

Essay #2

Length: 1,500 words

Due Date: in lecture, April 3rd

Late penalty: 5% per day

Write an essay approx. 1,500 words in length on one of the following topics. These are very general; be sure to narrow the topic and form a clear thesis statement. Be sure to support your argument with direct references to the text.

1. What ambiguities does Shakespeare build into the world of *Hamlet*? Why?
2. Why is Ophelia in *Hamlet*?
3. Hamlet spends most of the play doing nothing. Then, in his last minutes, he turns into a revenging hero. What happened?
4. Discuss the representation of sexuality in *Hamlet*.
5. Is Hamlet ever really mad?
6. What is the significance of Hamlet's love of theatre?
7. If it were not for Krogstad's extortion plot, Nora would never have told Helmer her secret, much less left him. She would have been happy to remain his "pet." Discuss.
8. The healthiest relationship in *A Doll House* is that between Krogstad and Mrs. Linde. Discuss.
9. What is the significance of the costumes, and especially costume changes, in *A Doll House*?
10. The characters in *A Doll House* are all prisoners of heredity. Discuss.
11. How does the action of *A Doll House* trace the growth of Nora's self-awareness and lead to her final decision to leave Helmer?
12. *Waiting for Godot* can (or should) be read not as an abstract nihilistic comedy, but as a depiction of post-religious existence. Discuss.
13. *Waiting for Godot* is about our need to avoid the failure we know is inevitable. Discuss.
14. One of Beckett's favourite quotations was from the philosopher Democritus: "Nothing is more real than nothing." This is the theme of *Waiting for Godot*. Discuss.
15. In *Angels in America*, Cohn epitomizes the hypocrisy of late 20th-century American political life. Discuss.
16. *Angels in America* is structured more like a movie than a play. Discuss.
17. How does AIDS, in *Angels in America*, function as a metaphor of late 20th-century life in America?
18. Discuss the use of apocalyptic imagery in *Angels in America*.
19. The great theme of *Angels in America* is that the personal and political cannot be separated. Discuss.