ENC-1102, Research Paper—VanDyke

Write a 4.5–6-page research paper about Joseph Conrad’s “The Secret Sharer”. Your paper should make a claim about one of the novella’s themes, declaring it a work of critical and cultural significance. You will support this claim through a variety of sources.

What your paper should/must do:

- MLA format (including Works Cited page)
- Refer to a minimum of 6 secondary sources, 4 of which must be scholarly sources.
- Incorporate support through direct quote and paraphrase/summary of the primary source and secondary source.
- Include a well-considered “I say” component that demonstrates a thoughtful awareness of your paper’s main points.

What your paper should not do:

- Summarize the novella.
- Include background information about the author.
- Overuse direct quotes to take up space.

Step 1: Read Joseph Conrad’s “The Secret Sharer”. Understand and appreciate the fact that it is thematically dense but not terribly long.

Step 2: Do some superficial research to grow a deeper understanding of the novella. Sources such as Wikipedia, SparkNotes, and CliffsNotes serve as an ideal gateway. Use these resources to develop a theme that interests you. (Don’t forget to document sources that will turn up in your paper.)

Step 3: Begin researching the novella on the HCC Library Databases. As you begin, bear in mind that the theme you generated won’t be presented to you verbatim. Instead, you need to decide on a handful of critical articles that relevantly discuss or address that theme directly and abstractly. If necessary, it’s okay to refine your area of focus (theme) at any time.

Ideally, you should find enough critical support to demonstrate to your audience that the claim you’ve made about the work’s theme is reasonable.

Step 4: Choose one of the following options.

Option A (Argumentative Research)

You may simply write a paper that uses critical sources to support your claim of the novella’s greatness. However, be sure that your paper also includes a substantial amount of your opinion—what we refer to as the “I say” component. At least 1/3 of your paper should be your reaction or response to the critical voices in your paper.
(If necessary, pick up a used copy of *They Say I Say* to get a grasp on how to do this gracefully through the use of templates.)

**Option B (Argumentative Research)**

Alternatively, do the exact opposite of Option A and choose one of the novella's standard themes and argue against it.

In other words, employ critical support to suggest that one of the widely held beliefs about the novella is inaccurate, imprecise, overrated, or under-developed. If you do, bear in mind that you must also propose and support a contrasting theme or meaning of the work that you feel is more substantive and support that point of view.

Again, this option also employs the *They Say I Say* technique but the “I say” will likely play a larger role than Option A.

**Option C (Analytical Research)**

For this option, supporting the work’s theme should account for approximately the first half of your paper.

The next component of your paper should further your response to the theme in a way that appeals to you. Consider extending the conversation with an original interpretation of the work by delving more deeply into your own understanding of psychology, philosophy, religion, or some other discipline relative to the novella. You might also consider comparing “The Secret Sharer” to another literary work that shares a thematic similarity.

For example, one common theme is self-discovery. Rather than merely parrot countless other scholars, you could suggest that the steps the ship’s captain takes on his voyage of self-discovery are reckless—indicative of an immature psyche. Then, support your claim by finding other examples in the text of immature behavior, and, most important, support your claim with established voices in psychology or child development. In other words, your research shouldn’t be bound by critical texts relevant only to “The Secret Sharer”.

**Option D**

If you have a proposal for slightly tweaking any of these options, please let me know.

Or, if you have a completely original idea of how you’d like to research the novella, please see me ASAP so we can make a plan.

(Ultimately, what I hope is that you develop some unique interpretation of the story that is meaningful to you. Furthermore, by reading and writing about it, you will not only have the opportunity to expand your respect for art's limitless potential to enrich our daily lives, but also an opportunity to appreciate its relevance to other academic disciplines.)
ENC-1102, Research Paper Grading Rubric—VanDyke

Please submit with each of the following assignments and do not lose this document!

- Quiz = 10 Points
- Proposal = 10 Points
- Outline = 10 Points
- Individual Conference = 10 Points
- Peer Review = 10 Points
- Paper = 50 Points
- MLA format and page length = all or nothing

__________ Quiz (1/27 or 28*)

__________ Proposal (2/12 or 2/18)

__________ Outline (3/3 or 3/4)

__________ Individual Conference (4/17 &22 or 4/21 & 23) To receive credit, you must be on time for your meeting with a completed draft of your paper. Remember, if you have an A average in the course, you are exempt from this meeting but will still receive the credit.

__________ Peer Review (4/24 or 4/28) To receive credit, you must attend this class and participate in peer review.

__________ Research Paper—must include final draft along with proposal and outline (4/29 or 4/30)

__________ Final Grade

(*Remember, all dates are specific to class sections—consult your course schedule to avoid confusion.)
ENC-1102, Research Proposal Template—VanDyke

Date: (Date submitted)

To: (My name)

From: (Your Name)

Subject: (Broad topic of your paper)

Purpose: (What about the topic interests you and what do you hope to learn by writing this paper?)

Thesis: (One to two sentence thesis that makes a claim about your topic.)

Approach to subject: (Briefly discuss how you will address the paper’s topic and support your thesis. Think Option A, B, C, or D.)

Documentation: (Simply write MLA)

Sources: (Prepare a numbered list of tentative sources, include at least 4. For each source, write the title of the article or name of the website followed by a brief description of the source and how it will benefit your paper.)
ENC-1102, Research Outline—VanDyke

This step in the writing process is something we often overlook, but its usefulness cannot be overemphasized. Two things, then. 1—For as long as you've been writing essays, you've been told that making a plan is essential for success. 2—You've been encountering outlines even longer than you've been writing essays.

Your outline should be exactly like you think it should. The key here is to make a plan for your entire paper. However, don’t feel compelled to organize by paragraphs; instead, organize the outline by discussion points. The number of paragraphs will take care of themselves during the writing process.

- Begin with your thesis/claim as the first item of your outline; move on from there with each main point you intend to discuss or enlarge.
- Once you cite the main points you’ll use to discuss your thesis/claim, continue with the sub-points that will support the thesis/claim. Be sure that your sub-points also include your response to the critical support.
- There is no page length requirement for creating an outline, but you are required to outline your entire paper.
- You do not need to include a reference list of sources in the outline.

For more guidance tips on structure and style, please visit the following link on the Purdue OWL.

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/544/01/