

Critical Response Guidelines and Grading Criteria

DUE: Every Sunday (Weeks 2-5) and must be submitted to the dropbox by 11:59 pm.

Guidelines

You will write four critical response essays to assigned readings. Responses should demonstrate close-reading skills and provide analysis of the text through attention to a key passage and theme. You may expand upon the question and summary that you submitted for the corresponding readings, or, you may come up with a different question or topic to explore. I don't expect you to discuss everything about the text(s), but your writing should be clear and concise, and you should demonstrate an understanding of the reading by providing textual details and specific, concrete examples that are directly pertinent to the course themes, issues and/or contexts. If you only provide examples that are vague, general, and/or limited to your personal experiences or views, then this indicates that you have not engaged in a thoughtful, close reading of the text.

For undergraduate students, each critical response should be a minimum of 600-800 words (approx. 2-3 pages each); points will be deducted by **at least** one letter grade for anything that is significantly **below** this required length. I do not mind if you go over the required length. Graduate students should submit a minimum of 1,000 words for each response and attempt to situate the paper's analysis through reference to secondary criticism or theory. Secondary sources are not required for undergraduate response papers, but if you do use any, please limit to no more than two; this is a short close-reading paper and the focus should remain on your own analysis. All direct references (quoted, paraphrased, summarized) to primary and/or secondary texts must be cited according to MLA guidelines. After the first critical response essays are submitted and graded, I will post several (anonymous) student samples in Pilot that demonstrate my expectations for a letter grade of A. Students may revise and further develop any of their responses for an improved grade or for the research essay (not both).

Grading Criteria (4x100 pts each = 40% of final grade)

A (90-100 pts) = Student fulfills *all* of the assignment requirements and demonstrates exceptional critical thinking skills as well as originality and complexity in framing and presenting an effective discussion question. Writing is clear, concise, and free of errors.

B (80-89 pts) = Student fulfills *all* of the assignment requirements, demonstrates solid critical thinking, some originality, and the ability to present an effective discussion question. Writing is coherent with minimal errors.

C (70-79 pts) = Student fulfills *all* of the assignment requirements and demonstrates basic critical thinking skills. Work contains little, if any, originality and discussion question prompts only a superficial or limited analysis. Writing is inconsistently clear and contains multiple errors.

D (60-69 pts) = Student fulfills *all* of the assignment requirements but with minimal effort, lack of critical thinking and/or originality and presents a simplistic discussion question. Writing lacks coherence and errors are frequent.

F (0-50 pts) = Student does not submit the assignment, or the submitted work is incomplete, incoherent, and lacks any critical thinking, effort, or originality (including any plagiarized elements).

Research Essay Guidelines

For this option, you should analyze a major theme explored throughout this class through analysis of at least one of the assigned texts from Weeks 2-6. Essays should develop a persuasive arguable thesis, be clearly organized, and provide relevant insights into your chosen theme and how it relates to the genre of myth and/or fairy tale. Undergraduate essays must be a minimum of 1,800-2,000 words (approx. 7-8 pages), incorporate at least five to seven secondary sources of literary criticism and/or theory, and be formatted and cited according to MLA style guidelines. Graduate essays should be 2,500-3,000 words with reference to at least ten secondary sources and clear discussion of primary texts within a relevant theoretical framework. The deadline for this essay is Sunday, June 23 by midnight (11:59 pm); late submissions will not be accepted, no exceptions.

Rubric:	A: 18-20	B: 16-17	C: 14-15	D: 12-13	F: 0-11
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1. Depth of Subject: ____/20

Provides a clear subject/thesis and develops an argument with adequate support and evidence by examples. Demonstrates understanding of major concepts of text(s) and/or significant issues/contexts. Avoids lengthy explications or synopses of plot (if writing a literary analysis). Expresses originality of thought and sustains objective level of critical analysis.

2. Organization: ____/20

Analysis is precise, pertinent, and well supported. Provides a logical conceptual approach. Clearly links interpretive points to subject and/or argument. Avoids repetition, reductive arguments, or any tangential material that detracts from central focus. Provides clear transitions between and within sections of paper. Paragraphs and sentences are clearly structured and coherently and adequately develop their main topic.

3. Completeness & Accuracy: ____/20

Remains focused on exploring all elements of the stated thesis as fully as possible. Interpretation is appropriate and grounded within the text(s) and/or evidence from secondary sources. The paper adheres to and fulfills the requirements of the assignment, including the minimum word count and secondary sources.

4. Clarity of Expression: ____/20

Sentences are clear, concise, varied, and logical. Vocabulary and terminology are appropriate to the subject, purpose, and audience, and adhere to the standards of academic style. Subjects agree with verbs. Elements are parallel. References and word order are clear. Spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, etc., are correct. Manuscript has been proofread and is free of typographical errors.

5. Style & Documentation: ____/20

Paper is formatted according to style guidelines. Does not heavily rely on quotations from secondary sources; paraphrases and summaries are in own words; phrasing and original wording is correctly quoted; documentation is provided for all quotations, summaries and paraphrases; makes effective use of signal phrases when quoting. Language, tone and verb tense correctly follow MLA guidelines. All references to primary and secondary sources are cited correctly and consistently according to style guidelines, including punctuation. Works Cited Page is correctly and consistently formatted. All in-text citations are included in Works Cited and vice versa.

