

### Paper 1 Assignment

Five to seven pages. Due Monday, October 6 at 5 p.m.

Your assignment is to write a focused, analytic paper making an argument about a specific problem, device, or pattern in a single text. You may write about “The Jolly Corner,” *Heart of Darkness*, or “Melanctha.” Your paper, when formatted according to the guidelines described under “Format” below, should be at least five full pages and no more than seven full pages.

#### Topics

You may choose to write about one of the following topics:

1. *Speaking for the other*. Both Stein’s “Melanctha” and Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* depict worlds that are not the authors’ own. Focus on one or two specific devices by which Stein or Conrad represents or speaks for that world or particular persons in it, define carefully what kind of otherness you are discussing, and interpret those devices’ purpose and effects. Consider how the approach to otherness shapes both narrative form and particular themes; is the story consistent in its modes of treatment of otherness, or does it have internal tensions? Pay careful attention to the way narratives are framed, ironized, or endorsed by an author who *is not identical* with any of her characters or narrative voices.
2. *Not talking about it*. In James, Conrad, and Stein, what is passed over in silence is often more important than what is said. Choose one story and identify a small number of specific moments of dialogue or monologue in which something is prominently *not* said. Use more evidence to show how we know that something has been omitted. Make an argument about the significance of the omission. Do not limit yourself to character motivations; consider the effect on the reader of having to puzzle out a hidden meaning and the importance of concealment, deception, or silencing as themes or tropes within the story as a whole.
3. *The end*. James’s “Jolly Corner,” Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, and Stein’s “Melanctha” all have endings that do not fulfill the desire for narrative climax, resolution, or explanation. Choose one of these texts and analyze its ending in relation to the rest of the work: how does it affect a reader’s experience and interpretation of the work as a whole? You should certainly think about the ending in terms of plot development, but pay special attention to issues of style, tone, affect, textual pattern, and narrative structure. How do these stylistic and formal features work to provide (or deny) a sense of ending?
4. *Playing house*. What does “The Jolly Corner” have to say about domesticity? Develop an argument about the significance of the setting. What does the story’s elaborate attention to the configuration of the apartment, and to the experience of being inside it, suggest about the “haunting” and Spencer Brydon’s return to New York? Or consider how and why the different characters’ interpretations of the space differ. Possible themes: ideas of home; real estate; memory and place.

5. *Minor role*. Develop an interpretive argument about a character in *Heart of Darkness* who occupies only a small narrative space. What role does this character play in the structure and meaning of the novella? How does this character work to point out particular themes? Why does Conrad (or Marlow) choose to represent such a character only briefly? What does their “minority” leave out of representation?
6. Your own *highly focused* topic (challenging). We will gladly give feedback on self-designed topics up to two days before the due date.

### Writing guidelines

Careful analysis of textual evidence is central to this paper. We have been modeling this mode of analysis in class. Your claims should be supported by extensive *quotation*. To support a claim, it is not enough simply to quote; once you quote, you must *analyze* what you have quoted, paying close attention to the significance of individual words, of syntactical and rhetorical patterns, of nuances and implications. Instead of attempting to paraphrase what a text means or summarize what it’s about, *show how it works*. Do not take for granted that your reader will see the text the way you do: point out the details that can *convince* the reader of what you say.

You are particularly encouraged to look back over your own commonplace-book entries, as well as your classmates’, to search for evidence of the patterns, recurring themes, or insistent problems that you might write about.

Your interpretation must be organized into an *argument* with a meaningful *motive*. In other words, your paper must address a significant, interesting, non-obvious question about one of the texts, and it must propose a clearly articulated, non-simplistic answer to that question. In order to find a motive in this sort of single-text assignment, think about what is most *surprising* about what you have to say. You may take for granted that your reader has in mind what has been discussed in class. (That also means that you should not repeat material from class.)

Relate your focused claims to broader questions about the author, genre, or theme your paper discusses, and show how paying attention to the particular, *highly specific* argument you are making changes how readers should think about the broader questions. It will also help to ask yourself what alternative arguments someone might raise about your topic and to anticipate objections to your claims.

