

British Literature Summer Reading

And Then There Were None (Also called *Ten Little Indians*) by Agatha Christie

Ten people (eight invited guests and two servants) are invited to Indian Island under false pretenses. Their mysterious, unknown host accuses them, through a pre-recorded message, of being responsible for some other person's death. Mystified how anyone could know their secrets, some of the guests feel guilty and others are unrepentant or oblivious. One by one, the guests meet deaths associated with the lines of the "Ten Little Indians" poem posted in each of their rooms. Since there is no way to escape the island, they attempt to determine who, if they are the only ones on the island, could be the murderer. The final conclusion is that it must be one of them. But who?

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

Victor Frankenstein, picked up in the arctic regions by boat pilot Robert Walton, recalls the events that led to his creation of a monster composed of human body parts. Immediately following the "birth" of his hideous creation, he regrets his action and attempts to ignore it. After his rejection of the creature, a series of horrible accidents and deaths follow. Victor Frankenstein is left to deal with the consequences of giving this creature life and the course of revenge it takes upon the creator who has rejected it.

Writing assignments

1.) Following your reading of *Frankenstein*, use the novel to answer one of these prompts in a well-organized, well-supported essay. The essay should not exceed 750 words (about two typed, double-spaced pages). Please write the year of the prompt (the number that precedes it) for the essay to which you have chosen to respond.

1973. An effective literary work does not merely stop or cease; it concludes. In the view of some critics, a work that does not provide the pleasure of significant closure has terminated with an artistic fault. A satisfactory ending is not, however, always conclusive in every sense; significant closure may require the reader to abide with or adjust to ambiguity and uncertainty. In an essay, discuss the ending of a novel or play of acknowledged literary merit. Explain precisely how and why the ending appropriately or inappropriately concludes the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

2001. One definition of madness is "mental delusion or the eccentric behavior arising from it." But Emily Dickinson wrote

Much madness is divinest Sense-
To a discerning Eye-

Novelists and playwrights have often seen madness with a "discerning Eye." Select a novel or play in which a character's apparent madness or irrational behavior plays an important role. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain what this delusion or eccentric behavior consists of and how it might be judged reasonable. Explain the significance of the "madness" to the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

2003. According to critic Northrop Frye, "Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divisive lightning." Select a novel or play in which a tragic figure functions as an instrument of the suffering of others. Then write an essay in which you explain how the suffering brought upon others by that figure contributes to the tragic vision of the work as a whole.

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2.) **And.** After you read *And Then There Were None*, use the novel to answer one of these prompts in a well-organized, well-supported essay. The essay should not exceed 750 words (about two typed, double-spaced pages). Please write the year of the prompt (the number that precedes it) for the essay to which you have chosen to respond.

1970 Choose a work of recognized literary merit in which a specific inanimate object (e.g., a seashell, a handkerchief, a painting) is important, and write an essay in which you show how two or three of the purposes the object serves are related to one another.

1977. In some novels and plays certain parallel or recurring events prove to be significant. In an essay, describe the major similarities and differences in a sequence of parallel or recurring events in a novel or play and discuss the significance of such events. Do not merely summarize the plot.

1982. In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Choose a work of literary merit that confronts the reader or audience with a scene or scenes of violence. In a well-organized essay, explain how the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work. Avoid plot summary.

1988. Choose a distinguished novel or play in which some of the most significant events are mental or psychological; for example, awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness. In a well-organized essay, describe how the author manages to give these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action. Do not merely summarize the plot.