

SEP Standard One: Subject Matter

1) My study of English at the University of Minnesota, Morris has helped me progress significantly toward meeting this standard. First, my classes exposed me to a number of different topics in literature: the Medieval and Renaissance eras, Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, early twentieth century British and American authors, as well as an overview of multicultural authors. Additionally, I took courses in grammar and expository writing.

Three major outcomes resulted from this comprehensive English program. First, I learned to appreciate a number of different authors and styles of writing. This, in turn, helped me to grow in my critical thinking and analysis of how the assigned novels applied both to their authors' societies as well as my own. Finally, my writing improved substantially from my freshman year in college. My professors challenged the specificity of my writing; they exhorted me to generate creative theses, while meticulously supporting my ideas from the text; my instructors also stressed the importance of developing my own distinctive voice in writing.

2) The following essays demonstrate my ability to critically analyze and interpret literature; they also show how my writing effectively conveys my conclusions. My first essay examines the importance of trust between characters in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, *2 Henry IV*, and *Othello, the Moor of Venice*. This work demonstrates my familiarity with three of Shakespeare's most famous plays, as well as my ability to compare and evaluate some of the different characters in each play.

My second piece discusses how Virginia Woolf lures readers into her explication of the quandary facing female authors in her non-fiction novel A Room of One's Own. This paper reflects my understanding of the literary techniques the author employs, and discuss how they fit into her work.

My final essay poses three questions that all high school English instructors need to answer: How do teachers approach the study of literature in relation to teaching writing? How do these approaches affect student attitudes about writing? How can teachers realistically and reasonably foster a student's confidence in himself as a writer? This essay answers these questions by showing how teachers, myself included, can productively use a student's reading to improve his writing and vice versa, while also confronting the mythical view of authors that impedes both instructors' and students' appraisal of their own writing.

3) I have three goals to meet. I still count grammar and usage among my weaknesses in English. I hope to make gains in these areas by teaching them to students and studying them on my own. I want to increase my familiarity with classic

and juvenile novels so that I have a greater variety of novels to study in my literature classes. Finally, I must continue writing on my own. Writing helps me to maintain and improve the fundamentals and techniques which I will need to teach my composition students.

*How will you do this?*

*Very good! The only thing that might make this slightly stronger is to add detail in part 3 - how will you study grammar? How will you read juvenile novels? Where could you find titles?*