Motive is often established at the start of an essay. *Avoid writing a generalizing introduction*. Begin your essay with a surprising piece of evidence or observation of your own that immediately frames the topic you are going to address and establishes its interest. Expanding on that piece of evidence, forecast the terms of your argument, then state the central, argumentative claim of the essay.

Spending too much of your paper on material or arguments already extensively discussed in class will weaken your motive.

Think carefully about the *line of thought* of your writing, the way one claim leads to the next.

“Transition sentences” are less important than your sense of the overall *logic* of your argument: it may help to think of the essay as a story you have to tell about the text you are analyzing, one with an arc from beginning to end. One of the most compelling ways to tell such a story is by thinking carefully about the *order of presentation of evidence*: indeed, you can “outline” a paper by first choosing the five or six passages that are most essential to your thinking and then deciding what sequence they should be presented in.

### Drafts

Plan to draft and revise. You may submit partial or full drafts to either of us for brief comments, as long as you do so at least two days before the deadline. We will answer questions, time permitting, up through the day before the deadline.

### Format

Your paper should have between 1.0 and 1.25-inch margins on all sides, with text in twelve-point serif font (e.g.: Garamond, Hoefler Text, Palatino, Baskerville, or, less appealingly, Cambria, Times), and between one-and-a-half and double spacing. *Number all pages*. The paper should have your name and the date on the first page. Title your paper.

Submit your paper electronically via the Sakai Assignments 2 tool. E-mail submissions are not acceptable. If you wish to turn in your paper in hard copy to my mailbox in Murray Hall, please e-mail me to say you have done so.

Digital submissions should be in Portable Document Format (PDF) if at all possible. Native word-processor formats (.doc, .docx, .pages, .odt) are a second-best alternative. All word processors are capable of producing PDF files, through either a “Save As...” option, an “Export” command, or a “Print to PDF” option in the print dialog. For more detail, see: <http://andrewgoldstone.com/pdf>.

### Style

*You must proofread carefully.*

Quotations should be carefully transcribed, punctuated, and attributed. In a paper on a single text, you may give a full citation only once, either in an MLA-style “Work Cited” bibliography or in a Chicago-style footnote to the first quotation. After that, page numbers may be given in parentheses. Secondary sources are not required in this paper; but if you use someone else’s work, including someone’s informal comments inside class or out, *you must cite that work*. Using someone else’s work without specific citation is plagiarism. Consistency and thoroughness in citation is more important than exact fidelity to either MLA or Chicago style.

Please follow the conventions of standard written American English. I am non-prescriptive about things like the split infinitive, the sentence-final preposition, and “they” used as a gender-neutral

singular pronoun. The passive voice is an excellent grammatical resource and can be used freely, provided it is used wisely.

The best resource on matters of usage is the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary of English Usage*, also available in a wonderful paperback Concise Edition. For detailed information about current and past word uses, the fundamental source is the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

For grammar, I consider *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* by Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum to be the reference standard; it is condensed in their slightly less daunting *Student's Introduction to English Grammar*.

### **Late Policy**

Late papers will be graded. If I receive your late paper less than 48 hours after the deadline, your maximum grade is 3.0. A paper that is more than 48 hours late can receive no higher than a 2.0. You may turn in a late paper any time until December 8.

Computer problems are not a valid excuse for lateness. Plan ahead. Back up frequently.

### **Grading**

The syllabus explains the general meaning of marks on the four-point scale. The chief criteria of assessment are:

1. Evidence: has textual evidence been used extensively, chosen well, and interpreted effectively in support of claims?
2. Motive: does the paper make its central problem interesting?
3. Argument: is the argument focused, logical, convincing, surprising?
4. Line of thought: does the paper develop its ideas in connected, orderly fashion? Does the conclusion follow from (and differ from) the opening?
5. Style: is the paper clearly written? Is it free from typographical, grammatical, and other errors?

In general, an A-range (3.5–4.0) paper is strong by all these criteria; a B-range (2.5–3.5) paper has well-chosen, well-analyzed evidence but does not fully develop its argument or its motive; a C-range (1.5–2.5) paper lacks evidence or uses evidence only to summarize plot; and a D-range (0.5–1.5) paper is too short or ignores the assignment.

If you submit work that is not your own, you will not receive credit for the assignment, and you will face disciplinary consequences. See the Rutgers academic integrity policy on the website <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.