

Your first essay assignment is based on H.P. Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu." The essay **must follow all guidelines to earn credit**, and revision will only be required if necessary. Choose a topic from the list below and follow the structure and format on the reverse, making sure to include specific quotes and examples from the text to illustrate your argument. You may reuse/adapt excerpts and ideas from your response paper as they are relevant to your topic. You may use outside sources to support your argument, but make sure to attribute and cite these sources if you do, and focus primarily on the text and your own analysis.

Bonus artistic extra credit: Draw your own illustration of Cthulhu based on descriptions in the text.

**TOPIC CHOICES:**

1. Lovecraft is frequently criticized by readers for his racist imagery and characterization which is offensive in the modern day, as well as to some of his contemporaries even in his time. Explain how Lovecraft used stereotypes of his time about race and ethnicity to contribute to the settings and the plot of "The Call of Cthulhu." Consider tropes of eurocentric perspectives and the exoticizing of "other" cultures.
2. Explore the character of the narrator, Francis Wayland Thurston. How would you describe his personality, outlook, and ambitions? How does this drive the plot forward?
3. Explore the use of secondary characters and their role in the plot. How does the surfacing of stories and evidence of Cthulhu and its effect on different characters build suspense and mystery?
4. Lovecraft presents The "Old Gods," and Cthulhu in particular, as horrifying because they transcend what human beings (and in particular, those from western civilization) understand as reality. Explore examples and interpretation of the nature of Cthulhu and why it is so scary to the narrator. What threat does Cthulhu, and its accompanying cult, pose? Another angle on this to explore: is Cthulhu universally scary? Might this be a bias of the narrator? Might there be an untold perspective on Cthulhu and who would tell it?
5. What writing techniques and style do you notice Lovecraft uses to tell his story? Consider plot structure, setting, character, tone, pacing, point of view, and use of details. Are they effective? Why or why not?
6. Given that many artists, authors, and other creatives, both historically and in the modern day, been outed as racist, misogynist, transphobic, homophobic, or otherwise prejudiced in some way, what is your opinion on whether it's possible or desirable to separate the artist from the art. Explore this question with Lovecraft, and this story, in particular. Given Lovecraft's wide influence on literature and various media, are there ways to engage with his work constructively and creatively, while not ignoring, or perhaps even highlighting, its problematic nature?
7. Choose a topic of your own, perhaps drawn from your response paper or class discussion.

**CONTINUED ON REVERSE ...**

**STRUCTURE:** The essay should be a **minimum of 5 full paragraphs (minimum 6 sentences per paragraph)** and follow this structure:

- **Introductory paragraph:** Introduce your topic and briefly explain background info your reader needs to know. Imagine the reader of your essay has not read the piece you are discussing, so give a brief synopsis and introduce the title and author. Include an engaging hook to draw the reader in. The last line of your intro paragraph should be your thesis statement: a clear sentence explaining an argument you will make with supporting examples throughout the essay.
- **Body paragraphs:** Dedicate at least one body paragraph to each reading and include specific quotes and examples to support your thesis. (Required! One quote per body paragraph is recommended.) Explain your own analysis and insights into the significance of these examples.
- **Concluding paragraph:** Tie together and compare/contrast your examples from the reading in a manner that connects back to your thesis statement, perhaps in a way that sheds new light on it, adds nuance, or simply affirms your argument. Add any final analysis and leave the reader with a clear takeaway.

**FORMAT:** Formatting guidelines are based on MLA standards, and a more detailed reference guide can be found here (also linked on HW Hub):

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html)

- The essay must be typed in double-spaced Times New Roman 12-point font with standard 1-inch margins.
- Include a header in the top right corner with your last name followed by the page number.
- Include a heading on the top left with your name, my name (Maryann Ullmann), the course title (Speculative Fiction) and the date (i.e. 17 September 2024).
- Include an original title, centered under the heading, that alludes to the topic of your essay.
- Structure your essay as indicated above and indent the beginning of each paragraph with no extra space between paragraphs.
- Include in-text citations after quotes with the author last name and page number in parentheses. For example: (Lovecraft 6). If using only one author, you only need to indicate the author the first time, and just cite the page number thereafter.
- If you use outside sources (which is optional), include a Works Cited page that lists each reading in alphabetical order with this format:

Author last name, Author first name. "Title of Essay or Chapter." *Title of Book*. City of Publication, Publisher, Publication Date.

- Proofread your essay for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Print a hard copy or email it to me at [MaryannU@school-one.org](mailto:MaryannU@school-one.org)