LessFormal Prompts

Directions: Choose any four of the following prompts, and for each, compose an original, un-researched response based upon your own impressions. Each response should be two pages, typed, double-spaced with one inch margins in a standard font (such as times new roman 12 pt.). Due Dates are on a rolling basis; the response MUST be completed before we discuss that author in class. Therefore, if you do not finish a response on time, you must select another.

Consider the works as historical artifacts reflecting cultural values, beliefs and desires of their eras and as works of art that transcend time and attempt to reveal some sort of “universal truth.” You might also consider biographical realities of the authors as appropriate, and as always, utilize the literary terminology from the toolbox in discussing the work.

Basically, your response is going to be less formal than a typical formal paper, but you should strive to create a main point around which to organize your response (a thesis statement). This main point will most likely be the theme of the work (remember our discussion of subject and theme). The remainder of the paper might discuss the culture, literary tools, etc. that contribute to that theme. As with any paper, your main point makes a claim, and the rest of the paper proves that claim. Your grade will be based on focus, critical thinking, and grammar. Have a clear direction and logical development. Be able to make connections (and remember your 1101 strategies, such as transitioning between main points) and support main points with thoughtful, logical observation and inference. And finally, proofread and spell check for grammar issues, including spelling, punctuation, diction, word choice, and other basic features of writing.

Part I

1. a. Discuss the ways in which Twain’s work defines/is defined by the tenets of realism. (Jan. 24)
   b. Discuss how and why Harris’s stories have been steeped in controversy. (Jan. 24)
   c. How is the mask in Dunbar’s “We Wear the Mask” symbolic? (Jan. 24)
2. Discuss Howells’s contribution to realism—what does he contribute to the movement beyond Twain, for instance? (Jan. 31)
3. Discuss why “Daisy Miller: A Study” is identified as a superior work of psychological realism. (Feb. 7)
4. What do the selections from “The Jungle” seem to reflect about American values at the turn of the century? (Feb. 14)
5. How do DuBois and Washington differ in their post-bellum observations, and how do you think these differences would be perceived by the American audience? (Feb. 28)
6. Using William Pratt’s “A Retrospective” from Florida English, discuss how Ezra Pound’s work fits into the genre of Imagism. (Mar. 14)
7. Discuss a few specifics from either “Hugh Selwyn Mauberly” (Pound’s goodbye to England) or The Cantos (Pound’s search for truth and beauty) and discuss possible meanings for a page or so. For the initiated, consider how John Gery’s article from p. 133 of Florida English bears significance to Pound’s work. (Mar. 14)
9. Using examples from her work, discuss why Pound called Hilda Doolittle, “H.D. Imagiste.” Feel free to use information from either MacNiven’s or Wallace’s articles from Florida English. (Mar. 28)
10. What makes Lowell’s poetry particularly modernist? (Mar. 28)
11. In Stein’s “Making of Americans,” “Susie Asado,” and/or “Miss Furr and Miss
“Skeene,” discuss Stein’s unusual use of language and how that contributes to the theme of the work. (Apr. 4)

12 Interpret any of Cummings’s poems, paying attention to the way in which he uses language to create meaning. Additionally, if you have room in your response, consider how this fits into the modernist view as related by Ezra Pound and others. (Apr. 4)

13 In Roethke’s “Big Wind,” explain how/why he uses the metaphor of a ship to describe a greenhouse OR from “The Lost Son” explore the ways in which Roethke uses landscape to reflect the theme of the poem. (Apr. 11)

14 Compare and contrast Maximus from Charles Olson’s “I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You” with the hero of Ezra Pound’s Cantos. (Apr. 11)

15 Discuss how Frank O’Hara’s work deals with the theme of time. (Apr. 18)

16 In “Diving into the Wreck,” how does Adrienne Rich use the wreck as a metaphor or symbol? (Apr. 18)

17 Discuss what we learn about the experiences and attitude of the speaker in Yusef Komunyakaa’s “Facing It” OR explore the ways in which Komunyakaa’s poems represent spiritual journeys. (Apr. 25)

18 Baraka's Dutchman addresses many of the same American social problems that DuBois and Washington addressed. How and why are Baraka's portrayals and/or solutions different, and what do these differences represent? (to answer this, consider the symbolic nature of Clay and Lula). (Apr. 25)