

## Interpretation of Fiction Online Discussion Board Assignment

Course: LIT2010  
Instructor: Nico Cassanetti

**Total Points Possible:** 35% of Total Grade (5 out of 8 discussion boards required!)

### **Assignment Objective**

Whether online or in-person, the Interpretation of Fiction class is largely dependent on successfully discussing, questioning, and unpacking the assigned texts. In a face-to-face class, this means having a large group conversation in which everyone has a chance to express their likes and dislikes, pose questions to each other about parts they found confusing, or share potential interpretations and ideas for what they believe is the deeper meaning or message of the story.

The principle is the same for our online class, except instead of having this conversation verbally we will do it in our Canvas discussion boards. For anyone that has used platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Instagram etc., you know it is quite a common practice for people to be part of an online debate/discussion/argument without ever needing to be in the same room

### **Requirements:**

Each student is required to complete the **Student Introduction** discussion board (Discussion Board 0) in the “Start Here” Module. **This discussion board DOES NOT count toward the 5 required.**

Beginning on Week 2, there are eight (8) Reading Discussion Boards that are assigned throughout the semester. Each student **MUST COMPLETE FIVE (5)** of them to be eligible for full credit, with the option to do a sixth (6) one for extra credit.

You will have the option of which discussion boards they wish to skip. However, **the following rules/restrictions apply:**

1. Each student **MUST** respond to Discussion Board 1: What is Fiction?
2. Each student **MUST** respond to at least **TWO (2)** of the Discussion Boards for the novel in the second half of the semester (Discussion Boards 6, 7 and 8).

***Failure to do this will result in an automatic 0 for one of the 5 required—which mean the highest cumulative discussion board grade you could get is a B- (or 80%)***

### **General Directions:**

It's easiest to think of these as a two-part assignment—you should complete Part I by Friday night and Part II by Monday night. For each discussion board, I will provide questions in the main discussion thread that each student should use as a springboard in crafting your response/reflection to that weeks' reading. You will also read your classmates' posts and comment on at least two of them—this can be a back and forth with someone or a single response to two (or more) of your classmates.

***PART I – due on Fridays at 11:59pm (unless otherwise noted)***

1. Complete required reading/lessons for the week. Make sure you read through all of the required readings AND lesson/lectures before moving onto the Discussion Board.

(NOTE: Each discussion board may have specific directions outlined in the discussion thread AND/OR the lesson).

2. **Create a 350 to 500-word post** that engages with the week's readings and lesson. Your post should offer your thoughts, interpretations and questions about the reading(s) and how you got there. It should also pose AT LEAST ONE specific and thoughtful questions about any of the readings to your classmates that they can choose to answer in their response.

YOUR POST SHOULD NEVER JUST BE A SUMMARY OF THE READING! There is a difference between summarizing a scene to offer context when setting up a quote you want to discuss and writing a SparkNotes summary of a reading. If you are still unsure how to approach this, check out some of the examples provided in the **Assignment Corner** Module.

### **PART II – *due on Mondays at 11:59pm***

1. Craft a response to AT LEAST TWO of your cohort's questions OR responses in a meaningful way. The responses should be no less than 5 sentences in length/approx.. 200 words.
2. You will not get credit for writing "great point" or "good post" or just saying "I agree about XYZ..." and then talking about or reiterating your own points.
3. The rules of Netiquette must be followed. Discussion board replies are not texts with your friends. Full sentences, proper spelling, source citations, etc., are expected.

### **Late Work:**

1. Discussion Boards are extremely TIME SENSITIVE and GRADED assignments and cannot be made up after the fact unless a student provides university-approved documentation for an absence/late work (or unless you have contacted me prior to the deadline about a reasonable extenuating circumstance).
2. If you only complete the Primary Post and not the peer responses, you will lose points.
3. Since you only have to complete 5 of the 8 Reading Discussion Boards, you can skip 3 without suffering any consequences (see prior note about which DBs are required for everyone)
  - a. If you would like to still view/participate in the discussion on a board you are "skipping" just write a post that says something like "skip week" so you will be able to view the entries. You are still welcome to participate in all the discussion boards

## **Formatting:**

To receive full credit on your discussion board postings, you MUST include the following when discussing the work:

- The title of the work(s) in quotation marks or italics (whichever is correct MLA formatting)
- The author's name (also, please refer to authors by their last names unless you know them personally)
- At least ONE quotation or particular passage from the text—integrated with your own sentence, properly punctuated, and explained to show why you believe it illustrates the significance to your larger point.
- Identify at least ONE literary element used in the text helped you hypothesize on the deeper meaning of the story.
- To receive full credit your post must be centered on your unique thoughts, analysis and interpretation—**NOT SUMMARY**.
- You are also welcome to use direct citations from our textbook, *Digging into Literature*, the optional supplemental readings, or any outside, credible sources you find on your own.
- **For those who want to get an A:** There are usually multiple readings each week and those who wish to get the best grade should strive to engage in discussion about all of them—either in your primary posts or in your peer responses. For maximum points, you may also reference ideas/examples from textbook chapters, secondary/supplemental readings, external research, etc.

## **Tips for Success!**

The first thing to remember is that these are discussion boards—NOT a book report, NOT a mini response paper, and NOT a summary! This assignment is meant to create a group discussion about the works of fiction we read that week.

To help you get started, consider using some of the following sentences to **start** your primary post:

1. My initial reaction when I read [insert title of work here] was that I felt... because...
2. What I liked/disliked about [insert title of work here] was... because...

After offering your initial thoughts, you should then share an interpretation or some questions/struggles you had while reading.

If you have an interpretation of the text you would like to offer, consider using some of these sentences to frame your idea post:

1. After giving it some thought, I think a message the author was trying to convey was...
2. At first, it seems like [insert title of work here] is a story about [insert literal meaning] but if you look closer, I think it is actually about [insert figurative meaning]
3. The literary device I think was most vital in illuminating that message was...because...

If you are having trouble discerning any meaning from the text, consider using some of these sentences to frame your questions or struggles:

4. I was really confused about why the author chose to include...

5. I struggled with the section about [blank] because...

Whether you have a working interpretation or not, your post should end with at least ONE question for your classmates to answer in their response to you. However, be cognizant that the questions you ask your classmates have purpose to propel the discussion forward in a useful way—remember that the choices characters make are **deliberate** because the author makes the choices for them, so frame your questions around the author's decisions instead of the characters.

Ex. Instead of asking: “do you think [insert character] wouldn’t have injured themselves if they had paid more attention to what was going on around them?”

Consider asking: “Why do you think the author chose to have [insert character] hurt themselves? What does it reveal about them/the setting of the story/the other characters?”

The goal in asking questions is not to collectively rewrite the stories we are reading, it is to talk to each other, and to push one another to create unique interpretations and find the “deeper meaning” within these texts.