FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

2ND SEMESTER 2021

ASSIGNMENT 1

INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE 1B
ILT521S
Dear students

Here follows a brief feedback letter on your first assignment.

Many students seemed confused and did not know how to interpret the instructions for Assignment 1. By now you should know that there are always 2 questions to be done per assignment.

This is copied from the Assignment instructions on Mynust.

**QUESTION 1**

Compare and contrast the setting and the effect thereof in "Shooting an Elephant" and "Pit and the Pendulum". [50 marks]

OR

Why is *The Pit and the Pendulum* a very effective short story in the horror/suspense genre? Use references from the text to substantiate your argument. [50 marks]

**QUESTION 2**

How do the varying views held by the British officials after Orwell shoots the elephant, reflect the moral dilemma Orwell faced as a British official in Burma? [50 marks]

**TOTAL MARKS FOR ASSIGNMENT 01: 100 MARKS**
You have Question1 which consists of a choice between 2 questions. You need to do ONE=50 marks. You have to do question 2 which consists of one question =50 so the total is 100.

Students were told by the COLL office on Teams as well as Mynust to do Q2 and e-mail it to me by 13h00 on Saturday 25/9.

I took pains to explain to you about plagiarism in the first semester, yet most students still committed this form of theft.

You will not get away with this behavior and Turnitin exposes those copying directly from a source.

Here is an example of extreme plagiarism taken from a student’s work:

**Assignment I**

**Question I**

**Why is The Pit and the Pendulum an effective short story in the horror/suspense genre?**

According to (Poe, 1964) the pendulum is often described as a way of hung from a given fixed point so that it can swing freely especially a rod with a weight at the end that regulates the mechanism of a clock and the pit is described as large hole in the ground also set someone in a conflict or competition. The story is very inspiring fear in the reader because its focuses on the senses such as
sound, emphasizing its reality unlike many stories that are aided by supernatural.

(1) The success of the story comes from the ability to access one fundamental human quality because in such a case of that a narrator is fearful of his sentence fearful of his pain and most have a fear of death. The chamber itself is made to induce fear and the slow descent of the pendulum creates both psychological suspense and mortal terror and lastly the pit represent the final decision which is death and ultimate fear.

(1) The narrator gives in to utter despair a few times throughout the story because the first is when he physically loses consciousness after his sentence knowing that all hope of mercy is lost and for the second time he comes and almost gave it to the inevitable death that the pendulum seems ready to deliver (Poe, 1842). However the collected calmness of despair allows him to formulate a plan of escape which can work. Lastly the narrator's last act of despair comes with his scream as he is about to be pushed into the pit. The scream seems to bring forth General Lasalle at the absolute last moment and who is able to save him from certain death.

(Carey, 1843) stated that (1) the chamber itself is an instrument of fear. It uses the complete and disorienting darkness and mysterious glowing with pictures of horrifying creatures on the walls to wreak psychological havoc on the narrator. The walls themselves become the instrument of certain death for the narrator as they push him towards the pit after the escape from the pendulum.

(2) According to (Hart, 1843) states that (2) the pendulum swings back and forth like a grandfather's clock. Every moment it swings, the narrator is confronted with the terrifying reality that it's both getting and it is a razor sharp. The pendulum it is said to be (1) an instrument of psychological torture. It creates the idea of a game and giving a narrator so much time to formulate an escape or he loses.

(1) www.storyboardthat.com
All the underlined words are highlighted by Turnitin as proof of plagiarism (what has been directly copied from a source). As you can see this is 80%+ of the entire passage. When I click on the numbers, Turnitin shows me where it has been copied from. You can see this at the top of this page.

This student has made no effort to present the ideas he/she read from the source in his/her own words. The student has replaced some words with his own and this leads to ridiculous sentences like the following:

the pendulum is often described as a way of hung(3) from a given fixed point so that it can swing freely especially a rod with a weight at the end that regulates the mechanism of a clock and the pit is described as large hole in the ground also set someone in a conflict or competition.

Here is another gem:

(1)The success of the story comes from the ability to access one fundamental human quality because in such a case of that a narrator is fearful of his sentence fearful of his pain and most have a fear of death.

This could have been avoided had the student paraphrased what she read and shown her OWN brain power. It could have looked something like this:

The pendulum hung from the roof and had a sharp scythe attached to the bottom, designed to cut the narrator in two. Another device designed to kill the narrator was a pit in the middle of the dungeon.

The story is so successful because it shows us the human quality of fear. Throughout the story the narrator makes the reader aware of his fear of death…
I hope this makes what is, and what is not, expected of you clear.

Now let us look at the questions and expected responses.

**QUESTION 1**

Compare and contrast the setting and the effect thereof in "Shooting an Elephant" and "Pit and the Pendulum". [50 marks]

Here you had to (1) compare (find similarities) and contrast (find differences) between the setting (time and place) of two short stories and (2) show the effect thereof.

