**Essay #1**

**Analyzing a Novel**

4-5 pages

**Quick Summary:**

For this essay you will:

1. Find one message Yamashita is trying to present in her novel that is connected to one of the topics below.

2. Use a clear, specific thesis statement to let your readers know what you think Yamashita’s message is. Then, use clear, specific topic sentences to present places in the novel that support your argument.

4. Use direct quotes/evidence from the novel in each body paragraph to support your arguments.

**How Do I Begin?**

You will begin by reading the novel and answering the reading questions provided on our Canvas site. For this essay, you will be analyzing Karen Tei Yamashita’s novel, *Tropic of Orange*. Literature is important, not only because the stories we read tell us things about ourselves, but also because the stories we read tell us something about others. Even though this novel uses magical realism, you should be able to find both things you relate to and experiences different from your own. This essay asks you to analyze one element of the novel in order to try and explain one of the points the novel is trying to make. Every novel has more than one message. You are going to choose one of the messages you found in the novel and then explain what you think that message is and how Yamashita presents it.

**Who Am I Writing to?**

Your audience for this assignment will be myself and your fellow students. Keep in mind that even though everyone in class has read the novel, you’ll still need to support your ideas with specific quotes and specific paraphrasing of elements of the novel. Make sure that you give your reader enough information about the plot of the novel so that we can follow along. You should also keep in mind that some readers won’t have the same opinion as you. It will be up to you to present a convincing argument in support of your evaluation.

**What Does It Look Like?**

Your essay is going to analyze one aspect of the novel and then support your analysis with specific examples from the book. After introducing the novel and the message from the novel you have chosen to analyze, your intro will end with a clear thesis that clearly and specifically outlines what you believe the novel is trying to say in the message you’ve identified.

For the rest of your essay, you will provide evidence from the novel to support your analysis. For example, if you’re arguing that *Tropic of Orange* uses the characters of Buzzworm and Manzanar to challenge the reader to care more about the homeless in Los Angeles, you will have to find places in the novel that support your thesis. You will have to find specific parts of the novel—specific chapters, lines of dialogue, or descriptions—that show that the novel wants the reader to care more about the homeless. One way to think of this essay is to imagine every body paragraph as one example from the novel that backs up your thesis. In each body paragraph, you’ll use a topic sentence to let the reader know how this example supports your thesis, then you’ll present evidence from the text, and finally you’ll analyze that evidence to show, specifically, how it supports your topic sentence.

Ex:

**Topic Sentence**: Buzzworm’s live talk show from the freeway overpass allows the reader to see homeless people as real human beings with real lives.

**Evidence**: Use quotes from that particular section of the novel to support your topic sentence.

**Analysis**: Show the reader how those quotes or that paraphrasing specifically supports your topic sentence: This quote shows that homeless people are perfectly capable of taking care of their own lives if they just have a little help. The woman in the quote was able to create a garden from almost nothing. This character—and all of the characters on the freeway overpass—help to humanize the homeless so that readers will think differently when they come across homeless people in their own lives.

Remember, you’re going to need to analyze each piece of evidence you use from the novel. DO NOT LET SUMMARY RUN YOUR PAPER! You should also choose a few key scenes to look at in more detail to support your position.

**Possible Topics**

You must use one of the following topics for your essay. If you want to use a topic of your own, you must let me know during office hours or via email by Monday, April 23rd.

**Mexican-American Relations**: A big part of this novel is an examination of the complicated relationship Mexico has with America. What does the novel try to say about the relationship between Mexico and America? Which characters represent this relationship? How does Mexico affect America? How does America affect Mexico? Is this relationship one-sided?

**Immigration**: What does Bobby’s story have to say about immigration in America? Are the ways he and his brother entered the country defended or attacked in the novel? What does Bobby’s cousin’s experience have to do with his own? How does Bobby’s experience with immigration affect him? What is the novel trying to say about immigrants?

**Magical Realism**: We will learn that magical realism is often used to heighten the emotional impact of certain scenes from a novel or story. Magical realism is also used to present situations that could never truly happen in real life. How does Yamashita use magical realism in the novel? Why are Rafaella and Arcangel chosen to represent magical realism. What does Arcangel’s past have to do with the novel?

**Homelessness in Los Angeles**: What is the novel trying to say about the homeless epidemic in L.A.? How do Buzzworm and Manzanar help the reader learn something about homelessness or about the homeless themselves. What do the events on the freeway overpass say about the city’s reaction to the homeless problem?

**The Media**: What is the novel trying to say about the media? How is Emi’s reporting different from Gabriel’s? What does the media coverage of the events on the freeway or of the “disaster of the week” say about our connection to the media? What does Buzzworm’s choice of listening material say about understanding life in Los Angeles?

**Additional Requirements**

Even though you don’t need any additional research for this essay, you can use additional research if you think it will make your arguments stronger. WARNING: YOU MUST READ THE ENTIRE NOVEL! If at any point in your essay I can tell that you haven’t read the entire novel (all of your quotes come from the first few pages, your analysis contradicts what comes later in the novel, you make things up) you will fail this assignment.

**How Will This Assignment Be Evaluated?**

I will also be using the evaluation categories found in the Peer Review sheet we will use during our draft workshop to evaluate your essay. The Rough Draft of Essay #1 is due Thursday, April 26th. **Your Final Draft of Essay #1 is due Monday, April 30th.** You must turn in your essay via Canvas no later than 9:35am on Monday. Then, you must bring a paper copy of your final draft along with your homework, rough draft, and peer review sheet to class with you.