**Biggs’s English II Honors – Essay #3, Short Stories: Dialectical Synthesis Writing**  
  
**This essay is all about juxtaposition (placing two things side-by-side for comparison) and synthesis** **(integrating two ideas into one larger concept).** In rhetoric, the study of argumentation and composition, this is called a DIALECTICAL approach. “Dialectical” literally means conversational. In other words, you're not putting two works in competition with each other; you're putting them “in dialogue,” making them “talk” and seeing what each one “says” to and about the other. The emphasis is therefore more on comparing than contrasting, though you will do both in the essay.   
  
**First, pick two short storie**s, one early and one modern, between which you see some relationship:

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| **Early** | **Modern** |
| Poe – Masque of the Red Death Poe – The Oval Portrait Irving – Devil and Tom Walker  Hawthorne – Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment | U.K LeGuin – Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas John Updike – A&P Joyce Carol Oates – Where are you Going … Kurt Vonnegut – Harrison Bergeron |

**Then, beginning from a lens, formulate and answer a question that bridges the two stories together.  
(Lenses: Psychoanalytic, Feminist, Sociological, Historical, Religious, Symbolic, Ethical, Romanticist)  
Example for “Masque” and “Bergeron” using Sociological Lens:  
*-Question (Focus): Why do humans consistently seek power over each other and become so corrupt?   
-Answer (Thesis): Despite great differences in tone, Poe’s “Masque…” and Vonnegut’s “suggest that human beings’ will to power makes us incapable of achieving equality, thus rejecting the Enlightenment’s optimistic faith in rational progress toward perfection.*  
  
You’ll follow this format for the essay:**  
I. Introduction of the stories – What are they and how do they relate?   
*I could write my intro on Poe and Vonnegut as a master of horror and of humor who share a pessimistic view of human nature that contrasts sharply with the optimism of the Enlightenment. Or, I could discuss human societies’ persistent inequalities, and move from there into the authors as critics of that tendency. Or I could start with Nietzsche and the Will to Power and use that as a way to set up my theme, bringing in the stories at the end of the paragraph.*   
  
II. Story 1 – Stylistic and Thematic Analysis (Style = Expression, Theme = Content)   
*You should begin with the earlier story. Avoid summary – unless you know otherwise, assume your audience knows at least the basics of the plot. Explain how the author’s use of language impacts the reader (style) so as to make them consider a particular idea, moral or new concept (theme). Talk about both the style and content of your quotations, being sure to dissect them a bit.*  
  
III. Story 2 – Compare/Contrast w. Story 1 (Stylistic Difference, Thematic Connection)  
*Bring in the modern story with a topic sentence that establishes its relationship to the first story. Stay focused on this relationship, going back and forth between the two in order to fully connect them. You might refer back to the quotes you used in the paragraph, even re-quoting a small piece as part of a sentence. By the end of the paragraph, the connection should be clear.*   
  
IV. Concluding Synthesis – What interpretation does your juxtaposition reveal to readers?   
*This paragraph, which is best begun with a sentence that indicates you’re now going to make a larger point encompassing both stories and what that point is. This synthesized interpretation should try to provide a possible answer to your starting question. I might explain how the two stories together make the point that equality is both rare and difficult to sustain within the human world.*