

Your first essay assignment is to write a short paper (about 1500 words, or six pages typed and double-spaced), comparing and contrasting two or all three of the Australian novels we have read or are reading so far this semester, Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*, David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*, and Murray Bail's *Eucalyptus*. Your essay should present a thesis you have chosen to develop, and then support it with carefully chosen and analyzed passages from the text. As you know, a thesis is an assertion of the particular idea that your essay will prove – it is a statement, rather than a question; it is detailed, rather than vague; and it is complex enough to require an entire essay for you to make clear the most significant evidence in its support. At the bottom of this sheet, you will find two *suggested* topics: you are encouraged to work on a topic of your own devising, providing (1) it deals with at least two of the works, (2) it is an analytical essay, proving a specific point, and (3) 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, construct a developed thesis explaining why that aspect of it is significant, and then design your essay so that each paragraph in it contributes directly to the support of that thesis.

Please double-space your essay, do not use a cover page (but put your name at the top of the first page), follow standard MLA format, and submit your essay online only, through the course Blackboard page (at [sjsu6.blackboard.com](http://sjsu6.blackboard.com)), by the beginning of class on the day it is due. To create your Blackboard account, use your student id number as your user name, and “fall” (like the semester) as your password. Submit your essay as an attachment only, in either doc (Word) or rtf format; all word processors can produce rtf (Rich Text Format) files – if you need help saving your file in rtf in some program other than Word, please ask at the Help Desk or Peer Mentor Center on the ground floor of Clark. Late work can only be submitted to either site by prior arrangement, and there will be a significant delay in its marking and return. Do not email or leave at my office any work for this class, unless I specifically ask you to do so. Corrected papers will be returned online in pdf format. Please keep a copy of all work submitted on disk, and retain all graded work returned until the end of the semester; English majors should save the graded copies of their essays in all department classes, since these will be required for the portfolio in their senior seminar. Please note that many people find it harder to proofread work on a computer screen than in printed form, so you may want to print out your final draft and make corrections to that, before submitting the finished file online. Also note that the file name for any work you are submitting should begin with your last name, first name, course number, and assignment name: for example, “Smith\_John\_123C\_Essay1.doc.” Finally, remember that I will also be keeping a copy of your marked work during the semester so that, when you submit your second essay, I will begin by reviewing the technical mistakes you made in the first one, and looking to see if you have made any progress in those areas on the second. You, too, should take the time to review those errors, and improve your writing on the second essay, since you know I will be checking.

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 claims or themes of your essay; please cite the page numbers 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 you have only used novels in the class editions. You are not asked to use secondary sources for this essay, and using them cannot replace or supersede your own analysis of quotations from the text, but if you do use them, follow MLA style in documenting them, as well.

In addition to submitting a copy of the essay by class-time on October 15 on Blackboard, you must also submit the essay to Turnitin.com on or before the same date. It would be a good idea to go online and establish your Turnitin.com account before you need to upload your essay, just to make sure there are no problems. Once that account is established, you can link it to the course by using the course number (2787907) and password (Australia). Then, when your essay is ready to be submitted, simply choose “Essay 1: Australian Novels” and upload your work.

1. **Narrative.** All three works make a point of undercutting their own verisimilitude at the beginning, by claiming they are yarns or opening like a fairy tale. Not surprisingly, however, the authors utilize those apparently similar aspects of their narratives for very different ends, as can be seen throughout and, in particular, at the end of each work. Recognizing that form is content, compare and contrast the narrative techniques of two of these fictions, and show how they further the author's themes in each.
2. **Bildungsroman.** Related to the issue of identity, but somewhat different from it, is the fact that all three are coming-of-age novels—or at least have central characters that come of age during them. In each case, that character is female: Sybylla, Janet (though we might also want to include Lachlan here), and Ellen. Compare and contrast the use of the bildungsroman conventions in two of the works, deciding how they contribute to each novel's theme and whether they are also meant to portray the country's “coming of age.”
3. **Literary Nationalism.** These three novels are shaped by attitudes about what is, or should be, Australia—an issue which is occasionally addressed directly in all three works, but which is also dealt with in metaphoric, symbolic, and other non-literal ways. Discuss the image of Australia in two of the works, and show how that image helps determine the themes and endings of both.