



Final Exam – American Literature from 1900

Short Answer (40 points, 30 minutes)

Write three to four sentences, identifying and explaining the significance (thematically, stylistically, and/or symbolically) of the following passages:

- A. The Russia wants to eat us alive. The Russia's power mad. She wants to take our cars from out our garages.
 Her wants to grab Chicago. Her needs a Red *Reader's Digest*. Her wants our auto plants in Siberia. Him big bureaucracy running our fillingstations.
 That no good. Ugh. Him make Indians learn read. Him need big black niggers.
 Hah. Her make us all work sixteen hours a day. Help.

- B. ... i like to feel the spine
 of your body and its bones, and the trembling
 -firm-smooth ness and which i will
 again and again and again
 kiss, i like kissing this and that of you,
 i like, slowly stroking the, shocking fuzz
 of your electric fur, and what-is-it comes
 over parting flesh ... And eyes big love-crumbs

- C. ... The grass is full
 And full of yourself. The trees around are for you,
 The whole of the wideness of night is for you,
 A self that touches all edges,
 You become a self that fills the four corners of night.
 The red cat hides away in the fur-light
 And there you are humped high, humped up,
 You are humped higher and higher, black as stone—
 You sit with your head like a carving in space
 And the little green cat is a bug in the grass.

- D. If you walk along the main street on an August afternoon there is nothing whatsoever to do. The largest building, in the very center of the town, is boarded up completely and leans so far to the right that it seems bound to collapse at any minute ... sometimes in the late afternoon when the heat is at its worst a hand will slowly open the shutter and a face will look down on the town. It is a face like the terrible dim faces known in dreams—sexless and white, with two gray crossed eyes which are turned inward so sharply that they seem to be exchanging with each other one long and secret gaze of grief.



Long Essay (60 points, 60 minutes)

Pick one of the following topics and write 4-5 paragraphs on it, not retelling the stories and not just stating that the theme is there, but making specific points as to what's being said/shown about that particular theme in the works. Of course, how you say something is as important as what you're trying to say, so choose your words carefully and don't oversimplify what's being said/shown in these great works of literature.

1. Discuss the theme of **work**—how it defines people, what a person's approach to it says about that person, what role it plays in people's lives, etc.—as seen in four of the following works: "The Wood-Pile," *O Pioneers*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *Tortilla Flat*, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, and/or "America."
2. Discuss the theme of **ownership** (property and/or land)—what advantages and disadvantages come with it, how it affects people's lives and the society around them, etc.—as seen in four of the following works: *O Pioneers*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *Tortilla Flat*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and/or *The Ballad of the Sad Café*.
3. Discuss the themes of **marriage and/or romantic relationships**—how they can define, limit, or enhance people's lives, what one's approach to it says about a person, what makes a healthy marriage, etc.—as seen in four of the following works: *O Pioneers*, *The Age of Innocence*, "This Is Just to Say," "The Ice Palace," *A Farewell to Arms*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and/or "Marriage."
4. Discuss the themes of **living for one's self vs. living for others** (commitment and responsibility to ourselves and others, whether in terms of ideals, dreams, aspirations, or whatever) in four of the following works: "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening," *The Age of Innocence*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *Tortilla Flat*, and/or *The Ballad of the Sad Café*.
5. Discuss the theme of **gender roles**—how some societies associate certain activities, jobs, and behavior with one gender and not the other, the effects of that, whether it can and/or should be overcome, etc.—as seen in the following works: *O Pioneers*, *The Age of Innocence*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *The Ballad of the Sad Café*.
6. Discuss the theme of **religious faith**—what constitutes faith, what role does it play in people's lives, etc.—as seen in the following works: *Desire Under the Elms*, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *A Farewell to Arms*, and *Tortilla Flat*.