American Literature
Research Project

Overview
For this project, you will research an American Literary time period and an author from that time period. You will need to show how your author exemplifies the characteristics of the period in which he or she wrote. After you have completed your paper, you will give an oral presentation to the class, in which you share your findings.

This project is designed as a culminating assessment (FINAL EXAM) for eleventh grade English. As such, it will count for 20% of your overall grade. There are many steps to this project so it is important that you keep up with the work. Falling behind will not only negatively affect your grades, but it will create an inordinate workload for the end of the year when we will be preparing for the Regents exam.

Please follow the steps outlined in this packet. You will learn invaluable skills for college and, hopefully, gain a greater appreciation for reading and writing. Some students have even found this project (gasp!) fun and enjoyable.

Contents of Paper
You will begin your paper by fully describing the literary time period. Then, you will transition into introducing a celebrated author from that time period who exemplifies the characteristics of writing during that time. You will give a brief biography of the author. Then you will choose works by the author and analyze how they portray the traits of the literary time period. The final page of your paper will be a works cited page.

Following are more specific guidelines for each requirement of the paper:

1. Thesis and Introduction
   Your thesis needs to be in your introduction. Your thesis should identify the literary time period, explain why it is important, and identify which author follows the style and conventions of that literary time period.

2. Literary Time Period
   - This is the foundation of your paper and should be approximately 3-4 pages in length. In addition to identifying the name and dates of the period, you should
     - explain how historical, social, and/or cultural events influenced the writing style of the time.
     - describe the characteristics of the writing during your period
     - describe the subgenres of the writing period
     - briefly identify key authors/works and their contributions
   - When researching this portion of your paper, you must use your textbook as a source. You MUST use Literary Movements for Students. You may and should use other sources in addition to these, but make sure they are reputable (websites should end in .org or .edu. NO .com! NO WIKIPEDIA).
3. **Author’s Biography**
   - Be sure you transition smoothly from the literary time period to the author’s biography. Introduce your author as being an exemplary figure for portraying the characteristics of your literary time period.
   - The biography should be relatively brief (no more than 2 pages). Include key events from the author’s life, but focus on events that influenced his or her writing. **You MUST** identify major themes and/or conventions the author used throughout his or her works.
   - When researching this portion of your paper, you are expected to use your textbook if your author’s biography appears in it. You are also expected to use *The Concise Dictionary of American Literary Biography* if possible.

4. **Analysis of the Author’s Works in Relation to the Literary Time Period**
   - This is the part of the paper where you must show critical thought. This is the section I will be reading most carefully because it will be where you are applying your knowledge of everything you have researched.
   - **Be very careful with organization for this part of your paper.** You should begin by identifying 3 or 4 characteristics the author uses that correspond to the conventions of the literary time period. (This also creates a smooth transition from the biography to the analysis sections of the paper.) Then trace each characteristic through at least three examples. Remember the format for setting up paragraphs with quotes. You must fully develop each of your examples.
   - What type of author you choose will determine how many works you will need to analyze:
     - Poet -- 3-4 substantial poems
     - Short Story -- 3-4 stories, depending on length
     - Playwright - 2 full-length plays
     - Novelist - 2 novels
   - **Note:** Some authors wrote in multiple genres. It is possible to combine genres. For example, if you choose Sylvia Plath (a poet and novelist), you could analyze *The Bell Jar* and one or two of her poems. If you choose a novelist and have read only one novel by him or her, try to find something shorter he or she wrote in another genre to analyze.
   - **Important:** Choose an author you are familiar with and who you like.
     - Unless you are a very fast reader, you will not have time to begin reading novels you have never read before. You **will** have time to research a poet, playwright, or short story writer who you have never read before, but PLEASE check them out before you commit to them. You want to read literature that you like!
   - **IMPORTANT:** There is to be **NO** research done for this part of the paper. It is expected that your analysis will be yours and yours alone. Any evidence of a researched analysis will result in a plagiarized paper and you will receive a 0.

5. **Works Cited Page**
   - Details will follow
RESEARCH PROCESS

1. Selection
   First, you will need to select a literary time period and an author who you enjoy from that time period. Do some preliminary investigating to be sure you will be happy with what you choose. Get final approval from me before you begin.

2. Source Cards
   a. For every source, record the publication data on an index card. EACH SOURCE GETS ITS OWN CARD.
   b. Assign each source a letter, and note it at the top right of the card. Later, when you’re taking notes, you can label them by source number instead of author and title.
   c. Record the publication data. Specific information about books, videos, web sites, and other sources appears in the back of your text book. You may also reference OWL@purdue for guidance.

   i. Basic Format for a book:
      Last Name, First Name. Title of Book. Publisher, Publication Date.
      Here’s what an example looks like:

   ii. An Article in a Scholarly Journal
      Author(s). "Title of Article." Title of Journal, Volume, Issue, Year, pages.
      Here’s what an example looks like:

   iii. Selection from Book of Works by Several Authors AKA your textbook***
      Last name, First name. "Title of Essay." Title of Textbook/Collection, edited by Editor's Name(s), Publisher, Year, Page range of entry.
      Here’s what an example looks like:

   iv. Citing an Entire Web Site
      It is a good idea to list your date of access because web postings are often updated, and information available on one date may no longer be available later. When using the URL, be sure to include the complete address for the site except for the https://.
      Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). Name of Site. Version number, Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource creation (if available), URL, DOI or permalink. Date of access (if applicable).
      Here’s what an example looks like:
v. **A Page on a Web Site**
   For an individual page on a Web site, list the author or alias if known, followed by the information covered above for entire Web sites. If the publisher is the same as the website name, only list it once.
   