Total Points: ____/100 x 2.5 = ____/250 (25% of Final Grade) Letter Grade: _____

Fairy Tale/Myth Guidelines

Instead of the research essay, you may write a contemporary fairy tale or myth (at least 5-6 pages but no more than 10-12), which should be an adaptation or reimagining of a traditional version using feminist revisionist strategies (150 pts). Accompanying your story, you will need to provide a brief (2-3 pages) analytical discussion of the literary contexts for your story, demonstrating understanding of the traditional tale type, its variants, and its key elements/themes (100 pts). Graduate students who choose this option will need to provide a slightly longer critical essay (5 pages) that also incorporates discussion of the story’s historical and/or theoretical contexts. The deadline is Sunday, June 23 by midnight (11:59 pm); late submissions will not be accepted, no exceptions.

Story Rubric: Writing an Original Fairy Tale or Myth

CATEGORY	Excellent – 10 pts	Strong – 8 pts	Needs Work – 7 pts	Weak – 6 pts
Traditional Elements	The story contains many of the common fairy tale or myth elements with a strong feminist adaptation of themes and content.	The story contains a sufficient number of the fairy tale or myth elements with an adequate attempt to provide a feminist adaptation beyond simple gender reversals.	The story contains several of the common fairy tale or myth elements with a minimal feminist adaptation at a superficial level (merely gender role reversal).	The story contains few or none of the fairy tale or myth elements and/or no attempt to provide a feminist adaptation.
Characters & Setting	Characters are named and clearly described in text. Most readers could describe the characters accurately. Many vivid, descriptive words are used to tell when and where the story took place.	Characters are named and described and story provides some idea of what the characters looked like. Some vivid, descriptive words are used to tell the audience when and where the story took place.	Characters are named. The reader knows very little about the characters. The reader can figure out when and where the story took place, but the author didn't supply much detail.	It is hard to tell who the characters are and/or what function they serve. The reader has trouble figuring out when and where the story took place.
Problem/Conflict	It is very easy for the reader to understand the problem the main character faces and why it is a problem.	It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem the main character faces and why it is a problem.	It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem the main character faces but it is not clear why it is a problem.	It is not clear what problem the main character faces.
Organization & Clarity	The story is very well organized. One idea or scene follows another in a logical sequence with clear transitions. There are no writing errors in the final draft. Character and place names that the author invented are spelled consistently throughout.	The story is pretty well organized. One idea or scene may seem out of place. Clear transitions are used. There are 2-3 writing errors in the final draft and some inconsistencies or confusing word choices.	The story is a little hard to follow. The transitions are sometimes not clear. There are 4--5 writing errors in the final draft and multiple inconsistencies.	Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged. The final draft has more than 5 writing errors with confusing word-choice, spelling and syntax.
Creativity	The story contains many creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The story makes significant alterations to the traditional elements of the selected tale type in an original way.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The story includes clear alterations to the elements, but some were the same as the traditional tale.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions, but they distract from the story. The story shows minimal alterations to the traditional version and demonstrates little originality.	There is little evidence of creativity in the story. The author does not seem to have used much imagination and reiterates all of the same elements in the traditional tale.

Score: _____/50 x 3 = _____/150 (15% of Final Grade) **Letter Grade** _____

Fairy Tale/Myth Critical Essay Rubric

A: 18-20	B: 16-17	C: 14-15	D: 12-13	F: 0-11
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1. Depth of Subject: ____/20

Provides a focused analysis of the original story's connection to a specific classical myth or fairy tale, with adequate support and evidence by examples. Demonstrates clear understanding of the traditional tale type, its variants, and its key elements/themes. Expresses originality of thought and sustains objective level of critical analysis in discussion of how the story provides a contemporary, feminist reimagining of the source tale or myth .

2. Organization: ____/20

Provides a logical conceptual approach. Avoids repetition, reductive arguments, or any tangential material that detracts from central focus. Provides clear transitions between and within sections of paper. Paragraphs and sentences are clearly structured and coherently and adequately develop their main topic.

3. Completeness & Accuracy: ____/20

Remains focused on exploring all elements of the critical analysis as fully as possible. Analysis and interpretation is grounded within the text(s) and/or evidence from secondary sources. The paper adheres to and fulfills the requirements of the assignment, including the minimum word count.

4. Clarity of Expression: ____/20

Sentences are clear, concise, varied, and logical. Vocabulary and terminology are appropriate to the subject, purpose, and audience, and adhere to the standards of academic style. Subjects agree with verbs. Elements are parallel. References and word order are clear. Spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, etc., are correct. Manuscript has been proofread and is free of typographical errors.

5. Style & Documentation: ____/20

Paper is formatted according to MLA style guidelines. Does not heavily rely on quotations from secondary sources; paraphrases and summaries are in own words; phrasing and original wording is correctly quoted; documentation is provided for all quotations, summaries and paraphrases; makes effective use of signal phrases when quoting. Language, tone and verb tense correctly follow MLA guidelines. All references to primary and secondary sources are cited correctly and consistently according to style guidelines, including punctuation. Works Cited Page is correctly and consistently formatted. All in-text citations are included in Works Cited and vice versa.

Total Points: ____/100 = (10% of Final Grade) Letter Grade: _____
