

English 202: Introduction to American Literature  
Professor John Edward Martin

Mid-term Exam Essay Question

Read the whole question and plan your answer accordingly. Make sure that you explain and define any necessary terms, utilize the required number of texts, and try to offer some diversity of examples.

“Romance, an exploration of anxiety imported from the shadows of European culture, made possible the sometimes safe and other times risky embrace of quite specific, understandably human fears: America’s fear of being outcast, of failing, of powerlessness; their fear of boundarylessness, of Nature unbridled and crouched for the attack; their fear of the absence of so-called civilization; their fear of loneliness, of aggression both external and internal. In short, the terror of human freedom—the thing they coveted most of all.”

Tony Morrison, “Playing in the Dark” (1992)

Explain **what you think Morrison means** by “the terror of human freedom” and how the literature that we’ve read expresses and accounts for that terror. Try to offer **at least three specific examples** from different authors that illustrate some of the fears that Morrison refers to. Then explain **how each author attempts to explain or reconcile such fears** to the ideals and values of the new nation.

Format:

This essay should be *no more* than 2-2.5 typed pages in length. Use a normal 10 or 12-point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, and page numbers. Make sure your name, the class and section number, and my name appears at the top of the first page.

Use proper grammar, style, and spelling in your essay. I *will* deduct points for these elements.

Cite any sources or quotes using proper MLA format. Use *only* the texts assigned for class and any notes that you’ve taken in lecture and discussion.

Bring your typed essay to class on the day of the exam, where you’ll attach it to the in-class, short-answer portion.

This essay will be worth 40% of the exam grade.

You are on your honor to write this essay on your own, without the aid of any other persons or outside sources, and in the allotted time. Any suspected plagiarism will be investigated and punished with a failing grade and referral to the dean of the school for disciplinary action. Sign your name below to acknowledge that you understand these terms.

Student: \_\_\_\_\_