

## Essay Assignment

Hum 1B, Spring 2009, Mesher

Due Dates: Part One, 24 February; Part Two, 10 March; Part Three, 7 April

This essay assignment focuses on your analysis of a text, and support for that analysis from secondary sources., and is divided into three parts: first, a brief exploration of three possible responses, described in one paragraph each; second, an outline, developing one of those possible responses; and third, the full essay. All three parts will relate to your choice of the following topics:

1. Compare and contrast the scenes of conversion as related in Acts 9, concerning Paul, and in Book VIII of the *Confessions* of Augustine. In considering these accounts, look for similarities and differences, and then form a thesis that relates those aspects of the conversions to the themes or objectives of the larger works.
2. Compare and contrast Beowulf's own account of his defense of Hrothgar's Heorot (ll. 2000-2162) with the earlier narration of his battles with Grendel and Grendel's mother (ll. 86-1650), in order to explain the need for or purpose of having the hero's shorter version of his exploits (as told to Hygelac) in connection with one or more of the central themes of the work.
3. Discuss the narrative order of several sections of *Beowulf*, explaining how it serves to highlight one or more of the central themes of the work. For example, when Beowulf returns home (beginning l. 1799), the order is something like this:
  - a. Beowulf seeks Hrothgar's permission to return, followed by a digression involving Queen Modthryth at a period long before the events of the poem;
  - b. Beowulf arrives back among the Geats, and begins to summarize the events of the first part of the poem;
  - c. during the summary, he discusses the feud between the Heatho-Bards and the Danes, at a period before the events of the poem;
  - d. finishing the summary, Beowulf exchanges gifts with Hygelac;
  - e. there is a jump in time, to Hygelac's death, followed by Beowulf's fifty years as king;
  - f. those fifty years are ended by the appearance of the dragon, but before Beowulf fights the dragon there is a long flashback to Hygelac's death; and so on.

Having selected your topic, you will then complete the following three parts of the assignment. Please note that each part of the assignment will be submitted on the due date in printed form in the seminar (only by students attending the full class), as well as in electronic form at Turnitin.com. Instructions for opening a Turnitin.com account can be found on the seminar web page.

1. Write two short paragraphs (about 150 words each), approaching some aspect of that topic from two different perspectives. The two paragraphs are not supposed to be linked as an essay; they will be two separate arguments, individual and self-contained; you might think of these as two proposals, or the opening paragraphs of two different essays, but remember to develop each paragraph with detailed analysis and evidence, including at least one short quotation, integrated into your prose. In each paragraph, make your main point (or thesis) clear, and then support that point with arguments and explanations. The objective of this assignment is not to come out with any particular answer (obviously, since the paragraphs will probably have different theses), but to do the best job you can in creating a separate, clear and cogent argument for each of the paragraphs. This part of the assignment is due on 24 February.
2. Having completed the two paragraphs, you should put what you have learned to work in creating a first paragraph for your essay – about 250 words long, and ending in a very clear and precise thesis. (You may want to review the section on the thesis in *The Writer's FAQs*.) You will receive the two short paragraphs back, graded and with my comments, on the following Tuesday (2 March), which should allow you time to incorporate suggestions and solve difficulties which may have carried over from the paragraphs to the thesis, before handing it in on 10 March. In addition to the thesis paragraph, you will also hand in at that time an annotated bibliography consisting of at least ten entries – five books and five

articles from refereed journals in the library's databases. Each annotation should identify how that source relates to your topic, and what specifically you plan to use from it. (Though you can use web pages as sources for your essay, you cannot use them for this bibliography, and you should be aware of the problems of using a web page for an academic essay. For that, and for the format of an annotated bibliography, see those sections in *The Writer's FAQs*.)

3. You will receive the graded thesis and annotated bibliography back before spring break. On 7 April, the final draft of your essay is due – six pages in length (or about 1500 words), on the same topic, but developing your thesis from the second part of the assignment in much greater depth. You need not wait until the second part is returned to begin thinking of how you will expand your thesis into an essay, but you will probably want to read my responses to your three paragraphs (from the first and second part) before working very much on the form and content of the final essay. Be sure to hand back in the graded copies of the first two parts of the assignment when you submit your essay.

4. After you receive the essay back marked, you must revise that draft to comply with any comments and corrections having to do with its composition, syntax, grammar, usages, or form. That revision will be due one week after you have received the marked essay back; remember to hand back in all three parts of the assignment, along with your revision. This is simply an efficient way to be sure that you understand the corrections; your revision cannot change the grade, and you are therefore strongly encouraged to proofread the original draft closely, before you submit it the first time.

In drafting your essay, focus on a limited aspect of your topic; define or describe the concepts necessary for a full understanding of your particular approach; and construct a developed thesis explaining the significance of that aspect. Your thesis (part two) should contain the *specific point to be proved*, and in the essay your paragraphs should all work toward proving it. To support your readings and to make your analysis clear, you will need to quote short passages from the texts, integrated into your own prose, which relate to the central scenes or themes of your essay; please cite the page number or line 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 how you are reading the passage, through discussion and analysis, as well as how you are employing 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 either MLA or APA style (depending on your major), as found in the *Writer's FAQs*, including a Works Cited list at the end. Be sure to cite your sources according to MLA or APA format, list them in the Works Cited, and *never* assume a web page is a reliable source without investigating the information further.