

Essay Topics

This is an essay assignment. Please write your essay on **ONE** of the following topics. The essay should be **between 1300-1500 words long**, typed, double-spaced, page-numbered and stapled, with your name on top left corner of the first page.

Topic 1:

In postmodern literature (since the 1960s) explicitly borrowing ideas from other literary works is considered inspiration (as opposed to lifting) and is generally praised as a valuable practice as long as the borrowing writer add his own original touch and puts in his own twist to the borrowed material. WE can analyze Sherman Alexie's novel *Flight* as an example of such literary borrowing (indebtedness). In what ways Alexie might be indebted to the other two works we have read (*Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Fight Club*)? In what ways does Alexie add his own personal touch to the borrowed material? From this perspective, should we consider *Flight* a Great American book—why or why not?

Topic 2:

Postmodern fiction is not necessarily realistic. Lots of examples of postmodern fiction since 1960s have surreal elements or elements of science-fiction integrated into a real-world setting and real-life characters. In general, these elements are used by the writers to estrange the reader so that the reader can look at the real-life issues being presented with a fresh outlook. How is this strategy used by the writers in the last three books we have read (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Fight Club* and *Flight*)? And what social/cultural issues or problems do these writers want to draw the reader's attention to through the use of such elements?

Topic 3:

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee gives us an example of a father who is a good role model for his children. However, in postmodern fiction, mostly weak or absent fathers are used to symbolize generational problems. The male narrators in the books we have read then turn to other male figures (real or imaginary) to fill in the gap of the father as a role model to follow. For example, Chief Bromden in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the nameless narrator in *Fight Club* and Zits in *Flight* all become disciples of other, stronger male characters in order to face and deal with their own problems. In what ways is the metaphor of fatherlessness is associated with powerlessness in these novels and how do the male characters that replace the father figure in these novels help the narrators deal with their problems?

Format:

* Since this is an essay assignment, you need to have a proper essay format with a title, an introduction that includes a proper thesis statement, a clearly organized development section and a conclusion.

* You should also use textual references (quotations) **to support, clarify and/or exemplify your arguments**. If your quotations are doing none of these, it means you are quoting unnecessarily.

No '**Bibliography**' page is necessary if you are just quoting from the two books.

*You need to follow the '**5 Rules**' handout in your paper.

Due Date:

You need to turn your paper in on **Wednesday, April 30**. Since we will not have class next week, you should email your paper to me by 5:00pm on Wednesday. However, I will also have office hours on Wednesday between 2:30-3:30pm in case you want to hand in your paper in person.

Reminder:

This is not a research paper. I want to read your personal take on the topics, supported by evidence from the books. So, I don't want you to consult secondary sources. However, if you do consult any, you need to cite them properly. **Plagiarism in the paper will result in failing the class.**

*If you need extra help, you can take your paper to the Writing Lab.