

Instead of a traditional midterm essay, you will **write three short essays of at least 250 words each, to be submitted in a single document, via email (as an attachment in *Word*) and uploaded to the appropriate folder in TurnItIn.** Essays must have an appropriate, original title; contain an introduction (with an explicit, assertive thesis, underlined), body, and conclusion; and avoid use of *I* or *you* throughout. Your essay will, as always, be evaluated in terms of Main Idea, Organization, Support, and Diction and Mechanics. Therefore, make certain your essays are not only well organized and developed, but also free of errors in grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling.

Remember that you are not summarizing the works but responding to them in a critical manner. Include evidence or examples from the specific texts that you are writing about, but do not retell the story, and do not copy directly except when quoting. Remember to incorporate sources correctly: use signal phrases and document with parenthetical citations and a Works Cited reference at the end of the essay.

You may use the texts themselves (textbook, printout, or online versions) and a dictionary and/or thesaurus (print, electronic, or online) for this essay, but no other materials or sources. **Use of secondary sources, whether credited or not, will be considered grounds for failure.**

Topics: select one from each of the following pairs; that is, one topic per author.

James Joyce, *Dubliners*

1. Joyce had a difficult time publishing *Dubliners*, repeatedly encountering resistance and rejection. Portions of the text were considered risqué, offensive, or politically problematic. **Using specific examples from at least three of the stories, explain what may have been so problematic at the time the collection was first published.**
2. The stories in *Dubliners* all have different characters and involve varying family structures and problems, plots, and settings; in fact, perhaps the only thing they all have in common is their setting in Dublin. **How does Joyce unify these different stories to form a coherent whole?** Consider themes, order of presentation, age or seasonal progression, and so on.

William Butler Yeats, selected poems

3. **Discuss the ways in which Yeats presents nationalism and rebellion in at least three of the poems** from the handout, including the related ideas of violence and disillusionment. Be sure to consider the effects of language, imagery and verse form in your answer.
4. In some ways Yeats is both a modern poet, one who transforms the genre in terms of both structure and content, and one who looks backward, echoing traditional images, forms, and themes. **Using at least three of the poems, discuss this double nature of Yeats' poetry.**

J. M. Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World*

5. *The Playboy of the Western World* is simultaneously broad comedy and an indictment of certain aspects of Irish life in the early twentieth century. **Using specific examples from the text, discuss how Synge's play uses comedy as social commentary and critique.** Possible approaches to consider include religion, conformity, the family, and so on.
6. Upon its debut, *The Playboy of the Western World* was greeted with outrage, condemnation, and even violence. Much like *Dubliners*, it was considered offensive, insulting, and even sacrilegious. **Using specific examples from the text, explain how the play could be seen as offensive at the time, and why.**