English 112

Essay Proposal

Due: Week 3

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Marlowe: An Honourable Man

In this essay, I will be examining the character of Philip Marlowe from Chandler’s novel *The Big Sleep*. Although Marlowe is the main character, and the story is told by him to the reader, it is still possible to examine his character using the tools of dialogue, action, and description. I will look at several key scenes in order to develop a better understanding of Marlowe, focusing especially on his sense of honour – a detective’s code, as it were.

**Thesis:** Although Marlowe is portrayed as a flawed character who drinks, smokes, and flirts constantly, his sense of loyalty and honor to his client provide an over-riding sense of centred calmness to his actions, showing that he lives his life by an unspoken detective’s code.

**Topics:** I will be discussing two main aspects of Marlowe’s character: honour and loyalty. Each one will be examined in a paragraph, and the third body paragraph will discuss both aspects together.

**Scenes:** I will be looking at three key scenes:

1. The scene early in the novel when Vivian tries to glean knowledge from Marlowe. He shows his loyalty to the General by resisting her advances and verbal trickery.
2. The scene in Geiger’s house when Marlowe finds the body. This scene shows that, when faced with temptation (a naked and basically helpless twenty-year old girl), Marlowe’s sense of honour causes him to act appropriately in protecting Carmen and, ultimately, the General. This is further emphasized in:
3. The scene at Marlowe’s apartment, when he finds a naked Carmen in his bed. His utter rejection of the girl shows his intense focus on the case, and his loyalty and honour in his dealings with the General.

I hope to illuminate the manner in which Chandler portrays Marlowe’s honourable character as evidenced by his actions, and on occasion, lack of action, when facing stressful, difficult, or tempting situations. Marlowe’s ability to maintain his client’s privacy, while also protecting his client from the vicissitudes of his two dissolute daughters, shows that Marlowe is indeed a loyal and honourable man.