

WRITING PROMPT OPTIONS (choose only one):

1. In the three plays we read, *Oedipus the King*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *The Glass Menagerie*, women do not figure as tragic characters or even prominent characters. But they do play important roles as nurturers toward their husbands and children. Focusing on the mother-types from the above plays, discuss the ways they either successfully or unsuccessfully nurture their families.
2. All of the plays we read deal with the theme of family dynamics. In modern psychological terms we would describe all of these families as "dysfunctional," meaning they have trouble interacting in a stable family relationship. In a well-written essay analyze the ways in which the families in *Oedipus the King*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *The Glass Menagerie* exhibit dysfunctional tendencies which cause the demise of their family stability.
3. In Tennessee Williams' play, *The Glass Menagerie*, the theme of escape helps to unify the work and hold together the dramatic action. Analyze how forms of escape function for Amanda, Tom, and Laura as you demonstrate how this theme unifies Williams' play.
4. *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller's Pulitzer Prize winning play about the demise of Willy Loman, directs the reader/audience to examine the notion of The American Dream and the values that surround the pursuit of it. In a carefully developed essay demonstrate how Miller's drama is a critique of The American Dream and how the literary work exposes "The Dream" as a myth, a dream unattainable in Miller's view.

This paper will be critical and analytical in nature. By critical, I mean that you must not just write a paper based on your emotional reaction to the work you are studying. You must deal with some specific aspect of the work. By critical, I also mean that you will need to incorporate an outside source of **literary criticism** into your paper to support your viewpoint. However, you do not merely want to echo the ideas in some scholarly essay you find.

Like any other paper you write in college, a paper for a literature course must assert an arguable thesis that is supported and developed by additional specific ideas and details. Be sure to quote relevant passages from the play.

REQUIREMENTS

Purpose: To interpret and explicate a play through a "close reading" and by synthesizing outside literary criticism.

Page Length: Your essay should be 5-7 typed double-spaced pages. *You are required to use the MLA Essay Template.*

Writing Mode: expository/interpretive

Audience: You are writing to peers, college-educated folks. Assume your readers have read the work you are analyzing but are not the level of expert you are on the text. *Your readers do not need detailed plot summaries.* Plot summaries = a failing grade.

Literary Research and Documentation: The text you are studying is called the *primary source*. Cite from it and include it in your Works Cited page. You also must use at least one outside literary reference (called a *secondary source*) of academic quality, but not more than three. **The source must be of a substantial length: not less than 4 pages.** Include a list of Works Cited. Use the MLA style of in-text parenthetical citations to credit your sources for direct quotations, summaries, and paraphrases. Refer to your class notes when we covered how to find academic sources. **A full copy of your source(s) must be submitted with your final draft.**

SAE: Remember, your paper must follow the basic conventions of Standard American written English (correct mechanics, usage, grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and so forth). *Be sure to use the literary present tense whenever you discuss the fictional events in the story.*

FINAL REMINDERS

- Make sure you mention the author and title of your primary text in the introduction and put quotation marks around the title of the short story (By contrast, *italicize* titles of plays and books). As you discuss the story within your essay, remember not to confuse the narrator as the author; they are two entirely different individuals. Again, **DO NOT write plot summaries or story reviews;** these will result in a failing grade.
- This essay must be written in the third person, so you **may not** use "you" or "I" at all in this assignment.
- Be sure to use the literary present tense (LPT) whenever you discuss what authors of outside sources say and when referring to events in the text you are analyzing.
- In the text of your essay, you should cite specific passages from the literary work you are discussing, but use these passages sparingly. Be judicious about quoting long passages. Paraphrasing is more common. Quote only when a paraphrase doesn't do justice to the idea you are presenting.
- Make sure you introduce the author and title of any outside sources in the correct manner when you employ citations (direct quotations, paraphrases, summarizations).

Below is a list of Do's and Don'ts about composing your paper.

1. Avoid irrelevant personal references: I think; I have always loved; to me; in my view; etc.
2. If you read the author's personal life into his works, be sure to support your idea with concrete biographical evidence.
3. Avoid ritual praise of the author, or great books, or reading, etc.
4. Avoid general pronouncements about the value of an author or a work; the most significant writer of fiction; one of the finest ever written.
5. Avoid announcing that you do not have enough space to cover the whole topic adequately or suggesting that the reader investigate for himself. Also avoid announcing that you are in the midst of writing an essay.
6. Relate what you have discovered in a work to the *entire* work, but make your introductions and conclusions brief.
7. You may present material in the same order in which the author presents it, but your paper *must not be a mere paraphrase or summary*. You must justify such organization by showing development of thought, tone, character, plot, etc. *Plot summaries will receive a failing grade when no critical analysis is present.*
8. Do not be afraid to quote and analyze in detail.
9. You may discuss the characters in the works; how they contrast with one another (in the same text), how the writer presents them (by author's analysis, objective dialogue and action, point of view, etc.), what ideas they stand for, their relationships with one another.
10. Construct an interesting title that reflects the thesis and subject of your essay. Follow the guidelines in the Manuscript Conventions handout. Titles that include a subtitle are often most interesting for readers.
11. How to refer to authors by name: James Joyce, or Joyce, but NOT Mr. Joyce, James, or Jim. Flannery O'Connor, but NOT Miss O'Connor, or Flannery.
12. Do not let this sheet of instructions inhibit you from developing any idea.
13. Type your paper and follow MLA conventions contained in the required MLA essay template: double space throughout and use one-inch margins on all four sides.
14. Do not make page references in your prose. For example, "on page 10 the hero walks into the woods: or "On page 75 it says...." Instead, state ideas and quotations directly, using MLA in-text parenthetical citations to credit your sources. Consult your handbook if you need a refresher course on this.
15. Do not use a folder or a cover sheet. On the first page, include your name, the course number, the instructor, and the date in the upper left corner. Fasten the pages with one staple or paper clip.