

ENGL 479D, University of Maryland
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Final Paper Assignment

Length: 6-8 pages, double spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman (or about 2000 words).

Topic and rough outline due: Dec 8

Due: Dec 16 (before midnight, via ELMS)

In keeping with the broad course goals of going “beyond” both the geographic and figurative shores of the Third Age of Middle-earth in the course, for your final paper I want you to tackle something from a work of Tolkien’s other than *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings (LOTR)*. Anything on the syllabus after we finished LOTR is fair game.¹

For your topic you can choose from a number of approaches or angles:

1. Argue for a prevalent theme or pattern through one or more of the works. In *The Silmarillion* for example, you could look at the relationship of body to spirit, the portrayal of female characters, leadership styles, music, creativity. (These are just examples to give you an idea of what I mean; feel free to use one of them or come up with your own.) If you choose to look at *The Silmarillion*, feel free to look at just one part of it such as the creation account or the tale of Beren and Luthien.
2. Examine a specific element of a work such as a poem, a single character, a single scene, an aspect of narrative style.
3. Compare something of the above or a concept important to Tolkien in multiple works. For example, you could look at eucatastrophe an aspect of the nature of evil in *The Silmarillion* and *Farmer Giles of Ham*. When comparing two or more works, be careful to construct one unified argument or thesis that your discovery in the works points to. Don’t just write about one work and then write about the other work and then say, “see, they are both have X but are different in Y.” You need to tell me why those similarities and differences matter.
4. Examine Tolkien’s work in his literary and historical context. That is, how does something in one of these works reflect or respond to his own Modern (early 20th -

¹ You may also touch on or draw on *On Fairy Stories*, *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*, *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth*, or materials in Tolkien’s *Beowulf* translation from earlier in the semester, but your main text(s) need to be *The Silmarillion* or one of the shorter works covered at the end of the semester. It’s also okay to reference something in *The Hobbit* or LOTR if doing so helps you argue whatever you are saying about the main work or theme you’ve chosen.

century) culture or his medieval literary background. This angle will require some external research.

5. Come up with your own approach. Discuss what you want to do with me first, however.

Whatever you choose, don't just argue that such and such a theme or pattern exists or that this character grows in some way. That will be the bulk of your argument, but you must also tie that argument to something broader in the work or in Tolkien's work or philosophy as a whole. Explain *why your argument matters* in understanding Tolkien or the rest of that work. Ideally (for most papers and topics), your introduction will hint at this significance, and your conclusion will really demonstrate it and connect your argument to it.