   **Here’s what an example looks like:**

3. **Note Cards**
   - A subheading will go in the top left corner of the index card. Be as specific as possible (ex. Historical influences on period, education of author, works of author, key authors during period, etc)
   - In the top right hand corner of the index card, you will put the source letter, followed by a comma, followed by the page number where you found your information
   - On one of the first few lines of the index card, you will indicate if your information is a Quote (Q), Summary/Common Knowledge (S or CE), or Paraphrase (P)
   - Put one piece of information on your index card

4. **Outline**
   - First, group your index cards by subheading
   - Next, organize your cards for each subheading in a logical order for your paper
   - Then, organize your different subheadings in a logical order for your paper
   - Create an outline -- the different parts of the paper should be the Roman numerals, your subheadings should be the capital letters, and specific details should be regular numbers. You must have at least two, so if you have an A, you must have a B.
   - **Make the information on your outline specific. A good outline will make the paper write itself.**

Example:

**THESIS STATEMENT:**  Toni Morrison is an exemplary author of the Postmodern period because she uses many of the characteristics of the period, such as *trait 1, trait 2, and trait 3*. Make sure you clearly identify the three traits for your author.

*Please note that this outline is not complete. It is just an abridged example to give you an idea of the format.*

I. Literary Time Period
   A. Historical Background
      1. Dates
      2. First major historical occurrence
      3. Second major historical occurrence
   B. Traits
   C. Subcategories
      1. First subcategory
      2. Second category
   D. Other authors/works that shaped the period
II. Author’s Biography
   A. Early Years
      1. Family Life
      2. Education
   B. First Jobs
   C. Major Influences
   D. Career
   E. Themes
   F. Death
   G. Awards

III. Literary Analysis
   A. First Literary Period Trait
      1. First example of this trait
      2. Second example of this trait
      3. Third example of this trait
   B. Second Literary Period Trait
      1. First example of this trait
      2. Second example of this trait
      3. Third example of this trait
   C. Third Literary Period Trait
      1. First example of this trait
      2. Second example of this trait
      3. Third example of this trait

IV. Conclusion

5. Draft your paper, following the outline
HOW TO FORMAT YOUR PAPER

General Guidelines

- Type your paper on a computer and print it out on standard, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper,
- Double-space the text of your paper, and use a legible font like Times New Roman or Courier.
- Set the margins of your document to 1 inch on all sides. Indent the first line of a paragraph one half-inch (five spaces or press tab once) from the left margin.
- Create a header that gives your last name and that numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.
- Use either italics or underlining throughout your essay for the titles of longer works and, only when absolutely necessary, providing emphasis.
- If you have any endnotes, include them on a separate page before your Works Cited page.

Formatting the First Page of Your Paper

- Do not make a title page for your paper unless specifically requested.
- In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date. Again, be sure to use double-spaced text.
- Double space again and center the title. Do not underline your title or put it in quotation marks; write the title in Title Case, not in all capital letters.
- Double space between the title and the first line of the text.

Here is a sample first page of an essay in MLA style:

Smith 1

Pete Smith
Dr. B. Boilermaker
English 101
12 October 2005

Building a Dream: Reasons to Expand Ross-Aide Stadium

During the 2000 football season, the Purdue Boilermakers won the Big Ten Conference Title, earned their first trip to the Rose Bowl in thirty-four years, and played every game in front of a sold-out crowd. Looking ahead...
6. **Create your works cited page**
   Once you have your source cards complete, you will take the information from the cards exactly as it is formatted and transfer it to a works cited page.
   A. On (a) separate page(s) at the end of your paper, list alphabetically by author every work cited in your paper.
   B. List only those sources you actually cited in your paper.
   C. Title the page Works Cited (not Bibliography), at the top of a new page, centered.
   D. Spacing - All entries should be double-spaced, unless your assignment instructs you otherwise.
   E. Indentation - Begin an entry at the margin; indent the remaining lines five spaces.
   F. Source Titles - Underline or italicize titles of books, periodicals, films, and television series (but not individual episodes).

**PRESENTATION**

A large portion of your Final Project is the Presentation. You are required to speak for 5–7 minutes about your author, the time period in which he/she wrote, and any other important information relevant to the project.

You must have some sort of visual component. Your visual must be referenced during your presentation and should offer visual evidence of some kind to prove your points. Your visual should be mostly images (not words) that people in the back of the room can see easily. Your visual should relate to your presentation style. It could be electronic, a poster, a collage, a tri-fold presentation, etc.

Handouts are optional, but if chosen, should be of the highest quality. You will need to plan ahead so that you have the handouts printed and copied before your presentation. This must be done on your time.

Your presentation will be graded on its content, organization, effectiveness of visual, creativity, and your speaking skills. Please sound interested about your subject and make it interesting. If you seem bored, you are practically guaranteed to put your classmates to sleep. Have fun with this. Think outside the box.

You will be graded on the following elements:

- **Presentation** - Your ability to present your ideas clearly and succinctly. Diction, volume and clarity will all be judged. You may use note-cards; however, you may NOT read off them. You may refer to them occasionally.
- **Form and Content** - Your presentation will be judged on your organization of your thoughts and the way in which you choose to display them. Relevance, order, visuals, and handouts will be noted and evaluated.
- **Overall Effectiveness** - The overall effect of your presentation will be evaluated here, and your ability to convey your thoughts and ideas to your audience will be judged.