



# Writing a Critical Lens Essay

ELA Regents  
Session Two - Part B  
Task 4



# Your Task:

Write a **critical essay** in which you discuss **two works** of literature you have read from the particular perspective of the statement that is provided for you in the Critical Lens.

In your essay, provide a **valid interpretation** of the statement, **agree or disagree** with the statement as you have interpreted it, and **support your opinion using specific references** to appropriate **literary elements** from the works.



# Literary Elements

- **CHARACTERIZATION**

- the various means an author uses to describe and develop characters (direct/indirect)

- **CONFLICT**

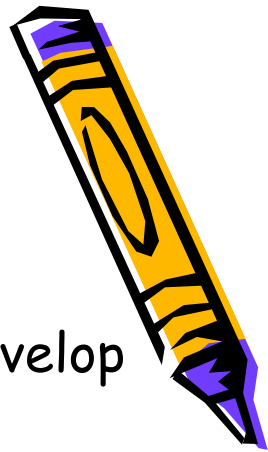
- a confrontation or struggle between opposing forces  
(Man v. Man ; Man v. Self ; Man v. Nature ; Man v. Society)

- **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

- descriptions that associate or compare distinct things  
(simile ; metaphor ; alliteration ; personification ; hyperbole)

- **FLASHBACK**

- a scene that interrupts the present action to depict some earlier event



# Literary Elements



- **FORESHADOWING**

- an author's use of hints or clues to suggest events that will occur later in a story

- **IMAGERY**

- the use of language to convey a visual picture or represent a sensory experience

- **IRONY**

- a contradiction between what is expected (or what appears to be) and what actually happens

- **PLOT**

- the sequence of events in a literary work  
exposition - rising action - climax - falling action - resolution



# Literary Elements



- **POINT OF VIEW**

- the perspective from which a narrative is told  
*first-person "I" ; third-person (omniscient/limited)*

- **SETTING**

- the time and place of the action in a literary work

- **SYMBOLISM**

- anything that stands for or represents something else

- **THEME**

- the central messages revealed through a literary work

- **TONE**

- the writer's attitude toward his or her audience and subject

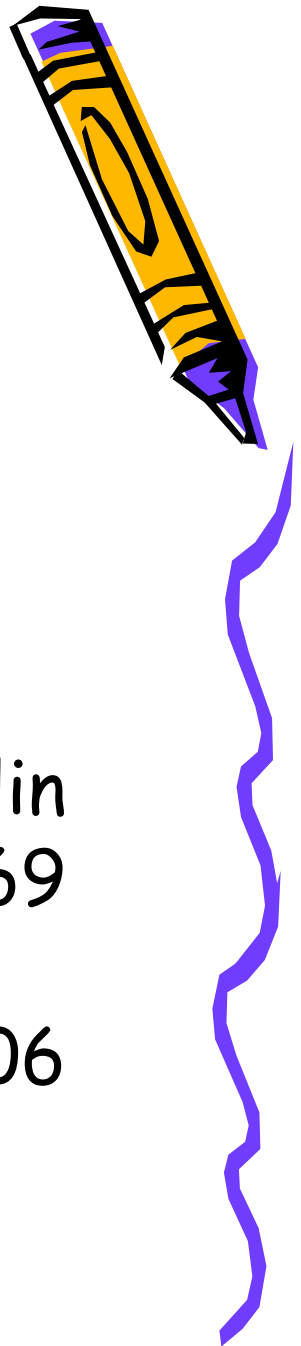


# Critical Lens:

"To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else."

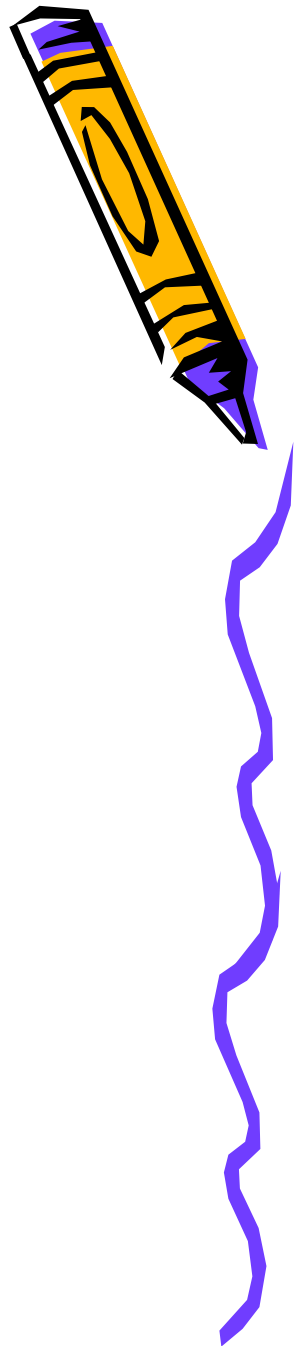
—Bernadette Devlin  
*The Price of My Soul*, 1969

Aug. '06



# Critical Lens: *Structure*

- Introduction
- Body Paragraph 1
  - Literary Work 1
  - Literary Element 1
- Body Paragraph 2
  - Literary Work 2
  - Literary Element 2
- Conclusion



# Introduction:

## FOUR STEPS:

1. Introduce/State Quote
2. Interpret Quote
3. Agree or Disagree with the Quote
4. Thesis



# Introduction:

## STEP ONE:

### 1. State Quote

Bernadette Devlin once said, "To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else."

