Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Out of Class Novel Essay

Write a 5+ page essay (typed) that interprets the significance of the novel you read. Your essay should identify one (or more) universal truth within the novel, and the various devices the author uses to reveal that universal truth. (In your analysis, you may wish to consider such literary elements as selection of detail, figurative language, tone, character/conflict development, or other literary elements.)

MLA Reminders:

* Size 12 font, Times New Roman
* Double spaced
* Include header and title
* *Italicize* or underline novel titles

“A” essays will include:

* Introduction, body, conclusion
* **A clear thesis statement**
* **Thoughtful, eloquent, non-repetitive analysis**
* Well-chosen and well-placed evidence that flows with the rest of your body paragraphs
* Fluid transitions within and between paragraphs
* A direct response to the prompt
* References to specific characters and events in the plot
* Control of grammar and mechanics
* Academic vocabulary and use of literary terminology
* A balance between analysis and necessary background/summary information

“A” essays will not include:

* Analysis that is simply a summary or paraphrase
* Grammatical and mechanical errors
* “Quote bombs” randomly dropped into your paragraph with no context or fluency
* “This means,” “This matters,” “This is important because,” “What I think they’re trying to say is,” “In my opinion…”
* **Second person or first person point of view (“You” “We” “I”)**
* The words, “Have you ever wondered..?”

**A literary analysis thesis statement:**

* tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion.
* is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
* directly answers the question asked of you. A thesis is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, of an essay might be World War II or Moby Dick; a thesis must then offer a way to understand the war or the novel.
* makes a claim that others might dispute.
* is usually a single sentence somewhere in your first paragraph that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation.

**Sample 1**

In *The Box Man*, by Barbara Lazear Ascher, the protagonist reveals that a life of solitude need not always be lonely. Though the Box Man lives a life of solitude as a homeless wanderer, Ascher describes his “grand design” and “grandmotherly finger licking” to convince readers that their assumptions about homeless people are unfounded – and that they *can* live a dignified life. By describing the Box Man as “dignified” and “at ease”, Ascher paints a vivid picture of a man who chose a life a comfort and solitude and defeated loneliness by becoming his own friend.

**Sample 2**

In *Upon the Burning of Our House*, Anne Bradstreet ponders her unfortunate circumstances and appreciates that it was God’s will that her house burned to the ground. Bradstreet believed that every misfortune she encountered served to remind her of God’s will – in this case, she was reminded that “All is vanity” – a Biblical allusion meaning that everything in life is futile and the only worthy goal is entry into heaven. Bradstreet’s attitude is further revealed when she says “The world no longer let me love, / My hope and treasure lies above.” Bradstreet clearly feels that worldly life is fruitless; her sole concern is God.

**Sample 3**

In The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck characterize the protagonist, Tom Joad, as a morally conscious person who stands up against evil. The image of Tom’s mother “slow with weariness” sitting and scraping potatoes affects Tom very much – so much that he is willing to give his life to rebel against the people who seek to harm his family. Through the use of imagery and diction, Steinbeck reveals Tom’s noble conscious and characterizes him as a rebellious young man.

**Sample 4**

In the His Dark Materials Series by Philip Pullman, the setting is an *essential* element in the development and outcome of the plot in more ways than one. The protagonist, 11-year old Lyra Belacqua, lives in the precincts of Jordan College in Oxford growing up as an orphan among the old scholars. Her cheerful existence consisted of playing on the rooftops of the college and “waging war” with the local children. This contrasts sharply with the bright and exciting future she soon experiences after she escapes from the drudgery of college life. After escaping, Lyra begins a grand adventure, journeying to the north to meet armored bears, witches, and gyptians. The initial setting is important to the development of the plot because Lyra’s future resourcefulness and quick-wittedness in difficult situations were fine-tuned during the numerous challenges she faced as a child while fighting “wars” with the other local children. In addition, by understanding Lyra’s humble background, the reader can appreciate her future accomplishments.