***Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead***

1. What is the Theatre of the Absurd? Explain the characters, themes, setting, etc.
2. What is existentialism? How are R and G existential characters?
3. Is this a comedy? Explain using devices of satire and the comedy ladder?
4. Is it a tragedy? Explain using criteria for tragedy and tragic heroes?
5. What is the role of the actors in the play? How are they different from humans? What do they say? What does this say about life?
6. What does the tossing of the coin represent? The question game? Words? Pages in the wind?
7. Why are R and G waiting around for most of the play? What do they do to pass the time? What does this represent about life?
8. What scenes are similar to Hamlet? What scenes or passages are altered? How?
9. Analyze style for 1 passage, speech, or conversation
10. Find examples of the following in the text and explain what each passage means:
    * Life/existence/purpose (memory? actions? motivation?)
    * Death/relief(box, boat, etc.)
    * Chance/action-reaction=sum of choices (coin)
    * Fate/Destiny (Claudius assigns them a task)
    * Freewill/Choice/Autonomy (questions? a time before questions?)
    * God/Afterlife/eternity (direction? answers to questions? knowledge? help?)
    * Reality/Truth (butterfly)

**“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”**

1. Find some criticisms and research articles that explain the poem. Cite your sources in your answers and attach a copy of the research to your answers.
2. How is this poem similar to the other works that deal with existentialism, alienation, and the absurd? How is Prufrock similar to the other existential characters we’ve read?
3. What is the tone? Any shifts in tone? Where? Why?
4. How many questions are asked in the poem? Why? How many answers are given? Explain.
5. Is this a love song? Is the title ironic? Explain.
6. Describe the setting. Any images used to describe the setting? What does it reveal about Prufrock’s world? Discuss the imagery throughout.
7. Describe the characters in the poem. What are the women like? Does he connect with them? What is Prufrock like? What are his concerns? What does he do? Any repetitions? Why?
8. Explain the allusions and the epigraph in the poem? What do they say about Prufrock? His world?
9. What metaphors and similes are used to describe Prufrock? What do they mean? Any other figures of speech used in the poem? Synecdoche? Any other examples of diction?
10. Analyze the structure of the poem. Why the opening? Explain the ending.

**ESSAY TOPICS**

**Choose 2 and write an essay or detailed outline for *R and G* AND “Prufrock”**

* 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.
* Writers often highlight the values of a culture or a society by using characters who are alienated from that culture or society because of gender, race, class, or creed. Choose a novel or a play in which such a character plays a significant role and show how that character's alienation reveals the surrounding society's assumptions or moral values.
* "The true test of comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter." Choose a novel, play, or long poem in which a scene or character awakens "thoughtful laughter" in the reader. Write an essay in which you show why this laughter is "thoughtful" and how it contributes to the meaning of the work.
* Many works of literature not readily identified with the mystery or detective story genre nonetheless involve the investigation of a mystery. In these works, the solution to the mystery may be less important than the knowledge gained in the process of its investigation. Choose a novel or play in which one or more of the characters confront a mystery. Then write an essay in which you identify the mystery and explain how the investigation illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.
* In Kate Chopin's The Awakening (1899), protagonist Edna Pontellier is said to possess "That outward existence which conforms, the inward life that questions." In a novel or play that you have studied, identify a character who outwardly conforms while questioning inwardly. Then write an essay in which you analyze how this tension between outward conformity and inward questioning contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid mere plot summary.
* 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.
* Palestinian American literary theorist and cultural critic Edward Said has written that “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.” Yet Said has also said that exile can become “a potent, even enriching” experience. Select a novel, play, or epic in which a character experiences such a rift and becomes cut off from “home,” whether that home is the character’s birthplace, family, homeland, or other special place. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the character’s experience with exile is both alienating and enriching, and how this experience illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.
* A critic has said that one important measure of a superior work of literature is its ability to produce in the reader a healthy confusion of pleasure and disquietude. Select a literary work that produces this "healthy confusion." Write an essay in which you explain the sources of the "pleasure and disquietude" experienced by the readers of the work.