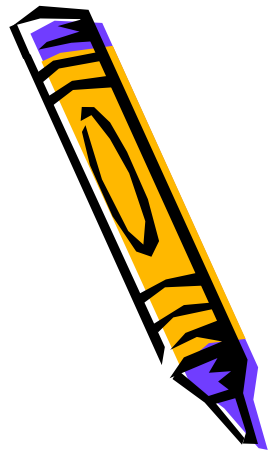


# Introduction:

## STEP TWO:

### 2. Interpret Quote

This quotation means that it is sometimes necessary to give up what we have in order to attain something even greater.



# Introduction:

## STEP THREE:

### 3. Agree or Disagree with the Quote

I agree with this quotation, as it holds true in life and in literature.



# Introduction:

## STEP FOUR:

### 4. Thesis

Both (title of literary work 1) by (author of literary work 1) and (title of literary work 2) by (author of literary work 2) support the idea that some things worth having cannot be gained without sacrifice.



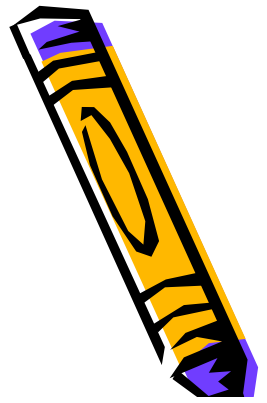
# Introduction:



Bernadette Devlin once said, "To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else." This quotation means that it is sometimes necessary to give up what we have in order to attain something greater. I agree with this quotation, as it holds true in life and in literature. Both (title of literary work 1) by (author of literary work 1) and (title of literary work 2) by (author of literary work 2) support the idea that some things worth having cannot be gained without sacrifice.



# Introduction:



Lessons of life are learned through various circumstances. In many cases, personal gain is the result of personal loss. Bernadette Devlin once said, "To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else." We all have things that we really long for in life, but some dreams cannot be met without sacrifice. Characters from The Crucible, written by Arthur Miller, and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, written by Mark Twain, teach readers that if they really want to gain importance and happiness in life, they have to let go of other things that have routinely become a part of who they are.



# Body Paragraph 1:



## FIVE STEPS:

### 1. Topic Sentence

- The novel \_\_\_\_\_ shows that \_\_\_\_\_.

### 2. Transition Statement/Literary Element

- One way (author/work) proves this point is through (insert literary element)

### 3. Define Literary Element

### 4. Connect Lens and Literary Element

### 5. Concluding Sentence



# Body Paragraph 1:

## STEP ONE:

### 1. Topic Sentence

The novel (title of literary work 1) demonstrates that in order to gain that which we truly desire, we must sometimes give up all that we have.



# Body Paragraph 1:

## STEPS TWO & THREE:

2. Transition Statement/Literary Element
3. Define Literary Element

One way this work proves this point is through theme. Theme is the central messages revealed through a literary work.



# Body Paragraph 1:

## STEP FOUR:

### 4. Connect Lens and Literary Element

Provide and Explain **TWO** Examples from the Novel that Support the Quote using the Literary Device you have Selected.



# Body Paragraph 1:



The Crucible is a story about a witch hunt in Salem, Massachusetts. John Proctor was a down-to-earth everyday Puritan farmer who was accused of being a witch and was given a critical choice to make, either to confess and go on living life, or to deny and be killed. The ironic thing about this situation is that every single person who was accused of being a witch was, in fact, not a witch whatsoever. However, this was a pivotal point in every accused person's life. It was either the key to life or the key to death. John Proctor chose death. He wouldn't allow himself to lie just so he could save his mortal body. He died with honor, standing up for truth.

This reflects an important theme in Arthur Miller's play. In order to uphold righteousness, we must be willing to give up things that are most dear to us. For John Proctor, this entailed his own life, not to mention his wife and children.

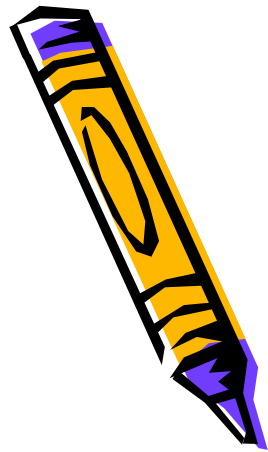
# Body Paragraph 1:

## STEP FIVE:

### 5. Concluding Sentence

Write a concluding sentence that ties your paragraph's main idea back to your thesis.

Despite our loss, Miller suggests we benefit from sacrifice. In Proctor's case, his and his family's reputation remained intact.



