

Ends and Beginnings (EN2D5/3D5) Essay Questions

Due on 27 January 2022 (Thursday, Week 3, Term 2)

Finalists: A 3,000-word essay covering term 1 materials and requiring independent development of the topic and independent researching with nineteenth-century primary materials: 3,000 words (40%)

Non-finalists: A 2,500-word essay covering term 1 materials based on set essay titles or on an independently-developed topic approved by your tutor (40%)

General Instructions (all):

You should use no more than TWO texts in your response, but one text will often be sufficient. You may use the text you discussed in your presentation and write-up, provided that there is no overlap in content.

You are encouraged to do some degree of independent research for this assignment, which may include primary materials from the period (historical materials, contemporary criticism from journals or newspapers, other relevant literature, etc.) and/or criticism and theory. Via the library portal, you can access useful databases such as Proquest OneLiterature, Empire Online, Gale News Vault, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, the Times Digital Archives, Project Muse, the MLA International Bibliography, Victorian Database and Victorian Popular Culture. *Remember that recent articles are normally embargoed for several years and will not appear in JSTOR.* Our subject librarian, Kate Courage, Kate.Courage@warwick.ac.uk, can support you with any questions you have about this research.

Those writing on issues related to race and ethnicity may find it useful to read Carolyn Betensky's "Casual Racism in Victorian Literature" (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/victorian-literature-and-culture/article/casual-racism-in-victorian-literature/1B4B3B0538F8B7C6B58E6D839DCFEC92>) when formulating their topics.

Your essay must have a strong central argument/thesis statement, which should appear towards the start. I will be expecting you to do close reading during the essay, commenting on issues such as narrative voice, style, etc. and the way in which these elements contribute to the title you have chosen.

The essay should use parenthetical citations for quotations and have a bibliography. THERE SHOULD BE NO COMMA AFTER THE AUTHOR'S NAME IN PARENTHETICAL CITATIONS.

The preferred style for this module is the MLA. Information on the MLA style can be found at www.mla.org, or via the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html. OWL also offers good guidance on how to formulate a thesis statement. I also recommend *The Craft of Research*, edited by Wayne Booth et al.

Essay Titles for Non-Finalists

Answer **ONE** of the following questions. You are highly encouraged to formulate your own question in consultation with Dr Forman. Finalists who wish to adapt one of the questions below should consult Dr Forman for permission.

1. “To study the literary cosmopolitanism of the *fin de siècle* means to deconstruct this deceptive dichotomy between the national and the foreign by looking for the traces of non-native traditions that are written out of national literary histories” (Evangelista 31).

Write an essay on the tensions between the national and the foreign in one or two of the works studied. Or write an essay on “the traces of non-native traditions” and what it means to recover these traces.

2. How is family life depicted in one or two of the texts for Term 1?
3. What is the significance of time in one or two of the texts from Term 1? (You might think, for instance, about Bobby Roper’s clock in *Child of the Jago* or photographic exposure in *Romance of a Shop* in answering this question.)
4. Write an essay on the relationship between architecture and fiction in any of the works studied.
5. Consider the role played by horses and carriages and/or the omnibus in any of the works from Term 1.
6. “It is to increased wealth and to increased civilisation that we owe the wide gulf which to-day separates well-to-do citizens from the masses. It is the increased wealth of this mighty city which has driven the poor back inch by inch, until we find them today herding together, packed like herrings in a barrel, neglected and despised, and left to endure wrongs and hardships which, if they were related to a far-off savage tribe, would cause Exeter Hall to shudder till its bricks fell down.” (George Sims, *How the Poor Live*, 1883)

Using this comment as a springboard, explore the relationship between wealth, poverty, and responsibility in any of the texts studied during Term 1.

7. How do the authors of any of the texts depict gender and/or class as essentially performative (e.g., Crane’s depiction of working-class masculinity, Grossmith’s middle-class identity, etc.)?
8. Explore the significance of theatricals or other forms of spectacle (such as the penny gaffe) in one or two of the texts from Term 1. You may want to consider how and why the texts contain representations of other genres.
9. Consider the function of the street in one or two of the narratives from this term. How is exterior space different from interior space?

