ENG 332 Assignment Sheet:

Close Reading of Edith Wharton’s *Twilight Sleep*

Date Due: W 9/9 (submit copy via Safe Assign on Blackboard AND deliver a paper copy to me by the start of class for on-time credit). This assignment is worth 100 points.

Word count: 950-1000 words, typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman font only, and one-inch margins throughout (I can tell the difference, please don’t test me on this).

Develop a close-reading formal essay of Wharton’s *Twilight Sleep*. In order to complete this assignment you may write on any topic that interests you within the novel. That is, you may opt to write a comparison/contrast between characters, locations, motifs, or motivations. You may wish to expound upon a particular theme, plot point, the trajectory of action, the use of language, a particular character, etc. You may choose to provide a close exploration of something like commerce, community, leisure, romance (or lack thereof), the use of specific conventions (such as naturalism) or story elements as devices that expand your insight into the text. You may even choose to trace a social or cultural practice that is evident in the novel, such as social rituals, for example.

Again, the above are to merely serve as suggestions. You may write about anything that sparks your interest in the context of the novel.

\*\*You may not use outside or additional sources for this paper\*\*\*

Produce a well-organized, developed essay that includes a title, a thesis statement, and a developed conclusion. Your paper must demonstrate college-level writing ability, well-thought analysis, and critical thinking. Here are some suggestions that you may find useful:

Organizing and writing the paper: Compile observations and evidence from the novel, you’ll need to stand back from the text and decide how to focus and arrange this material in your paper. Needless to say, your paper should be more than a collection of non-integrated observations. What overall claim can you make based on the material you’ve collected and the ideas you’ve jotted down? This one or two-sentence claim will become the thesis of your paper, and it will guide your writing of the paper as a whole.

\***Do NOT summarize the novel, the scene, the chapter or any other aspect of this work. Wharton’s work deserves your thoughtful analysis. Anything less is simply unacceptable and will result in a ZERO grade on this paper.**

Your thesis can serve as the culminating point of your opening paragraph, which should generally introduce and narrow your topic while letting your reader know what argument you will pursue.

Once you have your thesis, you can determine how you might organize the paper itself. This can be one of the most challenging parts of writing your paper, particularly in those instances (such as this) where you’re organizing a close reading essay. Let me suggest that you work this out by answering the following questions:

1. What natural groupings—or categories—do your observations fall into? The information we learn about a character’s past may, for instance, be naturally presented in a paragraph devoted to background. As with every aspect of this paper, these categories will be determined through analysis of the text and its characters.

2. What sequence represents the most logical order for these categories—what, in short, should come after what? Character background, for example, would naturally be presented first if this information is crucial to the other things you discuss.

3. What’s the best organization for presenting your close reading? There are several approaches to this. Here are some suggestions:

(1) Start the analysis part of your paper with a section in which you introduce similarities followed by sections in which you discuss differences (this works well with characters, as in the example above, that have certain obvious similarities)

(2) Start a section in which you introduce contrasts, tropes, trace a metaphor, discuss Wharton’s use of language (not whether or not you find it difficult to read; rather, what is novelist doing with specific language—what affect does the use of language have within a certain scene, what kind of language is she using (prose? poetry? dialogue? flashback? etc.) followed by sections in which you discuss how these influence plot, structure, character development, etc.

Supporting your analysis: Since the purpose of a paper like this is to understand a novel by exploring particularities, you should draw upon the details you have selected when writing your paper. Generally, don’t be afraid to cite specific details along the way to back up your claims. [A tip: if you find yourself running out of things to say before reaching the required length, you’re not being specific enough in your analysis. The success of this paper lies in the specificity of its analysis.] When you quote from the novel be sure to include a parenthetical citation and a reference to the text you’re using in the Works Cited page.

Writing points: Because this is an English course, you’re expected to pay special attention to things like paragraph coherence, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The most effective way of keeping a handle on these is (as always) to write your paper in stages: planning/organization, writing, revising, and proofreading. Writing the paper at one shot the night before it is due never works. Computer spell checks are, on their own, inadequate proofreading instruments.

Please note: Novel titles are underlined or italicized, never presented in quotation marks.

All papers must be carefully proofread before they are submitted, to remove errors of spelling, punctuation, and typing. Corrections may be made neatly in pen (cross out words with a single line). If you are printing your paper from a computer, you are responsible for making sure that the paper is formatted acceptably. Note: As many of us have learned from experience, computers and printers refuse to cooperate on occasion. Plan ahead for this possibility, so that you have time to recover should you find yourself confronted with this kind of problem. Computer problems do not constitute an excuse for late papers

Be sure to read the entry on plagiarism and proper citation on the course syllabus!! Every paper must have a Works Cited page in which you list the editions of the novels you’re writing about, whether or not you include direct quote from these novels in your paper. As you will be utilizing only a single work for this assignment, you will provide a “work cited” page in MLA format.

Paper Format: Double-space the main text of your paper, leaving adequate margins on all sides of the page, and fasten your pages with a staple in the upper left-hand corner (not a paper clip). Pages should be numbered via typeface in a running header. Please print on one side of the page only.

Every paper should have a title. In addition to the title of your paper, this page should contain the following information: (1) your name; (2) course number and name; (3) instructor’s name; and (4) date submitted.

\*\*\*Submit one paper copy to me at the beginning of class and one to the Safe Assign submission tool which will be posted on Blackboard under the “Paper Submissions” tab. Failure to submit both hard copy and electronic copy by the beginning of class time will result in a full letter grade deduction.

LATE PAPERS: My best advice is that you strive to get your work submitted on-time. You will receive a full letter grade deduction for EACH day that your paper is late. Once a paper is three days late, I will not consider it for a grade. That is, you have received a grade of ZERO for that paper and will not be offered an opportunity to revise or recapture points for the assignment in any other way.