

Assignment Packet for Literature Courses

Dr. Robertson, English Department

Your final grade for this course will be determined based, in part, on the major assignments listed below. We will discuss each assignment in more detail in class. You'll find the due dates on the schedule portion of the syllabus and/or in Canvas (at <https://canvas.troy.edu>). As the semester progresses, I may update some assignment instructions in the Canvas announcements, so make sure to check there for changes.

STUDENT-INFORMATION FORM

One of your first assignments is to complete a simple student-information form online. You'll find a link to the form in Canvas in the Regular Assignments module.

FORMAT ASSIGNMENT

Download the file called "Essay to Format.doc" from the modules section in Canvas. Then, reformat the essay in the newest MLA style. Don't change any of the wording except on the works-cited page, where you should also check the citations for correctness (they aren't correct). Check margins, paragraph spacing, spelling, headers, and so forth. Place a heading on the essay in MLA style (your name, instructor name, class name with assignment name, date). When you're finished, turn in the file through the appropriate link in Canvas.

Properly formatted, the essay is only two pages long (including the Works Cited).

Grading for This Assignment

This assignment has to be 100 percent correct for you to receive any points. If it's not correct when you turn it in, you'll get a zero, but you'll be able to redo it and turn it in again (through the same link). The number of points you get depends on when you get the assignment correct (earlier = more points). You can turn in this assignment as many times as necessary (including multiple times before the first due date if you want). If your file still needs work, I'll mention one or two things you need to look at in the comments, but I won't tell you everything. You can even bring a printed version to class for me to see, and I'll mark one or two things (or more) you need to do to the file. If your file has comments in it such as "track changes" notes, extra lines, or irrelevant pages, those count against the formatting.

Need Help?

Having trouble with the assignment? Try watching this video while you do the assignment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gRhHJ2tnPo>

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

Write ten discussion entries over the course of the semester in the Canvas section for this course. Your entries should deal with or evolve from the course materials in some way and should be of a substantial nature. The entries might deal with material we discuss in class, with material we didn't manage to cover in class, or with outside sources that you find about the class material.

This assignment will not be graded based on structure, organization, grammar, and so forth. Instead, you'll be graded on how substantial (in terms of length and critical thought) and timely your entries are. Aim for about 300 words or more of *thoughtful* prose.

Do not merely summarize what you have read; you need to put critical thought into what you write. Relate the information to what you've read elsewhere, for example, or suggest how the material relates to other classes or to your personal experience. Tell us whether you liked or disliked specific readings for the course. Think of this assignment as a sort of reading journal.

PRESENTATION

Prepare a brief (about five minutes long) presentation in which you discuss material related to one of the topics covered in our class. I'll either assign topics randomly or have you sign up for one.

For the presentation, give us an overview of the text at hand, and then discuss how you think the text relates to those of the other authors whose works we've been reading and how you think the text is important as an expression of the prevailing ideas of the time. A few questions to consider (though you're not limited to these): What does the author seem to be attempting to accomplish? What can we learn from the text? How can we relate it to our lives now? How is this text similar to the other materials we've been discussing? What is unique about this particular text? Does the text fit well with other texts from the same period? Think of the text you've been assigned in terms of studying for the next test. What are the major points the author makes? Who are the characters involved (if any)?

I encourage you to use secondary sources from the library's databases (not from the Internet generally), but make sure to cite them.

Your presentation should be a sort of informal lecture, and I encourage you to involve the audience. Do not bring food or drink of any kind for the audience (doing so will lower your grade). When I grade your presentation, I'll be looking at your preparedness, at how effectively you present the material, and at your source citation. Give your presentation a logical organization that clearly guides your audience, and make sure to do the following:

- Introduce yourself
- Don't start by saying, "I did my presentation on ..." because you haven't done your presentation yet!
- Discuss the material you're presenting.
- Mention which sources you used (you'll need at least one).
- Ask if the audience has any questions, and answer as well as you're able.
- Upload a **single-page** outline of the major ideas in your presentation to the "Presentation Handouts" thread in the discussion board of Canvas (making sure to cite your sources). These will become study sheets for the next test. Oh, and you lose a point or two if your handout is longer than a page.

The date you present on your topic will depend on the topic itself. Remember that late presentations lose points, just like late papers.

Electronic Visual Aid Requirement. As part of your presentation, you'll need to show a PowerPoint presentation with at least seven slides. The first slide should have your presentation title and name on it. The next five slides, however, should not have any words, letters, or numbers on them. You may not use videos or audio recordings for these five slides. The only things on the five slides should be images. Place any cited material on the seventh slide.

