

Paper #1: Thematic Analysis of *Hope Leslie*

Basic Assignment. Examine carefully a particular theme in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* and write a short paper that explains what the novel communicates about and/or does with this theme.

This assignment asks you to write a basic literary analysis that focuses on theme. The essay should have a clear and arguable thesis. It should provide an analysis of the novel, not just a summary. The analysis should be supported with specific details, references, and quotations from the text itself. These details, references, and quotations should be precisely noted by page number citations (in parentheses) from the novel itself. The paper should have a good title and page numbers. It should be typed and double-spaced. It should be proofread carefully for clarity, consistency, and correctness. Please use MLA style to cite the novel and provide bibliographical information about it. I know most of you will be citing just the one book; please use the MLA style guidelines nevertheless.

Specific Ideas and Explanations. Some themes you may want to consider for this paper are freedom, equality, independence, captivity, constraint, individualism, community, authority, religion, faith, spirituality, gender, race, love, conflict, romance, friendship, marriage, sexuality, singleness, solidarity, division, sympathy, emotion, politics, law, family, children, death, parents, the past, the future, and so on.

When I say "communicates" above, I'm thinking about what the novel *says* and what it *means*, which are not, of course, always the same thing in a literary text. When I say "does," I'm thinking about the ways the novel *formally uses* the theme within the structure or form of the novel itself and about the ways the novel *socially uses* the theme to affect change in its audience, culture, or society. You do not need to write about what the novel says, means, does formally, and does socially (a tall order); your paper will be more focused. I just wanted you to know specifically what I mean by *communicate* and *do* for this paper.

Purposes of the Assignment. This assignment should give you a chance to write a thematic analysis, a useful skill for students of literature, and to use writing to help you understand and interpret our first text.

I will use this paper to do some initial assessment. I am interested to see how well you read and understand the novel. I also want to get a sense of your abilities as writers. Can you compose a short essay with a central claim that is illustrated or demonstrated with evidence from the text? Can you put together a clear, well-written argument that offers a plausible and persuasive interpretation of a key theme in a novel? In other words, my expectations for this paper are fundamental:

- A paper topic that follows the basic assignment above
- A thesis statement or central claim that organizes the argument
- A clear, logical organization
- The use of specific textual evidence to support your thesis and main points
- Coherent, logical explanation of textual evidence that supports the thesis and main points
- Clear and correct prose
- Accurate documentation of source(s)

For most of you, this will be a straightforward paper assignment. If you struggle with these reading and writing skills, however, we can use this assignment as a chance to determine what skills you'll need to hone this semester (or decide if this class is appropriate for you this semester).

Due Date. Thursday, January 31

Length. 2 pages (400-600 words)