

## Assignment #1: Literary Analysis of *A Journal of the Plague Year*

100 points

Due Dates:

<b>“Brainstorming” blog entry:</b>	<b>01/18</b>
<b>Close-reading #1 blog entry:</b>	<b>01/20</b>
<b>Revised close-reading (#2) blog entry:</b>	<b>01/25</b>
<b>Rough-draft version (MLA paper):</b>	<b>01/27</b>
<b>Final version (MLA paper):</b>	<b>02/01</b>

For this assignment, you will write a 2 page paper analyzing a literary aspect of Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year*. You will complete the assignment in several steps and you will be graded on each one of the steps. *This assignment stresses close-reading of a literary text and the process of drafting and revising a short essay.*

To complete this assignment you will perform the following tasks:

1. Do a **brainstorming/free-write on your blog** about your first impressions of the text *A Journal of the Plague Year*. This will be due in class on Tues. Jan 18.
  
2. Transform those ideas into a longer **blog post (due Thurs. Jan 20)** which will be a **close-reading** of a passage or several passages from the text. If you’re not happy with the original ideas from your first brainstorming, you can do another one using a different passage or a different set of questions. This close-reading blog post should be **approximately 250-300 words** (it can be more but it shouldn’t be less) and should delve more deeply into a particular passage or a sequence of passages from the text. We will discuss close-reading strategies in class, but you should definitely do the following:
  - a. Identify the passage or passages you are discussing. It’s okay if they’re not sequential; if you are picking out a theme, for example, you might pick three passages from different sections of the book. **You should title or tag your blog post “Close reading JPY #1).**
  - b. Discuss in detail what makes this section/these passages interesting or compelling. You might zoom in on the language or the style of writing (thinking about the first person narrator or the journalistic style of including statistics); or you might think about the cultural/historical context and examine passages which demonstrate other concerns than just the plague; or you might consider the literary techniques at play (what images do you see repeated? Are there themes or tropes that emerge as you read?); or you might look at the descriptions of the city and think about the way the text is mapped by the narrator; or you might think about the morality of the text and examine passages where the narrator does or doesn’t take a moral stance

about the actions of the Londoners; etc. These are just examples to give you ideas – really anything that interests you or grabs you or makes you ask questions is a good place to start close-reading. What's most important is that you pay close attention to the text (hence "close"-reading) – you should examine specific word choices, images, sentence structures, literary devices and consider how they have an effect on the reader. You should quote specific words or sentences to *show* how they work. You don't necessarily have to have a solid argument at this point, just a set of ideas that you are examining in the text.

- c. End your blog entry by considering how you might shape these ideas into a more coherent argument (ex. If you are discussing the narrator, you might think about whether you find him reliable, or sympathetic, or morally sound – that is the beginning of an argument where you take a stand about how we are supposed to view the character of the narrator).
3. Over the weekend, you will comment on your group members' "close-reading" blog posts and give them feedback (and they will do the same for you). Using their comments and the feedback that you receive in class on Thursday (Jan 20), you will revise and expand that blog post (note: you will be revising your first close-reading but you should create a new blog post for it). Your **second close-reading** should be approximately **300-400 words** and while it will certainly build on your first close-reading (and necessarily will include much of your original writing), it should also add additional writing and should revise some of the original writing. We will discuss in class how to revise these drafts, but you should be focusing on *expanding your analysis, adding evidence, improving the organization, and focusing your argument*. I will be grading these entries on *how they evolve* so I will be looking at your revision techniques and taking into consideration how you use the advice of your peers. You should title or tag this blog post **Close-reading JPY #2**. It should be completed by **class time on Tuesday (Jan 25)**.
4. By Thursday Jan 27 you should have transformed your second close-reading blog post into the rough **draft of an essay that is approximately 2 pages long (double spaced)**. It should represent an evolution of your blog posts, although the rough draft may differ significantly from your original ideas. By this point your essay should be a fully-fledged literary analysis – it should have a short introduction, a thesis statement (expressing a clear argument), some signposting, and then several paragraphs which use examples from the text to *show* the reader the evidence for your argument. This is a short essay so you won't spend too long building up to your argument or elaborately describing the novel; rather, you will focus in immediately on the argument you want to make about the text and then you will proceed to walk your reader through your ideas using the text as evidence. You will bring this essay to class (either printed out or saved in a word-processing program such as Microsoft Word or Open Office) for a

**rough draft workshop on Thursday Jan. 27**

5. After the rough draft workshop you will use the advice from your peer reviewers to revise the essay one last time. **Your final draft should be uploaded to the T-square assignment by the beginning of class on Tuesday 02/01**