You have access to PowerPoint online through your Troy University e-mail account at <https://login.microsoftonline.com/>. So that you don't lose any points, make sure to upload your PowerPoint into Canvas at least 24 hours beforehand so that I can have it ready for you to project.

ESSAY SEQUENCE

A major part of your evaluation this semester involves the completion of what I call an "essay sequence," which will consist of a bibliography, an annotated bibliography, a proposal, and an essay. You'll turn in all these assignments through Canvas.

Topic

Your job will be to write a paper about the material assigned for the course. Interpret the meaning of the material, and examine how it either does or does not fit with the prevailing notions of the time. You might consider comparing that material with other items we read for class and/or with current events. Avoid writing a great deal about the author's life. Also, you might find the writing easier if you consider some of the questions mentioned in the presentation assignment above. The specific topic you write about will depend on which class you're attending. For survey courses, (ENG 2205, ENG 2206, ENG 2244, ENG 2245), the main focus of your paper needs to be the text you presented in class. For upper-level English courses, check with me and/or on Canvas for the specifics.

Bibliography

Complete a bibliography of some of the *secondary* sources you think you might use in your essay (for our purposes the literature itself, such as in the course textbooks, counts as *primary* source material). Follow these guidelines:

- Include 5 sources or more.
- Alphabetize your entries.
- Double-space everything.
- Use MLA documentation style with hanging indentation.
- Use at least three print or database sources (*i.e.*, books, journals, magazines, *etc.* General Internet sources usually are taboo.).
- Try to use sources published within the last ten years. Some exceptions to this rule are acceptable; ask me in advance. The more current your information is, the better.

Your best option for finding sources is the Troy library. Look for the databases. The last time I checked (**20 August 2023**), they were at <https://my.troy.edu/libraries/databases.html>. You'll probably want to narrow the list to humanities and literature. Some of the better options for you are (alphabetically):

- **EBSCO Databases Combined**
- **Gale Literature**
- **Humanities Source Ultimate**
- **JSTOR – Arts and Sciences Collections**
- **MLA International Bibliography**
- **ProQuest Central**

Never done this before? Check the final section in this assignment packet to see what your bibliography might look like if it included only two sources.

Annotated Bibliography

Your next task is to annotate the bibliography of sources that you're thinking about using. If necessary, add or delete sources as needed, but keep a minimum of five. How do you do this? First, read the source or at least its introduction. Then write a summary and evaluation of it as an abstract. Follow these guidelines:

- Include 5 sources or more.
- Abstracts should be 100 to 150 words each.
- Use bold facing for the MLA citations.
- Use plain text for the abstracts.
- Separate entries with blank lines.

Never done this before? Check the final section in this assignment packet to see what your annotated bibliography might look like if it included only two sources.

The samples are adapted from Charles Tennyson and Christine Fall, *Alfred Tennyson: An Annotated Bibliography* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1967), 51.

Proposal

Choose a topic based on the material from the course as indicated above, and propose an argument for your essay. You should focus carefully on the text you've chosen and relate the material to other works that we have discussed in class. Remember to keep your topic narrow, and take a definite, arguable stand on an issue. You're basically trying to sell this topic to me, but I'm here to help you formulate it as you proceed, so you're welcome to talk with me about your ideas prior to writing the proposal.

Keep these guidelines in mind as you write your proposal:

- It would be about a page long (around 300 words).
- It should be double-spaced in MLA style.
- You don't have to cite any sources at this point (but you can if you want).
- It should be two paragraphs:
 - Paragraph 1: Announce the topic you intend to pursue for your essay. Make sure to narrow the topic adequately, and tell me what your thesis might be. Underline the thesis.
 - Paragraph 2: Provide a general outline of the basic approach you will take to analyze the topic in the essay.

Never done this before? Check the final section in this assignment packet to see a sample proposal.

Final Essay

For your final paper, write and turn in a polished essay based on what you've learned from the presentation, proposal, and bibliographies. Here are the important guidelines:

- Here's how long the essay should be:

For 2000-level courses:	8 pages (around 3000 words)
For 3000-level courses:	12 pages (around 4000 words)
For 4000-level courses:	15 pages (around 5000 words)

- Use MLA style throughout in Times New Roman 12.
- Make sure you have a thesis near the end of your introduction.
- Stick with third-person throughout your text (no *I, you, we, us*, etc.).
- Include a standard MLA heading and headers.
- Double-space everything.
- Quote and cite from each source at least once within your text. Sources include the literature we've read (each item is a separate entry) and any outside sources you decide to use.
- List each source in the works-cited section at the end (no works cited = very, *very* low grade!). The works cited should not be annotated.

