

War of the Worlds:

H.G. Wells wrote this story of the Martian attack on England. These unearthly creatures arrive in huge cylinders, from which they escape as soon as the metal is cool. The first falls near Woking and is regarded as a curiosity rather than a danger until the Martians climb out of it and kill many of the gaping crowd with a Heat-Ray. These unearthly creatures have heads four feet in diameter and colossal round bodies, and by manipulating two terrifying machines – the Handling Machine and the Fighting Machine – they are as versatile as humans and at the same time insuperable. They cause boundless destruction. The inhabitants of the Earth are powerless against them, and it looks as if the end of the World has come. But there is one factor which the Martians, in spite of their superior intelligence, have not reckoned on. It is this which brings about a miraculous conclusion to this famous work of the imagination.

The Canterbury Tales-At the Tabard Inn, a tavern in Southwark, near London, the narrator joins a company of twenty-nine pilgrims. The pilgrims, like the narrator, are traveling to the shrine of the martyr Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The narrator gives a descriptive account of twenty-seven of these pilgrims, including a Knight, Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk, Man of Law, Franklin, Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, Tapestry-Weaver, Cook, Shipman, Physician, Wife, Parson, Plowman, Miller, Manciple, Reeve, Summoner, Pardoner, and Host. (He does not describe the Second Nun or the Nun's Priest, although both characters appear later in the book.) The Host, whose name, we find out in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale, is Harry Bailey, suggests that the group ride together and entertain one another with stories. He decides that each pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. Whomever he judges to be the best storyteller will receive a meal at Bailey's tavern, courtesy of the other pilgrims. The pilgrims draw lots and determine that the Knight will tell the first tale.

1984—George Orwell

In 1984, London is a grim city where Big Brother is always watching you and the Thought Police can practically read your mind. Winston is a man in grave danger for the simple reason that his memory still functions. Drawn into a forbidden love affair, Winston finds the courage to join a secret revolutionary organization called The Brotherhood, dedicated to the destruction of the Party. Together with his beloved Julia, he hazards his life in a deadly match against the powers that be.

Catch-22—Joseph Heller:

“Set in Italy during World War II, this is the story of the incomparable, malingering bombardier, Yossarian, a hero who is furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. But his real problem is not the enemy—it is his own army, which keeps increasing the number of missions the men must fly to complete their service. Yet if Yossarian makes any attempt to excuse himself from the perilous missions he's assigned, he'll be in violation of Catch-22, a hilariously sinister bureaucratic rule: a man is considered insane if he willingly

continues to fly dangerous combat missions, but if he makes a formal request to be removed from duty, he is proven sane and therefore ineligible to be relieved.”

The Scarlet Letter

Set in 17th-century Puritan New England, this story of illicit passion, guilt and punishment revolves around the beautiful and mysterious Hester Prynne. She is condemned to wear a scarlet letter as a sign of her adultery, and it has a strange and disturbing effect upon those around her - neighbors, husband, lover and child. The student will find a helpful introduction and a full section of resource notes encouraging active and imaginative study methods.

Assignment:

Assignment – Due 1st Week of School Students are to read one nonfiction book from the list provided and write a literary critique using the structured outline below.

Paragraph I: Summary

Provide a brief synopsis of the book to better acquaint your reader with the work. Brief is the key word! If your summary comprises half of the essay, your response will feel unbalanced. It is important to provide an adequate amount of information without giving too much away. Begin your critique with a great quote from the book or some interesting fact. Also include the book's title, author, publication date, and any other information that might be helpful to the reader.

Paragraph II: Identify

Identify the main theme of the work. What is the book about? What is the central idea or message the author is trying to convey? What is the major lesson to be learned? Once you have identified the major theme/s of the work, consider whether or not you believe it was conveyed effectively. Was this story a good vehicle to transfer this theme to you as the reader? Why or why not? Use specific evidence from the text to support your argument.

Paragraph III: Criticism

Be the critic. Beyond the theme, was this a good story? What did you like about it? Consider the general plot, characters, writer's style and voice, narration, subject matter, etc. What was the author able to do effectively? What did you dislike about it? How did the author fall short of your hopes and expectations? What did they do poorly? How might the book be better improved?

Paragraph IV:

Consideration How has this book changed your opinion of the world around you? Consider how this work has altered your perceptions of the topic discussed in the book. Did your opinion on the subject change at all from start to finish? How would you have felt about it before reading the novel? How do you feel now? What specific details from the work compelled this change? If there has been no change, explain what the author could or should have done to better do so.

Paragraph V:

Recommendation What is your recommendation regarding this work? Would you encourage a friend or classmate to read it? Would you tell them to avoid it at all cost? Provide some closure to your response with final thoughts on the work. Restate the title, author, and major theme/s of

the work, as well as appropriate (to your overall opinion) description of the work. Provide your recommendation, for or against the work. Restate the work's ability, or lack thereof, to compel the reader and creatively find some way to end your critique.

Example of Paragraph V: *Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck is a gripping work that beautifully depicts the importance of dreams and friendship in society. I would highly recommend this work to any reader looking to explore such topics. Through its simple style and structure it is able to encompass themes much larger than its size and has changed my view on the necessity for true friendship. As George says to Lenny, "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place. . . . With us it ain't like that. We got a future."