

Assignment Instructions

Research Paper, 1800 words minimum (150 points)

For your final paper, there are 4 possible topics.

1. Choose one American text that can be considered appropriate for children (may include picture books, comic books, YA Lit or adult text.) Explore the American-ness of this text through the messages it imparts, the myths it addresses or the example the text lays out for American children to follow. I must approve your text no later than November 19.
2. Choose one of the myths/mythical figures we have addressed over the course of the semester (examples: Founding Fathers, trickster, pioneer, supernatural beast, hero) and trace its evolution from the early American period to the modern day. You will need to reference specific texts, both from the class list and outside texts, in order to accurately trace the changes, adaptations and rewritings of this particular myth.
3. Define the "American Dream" and compare the ways in which 2 or more of the texts we have discussed in class perpetuate this idea. How has the American Dream changed over time? What does the dream consist of? What changes about the dream depending on race, class, sex or age?
4. A topic of your choosing. You are strongly urged to discuss any possible alternative topics with your instructor prior to November 19 in order to ensure its scope, theme and argument fit within the requirements of the class.

This essay will be at least 1800 words (6 pages), though you will likely need to exceed this minimum in order to do a good job. Your essay must include at least **5 carefully evaluated sources**. You may use other texts from class, both primary and scholarly, as points of comparison and examples, but at least 2 of your required sources must be from your **original research**. You must include an MLA-formatted bibliography of all 5 texts (you do not need to include the annotations).

Your grade will be based on the quality and creativity of your thesis, the thoroughness of your research, the support of your argument, assimilation and proper citation of sources, and proper grammar and formatting, including your MLA bibliography.

50 points: Content-Analysis, Comparison		Grade
50-40:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student chooses an appropriate topic, with a narrow scope and a adequate material to cover in 1800 words• Analysis is thoughtful, engaged, insightful, and persuasive• Paper clearly, creatively and fully addresses chosen topic• Paper displays academic enthusiasm for the topic, catches the reader's interest and draws significant conclusions	
39-25:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student chooses appropriate topic but does not fully engage text• Paper is dull, lacks complex analysis or thoughtful ideas• Analysis is one-sided or does not thoroughly convince reader	
24-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Topic does not fully address chosen prompt• Paper is lacking in analysis, does not address complex ideas	
9-0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Topic is inappropriate for the assignment, no controversy is present, no argument is made• Displays general disinterest in topic	

30 points: Building Argument/Supporting Evidence		Grade
30-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Every assertion is backed with sufficient evidence from the	

Grading Rubric: Comparison Paper: **150 points total**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> student's own observations or research, including 5 sources Works to prove thesis through evidence, logical progression, structure Various forms of evidence used (quotes, descriptions, data etc.) 	
19-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence to support argument is present, but sparse Paper relies heavily on sources/analysis used in class, without introducing student's original thoughts Evidence that is provided is sloppily recorded and not fully integrated into the essay Paper does not argue one strong point but many diverging arguments 	
5-0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student advances an argument without any hard evidence Paper does not make an argument or attempt to prove a point Suffers from a lack of focus and/or refinement 	

30 points: Thesis statement/sophistication of argument/Intro/Conclusion		Grade
30-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student proposes a strong dynamic thesis Argument emphasizes complexity, interrelatedness of various elements but clearly supports one central argument 	
19-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student proposes a thesis that is not direct, wavers, does not take a stand. Introduction/Conclusion are merely summaries of essay Thesis does not address any new topics, but summarizes or rehashes arguments of the classroom. 	
9-0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student does not propose a thesis or main argument Paper does not have an adequate introduction/conclusion Analysis is trite, lacking in creativity/awareness of texts 	

20 points: Source Material and MLA Citation		Grade
20-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student identifies and uses appropriate sources with relevant information to the topic. Minimum of 5 sources/2 original met or exceeded by a thorough understanding of high quality research. Student successfully weaves source material into the essay, either quoting or paraphrasing, with appropriate citation Work cited page follows MLA citation guidelines perfectly 	
14-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student uses irrelevant, inappropriate sources, or fewer than 5 sources. Student fails to produce original research or analysis of sources. Source information present in text but is not smoothly incorporated Work Cited deviates from MLA citation guidelines, needs revision 	
5-0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student does not incorporate outside sources Work Cited does not follow MLA guidelines at all, or is missing 	

20 points: Mechanics: grammar, style, proofreading	Grade
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Grading Rubric: Comparison Paper: **150 points total**

20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer than 2 typos or grammatical errors• Essay is clear and easy to read• Displays a grasp of the academic argument, tone and style• Appropriate for the topic discussed	
19-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer than 3 typos or grammatical errors.• Displays a grasp of the academic argument, tone and style• Appropriate for the topic discussed.	
14-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple errors.• Style is unclear in places• Overall, a good grasp of academic writing with minor adjustments to tone, style or structure needed	
5-0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple errors• Unclear/confusing sentence structures, poor use of punctuation• Suffers from a lack of editing, proofreading, refinement.	

TOTAL POINTS _____

Post Grade Deductions:

Not stapled: -10 points

Improper formatting: -20 points

Missing/incomplete drafts: -20 points

FINAL Point Total: _____/150

FINAL Letter Grade: _____