You should also look at the “Extra Guidelines for Essay Writing” and the MLA Style guide from my *Robertson's Miscellany* site. Your paper will be graded based on the originality, clarity, and logic of your argument. I'll be looking for a clearly defined, arguable thesis and logical organization of paragraph structures. In working on your thesis, think of how you would respond if you presented your thesis to someone, and that person asked, “So what?” Also, remember that spelling, punctuation, grammar, and mechanics count as part of your grade.

I'll have you turn in a rough draft of your essay a week or so before the final version is due so that you can exchange peer reviews with classmates and get ideas for improvement.

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

Bibliography:

Nelson 1

James Nelson

Professor Robertson

English 2245, British Literature after 1785—Bibliography

12 September 2045

Bibliography of Sources on Tennyson

James, David G. "Wordsworth and Tennyson." *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 36,

1950, pp. 113-29. MLA International Bibliography, www.mla.org.

Jennings, James George. *An Essay on Metaphor in Poetry*. Blackie and Son, 1915.

Annotated Bibliography:

Nelson 1

James Nelson

Professor Robertson

English 2245, British Literature after 1785—Annotated Bibliography

12 October 2045

Annotated Bibliography of Sources on Tennyson

James, David G. "Wordsworth and Tennyson." *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 36, 1950, pp. 113-29. MLA International Bibliography, www.mla.org.

An excellent and well reasoned comparison based chiefly on a study of *The Prelude* and *In Memoriam*, both of which were published in 1850. Concludes that Wordsworth is a greater poet than Tennyson because in his poetry the criticism of life is "profounder and a richer ennoblement of life." Wordsworth came to an assurance of the spiritual nature of the universe through poetic apprehension of the natural world. Tennyson's apprehensions do not act as a revelation and he does not attain Wordsworth's assurance. The author has perhaps not entirely understood the spiritual relevance of Tennyson's symbolism and may be to some extent misled by differences of approach and technique. Tennyson frequently said that his spiritual beliefs were founded not on what he saw in nature but on what he *felt* in his own heart.

Jennings, James George. *An Essay on Metaphor in Poetry*. Blackie and Son, 1915.

Jennings first gives what literary critics have said about metaphor; Aristotle, Quintilian, Longinus, and several moderns; then turns to the poets. His thesis is that metaphor, a double language, supplies scenes to complete and correct the partial nature of action or theme, and supplies a background, ever shifting, ever varied, before which the nearer

Nelson 2

visions of the poet pause or move as does life itself before the ever varied universe that is its stage. He then discusses Tennyson's art in the use of metaphor, particularly in *In Memoriam*, where the cumulative force of all the background pictures and their value in the poem can hardly be overestimated.

Proposal:

Nelson 1

James Nelson

Professor Robertson

English 2245, British Literature after 1785—Proposal

12 November 2045

In the Name of Matilda: Feminine Transgression and Romantic Conceit

In 1819, Mary Shelley wrote a novella that she entitled simply *Matilda*. The title character is a dark, brooding figure whose father, Shelley later reveals, fell in love with her. Shelley's decision to name her character Matilda is not unusual. In fact, Shelley's character is but one in a long series of Matildas who appeared in the literary works published in Romantic Britain. The prevalence of the name should not be dismissed merely as coincidence or popular convention. Authors had used the name Matilda long before Shelley wrote her novella, but by the time Shelley used the name, it had acquired special meaning shaped by Continental—and especially German—influences. Romantic authors transformed a name traditionally associated with strength and nobility into an emblem of feminine transgression and irrational behavior.

This essay will explore frequent recurrences of the name Matilda throughout the British Romantic Period as a means of defining what I term the Romantic conceit, an idea whose sustained presence becomes a shared cultural construct with special meaning. The essay traces the name to primarily Continental sources, with special emphasis on Dante and Spenser, on members of the British royal family with Continental connections, and on Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*. The juxtaposition of historical and biographical sources suggests that the Romantics appropriated this name traditionally associated with strength and nobility to transform it into an emblem of feminine transgression and irrational behavior. Romantic Matildas are connected with physical violence, with incest, and with direct challenges to religious and political authority

Nelson 2

as presented most visibly in Gothic literature. As the Romantic Period progressed, the connotations associated with the name coalesced into a well-defined set so that a mere invocation of the name also invoked revolutionary sentiment.