***BELOVED* ESSAY QUESTIONS**

1. In many works of literature, **past** events can affect, positively or negatively, the present actions, attitudes, or values of a character. Choose a novel or play in which a character must contend with some aspect of the past, either personal or societal. Then write an essay in which you show how the character’s relationship to the past contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.
2. One of the strongest human drives seems to be a desire for **power**. Write an essay in which you discuss how a character in a novel or a drama struggles to free himself or herself from the power of others or seeks to gain power over others. Be sure to demonstrate in your essay how the author uses this power struggle to enhance the meaning of the work.
3. In a novel by William Styron, a father tells his son that life “is a search for **justice**.” Choose a character from a novel or play who responds in some significant way to justice or injustice. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the character’s understanding of justice, the degree to which the character’s search for justice is successful, and the significance of this search for the work as a whole. You may choose a work from the list below or another work of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.
4. **Violence** can be found in all forms of expression – from fine art to sculpture, from theater to fiction; however, it is the truly gifted artist who employs violence for reasons above the gratuitous. Choose one novel that confronts the reader with scenes of violence that truly contribute to character and to the meaning of the work as a whole. In a well-written paper, show clearly the nature of the violence, its effects upon character, and its significance to the meaning of the work
5. In The Writing of Fiction (1925), novelist Edith Wharton states the following. At every stage in the progress of his tale the novelist must rely on what may be called the illuminating incident to reveal and emphasize the inner meaning of each situation. Illuminating incidents are the magic casements of fiction, its vistas on infinity. Choose a novel or play that you have studied and write a well-organized essay in which you describe an “illuminating” episode or moment and explain how it functions as a “casement,” a window that opens onto the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.
6. “You can leave **home** all you want, but home will never leave you.” —Sonsyrea Tate Sonsyrea Tate’s statement suggests that “home” may be conceived of as a dwelling, a place, or a state of mind. It may have positive or negative associations, but in either case, it may have a considerable influence on an individual.

Choose a novel or play in which a central character leaves home yet finds that home remains significant. Write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the importance of “home” to this character and the reasons for its continuing influence. Explain how the character’s idea of home illuminates the larger meaning of the work.

1. From the above list of novels, choose one in which some of the most significant events are **mental or psychological**; for example, awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness. In a well-organized essay, describe how the author manages to give these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action. Do not merely summarize the plot.
2. Some works of literature use the element of **time** in a distinct way. The chronological sequence of events may be altered, or time may be suspended or accelerated. Choose a novel, an epic, or a play of recognized literary merit and show how the author’s manipulation of time contributes to the effectiveness of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.
3. An effective literary work does not merely stop or cease; it **concludes**. In the view of some critics, a work that does not provide the pleasure of significant “closure” has terminated with an artistic fault. A satisfactory ending is not, however, always conclusive in every sense; significant closure may require the reader to abide with or adjust to ambiguity and uncertainty. In an essay, discuss the ending of a novel or play of acknowledged literary merit. Explain precisely how and why the ending appropriate concludes the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.
4. The meaning of some literary works is often enhanced by sustained **allusion** to myths, the Bible, or other works of literature. Select a literary work that makes use of such a sustained reference. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain the allusion that predominates in the work and analyze how it enhances the work’s meaning.
5. The significance of a **title** such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is easy to discover. However, in other works (for example, *Measure for Measure*) the full significance of the title becomes apparent to the reader only gradually. (1971) Choose *a work* and show how the significance of their respective titles is developed through the authors’ use of devices such as contrast, repetition, allusion, and point of view.
6. In many works of literature, a physical **journey** – the literal movement from one place to another – plays a central role. Choose a novel, play, or epic poem in which a physical journey is an important element and discuss how the journey adds to the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.
7. Many plays and novels use contrasting **places** (for example, two countries, two cities or towns, two house, or the land and the sea) to represent opposed forces or ideas that are central to the meaning of the work. Choose a novel or a play that contrasts two such places. Write an essay explaining how the places differ, what each place represents, and how their contrast contributes to the meaning of the work.
8. “In many plays a character has a **misconception** of himself or his world. Destroying or perpetuating this illusion contributes to a central theme of the play.” Choose a work with a major character to whom this statement applies, and write an essay in which you consider the following: (1) What the character’s illusion is and how it differs from the reality as presented in the play; and (2) How the destruction or perpetuation of the illusion develops a theme of the play. Do not merely summarize the plot.