

**HONORS BRITISH LITERATURE & COMPOSITION  
SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT & ESSAY—2024  
Mr. Beck**

**DRAMA:**

Because tragedy will figure so prominently in Honors British Literature, you are being asked to read **TWO** of the following comedies to balance out the year:

*Gammer Gurton's Needle*: a pre-Shakespearean comedy **OR** *Blithe Spirit*: a modern comedy by Noel Coward  
*Much Ado about Nothing*: a Shakespearean comedy  
*She Stoops to Conquer*: an 18th century Restoration comedy by Oliver Goldsmith **OR** *The Importance of Being Earnest*—a later Victorian comedy by Oscar Wilde  
*Blithe Spirit*—a modern comedy by Noel Coward

You will notice that these plays provide an overview of British comic drama from the pre-Renaissance to the modern era. Although you may find differences in subject, language, and dramatic conventions, you may also note trends and similarities in style and presentation.

**ESSAY:**

Consider the following statements:

- *Whereas tragedy shows us our strength of character, comedy reveals our weaknesses.*
- *Whereas tragedy focuses on an individual in society, comedy observes the society of individuals.*
- *Whereas tragedy suggests that man can change his condition, comedy implies that we can only learn to live with it.*
- *Whereas tragedy mourns what is lost, comedy celebrates what survives.*
- *Whereas tragedy honors wisdom in life, comedy elevates its folly.*

Based on your reading of the assigned, chosen plays, examine the validity of ONE of these comments about comedy. Substantiate your argument in a unified essay, using specific examples **from each** of the plays you have read. Do not repeat the statement as your thesis. **Develop your own thesis which expresses the essence of the statement and clarifies it from your point of view.**

Keep your response focused on comedy; this is not to be a comparison/contrast between comedy and tragedy. You may, however, as a point of reference, refer to a tragedy of literary merit that you have read / studied.

The organization of your paper is up to you, but if you can combine concepts inherent in the question rather than organize it by play, you may do so (and frankly, it is much more interesting to write and to read!).

**Avoid plot summary!** Assume that your reader is familiar with the works. Provide sufficient information to direct your reader's attention to the scene, character, or line to which you refer. **DO NOT RETELL THE STORIES!**

Your paper must be submitted to [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) by 11:59 P.M. on the first day of school. Follow these instructions to connect to [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com). To set up an account with [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com):

1. Sign on to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)
2. In the upper right-hand corner, click on CREATE A USER PROFILE.
3. Follow instructions as given. You will need your CLASS ID & CLASS ENROLLMENT PASSWORD as listed below.
4. Follow instructions from there

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**REQUIREMENTS**

**LENGTH: 3 to 4 pages typed (no more; no less) FONT: 12 PT. Times New Roman or similar**  
**Your essay is worth 50 points and is due on the first day of class.**

**NO EXCEPTIONS! NO EXTENSIONS! NO EXCUSES!!!**

Failure to complete the reading and/or the essay by the date due will adversely affect your grade for the Semester.

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**WRITING THE ESSAY:**

Follow the format that you have learned in your sophomore and junior years for writing an expository essay.

**Opening Paragraph:** Move from a broad to a specific statement. (But remember, that broad statement is not meant simply to fill up space. It should have substance and, most certainly, lead to your thesis.)

**Thesis:** Your thesis will be determined by your response to the prompt. Be sure that your thesis is appropriately narrowed and precise and that it is designed to provide the foundation for the rest of your essay. Try to keep your thesis to one sentence, but if necessary to avoid awkwardness and to achieve clarity, you may use two closely-related sentences. Please underline your thesis in your final draft.

**Body of Essay:** Your essay must contain specific supporting evidence taken ONLY from the works. Include specific scenes, situations, characters, and **direct quotations** which relate to and help to illustrate and support your thesis. By now you should know how to cite quotations. Do so correctly! If you're not sure, refer to *Writer's Inc or Purdue Owl*. **Avoid plot summary!**

**Closing Paragraph:** This is not a mirror image of paragraph one, nor should it be an afterthought. It should restate the thesis, but from a different approach. Do not be trapped into adding a judgment which you cannot substantiate.

**This is not a research paper.** I want only **your** conclusions based on the primary sources, that is, the works, themselves. Should you wish to read about the time period, feel free to do so, but this material has no place in your paper. **Your writing needs to follow the rules of FORMAL WRITING. Therefore, "You" and "I" do not belong.**

**Don't forget to ReVise, eidt, and proofREAD!**

**EVALUATION**

In evaluating your essay, I will consider the following:

- Command and control of content: A well-stated, precise thesis  
Selection of appropriate and convincing details, references and direct quotations. Accuracy and depth of thought.
- Clarity of expression Use of direct and clear sentences and the avoidance of ambiguity;  
Use of appropriate diction. FORMAL LANGUAGE.
- Coherence & continuity of thought Use of an appropriate plan of organization and transitions to reinforce that organization. Support and commentary.
- Conciseness Elimination of extraneous words, phrases and redundancy
- Correctness Use of the accepted conventions of grammar, mechanics, and spelling

**PLEASE NOTE: Do not wait until the last minute to find the works, or to begin reading or writing the paper. Doing so invites the possibility of disaster. And now, have a pleasant summer and enjoy your reading! I hope that you are looking forward to a stimulating year in Seniors Honors!**

**NOTE: ANY indication of plagiarism including the use of AI, will result in a zero on the assignment. This includes but is not limited to: ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quillbot.**