# ENG 231: American Literature I

## The Final Assessment: A Researched Critical Essay

### Instructions

Complete a researched critical essay of a minimum of 1,200 words on one of the two essay topics below. You are writing one essay of at least 1,200 words that addresses **either** Essay Topic 1 **or** Essay Topic II—**not both**.

The critical essay must follow classic essay structure: the introduction with thesis, the body, and the conclusion. The body of the essay must support the thesis by using information and examples from the assigned readings and must include additional, documented information from six primary and secondary credible sources. Your textbook may count as only one source, regardless of the number of literary works that you cite from it. You are required to obtain at least four sources from the library’s databases, such as the Literature Resource Center and the History Study Center. Wikipedia, Shmoop University, and Spark Notes are **not** credible sources for academic writing.

All paraphrases and quotations from your sources, including your textbook, must be documented in strict accordance with MLA eighth-edition standards. The documentation must include attributive phrases and/or in-text citations and a works-cited page. You may refer to the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University for updated MLA information and examples..

To eliminate plagiarism, you are required to submit at least one draft of your essay to obtain the Safe Assign Originality Report. The link for submission of the draft is in the Week 15 folder. You may submit the draft multiple times without having the link re-set. In the Originality Report, do not be concerned if sources are highlighted. This highlighting merely indicates that other students have located the same credible sources as you have located. Also, do not be concerned if quoted material is highlighted. You must be certain, however, that you have enclosed quoted material in quotation marks and have provided corresponding attributive phrases and/or in-text citations. Paraphrase again any highlighted material that is not a source and is not a quotation. This highlighting indicates that the percentage of similarity is too high, and you must eliminate the similarity by paraphrasing again. Continue to re-submit your drafts until you have eliminated the similarity.

Your completed, researched critical essay must be posted to the Safe Assign Final Critical Essay link in this folder: Week 15: The Final Assessment: The Researched Critical Essay. To be graded and to receive credit, your essay must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx) to this link. An essay submitted to the draft link and not to the Safe Assign Final Critical Essay link will not be graded and will not receive credit.

### Essay Topic I

The early-American fiction writers Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allan Poe contributed significantly to the American literary canon with their unique styles of writing and their varied literary themes and forms. Analyze and research their literary works to support your thesis on the writing styles, themes, and forms of Irving, Hawthorne, and Poe. As you explore pertinent contexts, be careful to use appropriate literary, political, and cultural terminology in your writing.

### Essay Topic II

Both Abraham Lincoln and Harriet Beecher Stowe were influential writers of the Civil War era; and this turbulent time in American history also gave rise to the slave narratives of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Ann Jacobs. After analyzing and researching the writings of Douglass, Jacobs, Lincoln, and Stowe, form a thesis that enables you to address Douglass’ and Jacobs’ lives as slaves and Lincoln’s and Stowe’s influences in bringing the institution of slavery to an end. A thesis is one sentence of no more than 25 words, so choose your words carefully because you must address both aspects of this topic in the one thesis. As you explore pertinent contexts, be careful to use appropriate literary, political, and cultural terminology in your writing.