

English 11 Honors Research Paper

200 Points

We began our journey into American literature by watching the video "America is Not the Greatest Country in the World Anymore" from a 2012 episode of the *Newsroom*. You will recall that a TV news anchor finds himself on a journalism panel between two stark examples of the partisan divide present in the country today. The anchor, Will McAvoy, is likewise divided as he navigates a past glorious career on a major network to his present declining (both personally and professionally) reality on a small cable channel. Will is asked, "Can you say why America is the greatest country in the world?" Initially the anchor ducks and says, "The New York Jets." But upon reflection and forced by a moderator who demands a "human moment," Will confesses, "'It isn't" followed by "But it can be." (See [full speech and video](#))

Will's speech simultaneously eviscerates and romanticizes the nation, its past and its present. It catalogs the glory of the country: its mythology, its laws, and its people, and then launches into the metrics of its decline. It leaves audiences with a compelling sense of ambivalence that forces us to consider the nuances of our existence: where we have been as a nation, and where we have arrived, and most importantly, where we go from here.

This term paper requires you to answer the question:

Is America the greatest country?

The Assignment:

In a 4 to 6-page paper you are to answer the question in a universal thesis claim (no insight necessary since essays written outside of class always require this sort of claim). Your focus for this essay is

- The question in the prompt (note the main idea)
- This examination requires you to
 - Use as your support TWO novels we have studied in this course
 - Two literary periods (subgenres count as a literary period) with at least two works from that period (so two works from say, Transcendentalism and two works from Naturalism). This means **SIX different** documents or stories and actual evidence/quotes from those works.
- A minimum of 10 parenthetical citations (with corresponding S/M/M)
- A Works Cited with a minimum of SIX sources (1. first novel; 2. second novel; 3 and 4. two sources from literary period No. 1; and 5 and 6. two sources from literary period No. 2.

The assessment of this analysis is based on both content and mechanics. Allow time for proofreading and editing of rough draft, revised draft, and final copy is essential. Any paper turned-in with an excessive number of diction, spelling, punctuation, and/or sentence structure errors because necessary time was not allotted for editing and revision will be returned to the student ungraded. The student will have three days to make the necessary corrections, and will earn a grade no higher than 65%. This project has a maximum value of 200 points.

Note: You will use as your sources the works assigned you, which are the reading packets and the textbook. You will also cite your version of the novels. DO NOT GO TO ONLINE SOURCES AS YOUR REFERENCE.

Works Cited

Newfield, Jack. "Stallone vs. Springsteen." *Unit 4: Literary Nationalism and*

Romanticism. Course Reader. Eds. Rachael Gerber. El Segundo, CA: El Segundo High School, 2010. 3. Print.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden. United States in Literature*. Eds. James E. Miller, Jr. et al. 1st ed. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1979. 232-233. Print.

Additional Help
See [MLA Packet](#)
In text citations

Common Errors in the Term Paper

In no particular order

- Thesis literal and/or simplistic
- Thesis a fact (not arguable)
- Thesis not universal
- No transitions between paragraphs
- Syllogisms
- Leap in logic between introduction and thesis
- Concluding sentences in body paragraphs MUST revisit the thesis
- Speculation – “If America was a socialist country, it would not be experiencing these problems.”
- No Uni-T
- Random and undefined use of the word “truly”

- Inner self, true identity, true self, inner being are clichéd and say nothing. Say what you mean.
- Use of the “true American” – not defined, specific or accurate
- Lack of evidence
- Lack of examples
- Lack of explanations
- MLA – particularly in-text citations (even spacing – double, no more, no less)
- Essay Organization
- Lack of SMM
- Topic Sentences
 - Not specific to the work but universal
 - Does not support thesis
 - Is the thesis
 - Does not evidence an argument but presents a fact
- Transitions – missing or choppy
- TLQ – Missing or after the quote
- Reference to the quote (this quote shows)
- Use of examples outside of class, not advisable or necessary
- Overly simplistic and obvious comparisons and thinking
- Random punctuation
- Tense between fiction and non-fiction
- Taboos (in order to, being, thing – first and second person)
- Unfounded conclusions – “Americans traveled West, which demonstrated the essence of true Americanism.”
- Strive is not a noun
- Rhetoric without explanation
- Know the figurative lang and rhetorical terms
- Abstract noun or thesis becomes secondary and superficial
- No quotes pages – go to original source
- Conclusions – specific to general (spool shape – must answer the so what, why does it matter)
- Pathological inattention to MLA for in text citations – egregious
- Unresponsive thesis statement
- Generalizations
- “once said”
- Our, we, us = first person and not at all good
- Changing nouns to verbs
- Mis-spelling of tenet (to tenant – which is someone who occupies a space)
- Vague language (“What America is today”)

English 11 Honors Research Paper (420 Points)

	Student				
Development of thesis statement in text Thesis established, maintained, developed	1	2	3	4	5
Arrangement, relevance and employment of quotations from text to support analysis Say/Mean/Matter	1	2	3	4	5
	_____ x 10 = _____				
Overall organization of work	1	2	3	4	5
Wording and phrasing	1	2	3	4	5
	_____ x 5 = _____				
Grammar and sentence structure	1	2	3	4	5
Punctuation and capitalization	1	2	3	4	5
Minimum Requirements for paper Minimum of 4 pages, Max of 6 pages Six sources/10 in-text citations 2 supporting novels/2 historical units/2 works under each	1	2	3	4	5
MLA form in paper	1	2	3	4	5
Citations consistent with Works Cited	1	2	3	4	5
	_____ 2 = _____				
Comments	Subsection I Total _____ Subsection II Total _____ Subsection III Total _____				
	Total Sections _____/200 Letter Grade _____				

Legend

5- The student demonstrates superior abilities and skills and exceptional attitude; writing offers unique perspective and creative thoughts.

