

## **Explication Essay**

### ENGL 373: Science Fiction and Fantasy

When we explicate something, we thoroughly explain and analyze it. That is exactly what you'll be doing for this assignment. **In 3-5 pages, you will select a representative paragraph from one of our course texts and thoroughly investigate it as a microcosm of that text.** It's not enough to say that, for example, race is important in *Binti*. Rather, this is your opportunity to show *how* and *why* race is centered as an important theme in the novella, and what effect this has on the text. This is your chance to do a real deep dive into some aspect of your chosen text that interests you. That means that you will:

- Begin by **introducing your paper**. This means that you should identify the author and text and give the context for your selected passage. Where does it fit in the narrative? What about this paragraph makes it particularly useful for our understanding of the text? In your introduction you should also include a specific thesis statement as to how your chosen paragraph helps us understand the text as a whole.
- In your body paragraphs, you should **explicate the chosen paragraph**. This could take several different forms. You might look up words using a dictionary such as the Oxford English Dictionary (which you can reach at <https://guides.lib.purdue.edu/db/oed> and logging in with Boilerkey) and explain how their definitions impart meaning to the scene. You also might explain any metaphors or similes, discussing how they affect the story and how they function within the context of the narrative. You also might identify patterns that you spot—this could be in images, in metaphors, in word choices—and why these patterns are significant. This is also the place where you can explain how certain ideas or details appear in your paragraph that are significant elsewhere in the text.
- Finally, you should conclude by **extrapolating how this moment is significant in relation to at least one other textual moment**. This will allow you to show that this passage is a microcosm of the text, as the same themes, images, etc. appear elsewhere. You will also bring your paper to a satisfying conclusion.

Additionally, you will **submit a transcription of the passage** you have chosen. This may be submitted as a separate document or as the last page in your essay document (NB: the transcription does NOT count as a page of the essay).

You will write **two** of these papers this semester:

- Explication essay 1: Due 10/8 by 11:59 pm
- Explication essay 2: Due 11/19 by 11:59 pm

**Both of these papers must be submitted on Brightspace as a Word doc (.doc or .docx) or PDF. Any other file type will not be accepted and will receive a 0.** Please make sure that your paper is in double spaced 12-point Times New Roman with 1" margins. You should cite all quotes from your text in Chicago or MLA. **Do not use outside sources apart from the OED.**

You may write on any course text that we have read by the time you submit your paper, but you may not write on the same text twice.

### **Grades:**

- An A paper will be well-reasoned and offer depth in its arguments, with a clear thesis and organization and originality in its argument. It will cite the source text carefully and provide detailed close readings.
- A B paper will share many of the features of an A paper, just to a still-developing degree. Its thesis will still be clear, but some of the organization may be redundant or the argument may occasionally be obvious. Its claims may need further development or may need to be pushed further. It will cite the source text but be lacking in its close readings.
- A C paper will be a perfectly average paper. Its thesis will be underdeveloped or surface-level, and the organization will be loosely connected; the argument will remain general or occasionally disconnected. It will cite the source text but may not provide detailed close readings.
- A D paper will be hard to follow. Its thesis will be unfocused, and its organization will be seriously lacking. The argument will not be connected. It will not cite any sources.
- An F paper will be off topic, incoherent, or otherwise severely lacking. A person who fails to turn in their paper will receive an F.