

## THE IN CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENT

*The In Class essays are to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the readings. You will have 55 minutes to produce a short, well thought out essay. You have been assigned two topics on the syllabus, and on the day of the writing I will pick one for you to write on. Suggestion: PREPARE FOR BOTH by READING the books with your TOPICS in mind. Highlight and underline key passages relevant to each topic. The week before the writing assignment, do an outline for each of your two topics. Begin with a clear and brief Thesis, the key to a good, college level essay.*

### **THE THESIS:**

The Topics are extremely Broad. You need to narrow them down, refine them and define the aspect of the Topic about which you intend to write. Then you will have the basis for a good thesis. For example, suppose you have been assigned the Topic "Males."

"Males in the Yellow and All Night Party are usually depicted as happy people. On this subject, the books are generally similar."

What about the topic "Right and Wrong"?

"In the book Yellow, right and wrong generally have to do with relationships with animals, while in All Night Party right and wrong have to do with the drug laws and breaking them. On this subject, the books differ greatly."

(By the way these example theses are not accurate.)

A good thesis has two parts: a Narrow Focus and whether the books handle that aspect of the topic in a similar or dissimilar fashion. Without a CLEAR and BRIEF thesis, an essay will generally be better put in the toilet than in a blue book. With a good, clear, and brief thesis, an essay will generally have a much better chance at success.

### **A good essay proves with specific evidence a clear thesis.**

*During the in class essay, you may use your book(s), but no notes please. You must use the reading assignment(s) thoroughly and specifically. The more of the reading you use, the better. QUOTES are your best evidence, and each body paragraph should have at least three or four. Of course, college level essay structure, grammar and spelling are expected.*

*Suppose your two topics are "Eating" and "Parents". On the day of the in class essay, you come to class and I pass back to you your Blue Books. On the cover, where you have written your two topics, "Eating" and "Parents", you see "Eating" has been circled. That is the topic you will do.*

### **SAMPLE**

In the short stories, "Monmouth" and "Diary of Sandra Ledmen," and in the novel Hungry Prospects, **eating** is usually depicted as activity done by the entire family. The books are generally similar on this subject.

In the "Diary of Sandra Ledmen" there are four meals. The first meal occurs at Sandra's birthday. At this feast, "well over 20 members of the Ledmen clan showed up" (4). The second meal happens when Sandra's Grandpa, Robin Locksley Ledmen, turns eighty. "This was no ordinary feed, but one which involved five Ledmen generations from 13 states and two foreign countries" (11)....

In a similar fashion, the short story "Monmouth" tells how the Wallright family in Revolutionary War manages to have three meals that bring the family together. "On the eve of the war, the minister of Lancaster, Byron Wallright, held a great feast celebrating the harvest. His parents and his grandchildren attended" (19). The Minister's wife "died from the flu" (20) on the eve of the battle of Lexington....

Like the short stories, the novel Hungry Prospects, celebrates family meals. In the first third of the novel, the main character Kellen McDougale and his family eat six meals together. After they cross the Missouri river, the family stops beneath the only tree "for miles around" (4) and sits down to a "substantial feast with pies, cornbread, pork chops, oatmeal cookies, coffee, and walnuts" (5)....

In the next third of the book, after the McDougale family has settled in Bull Snout, Wyoming, there are four significant meals and all of them are family affairs...

As you can see, eating was portrayed in a similar fashion as a family affair in the short stories and in the novel.

#### SUGGESTIONS:

1. Always clearly identify the Characters, using their name and their key roles, "Ted Binson, Julie's uncle," "Mrs. Warter, the main character and mother of the Johnson Twins"
2. Make a simple yet clear thesis statement, no more than two sentences long. Remember to use a qualifying word like "usually", "often," generally", "much of the time," etc.
3. A Thesis which shows Similarity: "In Turtle and the stories in Yellow, anger among men is similar. Usually, it is caused by lack of money."
4. A Contrast Thesis: "In the stories from Yellow, friends are generally people who work together at a job or a business. However, in the chapters from All, friends don't work together, which is why these books are different in this topic."
5. Avoid vague unsubstantiated assertions: "Women hate sports" or "Men like beer"
6. Use specifics always: "Mrs. Warder hated football" "Ted Binson could drink two gallons of beer."
7. Use plenty of **direct quotes**; they are your best evidence.
8. Put page numbers at the end of your quotes. He said, "Give page numbers at the end of the quote" (11).
9. If you haven't read the stories/chapters/novel thoroughly, and if you haven't prepared well for your two possible topics, your short essay will most likely be an embarrassing disaster.

#### WRITING ASSIGNMENT # 3:

1. This writing assignment requires you to use **three** of the course books. You are to use **assigned stories** and chapters only.
2. You have the **same** two topics as you had in your previous WA.
3. A Contrast Thesis: "Generally, the three books are very different on the topic of Male anger, and each book shows very different causes of male anger."
4. Similarity Thesis: "In most respects the three books are similar on the topic of work, especially in how each book depicts the struggle for justice at work."
5. STRUCTURE: These are just examples; you can organize and emphasize the books according to your own interest. You must use all three books, however. (P=paragraph)

P1: Thesis	P1: Thesis
P2: Book 1: Chapter 4 (Fool)	P2: Book 1: Ch 2 (All)
P3: Book 1: Chapter 9 (Fool)	P3: Book 2: Chapter 5 (Fool)
P4: Book 2: Story A (Growing)	P4: Book 3: First Third (Growing)
P5: Book 3: Middle Third (All)	P5: Book 3: Last Third (Growing)
P6: Conclusion	P6: Conclusion
6. Always identify people/characters. Give specific context.
7. Quotes are always the best evidence. Use quotes copiously.