**Analysis of Short Fiction: Character Arc Essay**

**Format: Paper should be formatted according to MLA: double-spaced, indented paragraphs, standard font (Times New Roman, standard print size (12), and margins (1”) with an unique title and proper placement of name and class information. For a tutorial on how to format your paper, access Lecture Notes.**

**Tone and language will be appropriate for a college-educated audience. Avoid the use of first person (I, me, in my opinion, etc.).**

**Length**: 4-6 pages. If you feel you have accomplished a thorough character arc in three pages, this is fine but if analysis is lacking, this would affect your assessment. You may go over the maximum but only if it enriches the analysis.

**Due**: Feb. 18

**Weight**: 20% of final grade

**Objective**: In popular fiction—murder mysteries and the like—plot is the most important element.  However, in the literary short story, what happens in the story is driven by **character.**  To put it simply, the main character, the protagonist, runs into some kind of conflict as the result of encountering an antagonist (whether a person/people or an internal conflict which can be considered antagonistic), and this conflict gives rise to a significant event or moment that changes the protagonist’s life in some way. As discussed in the literary terms review (under Lecture Notes), the significant part of the character arc is how the protagonist changes from the beginning of the story to the end. These changes can be dramatic or subtle and can range from changes within himself/herself and/or how the character views the world or others.  **For this essay, you will choose a main character from one of the stories discussed in the discussion boards and examine how this process works**:  Your paper will analyze the way this particular character functions in the story by tracing his/her character arc.  What do we initially know about the character, and how do plot events change him/her and bring about an epiphany for the character ultimately resulting in change by the story’s end.

 The paper will have the following elements:

* **Title for Essay**: Your title will indicate the main focus of your essay
* **Introduction**: The introductory paragraph will engage readers, be relevant to selected story and will lead to thesis statement.  (Be sure to identify the story and its author somewhere in this paragraph.) Short story titles are placed in quotation marks.
* **Thesis statement**: You will state a thesis in the last sentence of the introduction, a one to three sentence statement that sums up the main focus of your paper **and be indicative of the objective of characterization.** This thesis will make a claim about the character and his or her role in the story. For example: Because of William’s abusive and violent past, as an adult, he refuses to trust anyone he meets and ultimately lives a lonely, bitter life. So, here, this thesis is indicating an analysis of William’s former life and what happened to him and how it changed him as an adult. For your thesis, do not use first person or what is known as the announcement tone—i.e. “In this paper, I will…”
* **Supporting body paragraphs**: Each paragraph of the paper will begin with a clear topic sentence that makes a point about the character (i.e how the character is initially presented, behavior and actions of the character as a result of plot that lead to subsequent conflict etc.) that supports your argument.  Each sentence in the paragraph will support that claim with your analysis and textual evidence from the story. In other words, readers will be presented with an initial portrait of the character but then the protagonist’s character arc will be traced. Plot events will be discussed and analyzed in terms of how they are affecting the character and how it leads to an ultimate change. **The body of your essay should NOT just be a summary of the story.** Yes, you will mention significant plot events, but then go beyond identification to *analyze* how these plot events are affecting the protagonist (whether it be mentally, emotionally, physically or a combination thereof).
* **Conclusion**: Your concluding paragraph will begin by re-examining/reiterating the thesis and then reflecting on how the character has changed by the end of the story. You should include how this epiphany emphasizes the theme/message of the story and if said theme/message is universal in nature.
* **Citations from story**: Please cite page numbers from the story only when quoting directly.  (Note: Try not to “over-quote.” Select direct quotations that best support your thesis and avoid extended quotes (more than four typed lines). Consider working quoted words and phrases neatly into your own sentences i.e. Finally, Mrs. Mallard says her first words “over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!”(416). **Another way to integrate a quote is to introduce it with a full signal sentence, followed by a colon, then the extracted quote**—i.e. Finally, Mrs. Mallard abandons her fear and embraces her epiphany: “But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome” (416). Please follow the conventional MLA placement of period outside of the parenthetical citation.
* **There is no research required for this story**. Please avoid going online to unreliable websites such as Sparknotes, Bookrags, Schmoop, and Wikipedia. These sites are not deemed as scholastic sources. Your essay should be your own critical insights. If there is any evidence of plagiarism within the essay, the essay will receive a failing grade. Refer to plagiarism policy in our Syllabus. Because you will be using only one source (the selected story within your textbook), you do not need a Works Cited page.

