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Essay 2, Assessing a Novel's Argument:

5-6 pages

Using an LPC writing tutor is *highly* recommended. Be sure to finish your essay ahead of time and visit a tutor well in advance of the essay due date. (In other words, do not visit the Writing Center the day before the essay is due; if there is a long line for tutors or if the tutor recommends you do substantial revising, you will wish you had come earlier.)

Writing Center hours (held in ILC, building 1200):

M-W 9:30 am-2:30 pm and 5-7 pm

Th 9:30 am-2:30 pm

F 11:30 am-1:30 pm

This essay will be written in response to Kate Chopin's The Awakening. In some respects, it will be a revision of your midterm essay in that it will use that essay as raw material. But the purpose of the essay will be different.

You will write an essay that assesses how *well* Kate Chopin uses The Awakening to make an argument about the relative value of the institutions of marriage, motherhood, and the family for independent-minded nineteenth-century women.

In your introduction, be sure to make a clear assertion of what Kate Chopin's argument is before following up with your judgment of its success. This will be your *thesis*.

In the body of this essay, you will **support** that thesis by:

- outlining the development of Chopin's argument. Do this by providing:
 - minimal plot summary
 - textual analysis, and
 - explanation of how Chopin uses the elements of fiction to support her argument
- assessing whether her argument is successful. Do this by examining:
 - whether she commits any logical, ethical, or emotional fallacies of argument
 - the opinion of at least one nineteenth-century reviewer
 - the opinion of at least one twentieth-century literary critic

You will conclude your essay by restating your thesis and adding any further conclusions or reflections that you would like the reader to consider as she considers your argument.

Advice:

When you begin work on assessing the author's argument, remember the following resources:

- ❖ Your midterm essay
- ❖ M2A5 handout on fallacies
- ❖ Nineteenth-century reviews of Chopin in Norton edition (we read reviews on pp. 162-63, 166, and 170-72)
- ❖ Twentieth-century literary critical article you read
- ❖ Model student summaries of twentieth-century literary critics (You may consult the original articles if you think they will help your argument.)
- ❖ Instructor's discussion of standards by which literary critics evaluate an author's argument (M2A6 and M2A7).
- ❖ Barnett pp. 200-02, for reminders of questions you can ask yourself about the elements of fiction and vocabulary appropriate which provides useful questions you can ask yourself about each element.

I highly recommend creating an outline, whether you do so before you begin or in the middle of the writing process. Taking a break to create an outline after you've become fairly invested in the essay can help you revise and help you stay on track and avoid tangents.

As I've said before, an organizational pattern that goes through each element of fiction or each review or literary critical article in order will likely cause more coherence problems than it solves. Focus on what you want to say (your thesis), what parts of the novel will be the most central to your thesis, and where you can pull in various resources to help your analysis of your *ideas*, the points you'll make as you walk your reader towards understanding Chopin's argument and understanding how well it works. The main organizational decision you will make will likely be whether you want to outline Chopin's argument first and *then* assess it or whether you want to assess her argument *as* you work through it.

Formatting requirements for all essays:

[See the "Model Student Writing" folder in Resources for an example.]

Typed (written in a word processing program)

Double-spaced

12-point Times New Roman font

1-inch margins (click on File/Page Setup to check this)

Left-hand justification

Title (not in quotes, underlined, or bolded, but just centered at top of essay)

Headed (upper right-hand corner for last name and page number, upper left hand corner on page 1 for your name, course number, my name, and due date, in day, month, year format.