

ETS 142

THINKING PAPER #5 CHOICE 2: SUBJECTIVITY & THE MILL ON THE FLOSS

Remember these instructions from the syllabus:

Response papers: As a general rule, a superior response paper:

- ✓ Takes a clear position on the topic, though that position may be multi-faceted;
- ✓ Uses the appropriate language and concepts of theory to analyze the text;
- ✓ Is organized in a logical, concise, and natural way, making strong use of paragraph form to support and develop the claim and explain its significance;
- ✓ Is almost completely free of formal and mechanical errors.

An introduction is not necessary for a superior response. If you need to trim the essay to stay within the length requirement, just present your response to the prompt and start explaining your position.

Some tips:

- This is NOT an essay that requires an evolving thesis. Boldly state a clear idea and support it in body paragraphs. That said, work to develop your ideas; paragraphs should build upon one another.
- Concision is a skill; practice it when crafting your Response Papers. The more details you can engage and use to support your points, the better. Assume the reader is familiar with the text, and concisely address as many details as you can. Sentences like this – "When X says Y about Z, he would also like us to believe Q about R." – will allow you to analyze a great deal of the evidence in a relatively small amount of space.
- Using our "punctuation friends" will also aid concision.

By now, you're probably testing the waters, figuring out how you'll be tackling the Unit I essay. Think of this response paper as a site for you to begin this critical work by analyzing and problematizing issues of subjectivity that arise in popular films. No doubt, this work will function as a starting point for the much longer journey ahead!

Your task: Using the ideas expressed in Althusser, Meltzer and Greenblatt, provide a close reading of one character in one scene from *The Mill on the Floss*. To establish the significance of the scene you select, provide other information from the film, as needed. To establish the significance of the film's portrayal as a whole, leave a bit of room to situate in the larger cultural discourses about the characters and issues it depicts.

The prompt: **What does the text convey about the character's subjectivity? What is significant about this representation?**

Some guiding questions to consider while grappling with these issues:

- In the world of the film, are these characters "always already" subjects or does the film depict them as selves on a journey of enlightenment? Why might this be significant?
- Consider the film's tagline: "The only person you need to be is yourself." Then, consider de Saussure's point that signs only mean something when interpreted in relation to other signs within a larger contextual framework. What kind of meaning-making "work" does your scene "do" when placed within the context of the film's tagline?
- To what degree does agency play a role in the characters' struggles toward "self" "definition"?
- How might Althusser's "duplicate mirror structure" play out in the interactions between Subjects and subjects in these scenes?
- Upon what social understandings does this film depend?
- Whose freedom of thought or movement might be constraint implicitly or explicitly by the work? Why?
- What are the larger social structures with which these acts of praises or blames might be connected?
- How does George Eliot, the author, use her imaginative mobility to display a crack in the social structure and record a voice of the displaced and depressed?
- How are the differences described in TT (race, gender, economic, etc) dealt with in the world of the film? Why might this be significant?

- What type of codes seem to be at play in these scenes? What cultural narratives are established, critiqued, reinforced? What strikes you, the viewer, as being anomalous, or out of place? Is it *really*?
- Thinking more globally, who is the author of this text and how might this authorship complicate our reading of this film?

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RESPONSE PAPER GRADING RUBRIC

A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Clear, insightful claim that addresses the prompt.▪ Rich analysis of supporting evidence, linked to the claim; covers most of the text's essential components.▪ Thoughtful organization clearly guides the discussion and allows for a rich exploration of the text.▪ Clear prose throughout.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Clear claim that addresses the prompt.▪ Strong analysis of supporting evidence, linked to the claim; covers many of the text's essential components.▪ Thoughtful organization clearly guides the discussion.▪ Clear prose throughout the majority of the response.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Claim addresses the prompt, but the initial statement may not be clear enough or may come later than it should▪ Engages some supporting evidence; analysis may be vague at times, may be inconsistent / contradictory, or may include too much summary.▪ Organization is acceptable but could be more precise.▪ Generally clear prose, but with fairly frequent grammatical errors.
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Response attempts to address the prompt, but claim needs to be clearer or may be conflicted in some way.▪ Engages minimal supporting evidence; minimal / vague analysis, or excessive summarizing.▪ Organization is not strong enough.▪ Frequent grammatical errors are a distraction and may interfere with meaning.