# Body Paragraph 2:



## FIVE STEPS:

### 1. Topic Sentence

- The novel \_\_\_\_\_ shows that \_\_\_\_\_.

### 2. Transition Statement/Literary Element

- One way (author/work) proves this point is through (insert literary element)

### 3. Define Literary Element

### 4. Connect Lens and Literary Element

### 5. Concluding Sentence



# Body Paragraph 2:

## STEPS ONE, TWO, & THREE:

1. Topic Sentence
2. Transition Statement/Literary Element
3. Define Literary Element

(Title of literary work 2) by (author of literary work 2)  
*also* demonstrates through (insert second literary device) that in order to gain that which we truly desire, we must sometimes give up all that we have.  
(Define second literary device.)



# Body Paragraph 2:

## STEP FOUR:

### 4. Connect Lens and Literary Element

Provide and Explain **TWO** Examples from the Novel that Support the Quote using the Literary Device you have Selected.



# Body Paragraph 2:



In Huckleberry Finn, a young boy by the name of Huck Finn, encounters many adventures, <sup>while</sup> in search of happiness and liberty. He met many different people along the way who affected his life in one way or another. As a result, he battled between choosing a civilized or an uncivilized lifestyle. People like Widow Douglas and Miss Watson told him that he ought to live a civil life and wanted him trained and molded to fit into society's standards. On the other hand, he was drawn to the lack of restrictions that a life on his own in nature allowed. This often left Huck feeling confused as he continued on his ~~own~~ journey, and faced further conflict. Huck didn't know which life to choose. Would wearing button-up white collared shirts, fancy pants, and expensive shoes make him happy? Would the rest of society accept him then? He was so used to smoking, "cussin'", and living around freely, doing what he wanted, when he wanted. Huck had to pick which life he wanted to live. This conflict helped further develop Huck's character. In the beginning of the novel, Huck didn't really care about anything but himself and his own self-interests. He did everything for himself, no matter how it would affect others. As the story goes on, however, Huck learns the importance of valuing other people and their opinions.




# Body Paragraph 2:

## STEP FIVE:

### 5. Concluding Sentence

Write a concluding sentence that ties your paragraph's main idea back to your thesis.



In order

for him to learn this lesson, he had to give up some really old and learned habits so that he could gain companionship and happiness in the end. This included "civilized" teachings that supported slavery and would have had him turning Jim over to bounty hunters rather than plotting to free him.

# Conclusion:

## FIVE STEPS:

1. Introduce/State Quote
2. Interpret Quote
3. Agree or Disagree with the Quote
4. Thesis
  - The novel \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ supports/does not support the idea that (reword the quote).
5. Concluding Sentence (that ties the main ideas of the paper back to the critical lens)

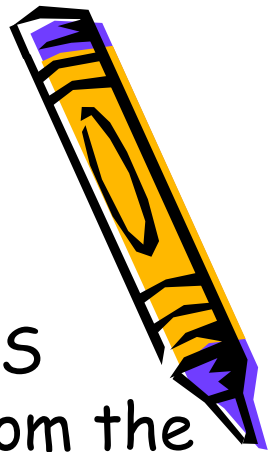


# Your Task:

Write a **critical essay** in which you discuss JOHN KNOWLES' NOVEL A SEPARATE PEACE and JAMES HURST'S SHORT STORY "THE SCARLET IBIS" from the Perspective of the Critical Lens Statement provided.

**YOU *MUST* USE *THEME* AS THE LITERARY ELEMENT WHEN YOU WRITE ABOUT A SEPARATE PEACE!!**

In your essay, provide a **valid interpretation** of the statement, **agree or disagree** with the statement as you have interpreted it, and **support your opinion using specific references to appropriate literary elements** from the works.



# Guidelines:

## Be sure to

- Provide a valid interpretation of the critical lens that clearly establishes the criteria for analysis
- Indicate whether you agree *or* disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it
- Choose *two* works you have read that you believe best supports your opinion
- Use the criteria suggested by the critical lens to analyze the work you have chosen
- Avoid plot summary. Instead, use specific references to appropriate literary elements (for example: theme, characterization, setting, point of view) to develop your analysis
- Organize your ideas in a unified and coherent manner
- Specify the titles and authors of the literature you choose
- Follow the conventions of standard written English



# Critical Lens Options:



- "In literature, evil often triumphs but never conquers."
- "The bravest of individuals is the one who obeys his or her conscience." - J.F. Clarke
- "Good literature substitutes for an experience which we have not ourselves lived through." - Alexander Solzhenitsyn
- "It is not what an author says, but what he or she *whispers*, that is important." - Logan Pearsall Smith
- "It is the responsibility of the writer to expose our many grievous faults and failures and to hold up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams, for the purpose of improvement." - John Steinbeck
- "All conflict in literature is, in its simplest form, a struggle between good and evil."
- "All literature shows us the power of emotion. It is emotion, not reason, that motivates characters in literature." - Duff Brenna
- "Good people... are good because they've come to wisdom through failure " - William Saroyan