10. Explore the depiction of immigrants to London. (This might include immigrants from other parts of Britain, as well as from Europe, the colonies, or elsewhere.)
11. Consider the function of imperial paranoia about invasion and/or sexual predation in any of the texts studied in Term 1.
12. How are the suburbs or what Matthew Taunton calls the “suburbans” depicted in one or two works from Term 1?
13. Write an essay about the deployment of jealousy or envy in one or two of the works from Term 1.
 1. How is this jealousy or envy related to the urban/suburban setting of your chosen work(s)?

EN2D5/3D5
DR ROSS G. FORMAN

GENERAL TIPS FOR ESSAY WRITING

- Familiarize yourself with the marking descriptors used by the Department. See <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/handbook/teaching/assessment#marking-criteria>.
- Make sure you have an **argument** that you can state in one sentence. This argument encapsulates what your essay is about, what its conclusions are, what its significance is. The sentence describing the **argument** need not appear in your final essay, but you should keep it in mind at all times while writing to make sure you stay focused.
- FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS. Do not try to provide too much background information or to accomplish too much in your essay. Make your topic as narrow as you think you can sustain, given the 3,000-word limit.
- SUPPORT YOUR IDEAS. Support means explaining, expounding, developing *with specific reference to the texts you are discussing*. You will want to practice **close reading** in your essay. That is, you will want to refer to specific passages in the text/moments in the film, etc. and detail how they fit in with your **argument**.
- LINK TOGETHER THE TEXTS, if you are working on an essay involving comparison. There are various ways to compare and contrast the works you are discussing in an essay, but you should make sure that the essay is structured so that texts play off one another. Do not produce two or three mini-essays that do not make a coherent whole.
- COVERAGE. Your essay should engage with critical concepts, where appropriate.
- QUOTATIONS. A good rule of thumb about *quotations* is as follows: your discussion of a quotation should take up as much, if not more, space than the quotation itself. Quotations do not make your argument for you. They need to be contextualized, examined, analyzed.
- CONCLUSIONS. A good conclusion is not a simple summary of your essay. You may want to pose a question, suggest an offshoot of your argument, propose how your reading of the text(s) opens up further areas of study, etc.
- USING CRITICISM. Always keep in mind that you are the author of your essay. Criticism and theory should be tools that you use to say what you want to say about the works under discussion.
- The key to good writing is revision. You may want to ask a peer to read a draft of your work to help you with this. You may also want to plan ahead and get support from the Academic Writing Centre.

- It often is helpful to make a plan or outline of your essay after you have produced a draft. Such a plan will help you discover whether the structure of your essay is coherent and sharp. It will assist you with any reorganization you need to do, as well as with any cutting you may want to undertake.
- Edit and proofread your work carefully. Grammar and punctuation are very important. The “way you say it” is essential to what you say. **Make sure you know how to use possessives and commas in particular, as these are common problem areas for students. Use semicolons sparingly—their function is only to link independent clauses or complex items in a series.**
- *Do not assume that a computer spellcheck program will find all your typos and misspellings.*
- Avoid “run-on” sentences (where several clauses that should be separate sentences are linked together with commas).
- Avoid the passive voice (e.g. “is given,” “was thought”), wherever possible. Passive voice obscures agency and produces lack of clarity.
- **Many people find it helpful to read their work aloud to themselves. This technique allows the writer to hear how the language flows, to determine how smooth the transitions are, etc. It can also help decide how to punctuate a sentence: a long pause means a full stop, a short one a comma.**
- You are expected to produce a proper bibliography and to format footnotes/endnotes correctly, if you use them. The Modern Language Association (MLA) format and the MHRA format are the department’s preferred forms, although I recommend using the MLA style.
- Parenthetical citations should be used for referencing, with a works cited section at the end of the essay. Reserve endnotes/footnotes for editorial comments. Do not include a “Works Consulted” section.
- Note that there is NO comma in a parenthetical citation between the author’s name and the page number. The correct format is: (Marsh 54). Also, the punctuation goes AFTER the closing of the parenthesis.
- You also do not need to include the author’s name in the parenthetical citation unless it is not clear from the context.