**Multiple Text Analysis--English 10 Honors**

Your claim and outline due Monday, November 30 - hard copy

The rest of the essay (draft) due Wednesday, December 2 – in your shared folder

Final paper due Monday, December 7 – turnitin.com

**APPROACHING THE ESSAY**

First, you must picture yourself as an expert adding to the body of scholarship on this particular set of texts. You’ve read several stories by Jhumpa Lahiri. Some of you have even read one of her novels. You have an important idea and/or an important perspective. You want to share that idea/perspective with a reader. Second, you must view the reader as one who wants to learn more about the story.

**HOW TO BEGIN?**

Hopefully you’ve been curious about the stories we’ve been reading. Perhaps one idea has been more memorable than the others because some aspect of it has perplexed you or resisted a simple, straightforward interpretation. Or perhaps after much thought and class discussion, you’ve arrived at an idea about these stories that you feel is slightly different from what your classmates have been saying AND you can support it by directing the reader’s attention to words, phrases, descriptions, and/or actions in the text. Is there a “why” question that intrigues you so much that you want to write an essay about it? For example:

- Why does the author frame her stories *that* way?

- Yes, these stories are about X, but what does author really want us to take away (theme, idea, commentary on society) from them?

- I noticed that the author brings object/situation X into the stories several times--why? And how do these objects/situations contribute to a theme or idea from the stories?

One way to measure whether or not your WHY question is worth pursuing is to consider a few follow-up inquiries: 1) Would a first-time reader of this author likely have the same question? If yes, keep thinking. 2) Is there complexity to the answer to my question? In other words, can I answer the question in more than one paragraph? If the answer is yes, proceed to formulate your claim.

**STATING YOUR CLAIM:**

Before you state your claim, you need to answer more follow-up questions. What are the plausible answers to your WHY question? What will you write about in your supporting paragraphs? What information will the reader need to be convinced that your claim is believable and plausible?

Once you have a good grasp on an answer, you need to write a sentence that articulates your main answer to your why question. Be sure to write it in the present tense.

A common error with claims is that the statement is one of fact and not necessarily a provable and arguable assertion. A claim that a character prefers solitude is too one-dimensional and is probably a truth of the story. A claim that explains that a character’s preference for solitude puts him in difficult situations that cause him to question his past behavior allows for deeper exploration of this character. If you find yourself asking about your claim, “Well, why is this important?” or, more callously, “So what?”, then you need to add more substance to your claim.

**BUILDING YOUR ARGUMENT:**

Good lawyers who prosecute criminals do not go into courtrooms and just talk at the jury. They might be persuasive, but juries are not going to believe lawyers unless the jurors see evidence--the fingerprints, the shell casings, the DNA samples. The same dynamic exists between you and your reader. In your supporting paragraphs, the reader (your juror and student) needs to see evidence (the words, phrases, and descriptions) in order for him or her to believe your claim. Generally, the reader wants to believe in your ideas. Presenting the reader with direct quotations that support your claim will make it much easier for the reader to believe in your ideas. For example, the reader might believe you if you tell him/her that a character is fond of solitude; the reader **will** believe you if you present the reader a passage from the text that describes the character’s enjoyment of solitude.

Presenting quotations to readers requires skill. You can’t just lob quotations (textual evidence) at the reader. You need to prepare your reader for the quotations you choose. Introduce your quotation by establishing a context--what’s happening in the story when your quotation appears? Who is speaking? Writers need to set up direct quotations in a clear manner by explaining the context of the passage.

In general, your supporting paragraphs should feature at least two substantial quotations. There are always exceptions, but if you can find two sentence-length quotations, your supporting paragraph will feel more fully developed. Better writers will build their supporting paragraphs around two sentence-length quotations *and* use two or three short quotations (2-4 words) in the flow of their sentences to help illustrate their points.

At this point in the paragraph you are teaching the reader by explaining why the passage is important. In your analysis, you should make connections to your claim. Tie in your claim by referring to key words. For example, if your claim is about a character’s desire for solitude leading to unwanted complications in his life, you might use the word “solitude” or a synonym for it in your discussion and analysis of your textual evidence. You would probably also mention a specific “unwanted complication.” Do not hesitate to lead the reader by the hand from your analysis back to your claim. If you simply imply or hint at a connection between your analysis (of a passage) and your claim, your reader may not always follow the connection that is apparent to you.

It makes more sense to discuss one story then the next (and the next, if you are looking at a theme in three stories). Be careful NOT to summarize too much of the story. You need to have a proper balance between summary/contextualizing your quotations and analysis of the quotation.

**Your Conclusion**

Make sure you answer the “why is this theme/idea important?” question. What conclusions can you draw from the way that Lahiri develops ideas in her work? You are making broader statements here, so try to make them substantive and not too general or too obvious. The conclusion requires precise word choice and thoughtful “stepping back” analysis (stepping back and putting this discussion in a larger context).

**800 - 1200 words**

**100 points**

**Must include examples from two or three Lahiri short stories**