

Essay Topics

This is a take-home essay exam. Please write an essay on **ONE** of the following topics. The essay should be 1000 words long (+/- 50 words is allowed), typed, double-spaced, page-numbered and stapled, with your name on top left corner of the first page.

Topic 1:

Both *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* criticize the late 19th and early 20th century institution of marriage and the perceived role of women in marriage. In what ways do Kate Chopin and Zora Neale Hurston carry out their criticism? Do they offer an alternative to the conventional form of marriage? What are the similarities and differences between the two novels' treatment of the subject of marriage? Discuss with specific references (quotations) to both novels.

Topic 2:

Both *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* can be viewed as the story of a woman's awakening to selfhood; that is, as Chopin says in Chapter 6, each woman begins "to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her" (13). However, as Chopin implies in Chapter 6, not every woman is able to emerge victorious from this process of self-discovery. What are the similarities and differences between the two heroines' journey of self-discovery? Discuss with specific references (quotations) to both novels.

Topic 3:

Although *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* are similar in that they both criticize marriage, the stories are very different because the main female characters are different from each other: one is white, the other one is black; one is upper-class, the other one is working class; one lives in a big Southern city; one has children, the other one does not, one is better educated than the other one, etc. Although Edna and Janie are both women, their differences in race and class partially determine what they can do and what they cannot do. How are the stories of Edna and Janie partially determined by their specific cultural context? Discuss with specific references (quotations) to both novels. (**hint:** the specific cultural context works in both positive and negative ways; that is, it might sometimes prevent one from doing certain things that the other one is able to).

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 **Monday, February 25.** Ideally, you need to submit your paper in class. However, if you cannot come to class for any reason, you can e-mail me a copy of your paper in the form of an MS-Word attachment **by class time on Monday.**

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 on Monday morning.