

Ends and Beginnings (EN2D5/3D5) Essay Questions

Due on 10 May 2022 (Tuesday, Week 3, Term 2)

Finalists: A 3,000-word essay covering term 2 materials and requiring independent development of the topic and independent researching with nineteenth-century primary materials. (40%)

Non-finalists: A 2,500-word essay covering term 2 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/1B4B3B0538F8B7C6B58E6D839DCFE92>) 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. You may use an individual short story/poem or a set of stories/poems in your response.

1. Explore the representation of sentimentality (often in opposition to “reason”) in one or two texts from Term 2. How is sentimentality a gendered quality?
2. Consider the relationship between suicide and nonconformity in one or two of the texts from Term 2.
3. Analyze the relationship between motifs of commodity and commerce and gender relationships in any TWO texts. You may want to consider how these motifs are connected to debates about the rights of women at the fin de siècle.
4. Write an essay on the relationship between clothing and gender and/or sexuality using one or two of the works from Term 2.
5. How do writers in the fin de siècle rework and/or reject notions of shame? Use one or two texts from Term 2 in your response.
6. Analyze how one or two texts from Term 2 explore issues of reproductive futurity.
7. According to Talia Schaffer in *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian Britain*, women writers of the fin-de-siècle were “required” to achieve humour in their work, humour being considered a particularly female requirement. In addition, they were assumed to be writing self-revelations of their own subjectivity. Analyse how one or more women writers from Term 2 cater to or resist these expectations.
8. Explore the narration of “non-normative” sexualities in any TWO of the texts studied. Among the issues you may wish to consider: How is polygyny/polygamy represented? How do writers handle the gaze, “cross-dressing” narrators (women adopting queer male narrative personae, for instance), and genre (pornography, sexology, confessional writing, fiction, poetry, etc.)? How do literary texts work with theories of homosexuality, notions of sexual “deviancy” and “perversion,” and early frameworks of transgenderism?
9. Explore the relationship between the colonial subject and sexuality in any one or two texts from Term 2. To what degree is this relationship specific to the 1880-1914 era?
10. Analyze the dynamics of frustrated desire (or consummated desire) in one or two texts from Term 2.

11. Discuss the embrace or rejection of “romantic love” by New Woman writers and/or New Women characters in one or two texts from Term 2.
12. Explore the function of melancholy and longing in one or more of the works studied in this term.
13. “Ultimately, the bond of all companionship, whether in marriage or in friendship, is conversation, and conversation must have a common basis, and between two people of widely different culture the only common basis possible is the lowest level.” (Wilde, *De Profundis* 13)

Evaluate this statement with respect to one or texts studied in Term 2.

14. Examine the role of servants in any TWO of the works for this module. You will want to consider such as aspects as class, gender, and mobility in formulating your response.
15. Explore the relationship between motherhood and marriage in any TWO of the works for this module. You may want to consider some of the following in your essay: the representation of motherhood as a burden, ideas of “good” and “bad” mothering, eugenics, and miscegenation.

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.