

Engl 2130, Spring 2020—Midterm (25 pts)

Requirements: You will be expected to work for an hour; you'll have approximately 30 minutes for each answer, though I expect the first answer should probably take a little longer than the second. The required length will be the result of your consistent effort during this time. A successful exam will offer thoughtful, thorough, and compelling responses to the prompts and will demonstrate effective engagement with the subject text(s); in other words, use specific details from the novels to support your answers. When finished, submit the file as a pdf to Canvas > Assignments > Midterm. This is an open-note, open-book exam.

1. Please respond to the following prompt:

Discuss the ending of *The Time Machine*

How should we understand the Time Traveler's decision to go back to the future at the end of *The Time Machine*? In your view, is this a laudable, heroic action that highlights the best qualities of human beings in the novel (e.g., intellectual curiosity, ambition, courage, tenacity, etc.), or is this a futile gesture, a selfish gesture, a foolish leap into the void, a useless attempt to achieve something—an attempt that will necessarily fail in the face of the vast expanse of time and ultimate degeneration of all life? Or, to think about this question in another way, should we understand the ending of the novel as a celebration of the human spirit (and the life force more generally), as the narrator argues in the "Epilogue." Or, to offer one more possibility, should we think of the book rather as a critique of the inhumanity with which people treat each other (class warfare, etc.)?

In your answer, please discuss the football-shaped creature from the terminal beach, the Time Traveler's decision to go back to the future, and the "Epilogue." Be sure to take a clear position, and use the text to support your answer. Build paragraphs.

Tip: It might be a good idea to begin your answer by explaining what makes sense about the alternative point of view and why readers might tend to understand the novel in that way, before going on to assert your thesis as a more compelling answer to the question.

2. Now respond to only one of the following (include a paragraph at the end that explains your thinking):

Option A—Write a new ending for Frankenstein:

We've talked about the importance of the frame narrative, and in this option I'd like you to think more about how point of view influences our sense of the story. **Task:** Imagine you're one of the unnamed sailors on Walton's ship and document your story from the day you spot Victor and the Creature (Aug. 5th) to the day of Victor's death (Sept. 12th) and ultimately your voyage home. Present this as a Twitter feed—so a series of short posts. Your tweets should chart your own course, the life of the ordinary sailor, through these weeks, through the mutiny, etc.

A thoughtful response to this prompt will do more than get a few laughs; your goal is to engage with the events of the novel from a new narrative perspective, a new frame in other words, a fourth perspective on the end of the novel in order to add another layer of meaning to the story. Include a brief paragraph as an afterword of your own analysis in order to explain your strategy.

Option B —Write a new ending for The Time Machine:

In the novel, it's unclear what ultimately happens to the Time Traveler. We don't know exactly where he goes, what he does, or what happens to him. This creates a particular effect in the audience. I'd like you to change that effect. **Task:** Write a new (and obviously brief) final chapter to follow or to replace the "Epilogue" in which we learn what happened to the Time Traveler on his second trip elsewhere.

Tips: Follow the conventions of the novel. For instance, if you're going to have the Time Traveler return home, you might want to start with the narrator, the friend, discussing the Time Traveler's return and before offering some first-person narration from the Time Traveler himself.

As in the above option, include a brief afterword, a footnote of your own analysis, explaining how your revision has altered the original meaning of the original novel in an important way.