Engl 103 A2, Spring 2018, Dr. Chowdhury

Due May 22

**Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Read the instructions first:**

All the quiz questions are based on a sample student essay. This sample essay is in response to the following essay topic:

**How does “Cathedral” by Raymond Carver suggest that the narrator’s wife is mostly wrong in jumping to the conclusion that the narrator is racist toward black people**?

Answer all the questions briefly.

**The Exercise:**

1. **Read the introduction to the sample essay and answer the questions that follow**:

Raymond Carver’s well-known short story entitled “Cathedral” is often read as a story about the ignorant and racist narrator. It is true that he uses stereotypes to talk about black people. However, a closer examination of the context of his thoughts and spoken words about black people as well as those of his wife indicate that she is wrong to condemn him as a racist.

a. What purposes do the first two sentences serve?

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b. What is significant about the way the student uses some plot details in the introduction?

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d. How does the thesis also serve as a “road map” for the body paragraphs yet to come?

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1. **Read the first body paragraph of the same sample essay given below and answer the questions that follow?**

A careful examination of the context of the mostly one-sided conversation about Robert’s wife proves that the narrator is not a racist. His wife tells him that Robert hired the black woman Beulah immediately after the narrator’s wife quit and they got married soon afterwards. The narrator naturally feels uncomfortable about his wife’s former boss visiting them because she might have ended up marrying him had she not quit the job, and she might still have strong feelings for Robert. Moreover, his wife starts telling him the long story about how Robert and Beulah met and got married: “Right then my wife filled me in with more detail than I cared to know” (3). He clearly feels overwhelmed by so much “detail.” It is this feeling of helplessness and resulting frustration that makes him later make fun of Robert and Beulah’s courtship and eventual marriage. He indeed makes derogatory remarks such as “”who’d want to go to such a wedding” and “all this without his having seen what the goddamned woman looked like” and “pathetic” (3). However, if we interpret these comments in their original context, it becomes clear that he is indirectly expressing his anger toward his talkative and domineering wife by making fun of Beulah and Robert’s marriage.

a. How does topic sentence #1 relate back to the thesis? On other words, when you read this topic sentence how do you know that it is proving a part of the thesis?

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b. In which sentences does the student use paraphrased evidence? Why has the student decided to use paraphrase and summary instead of direct quotations in these sentences?

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Not only the context of the conversation, but also his thought and spoken words reveal that he is a socially awkward and unfashionable man rather than a racist. Right after his wife informs him that Robert’s wife’s name is Beulah, he thinks to himself, “Beulah! That’s a name for a colored woman.” He follows up this thought by asking his wife whether Robert’s wife is indeed a “Negro” (3). He thinks “colored woman” but actually says “Negro.” The term “African American” had already begun to replace “Negro” as a respectful way to refer to Americans of African descent in the 1970s. The narrator’s use of “Negro” instead of “colored woman” reveals that although he is sensitive enough not to use the older, obsolete expression “colored woman,” he is still ignorant enough about the social and political changes happening around him to use “Negro,” which had already been replaced by “African American.” His inability to use the latest politically correct term makes him socially backward, but it does not make him a racist. He is an isolated and depressed man who cannot keep up with the latest trends and fashions.

a) How does the student create a transition between the first body para. and the second one using the topic sentences in each?

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b) How does the student relate her analysis to the evidence that comes before it? In other words, when you move from evidence to analysis how can you tell that she is still talking about the evidence she provides earlier?

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c) How does the student demonstrate her knowledge of historical context in this paragraph?

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d) How do the last two sentences of this paragraph do two things: i) develop the main idea ii) conclude the paragraph?

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**4. Read the third and last body para. given below and answer the following questions:**

In contrast to the narrator’s words and thoughts, the wife’s spoken words and action prove that she wrongly labels him as a racist. As soon as he uses the word “Negro,” she exclaims, “Are you crazy?”She adds, “Have you just flipped or something” (3). At the same time she throws a potato at him. The wife evidently believes that anyone who uses the older term “Negro” instead of the latest term “African American” must be insane. She throws the vegetable at him is a kind of punishment for his use of what she believes is a racist term. This term was certainly considered by black Americans as racist at this time in history. However, the wife does not realize that her husband is not using “Negro” intentionally to insult black people, nor does she have any clue about the quick editing he does in his mind before using this term as a more respectful substitute. He simply does not know the latest politically correct term.

a. How does the topic sentence relate back to the one before it?

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b. How does the student prove that the wife believes her husband to be a racist even though she never says directly, “You are a racist”?

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**5. Read the conclusion to the sample essay given below and answer the following questions:**

Carver certainly makes it difficult for the readers to figure out that the narrator is a much more complex character than his wife thinks he is. His words and thoughts taken out of their context might lead some readers to think that he is a racist. However, a careful examination shows that he is misunderstood not just by his wife, but also by some readers of this story. Carver raises a really important issue by using the example of the narrator and his wife’s conversation about Robert’s wife: how can we talk about those who are different from us in a way that is both respectful and sincere. Using politically correct terms can help us avoid giving offense, but can

they help us to speak from the heart?

a) What is the purpose of the first sentence?

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c. What does the student accomplish with the help of the last two sentences?

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6. What kind of audience do you think this essay has been written for? Is it an audience that has never read the story? Is it one that has read the story but may have a different opinion about it? How can you tell one way or the other?

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7. Why does the student not use expression such as “I think” or “In my opinion” anywhere in her essay? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. The above sample essay has been outlined for you below. Read it carefully and answer the following questions:

**Thesis**: A closer examination of the context of his thoughts and spoken words about black people as well as those of his wife indicate that she is wrong to condemn him as a racist.

**Topic Sentence 1**: A careful examination of the context of the mostly one-sided conversation about Robert’s wife proves that the narrator is not a racist.

**Topic Sentence 2**: Not only the context of the conversation, but also his thoughts and spoken words reveal that he is a socially awkward and unfashionable man rather than a racist one.

**Topic Sentence 3**: In contrast to the narrator’s words and thoughts, the wife’s spoken words and action during this scene prove that she wrongly labels him as a racist.

a. In the above outline, how do the main points manage to connect with each other and form a “chain of related arguments” without the use of obvious transitions such as “first of all,” “secondly,” and “lastly”?

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b. Why is this way of organizing your arguments better than using “firstly” and “secondly” to create a list?

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