Most students did not pay attention to this second part of the question!!

Unfortunately some students also used point-form in answering the questions. Remember this has to be done in an essay format and full sentences and paragraphs are required!

These are some of the important points you should have included in your essay:

- In *Shooting an Elephant* the setting is in Burma in Moulmein during the time of the British empire
  - Orwell is telling of his own life as a British police officer
  - The Burmese were treated badly (Orwell’s description in second paragraph “In a job like that………………sense of guilt”)
  - Orwell hated his job
- We see rural Burma-hunger and poverty (para 3 “The Burmese population had no weapons……bamboo hut…raided fruit stalls…”

- The crowd wanted the meat. Not interested in the dead “coolie”

- Attitude of the British officials differed (shows setting as Burma is British controlled. We see ingrained British racism/superior attitude prevalent in the country

In *The Pit and the Pendulum* the setting is during the time of the Spanish Inquisition in a dungeon in Toledo.

- The narrator is unnamed

- Detailed description of the dungeon is needed

- Explanation of how the dark and appeal to 5 senses adds to the suspense

**EFFECT**

_ In Shooting an Elephant the setting makes us see the plight of the native Burmese as well as Orwell’s moral dilemma more clearly. It creates an intense atmosphere and we can appreciate the hopelessness of Orwell’s situation. Also it adds credibility to the story. British Imperialism was a cruel system and the natives in British territories were not treated fairly. This is shown by the attitude of the British officials after Orwell shot the elephant,

- In The Pit and the Pendulum the setting increases the suspense and “horror” of the unnamed narrator’s plight. Poe continually focusses on the interior of the dungeon to show the hopeless situation the narrator is in. The darkness and the knowledge of the cruelty of the inquisitors makes this story so effective etc

The other question which you could have chosen (OR) was:
Why is *The Pit and the Pendulum* a very effective short story in the horror/suspense genre? Use references from the text to substantiate your argument.  

This story is very effective as a horror/suspense story because:

- The setting adds to the suspense.

- In *The Pit and the Pendulum* the setting increases the suspense and “horror” of the unnamed narrator’s plight. Poe continually focusses on the interior of the dungeon to show the hopeless situation the narrator is in. The darkness and the knowledge of the cruelty of the inquisitors makes this story so effective etc.

- Poe (not the unnamed narrator) the author gives a detailed description of the traps set for the narrator.

- After every close call the narrator has with death we share his relief, only to be tortured further as we read because there follows another near-death experience. The narrator escapes again. Then there is another close-call etc.

- This constant build up of tension, relief, build up ... is very unnerving for the reader.

- Poe also appeals to the reader’s 5 senses in the story. There are numerous references to sight, taste, hearing, smell and touch throughout the story. “I reached out my hand, and it fell heavily upon something damp and hard”. (touch)

  “I proceeded for many paces; but still all was blackness and vacancy.” (sight)

  “...and the peculiar smell of decayed fungus arose to my nostrils.” (smell)

  “…at length there was a sullen plunge into water, succeeded by loud echoes”
(hearing)
“...for the food in the dish was meat pungently seasoned"
(taste)

There are many more. I found 8 references to hearing, 9 to sight, 6 to touch, 3 to smell and 1 to taste. You might even find more.

Now to compulsory question 2

How do the varying views held by the British officials after Orwell shoots the elephant, reflect the moral dilemma Orwell faced as a British official in Burma?
[50 marks]

In this question you have to highlight Orwell’s moral dilemma as a British official in Burma AND you have to mention the varying views held by the officials.

As I have mentioned before, you need to strengthen your argument with references from the text (quotes)

Here are some important references and aspects you could have included as you built your argument:

- “....I was hated by large numbers of people...”
- Refer to the bad treatment of Orwell by the Burmese seen in paragraph 1
- “For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing...”(para.2)
- His explanation of the Burmese prisoners
- Orwell’s reaction on seeing the dead “coolie”. He seems morbidly fascinated. Devoid of emotion/sympathy. He has been de-sensitised by his job.
- “I had no intention of shooting the elephant…”
- The most important piece, which is the crux of the issue Orwell has “…I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward…when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom he destroys”. Orwell realizes this, yet he still shoots the elephant to avoid looking a fool and being seen as “weak”

- The reaction of the officials “Among the Europeans opinion was divided….damn Coringhee coolie”.

All these facts need to be woven into your essay so that it is a sensible and convincing piece of writing.

I hope this has helped for your next assignment.

Remember:
- Always write in essay-style
- Never use bullet point sentences
- Make sure you acknowledge sources when you use them-in the text as well as the References list.
- ALWAYS paraphrase work you are “copying” from a source- in other words put it in your own words.
- Use references (quotes) from the text frequently to support your argument
- Make sure you have answered the question. If there are 2 parts to the question pay attention to BOTH.
- Proof-read your work before submitting it
- You need to read the text itself, not only notes on the text!!!