 4/25** (ItsLearning by 11:59 PM **without critical article attached**); **Thursday, 4/26** in class (HARD COPY with lit crit OR article attached).

**\*\*IF YOU TURN YOUR PAPER IN TO ITSLEARNING ON TIME BUT YOUR HARD COPY IS LATE, I WILL TAKE OFF TEN POINTS. IF YOUR ITSLEARNING COPY IS INCOMPLETE AND YOUR HARD COPY IS COMPLETE, I WILL GRADE YOUR ITSLEARNING COPY. WHAT YOU TURN IN TO ITSLEARNING REPRESENTS YOUR FINAL WORK.\*\***

**Final Instructions and Information:**

* Don't even consider using information or sources other than the novel itself, a scholarly, published article, which you *will* credit and cite in your paper, and the poem you select to connect to the novel. This assignment is weighted far too heavily **(DOUBLE MAJOR GRADE)** for you to risk losing all credit because of plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional. If you are struggling, talk to ME first. We will work through it together, and a late grade is always better than a zero.
* Final Drafts of papers will be due ~one week after your seminar**. You will not get a lot of feedback beyond simple stuff (as this is a mastery project), so plan your time accordingly.**

Here’s a sample rubric I would use to grade your book project:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **A**  **(20-18)** | **B**  **(17-16)** | **C**  **(15)** | **D**  **(14)** | **F**  **(13-0)** |
| **Organization**  The essay is organized with a strong introduction that includes a clear thesis statement. Well-developed and organized sections (scholarly article, style, theme) and a clear conclusion. Poetry explication (after conclusion) is clearly connected to novel. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Focus**  The essay is on topic and consistently holds the reader's attention with well-chosen examples. Avoids vagueness and summary. Appropriate transitions between ideas. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Development**  The essay is supported with specific and relevant evidence. Ideas are original and reflect a confident and clear understanding of the topic. Includes sufficient textual support (from appropriate sources in addition to the novel) throughout: **at least** 20 quotations total. Critical article and poem are taken from credible websites. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Sentence Fluency and Word Choice**  Essay expresses ideas with effective use of a variety of sentence structures. Demonstrates accurate use of language in a clear and lively manner. Incorporates appropriate and precise word choice. Audience awareness is evident, and it is not awkward. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Form and Conventions**  The essay is typed: MLA heading, creative title, 12 pt font, Times New Roman, single-spaced, one-inch margins on all sides, page numbers in top right-hand corner of each page, bold headlines for each section. Sections adhere to lengths stated in original requirements. Minimal errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and other elements of grammar. All sources are cited by MLA standards both within the essay and in a Works Cited section after the poetry explication. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** |  |  |  |  |  |

\*No critical article attached: -10 points (DO NOT UPLOAD TO ITSLEARNING, JUST ATTACH TO HARD COPY)

\*No hard copy: -10 points \*No rubric: -5 points