Independent Reading—4th Quarter Prompts

You will be given 60 minutes to write an in-class essay on your choice novel. You may use your novel, annotations, and an outline. You may respond to any of the following prompts:

1. The meaning of some literary works is often enhanced by sustained allusion to myths, the Bible, or other works of literature. Write a well-organized essay in which you explain the allusion that predominates in the work and analyze how it enhances the work’s meaning. Do not merely summarize the plot.

2. In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Examine how the text confronts the reader or audience with a scene or scenes of violence. In a well-organized essay, explain how the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

3. In questioning the value of literary realism, Flannery O’Connor has written, “I am interested in making a good case for distortion because I am coming to believe that it is the only way to make people see.” Write an essay in which you “make a good case for distortion,” as distinct from literary realism. Analyze how important elements of the work you choose are “distorted” and explain how these distortions contribute to the effectiveness of the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

4. The British novelist Fay Weldon offers this observation about happy endings: “The writers, I do believe, who get the best and most lasting response from their readers are the writers who offer a happy ending through moral development. By a happy ending, I do not mean mere fortunate events—a marriage or a last minute rescue from death--but some kind of spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation, even with the self, even at death.” Examine the kind of ending Weldon describes. In a well-written essay, identify the “spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation” evident in the ending and explain its significance in the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

5. In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, is a significant presence. Write an essay in which you show how such a character functions in the work. You may wish to discuss how the character affects action, theme, or the development of other characters. Do not merely summarize the plot.