4 – The student demonstrates above average abilities, skill and attitude; writing offers good awareness with some creative speculation.

3- The student demonstrates suitable abilities, skills and attitude; writing offers accurate but common awareness

2 – The student demonstrates elementary abilities, rudimentary skills and indifferent attitude; writing offers limited perspective and simple awareness.

1 – The student demonstrates substandard outcomes; writing is off task with faulty awareness.

DOMAIN	1 Very Weak	2 Marginal	3 Adequate	4 Strong	5 Superior
MLA Formatting	Author demonstrates substandard ability or complete indifference in adhering to MLA guidelines, resulting in an unacceptable amount of formatting errors; Works Cited page exhibits negligent research and documentation of sources, and contains an unacceptable amount of formatting errors; Paper violates minimum or maximum length requirements.	Author demonstrates limited adherence to or is neglectful or negligent in adhering to MLA guidelines, resulting in an excess of formatting errors: document margins, spacing, font type and size, heading contents, page header, title; Works Cited page contains less than required amount of source entries; substantial bibliographic information is missing from source entries and often disordered; Paper meets length requirements.	Author demonstrates suitable adherence to MLA formatting and guidelines, though noticeable errors exist: document margins, spacing, font type and size, heading contents, presence of header, title; Works Cited page contains required amount of source entries; source entries contain bibliographic information, though necessary data is missing; Paper meets length requirements.	Author is mostly consistent in adhering to MLA formatting and guidelines: document margins, spacing, font type and size, heading contents, presence of header, title; Works Cited page contains required amount of source entries; all source entries are cataloged alphabetically and contains almost all necessary bibliographic information, mostly organized in the correct order; Paper meets length requirements.	Author demonstrates exemplary adherence to MLA formatting and guidelines: document margins, spacing, font type and size, heading contents, presence of header, title; Works Cited page contains required amount of source entries; all source entries are cataloged alphabetically and contain essential bibliographic information in the correct order; Paper meets length requirements.
Understanding and use of the text	Demonstrates very poor understanding of the main points of the text, does not use the text appropriately or in developing a response.	Demonstrates some understanding of the text, but may misconstrue parts of it or make limited use of it in developing a weak response.	Demonstrates a generally accurate understanding of the text in developing a sensible response.	Demonstrates a sound critical understanding of the text in developing a well-reasoned response.	Demonstrates a thorough critical understanding of the text in developing an insightful response.
Quality and clarity of thesis and vision	The purpose or argument is generally unclear. Lacks focus and coherence, and often fails to communicate its ideas.	The central purpose or argument is not consistently clear throughout the paper. Lacks focus or demonstrates confused or simplistic thinking.	Writing has a clear purpose or argument, but may sometimes digress from it. May treat the topic simplistically or repetitively.	Author's central purpose or argument is apparent to reader. Shows some depth and complexity of thought.	Author's central purpose or argument is readily apparent to reader. Explores the issues thoughtfully and in depth.
Organization, Development, Support	Has very weak organization and development, providing simplistic generalizations without support.	Is poorly organized and developed, presenting generalizations without adequate and appropriate support or presenting details without generalizations.	Adequately organized and developed, generally supporting ideas with reasons and examples.	Well-organized and developed with ideas supported by appropriate reasons and examples.	Coherently organized, with ideas supported by apt reasons and well-chosen examples.
Voice, Syntax, and Command of Language	Has inadequate control of syntax and vocabulary. Voice and tone are unacceptable.	Has limited control of syntax and vocabulary. Voice, tone, and diction are often inappropriate for an academic research paper.	Demonstrates adequate use of syntax and language. Voice, tone, and diction are occasionally inappropriate for an academic research paper.	Displays some syntactic variety and facility in the use of language. Voice, tone, and diction are appropriate for an academic research paper.	Has an effective, fluent style marked by syntactic variety and a clear command of language. Voice, tone, and diction are professional and sophisticated.
Grammar, Usage, Mechanics	Is marred by numerous errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that frequently interfere with meaning.	Has an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that sometimes interfere with meaning. Excessive errors in parenthetical citations and integration of direct quotes.	May have some errors, but generally demonstrates control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Multiple errors in parenthetical citations and integration of direct quotes.	May have a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics. Mostly accurate parenthetical citations and integration of direct quotes.	Is generally free from errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics. Flawless parenthetical citations and integration of all direct quotes.
60-58 = Superior writing, but may have minor flaws. 57-54 = Competent writing; may have some errors but aren't serious to distract the reader. 53-48 = Adequate writing; may have some errors that distract reader, but don't significantly obscure reading. 47-42 = Developing competence, but is flawed in some significant way(s). 41-36 = Seriously flawed. 35-10 = Fundamental deficiencies in writing skills.					TOTAL ____ x = ____ / 200