

Essay 2: Comparison and/or Contrast of Two Novels

This essay gives you the opportunity to draw connections between two of the assigned novels for this course. Your argument should involve a comparison and/or a contrast of the two texts through close reading, and it needs to incorporate two pieces of literary criticism that take the form of a scholarly journal article or book.* Your paper should include a brief paraphrasing of each critic's argument and an indication of how your interpretation of the novel either agrees with or refutes the critic's argument.

You may base your essay on one of the following prompts or develop your own topic.

1. Early in the quarter, we discussed the eighteenth-century fear that novel reading was particularly dangerous for women because it would heighten their sensibilities and, accordingly, their sexual desires. Select two novels that we've read and make an argument about how they construct female characters or female readers. Some questions you might consider: do they suggest a connection between reading/the novel and women's sexuality? Do they endorse or critique women's rights?
2. Colonialism is a central theme in many of the novels we've read. Make an argument about how two of the novels deal with this theme. Some questions you might consider: do they seem to condone or critique colonialism? How are their structures related to colonialism or postcolonialism? What do they suggest about the relationship between the novel (the particular one you're examining) and "the novel" (as a genre)?
3. Many of the novels have dealt directly or indirectly with the question of how to represent someone who is often silenced. Compare and/or contrast two of the novel's representations of the "unspeakable" or the "unspeaking."

Or, for something completely different, choose the two assigned novels that you believe best represent the genre. The two don't have to be a previously designated pair (e.g. *Robinson Crusoe* and *Foe*). Make an argument about why the two you select embody your conception of "the novel." This will require you to give a working definition of the novel.

This paper should be 5-7 typed, double-spaced, stapled pages. Remember the following:

- Use a regular-sized font and double spacing.
- Include a title.
- Number and staple pages.
- Use quotation marks around poetry, short story, and essay titles, and underline or italicize the names of books and plays.
- Use the correct MLA citation format when incorporating quotations (see me, the handout I gave you early in the quarter, or your writing manual if you have questions).

Essay 2 is due to my office by 5 p.m. on Friday, May 23. There will not be a later opportunity to revise this essay.

*If you're interesting in incorporating scholarship from another discipline, please see me before starting the paper.