

The River Between

By Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

Global Issues Network and African Literature

Analytical Essay

*As we have wrapped up our reading of Wa Thiong'o's work, it's time now to analyze meaning/purpose of this work. Ngugi's work is deep in metaphor. Look over the following essay topics and choose one to write. **This is due on Thursday March 1! Late work will not be accepted!***

Analytical Essay Options:

- 1) Tradition and Sacredness:** Analyze how tradition plays an important role for the people of both ridges – Makuyu and Kameno.
- 2) Metaphor:** Investigate Wa Thiong'o's use of metaphor throughout the novel.
- 3) Cultural Collisions:** Dissect how cultures communicate, collide, and co-exist in this novel.
- 4) Theme:** Examine various themes from the novel and suggest what is essentially learned from a novel such as this.
- 5) Religion:** Discuss the complexities of the power and influence that religion holds for the people in the novel.
- 6) Love:** Analyze the definition of love in this work for the people of the ridges. (Is it different from our "western" definition of love?)
- 7) History:** Research the history of this region of the world and examine how this book works as a historical fiction.
- 8) Prophecy, discipleship, and loyalty:** Investigate what these words mean to the people of the ridges.
- 9) Character growth and change:** Examine how characters grow, change, and develop throughout the work.
- 10) Ambiguous Ending:** Wa Thiong'o leaves us hanging in the end. What purpose might he have in ending the work like this? What do you think happens to Waiyaki, Nyambura, Joshua, the white settlers, Siriana, etc...?

I will meet with each of you on Friday February 24 to discuss the progress of your work. By this point you should have chosen a topic and be ready to discuss your points. I will gladly look over any rough drafts during this time. While I do not like to

include minimum/maximum word counts, you should answer fully. Your paper should have a clear beginning (with thesis statement), middle, and end. 1000-1500 words is appropriate for this assignment.

Please refer to the rubric below. Also, please include the following paper heading on the left hand side of the paper:

Name
Due Date
Title of Paper
Word Count

Your work will be assessed using the following rubric (from AP English Exam):

10-9

These well-focused and persuasive essays address the prompt directly and in a convincing manner. An essay scored a 10 demonstrates exceptional insight and language facility. An essay scored an 9 or a 10 combines adherence to the topic with excellent organization, content, insight, facile use of language, mastery of mechanics, and an understanding of the essential components of an effective essay. Although not without flaws, these essays are richly detailed and stylistically resourceful, and they connect the observations to the passage, poem, or novel as a whole. Descriptors that come to mind while reading this essay include: mastery, sophisticated, complex, specific, consistent, and well-supported.

8-7

These highly competent essays comprehend the task set forth by the prompt and respond to it directly, although some of the analysis may be implicit rather than explicit. The 8-7 essay is in many ways a thinner version of the 10-9 paper in terms of discussion and supporting details, but it is still impressive, cogent, and generally convincing. It may also be less well-handled in terms of organization, insight, or vocabulary. Descriptors that come to mind while reading these essays include: demonstrates a clear understanding but is less precise and less well-supported than a 9-8 paper. These essays demonstrate an adherence to the task, but deviate from course on occasion. The mechanics are sound, but may contain a few errors which may distract but do not obscure meaning. Although there may be a few minor misreadings, the inferences are for the most part accurate with no significant sustained misreadings. The analysis is somewhat more simplistic than found in a 8-7 essay, and lacks sustained, mature analysis.

6-5

These essays may be overly simplistic in analysis, or rely almost exclusively on paraphrase rather than specific, textual examples. These essays may provide a plausible reading, but the analysis is implicit rather than explicit. These essays might provide a list of literary devices present in the literature, but make no effort to discuss the effect that these devices have on the poem, passage, or novel as a whole. Descriptors that come to mind when reading include: superficial, vague, and mechanical. The language is simplistic and the insight is limited or lacking in development.

4-3

These lower-half essays compound the problems found in the 5 essay. They often demonstrate significant sustained misreadings, and provide little or no analysis. They maintain the general idea of the writing assignment, show some sense of organization, but are weak in content, maturity of thought, language facility, and/or mechanics. They may distort the topic or fail to deal adequately with one or more important aspects of the topic. Essays that are particularly poorly written may be scored a 3. Descriptors that come to mind while reading include: incomplete, oversimplified, meager, irrelevant, and insufficient.