WRIT 100: Pretty Hurts
Paper I assignment

Your first formal paper will be an extension of the short close reading assignment you completed earlier. Now that you’ve gotten some practice writing about textual details, you’ll pick a second scene from *The Bluest Eye* that you think can be understood in relation to the one you picked for your first close reading. In Paper I, you will analyze the two scenes and then compare them.

Writing your paper in 6 easy steps

1. Pick a second scene
   
   The first thing you’ll need to do is decide on a second scene to analyze. Much as your goal in the short close reading was to show how paying attention to a small piece of text could help us understand something about the whole, your goal in this longer paper should be to show how reading two scenes together can illuminate something about the text as a whole. There should be some textual element present in both scenes that bears analysis and that, when examined closely, has an effect on how we as readers understand the novel as a whole.

2. Close read your second scene
   
   Once you’ve selected your second scene, you should take some time to perform a close reading of just that small piece of text, just as you did for the first close reading. What details stand out to you? Do you notice anything you haven’t noticed before? If you were going to write a close reading of just this one scene, what would your thesis be?

3. Compare the two scenes
   
   Next, look at the two scenes together. What are the similarities? Write down as many as you can, and as many types of similarities as you can. In what ways are these two scenes different? How does each function in terms of the novel as a whole? What’s their role in the plot? What do they tell you about the characters? How do they relate to one another in terms of plot or character?

4. Decide on a structure
   
   At this point, you’ll want to think carefully about how best to structure your paper. You could, of course, have three sections: one that analyzes the first scene, one that analyzes the second, and one that compares the two. But with this kind of structure, you’ll risk repeating yourself, or playing ping pong in the final comparison section. What are the main claims that you want to make about these two scenes? Is there an order that will make more sense to your reader? What information does your reader need first, and what claims need to be saved for last? Aim to let the needs of your particular argument guide the organization of your paper.

5. Write your paper
   
   Use your notes and your conclusions about the best structure for your argument to guide you as you get your ideas all out onto the page.

6. Look back at the beginning and end
   
   You probably had a thesis in mind when you started writing, but once you’ve drafted your paper, take some time and re-visit that thesis. Is your initial thesis actually what you ended up writing about? Often, your argument changes—sometimes substantially—as you work through your analysis. If that’s the case, re-write your thesis to reflect your new argument. Use your conclusion to remind your reader why your argument is important: that is, how does your thesis help your reader better understand the novel?
Who your paper should address

Your audience for this paper should be a hypothetical classmate who has attended class and done the reading, but has not been overly studious or attentive. This classmate will definitely notice if you make an obvious claim, but there is also room to teach her something new about the readings and concepts from class. Your classmate does not need full, detailed summaries of the readings, because she has already read them, but she does need concise reminders to help locate herself in the text and to remind her of what the important points were.

What your paper should do

- Focus on two and only two scenes from The Bluest Eye of no more than a few paragraphs each
- Make an argument that shows how reading the two scenes together, with close attention to textual details, helps us better understand something about the novel
- Use specific textual details to support each claim in the paper, and follow each piece of evidence with analysis explaining how those textual details prove your claim
- Have a brief introduction that introduces your reader to the two scenes you’ll be analyzing, what you’ll be arguing, and why that argument is important
- Have a brief conclusion that reminds your reader what your argument and most important points were, and how and why that argument is important
- Be 1000-1500 words long
- Be formatted according to MLA style

After your paper is written

Peer review and submission instructions

We will conduct peer reviews of your papers in class on Tuesday, Jan. 26. You should bring a copy of your paper with you to class; you should also upload your paper to the “Paper I peer review” folder on Sakai.

After our in-class peer review session, you should revise your paper according to your classmates’ feedback and upload it to the “Paper I” folder on Sakai by midnight on Friday, Jan. 29.

Grading

Paper I is worth 16 points. Two of those points are allocated to peer review, one for submitting a completed draft by the appointed time, and another for participating in the in-class session and submitting feedback. The final paper will be graded on the 14-point scale; for more details on that scale, see the “Grading Scale” handout.

Revisions

While you may continue to revise your paper throughout the semester, your initial revision must be submitted to me by Thursday, Feb. 11 in order to be eligible for further revision. This policy is both to help you keep up with the many writing dates, and to help me comment on and return papers to you in a timely fashion.