

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

Composition II

Critical Analysis Essay #3 (750 words--3 pages)--Draft Due April 21 in class

**Purpose:** The purpose of this essay is to examine and analyze the portrayal of issues of injustice and oppression presented in works in the Holocaust unit or in a selected work of your choice. When you critically analyze a work, you examine it according to a single principle and then come to a new understanding of the text.

**Think of the categories of reading that we have discussed: Text/Self --Text/Text--Text/World connections.**

You may analyze a work and focus on its emotional impact on you; you may analyze a work and concentrate on its theme or message and aspects of the work that build that message ; or you may evaluate a work and determine its effectiveness. For example, you may analyze *MAUS* and discuss your main emotional responses to the work at the beginning, middle, and end of the text. Your main emotional response becomes the thesis or your essay. OR You may focus on one theme, for example, the depiction of brutality of the Polish peasants in *The Painted Bird* and the aspects of the text (characters, action, symbols) that present this theme and message. OR You may examine the novel and suggest issues and questions that it provokes you to ask about human nature, state of the world, etc. OR you may analyze the novel in order to determine why is it such an effective work portraying the Holocaust.. You will create your criteria for effectiveness; such criteria might include presentation of characters, use of detail, drama—you decide. In the case of *MAUS*, you might want to explore how the cartoon, the visual detail, works—is it effective?

**Readings:** *The Painted Bird* and *MAUS*, selected oral histories, stories, and art work; *Legacies*, Chapter 3, Checklist for Peer Evaluation, pp. 32-33

**Topics:**

1. Choose an artwork or a song and discuss its treatment of injustice or message of social protest. Focus on the theme of the work and the aspects of the work that develop the theme. Note: If you are using a song, I need the lyrics. Provide an introduction to the work in the opening paragraph.
2. Compare modes of survival for two characters in the selected Holocaust works, oral histories, or stories that we have read.
3. Compare one of the selected artworks that I have distributed in class and compare the vision of the Holocaust presented in the work with that of *MAUS* or *The Painted Bird* or one of the selected stories.
4. Discuss **one** of these topics in relation to **one** of the two novels: treatment of children, inhumanity, suffering, heroism, and the aftermath of the Holocaust for survivors.
5. What makes *MAUS* an effective Holocaust memoir? How does it draw you in as a reader? Establish your standards of judgement (e.g., use of visuals, effective detail, realism, and honesty) and then use evidence--specific examples from the work--to support your standards of evaluation and your overall opinion. OR You may choose *The Painted Bird*.
6. Research option: Do online research. Find a survivor's testimony online. Turn the testimony into a narrative poem. Then write a critical essay discussing the vision of the Holocaust presented in the poem. Turn in the testimony, poem, and essay.
7. Discuss your emotional response to one of the works that we've studied during the Holocaust unit. Or you may choose an artwork, poem, or song. Make sure to include the aspects of the work that provoke your reaction.
8. Create a Holocaust poem, diary entries for a fictional character, or a short, short story or vignette. Then critique your own work. Discuss its vision of the Holocaust.
9. Should *MAUS* or *The Painted Bird* be required reading in a high school English class/ Present your views on this issue. Use evidence from the text to support your argumentative position. See attached format for an argument essay.

Formats for the Critical Analysis Essay:

Procedures:

1. Do several free writes, clusters, or journal entries to determine a topic.
2. Move from journal and free writes to an outline and draft.
3. Bring a draft to class for peer review.
4. Turn in your peer review sheet, rough and final drafts to be graded.