Paper 1 Assignment Sheet

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EngL1201W: Introduction to American Literature

Due: Tuesday, February 7

Weight: 10% of your course grade

Format: In MLA style, with proper heading and numbered pages; typed, double spaced, in a standard 12-pt. font, with no greater than 1.25-inch margins; stapled.

Instructions: Write a polished four-page essay in which you develop a specific argument that responds to one of the following questions*:

1. What purpose does ‘time’ serve as a theme in “The Masque of the Red Death” and/or in “The Pit and the Pendulum”? What significances—both in relation to and outside of what explicitly occurs in the narrative—and what figurative meanings do you think time has in these works by Poe? In your essay, you may focus on one or both of these short stories.

2. What conception of ‘difference’ does Poe convey in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and/or does Thoreau convey in his essays in Civil Disobedience and Other Essays? You will have to decide which of these texts (you might choose just one) and which forms of ‘difference’—gendered, class, ethnic/racial, national, linguistic, or other (again, you might choose just one)—to focus on in your essay.

3. Which of Thoreau’s techniques of persuasion, or his methods of convincing his reader of his argument, is most effective in your view? In your essay, be sure to focus on one particular technique/method, discuss how Thoreau employs this technique/method (or how it manifests) in specific examples from at least one of the five essays in Civil Disobedience and Other Essays, and explain why it is most effective as a technique of persuasion.

Articulate your argument near the start of your paper, at the end of your introduction. Then, in the body of the paper (in the paragraphs between the introduction and conclusion), work to convince your reader of how one arrives at this argument through analysis of the text/s. *This is not a five-paragraph-themed paper: your argument should not simply be a list of what each paragraph will prove or contain.* Instead, organize your paper into coherently developed paragraphs that each center on a main idea that helps to build your argument. Each paragraph in the body should have a balance of claims and textual evidence. The claims should reveal (they should make clear and explicit) the implicit messages conveyed by the textual evidence. Develop
transitions between your ideas so that your argument about the text/s evolves clearly and logically.

Guidance: I encourage you to visit me during my office hours (or make an appointment with me) to discuss your paper, and to make an appointment with a tutor at Student Writing Support, at any stage during the writing process. *I am open to other ideas you have for your paper, or to modification of any of the three questions you are required to choose from above, but you must discuss these with me in person.

Grade: The grade on the paper will be determined by the following guidelines:
A—the paper meets all of the basic requirements and has all or nearly all of the additional features
B—the paper meets all of the basic requirements and has several of the additional features
C—the paper meets all of the basic requirements but has few, if any, of the additional features
D—the paper does not meet all of the basic requirements
F—the paper does not meet any of the basic requirements
0—the paper is plagiarized, or you fail to turn in the assignment within one week of the due date

Basic Requirements (of equal weight): The paper (1) satisfies the requirements of form, page length, and topic, (2) is academic in tone, (3) includes an argument or main idea about the text/s, (4) has analytical claims about the text/s supported by evidence in the form of select quotations and/or paraphrasing, (5) uses MLA style for in-text citations, (6) includes a Works Cited page with end-of-text citations in MLA style.

Additional Features (in order of decreasing importance): (1) The ideas conveyed move beyond the obvious in thinking about the text/s; (2) The paper relies on evidence interpreted fully and convincingly to support the argument or main idea; (3) The paper is well-organized—coherently and effectively—with logical transitions between ideas and paragraphs; (4) The argument evolves rather than remains static from beginning to end of the paper; (5) The introduction is fully developed—it provokes the reader’s interest, situates the discussion within a context or in relation to a specific issue or question, identifies (by author and title) the text/s that will be analyzed, and includes an argument or main idea; (6) The conclusion is fully developed—it clarifies the most complicated point to which the analysis has evolved, returns to the context, issue, or question laid out in the introduction, and provides a ‘send-off’ for your reader; (7) The sentences in the paper are well-crafted to communicate ideas to your reader: the language is clear, precise, and non-redundant; (8) The paper follows established rules of grammar, syntax, and spelling; (9) The paper has a creative and catchy title that reflects the argument or main idea.

Elaboration on important features of the paper:
ARGUMENT: You articulate a strong (original, clear, and specific) analytical thesis. You
develop this thesis from the beginning to the end of your paper. Your thesis evolves in the
course of your analysis, rather than remains static.

ANALYSIS: You make interesting and convincing assertions about your subject.

EVIDENCE: You support your argument by analysis of specific textual evidence. You are clear
and selective in your choice of evidence.

STRUCTURE: You maintain your reader’s interest and comprehension; you organize your paper
coherently and productively to build support for your argument; you have logical transitions
between ideas and paragraphs.

STYLE: You use language to engage your reader. You are precise and descriptive in your
choice of language; you use clear syntax and accurate diction; you make a variety of word
choices (i.e., avoid redundancy); you convey an appropriately formal and critical tone but also
your own voice.

SPELLING AND GRAMMAR: You follow the standard rules of spelling, punctuation, syntax,
sentence structure, and diction in English.

CITATION: You follow MLA format in citing your texts in your paper and on your Works Cited
page.