**Essay 1: Analyzing Character**

**Option #2: Analyzing and Defending the Role of a Minor Character**

Draft of Thesis Statement: on icon Fri, Sept. 18 by 5:00pm

Final Draft: Thurs, Sept. 24 (bring a copy to class and post on icon before class)

**Assignment**

Whereas option #1 asks you to consider a main character’s decision and motivations, option #2 asks you to think about the purpose of minor characters in a work of literature. For this assignment, pick a minor character from *Frankenstein* or from one of the short stories we have read in class and make an argument for why that character is necessary to the story.

**Approach**

Often when analyzing a piece of literature we come across a minor character that at first seems unnecessary. As we examine the structure of the text and the story it tells, we begin to wonder why the author thought this seemingly unnecessary character was a necessary component of the story. We may discover that this character is, among other things, crucial to the plot, to our understanding of main characters, or to our understanding of the themes in a piece of literature. Your job is to discuss the purpose of a minor character.

First, you will want to pick a character that a casual observer might think could be easily cut from the story. Your essay should establish a two-part argument. In the first part of the essay, after your introduction, you will *briefly* (in about **one page**) explain why, at first glance, the character seems expendable. For the remainder of the essay, however, you will hypothesize why the author chose to include this character. Ask yourself the question “What would the piece of literature lose if this character were missing?” You will argue why this element is important and explain its value within the greater arc of the text. In other words, you will argue why this “unnecessary element” is, after all, a necessary component of the story.

Keep in mind that your role is to advocate for the importance of this character to someone who thinks the character should be taken out. Be careful not to summarize the story. Your audience already knows what happens in the story, which means that you will need to call attention to quotations and details that demonstrate why the character is needed.

Finally, you should come to some conclusion about how this character adds to our understanding of the piece of literature. What greater insight can we gain into the text by studying this character?

## Requirements

Your final paper should be **4-6** pages and adhere to MLA format (double spaced, 1” margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, proper headings, parenthetical citations, a works cited page etc.). Improper formatting will affect your grade, so please come see me if you have questions. You are not required to use any sources besides the piece of literature you are discussing, but if you do, you should cite these sources using in-text citations and in the works cited.

I will primarily be grading on the sophistication of your analysis and the thoughtfulness of your evaluation. This is not to say, however, that a comprehensive thesis statement, logical structure, appropriate transitions, and clean grammar and mechanics are less important. On the contrary, all of these elements are essential in the most effective academic writing, and I expect that you pay careful attention to them while you work toward the specific goals of this essay. Strong papers will include both an argumentative thesis statement and strong textual evidence.