

Your second paper assignment is to write an essay (about 1500 words) discussing in some way the form and content of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*. Three topics are outlined below, but remember that these are only *suggested* topics: you are encouraged to work on a topic of your own devising, providing (1) it covers both form and content, and (2) you clear it with me beforehand. Even as suggested topics, the following are probably too general to be covered fully in a short essay. Therefore, focus on a limited aspect of your topic, and devise a specific thesis for your essay which explains why that aspect of it is significant. To support your readings and to make your analysis clear, you will need to quote short passages from the text, integrated into your own prose, that relate to the central points or themes of your essay; please cite the page number for each quotation or group of quotations parenthetically at the end of the phrase or sentence, and avoid using long, indented quotations. Using shorter quotations makes it easier to establish what your reading of each is, through discussion and analysis, as well as to employ that reading in supporting the thesis of your essay. Revise for content and to strengthen your thesis and transitions; proofread thoroughly, even if you use a spell-checker first; and follow MLA style, including a Works Cited list at the end, even if that list consists only of the two works themselves, in the editions used in class.

1. Free Women. Early in the novel, Anna makes the claim that living as "free women" means that they are living "like men." Partly, this is due to the perception that men were freer in their choices than women in Britain in 1962; but it is also due in part to the rejection by Anna and Molly, not only of traditional roles of women, but of a whole range of responsibility and obligation. Looking at both form and content, discuss the possibilities, and the costs, of being "free women" in the novel.

2. The Politics of Gender. Lessing's *Golden Notebook* is about politics because, in the intellectual world she is describing, *everything* is about politics, just as everything is about gender. But Lessing is also wise enough to realize that leftist politics do not automatically mean enlightened attitudes about gender. Discuss examples from the novel of male characters with socialist allegiances who nevertheless hold unenlightened views on the role of women, and how such characters fare, both in their relations with women like Anna and Molly, and in Lessing's novel generally.

3. Gender and Identity. Anna's personality conflicts are, arguably, the real story of this novel: they find expression in the various colored notebooks, and their resolution, to some extent, allows for the writing of the Golden Notebook. Late in the novel, Anna describes her conscious self as "the disinterested personality who had saved me from disintegration." By looking at specific elements of the novel, both form and content, decide whether the often unintegrated elements of Anna's personality is more a *modern* phenomenon or more a *gender* phenomenon.

Remember that an essay should have a specific point—a thesis. Though it need not be stated in so many words within the essay, you should keep that thesis in mind as you are outlining, and then writing your essay. Be sure that each of your paragraphs somehow supports that thesis, and that there are clear and logical transitions between one paragraph and the next.

Essay due: Tuesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, as an email attachment (please use 174Yourname.doc as the name of your file). I will print out those essays submitted via email once I return to San Jose, and grade them there. Graded essays will be available for pickup by arrangement.

Any essays printed out and submitted by Tuesday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, will be graded and returned by May 6<sup>th</sup> in Bath. Please do *not* print out essays you will be submitting anytime after April 27<sup>th</sup>.