

Your Name

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LIT 114-01

Due Date

How to Write Response Essays

When responding to films as literature, watch the film carefully more than once, take notes and discuss the film with others who have seen it. Mention the film's title and present a clear literary thesis in your opening paragraph. Choose a single, focused, literary topic, and write an essay in third person, present tense. For example, "Mathilda thinks she is in love with Leon, because she has always been treated badly by adults". Possible topic choices include writing about character development, the use of foreshadowing or symbolism, one of the elements of a good story, the importance of music or dialog, theme, setting, and many others. **Do not write about the same topic more than twice.** Do not refer to actors or film production people (directors, producers, etc.) in your essays. **Demonstrate your understanding of each film by using appropriate terms** and by clearly expressing your observations. NEVER simply summarize the plot of the film. Do not include information from outside sources or repeat term definitions. Assume your reader is familiar with the films and with appropriate terms.

Write a minimum of 400 words—size 12 print and standard font, print a dark copy, preferably on a laser printer, and format your essays according to this handout. Check spelling and proofread. Check proper spelling of character names and film titles on imdb.com. No handwriting or whiteout on final drafts. Italicize film titles, for example, *Black Hawk Down*, and don't use a film's title as the title for your paper. Limit use of am, is, are, was, were, I, me, my,

mine, and eliminate you, your, and undefined pronouns (e.g. they, it). Use left alignment.

Double-space everything.

If you use a typewriter, make photocopies of all papers prior to handing them in. Save all graded essays this semester. Review all papers after they are returned, otherwise, you don't learn from my remarks. Discuss your essays with me if you receive scores that you find to be unacceptably low by your standards. I score the first three essays more easily than later essays.

Avoid slang expressions ("I blew them off", instead of, "I ignored them") and clichés ("Like finding a needle in a haystack" or "Like a fish out of water"). Also, avoid use of euphemisms (a phrase that softens or destroys the meaning of another word or phrase). For example: During the Vietnam War, the plastic containers that were used to transport the bodies of dead soldiers were called "body bags". This represents a clear definition. During the first Persian Gulf War, the same containers were called "human remains pouches". This sounds like something you could buy at a Tupperware party and hides some of the inherent pain that must accompany these items.

Most importantly, consult with your professors concerning appropriate development of each assignment. This isn't high school, and single draft papers will not be successful—especially when those essays are written late at night on the night before the assignment is due. The rules have changed, and you must follow the new "reality" to be successful.

This is how your papers must look. Essays that are formatted incorrectly will not receive full credit regardless of content. Re-read this handout before writing each response essay.