

Engl 68B: American Lit, 1865 to the Present
Short Fiction Explication Assignment
Due: September 17th (by 1:30 pm on Canvas)

An explication is a detailed analysis of a literary work, as in the French phrase *explication de texte*. Such an explication, for fiction, might involve anything from word choice and usage, to images and themes, to structure and narrative technique—all working together to give a focused, detailed explanation of the story. Your assignment is to deal with one of the following two stories: Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" or Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's "A New England Nun." If you choose to deal with "Owl Creek Bridge," be sure to discuss section II; if you choose to write about "Nun," be sure to discuss Caesar.

Because this is such a short assignment (no more than 500 words, not including any Works Cited), also be sure that whatever you discuss contributes to your analysis. In other words, do not give a summary of the whole plot or even a single scene, unless that summary is somehow necessary for your explication, do not mention images or figurative expressions unless you have a point to make about them, do not discuss the type of narrative unless it helps you support your thesis, and so on. Instead, explain what you think the story is about, or how you think the way it is told achieves that end, or why you think an important scene or passage is included, by using its various attributes and elements as evidence for your argument. You are not required to use secondary sources but, if you do, be sure that they are reliable (web pages often are not, so avoid them) and that you follow MLA guidelines in citing them. Even if you do not use secondary sources, you should follow MLA guidelines for essay format, capitalization and punctuation, and the inclusion of a Works Cited page (at the end, but not as a separate file). The one exception to this is that you should not put your name, date, class, or word count on your essay. Proofread thoroughly before submitting your work online at Canvas (sjsu.instructure.com) by the beginning of the class on September 17th, in either Rich Text Format (.rtf), Word (.docx) or Word 97-2003 (.doc). Your submission will automatically be sent to Turnitin.com, as well.