

Your second essay assignment is to write a short paper (about 1500 words, or six pages typed and double-spaced) on the fiction of Bernard Malamud and either Philip Roth or Nathan Englander. The following are *suggested* topics: you are encouraged to work on a topic of your own devising, providing (1) it deals with both authors we have read so far this semester, (2) it is an analytical essay proving a specific point, (3) it includes some discussion of critical sources dealing with both writers, and (4) 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 essay so that each paragraph in it contributes directly to the support of that thesis. And, whether you write on one of the suggested topics or propose your own, remember that your essay must cover both writers, must focus primarily on the assigned readings for each, and cannot present stories which you presented to the class as the major emphasis of the analysis.

Please do not use a cover sheet, or bind the pages with more than a single staple; do be sure that your name is on each sheet, and that the pages are numbered. State your thesis in your essay as usual, making clear the specific point to be proved, and develop your paragraphs to prove 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 claims 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, including your secondary sources. Remember, though, that criticism cannot replace or supersede your own analysis of the texts, which should be supported primarily with quotations from the text and your discussions of those quotations.

In addition to handing in a printed copy of the essay in class on December 9th, you must also submit the essay to Turnitin.com on or before the same date. When your essay is ready to be submitted, simply choose "Essay 2: Malamud and Roth or Englander" and upload (or paste in) your work.

Except by prior arrangement, printed essays can only be submitted in the seminar and by students attending the full class; otherwise, make an appointment to hand in the material during my office hours, but do not email it to me, or leave it in my mail box or under my door. Expect significant delays in the marking and return of late work. After you receive the marked essay back, you will need to correct the technical errors (of grammar, word-choice, fact, spelling, and so on) and resubmit a new draft, along with the original marked draft. Those corrections must be submitted and approved before you hand in the second essay this semester.

1. **Malamud's Pattern of Redemption.** We have talked a lot in class about the particular pattern (as well as numerous variations on it) that Malamud uses to bring his protagonists to humanity and self-acceptance (or not). With such a recognizable precedent, we should not be surprised if later writers familiar with his work produced their own variations on that pattern. Looking closely at two or more stories by Malamud that you think offer important insights into the pattern, and at least two stories by Roth or by Englander that produce interesting variations on that pattern (or, perhaps, break the mold entirely), discuss Malamud's fictions of reality instructors and humanity lessons, and how his successors continued or departed from that tradition.
2. **Metaphors of Jewishness.** A clichéd (but mostly accurate) formula to distinguish between the fictions of Malamud and Roth is that in the former all men are Jews, while in the latter all Jews are men. In other words, Jewishness for Malamud is a metaphor for the human condition, while for Roth the human condition (and especially coming to terms with one's own shortcomings) is not something that he allows his Jewish characters to avoid. Englander, coming a generation after Roth, seems to draw on an historically richer but no less metaphoric Jewishness. Discuss the use of things Jewish in two of these writers, and how it relates to their overall themes.
3. **The Holocaust and Israel in American Jewish Short Fiction.** Despite being momentous historical events in the twentieth century generally, and in the lives and psyches of American Jews in particular, the Holocaust and the re-establishment of the state of Israel are topics that are often only indirectly broached in fiction by American Jewish writers. This is especially true of the stories by Malamud and Roth, written mostly in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Discuss the differences in approach and sensitivity about such subjects between those two writers, or widen the discussion to include the fiction of Englander, an American who was living in Jerusalem at the time that *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges* was published in 2000.