Extra Credit Essay Topics for Grade 9 (choose one)

1. Novels often show characters caught between two cultures -- national, regional, ethnic, religious, social, or institutional. Being caught between two cultures can confuse a character and make him question his own sense of identity. From the novel you read this summer, select a character that seems caught between two cultures. Then write a well-organized essay in which you describe the character's response to being caught between cultures and explain how this confusion is relevant to the work as a whole. Be sure to cite specific examples from the text to support your answer.

2. Morally ambiguous characters are characters whose words and actions prevent readers from labeling them purely good or purely bad. From the novel you read this summer, choose a morally ambiguous character that plays an important role in the story. Write an essay in which you explain how the character is morally ambiguous and why this is significant to the plot, theme, or development of other characters. Be sure to cite specific examples from the text to support your answer.

3. From the novel you read this summer, choose a character whose mind is pulled in different (maybe conflicting) directions by two strong desires, such as personal ambition, obligations, or outside influences like peer pressure. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict inside the character helps to explain the meaning of the work as a whole. Be sure to cite specific examples from the text to support your answer.

4. Write an essay in which you analyze the moral or immoral nature of a character from the novel that you read this summer. You may wish to focus the content of your essay by selecting a single quote or passage and explaining how it reflects the character’s strengths or weaknesses. Address whether the character has any flaws, and explain how he conveys his beliefs to his community. Be sure to cite specific examples from the text to support your answer.
Extra Credit Essay Topics for Grade 10 (choose one)

1. The battle between passion and responsibility is a common theme in literature. For instance, a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, or some other emotion may conflict with moral duty. Choose a character from the novel you read this summer who deals with a conflict between passion and responsibility. In a well-structured essay, discuss the nature of the conflict, its effects upon the character, and its significance to the work. Be sure to cite specific examples from the text to support your answer.

2. People often feel alienated from their own culture or society because of gender, race, class, economics, or religion. From the book that you read this summer, choose a character whose feelings of alienation tell the truth about his society's assumptions or moral values. Be sure to cite specific examples from the text to support your answer.

3. Often, past events can positively or negatively affect the activities, attitudes, or values of a character. From the novel you read this summer, choose a character that is forced to deal with his past, either personal or societal. Then write an essay in which you show how the character's past contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole. Be sure to cite specific examples from the text to support your answer.
Extra Credit Grade 11 Critical Lens Essay

Critical Lens
Write a critical essay in which you discuss a work of literature you have read from the particular perspective of the statement that is provided for you in the Critical Lens. In your essay, provide a valid interpretation of the statement, agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it, and support your opinion using specific references to appropriate literary elements from the works.

Guidelines:
Be sure to . . .
• Provide an interpretation of the Critical Lens (Say what it means.).
• Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it (without the use of “I”). This will become your thesis.
• Use the ideas suggested by the Critical Lens to analyze and make connections to your chosen novel (Create an introduction, at least 2 to 3 body paragraphs connecting the book you read to the Critical Lens, and a conclusion.).
• Avoid plot summary. Instead, use specific references to the text and use appropriate literary elements to add insight to your essay.
• Specify the titles and authors of the novel you choose.
• Follow the conventions of standard written English.

CHOOSE ONE QUOTE

“Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right using of strength....”
—Henry Ward Beecher, *Life Thoughts*, 1858

“For what does it mean to be a hero? It requires you to be prepared to deal with forces larger than yourself.”

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”
—Martin Luther King, Jr. “Strength to Love,” 1963
Extra Credit Grade 12 Critical Lens Essay

Critical Lens
Write a critical essay in which you discuss a work of literature you have read from the particular perspective of the statement that is provided for you in the Critical Lens. In your essay, provide a valid interpretation of the statement, agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it, and support your opinion using specific references to appropriate literary elements from the works.

Guidelines:
Be sure to . . .

• Provide an interpretation of the Critical Lens (Say what it means.).

• Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it (without the use of “I”). This will become your thesis.

• Use the ideas suggested by the Critical Lens to analyze and make connections to your chosen novel (Create an introduction, at least 2 to 3 body paragraphs connecting the book you read to the Critical Lens, and a conclusion.).

• Avoid plot summary. Instead, use specific references to the text and use appropriate literary elements to add insight to your essay.

• Specify the titles and authors of the novel you choose.

• Follow the conventions of standard written English.

CHOOSE ONE QUOTE

“All literature shows us the power of emotion. It is emotion, not reason, that motivates characters in literature.”
— paraphrased from an interview with Duff Brenna

“The bravest of individuals is the one who obeys his or her conscience.”
— J.F. Clarke (adapted)

“All conflict in literature is, in its simplest form, a struggle between good and evil.”
--- Anonymous