**The rubric that will be used to assess this assignment is below**:

**RUBRIC: Analytical Essay on Fiction: Characterization & Character Arc ENGL 1020**

\***Please see the rubric section that corresponds to your assessment**. The rubric assessment/percentage that a student is given is the one *which best fits/describes the quality of the submission.*

In general, a solid “A” paper will receive a 95 (anything above a 95 is generally considered superior), an A- paper will receive a 93 and a borderline A/B essay that leans more toward the “A” scale will receive a 90. A solid “B” will receive a 85, a B- paper will receive a 83 and a borderline essay B/C that leans more toward the “B scale will receive an 80 and so on. **Percentages may be higher or lower depending on quality of content/mechanics and will be clarified through professor’s brief notes:**

**Student’s Assessment:**

**Instructor’s brief notes**:

|  |
| --- |
| 90-100% |
| **Intro and Thesis:** Introduction presents a clear, appropriate lead-in to thesis and holds appeal for a wide audience; work to be discussed and author’s name is presented. Thesis is well crafted and clearly indicates, explicitly or implicitly, the analytical direction of the characterization. Announcement tone and use of first person is avoided in thesis.  **Organization**: overall, strong organization with effective topic sentences and transitions; contains clear introduction, body paragraphs, and satisfying conclusion. **Content**: a thoughtful, in-depth essay which addresses and supports thesis and is developed through skillful and varied diction; paraphrases and direct quotes from text are skillfully woven into the work.  **Diction and tone**: employs precise choices of vocabulary; tone demonstrates a high degree of audience awareness. **Mechanics**: sophisticated sentence structure, demonstrating a command of subordination and parallelism; contains very few (or no) errors, showing a mastery of the conventions of written English. Adheres to formatting: double-spaced indented paragraphs; page length is adhered to; direct quotes are documented by parenthetical indication of page number. |
| 80-89% |
| **Intro and Thesis:** Overall, introduction is clear, but may need to be more engaging for a wide audience. Thesis is effective (but may need slight revision in some instances).  Author and work to be discussed is presented.  **Organization**: Overall, clear organization but slight revision may be needed with effective topic sentences and transitions as well as with creating in-depth intro and conclusion.  **Content**: a good response which addresses the analytical strategy of characterization and is developed through effective diction and integrated direct quotes, although some content areas may need more development.  **Diction and tone**: employs a good vocabulary which may be less precise than a superior paper but are still appropriate; tone demonstrates audience awareness. **Mechanics**: while sentence structure may be less sophisticated than a superior paper, it is still effective; may contain a few agreement, sentence structure, punctuation, or capitalization errors which may distract slightly from content. Adheres to formatting: double-spaced indented paragraphs; page length is adhered to; direct quotes are properly documented by parenthetical indication of page number. |
| 70-79% |
| **Intro and Thesis:** Intro may not be suitable for a wide audience and may lack interest/appeal; thesis needs revision to more clearly indicate analytical direction of essay. The author and work to be discussed may be lacking.  **Organization**: essay follows basic principles of organization, but topic sentences may be inconsistent, and transitions may be weak; some paragraphs may lack unity and need more development.  **Content**: a satisfactory response which attempts to address the analytical strategy of characterization; the diction and textual support (direct quotes) is apparent, though the inclusion of some quotes may be awkward, may lack relevance or may be repetitive. Some points in body of essay may lack development and support. **Diction and tone**: employs generalized vocabulary which may be less precise than a strong paper; audience awareness may be weak. **Mechanics**: sentence structure is adequate, but may be noticeably simpler than in the categories above; contains errors in agreement, sentence structure, punctuation, or capitalization which distracts from content. Adherence to essay formatting and page length requirement may be inconsistent. Documentation of direct quotes may be either inconsistent or lacking. |
| 60-69% |
| **Intro and Thesis:** Intro is not suitable for analytical strategy and appeal for audience is lacking; thesis is unclear and needs significant improvement. Author and work to be discussed are lacking.  **Organization**: essay may have significant problems with organization, topic sentences, and transitions; coherence may be weak **Content**: the response makes a weak attempt to address the analytical strategy of characterization and some parts may not correspond; use of varied diction and support (direct quotes) may be lacking or underdeveloped. **Diction and tone**: vocabulary is too general and vague; may have some usage errors; may lack audience awareness. **Mechanics**: sentence structure is often awkward; may lack subordination and parallelism; contains enough errors in agreement, sentence structure, punctuation, or capitalization to be distracting. Essay may not adhere to proper formatting and page length may not be met. Documentation of direct quotes is lacking or inconsistent. |
| 0-59% |
| **Intro and Thesis:** Intro is either too brief and/or is not relevant to essay and thesis is poorly presented or lacking. Author and work to be discussed are lacking.  **Organization**: essay is disorganized; lacks or has ineffective topic sentences and transitions. **Content**: fails to address the analytical strategy ; lacks varied diction and integrated support (direct quotes) ; is too brief and underdeveloped. **Diction and tone**: vocabulary is very basic; may use words inappropriately; lacks audience awareness. **Mechanics**: sentence structures are overly simple or have confusing structure with excessive coordination; contains distracting errors in agreement, sentence structure, punctuation, or capitalization; meaning may be difficult to determine. Essay’s formatting is inconsistent or lacking; page length not met; documentation of direct quotes is lacking. |