

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND EQUIVALENCIES: ENGLISH 3133

I. Critical analysis

Discuss an aspect of the novel, such as theme, characterization, structure, imagery, narrative techniques, or prose style. Possible topics for the novels follow:

- *General topics*. The role or treatment of women, the relationship of men and women, the significance of the title, freedom of choice, violence and/or the abuse of power, the role of the family or the relationship of parents and children, the portrayal of the orphan, the effectiveness of the epistolary novel (e.g., its presentation of action and characterization), snobbery and class consciousness, portrayal of society or an institution, such as the justice system in *Joseph Andrews*.
- *Robinson Crusoe*. The novel's universal appeal, Crusoe: representative of the aloneness/ or powerlessness of human beings. Crusoe: representative of human indomitability and resourcefulness, Crusoe an Everyman?, Crusoe: the emotionally repressed man, Crusoe's conversion: true religion or self interest?, Crusoe as economic man, Defoe's use of the journal structure, significance of the imagery of being consumed, Crusoe: self-isolating or castaway?, *Robinson Crusoe*: a spiritual autobiography?
- *Joseph Andrews*. The role of religion, love, chastity and/or lust, true charity, the country versus the city, the role of the narrator, Adams: moral exemplar?, static or developing characters?
- *Clarissa*. The need for power and control, the effect of society's customs, rules, public opinion, and gossip on Clarissa, Lovelace's code of behavior, Lovelace's ability to love, Clarissa asexual?, Clarissa's virtue: founded in pride or in principle?, the power struggle between Clarissa and Lovelace or between Clarissa and her family, the friendship of Belford and Lovelace or Clarissa and Anna Howe, the development or lack of development of Clarissa or Lovelace, the relationship of Mr. Hickman and Anna Howe, parental authority.
- *Tristram Shandy*. Time, cause and effect, modern quality or qualities, Tristram as character and narrator, an organized or disorganized novel, expression of love, effect of the digressions and other devices.
- *Evelina*. A novel of anxiety?, portrayal of the upper classes and/or the middle class, Evelina's social initiation, the necessity of and the dangers of innocence, Lord Orville as romantic hero, courtship.
- *A Sicilian Romance*. The patriarchal family vs. the matriarchal family, the corruption of the aristocracy, delicacy: virtue and threat, the role of nature, anti-Catholicism, Julia: developing character?

Or you may analyze a key scene in the novel to explore a major theme or the nature of one or more characters, for instance, Crusoe's discovery of the footprint, Lovelace's duel, or Evelina's first ball.

Minimum length: 1200 words.

II. Personal response

Choose a character, a statement, a theme, an occurrence, an image, or a scene in a novel and write a personal essay developing your response to it. Your response may include a point by point comparison and/or contrast, or you may refer to the novel briefly (e.g., use the reference to the novel as a jumping off point) and then devote the rest of your essay to your own response. For instance, Crusoe's conversion may move you to write about your conversion, whether toward God or away. Crusoe on the island may lead to a discussion of your feelings of isolation or the values for you of being alone.

Minimum length: 1200 words

III. Social or general analysis

Choose a character, a statement, a theme, an occurrence, an image, or a scene in a novel which leads you

into an analysis of some aspect of society today. For instance, the character of Crusoe could lead to a criticism of corporate culture or the relationship of Crusoe and Friday could be the basis of a discussion of race relations in the US. The abuse of power in *Joseph Andrews* could be applied to a corporation or financial institution, like banks foreclosing with faulty paperwork or foreclosing on homes of soldiers of Iraq or Afghanistan. Or *Clarissa* might remind you of sexual abuse or date rape today.

Minimum length: 1200 pages

IV. Putting an author and/or a character on trial

You could try an author or a character for one or more crimes against modern readers, against humanity, against characters in the novel, against the law, or against morality. You may write a brief or motion for a trial. Or you may hold a trial with judge, prosecuting attorney; critics and secondary characters may be "expert witnesses" for both sides; the defendants may have a chance to reply. Keep the audience or jury, in mind. You may ask questions and provide specific summaries or quotations as evidence. Or you may report a trial for a newspaper. Examples: Friday could sue Crusoe for coercion and kidnapping and slavery; the Harlowes could sue Lovelace for the alienation of their daughter's affections; Evelina could sue Sir Clement Willoughby for attempted rape; the reader could sue Sterne or Richardson for being boring.

Length: This paper will be longer than the 5-page minimum of choices I, II, and III.

V. A short story

Write your own short story; it does not have to have any connection with any novel read in this course. Or you may experiment; try presenting the point of view of a minor character from one of the novels, e.g., Friday, the Portuguese captain, Xury, Crusoe's mother or wife. A short story must be fully developed; it is not merely a three-page statement of the action of conversation. Characters must be individualized, physically, emotionally, morally, spiritually, etc.; they must have some sort of relationship to others, their environment, and/or their society (note: one kind of relationship is the inability to form attachments). They must be placed in a physical world. The story must also have a point to be made and/or an effect to be achieved. Therefore a short story will be considerably longer than assignments I, II, and III.

Length: How long does the short story have to be? As long as it needs to be to achieve its purpose(s). Successful student short stories have ranged from ten pages to nearly fifty. (I do not mean to encourage length by sticking in unnecessary words. Wordiness and redundancy are serious flaws in any writing.)

Samples of assignments I through IV can be found on my Website:

[Http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_18c/essays.htm](http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_18c/essays.htm)