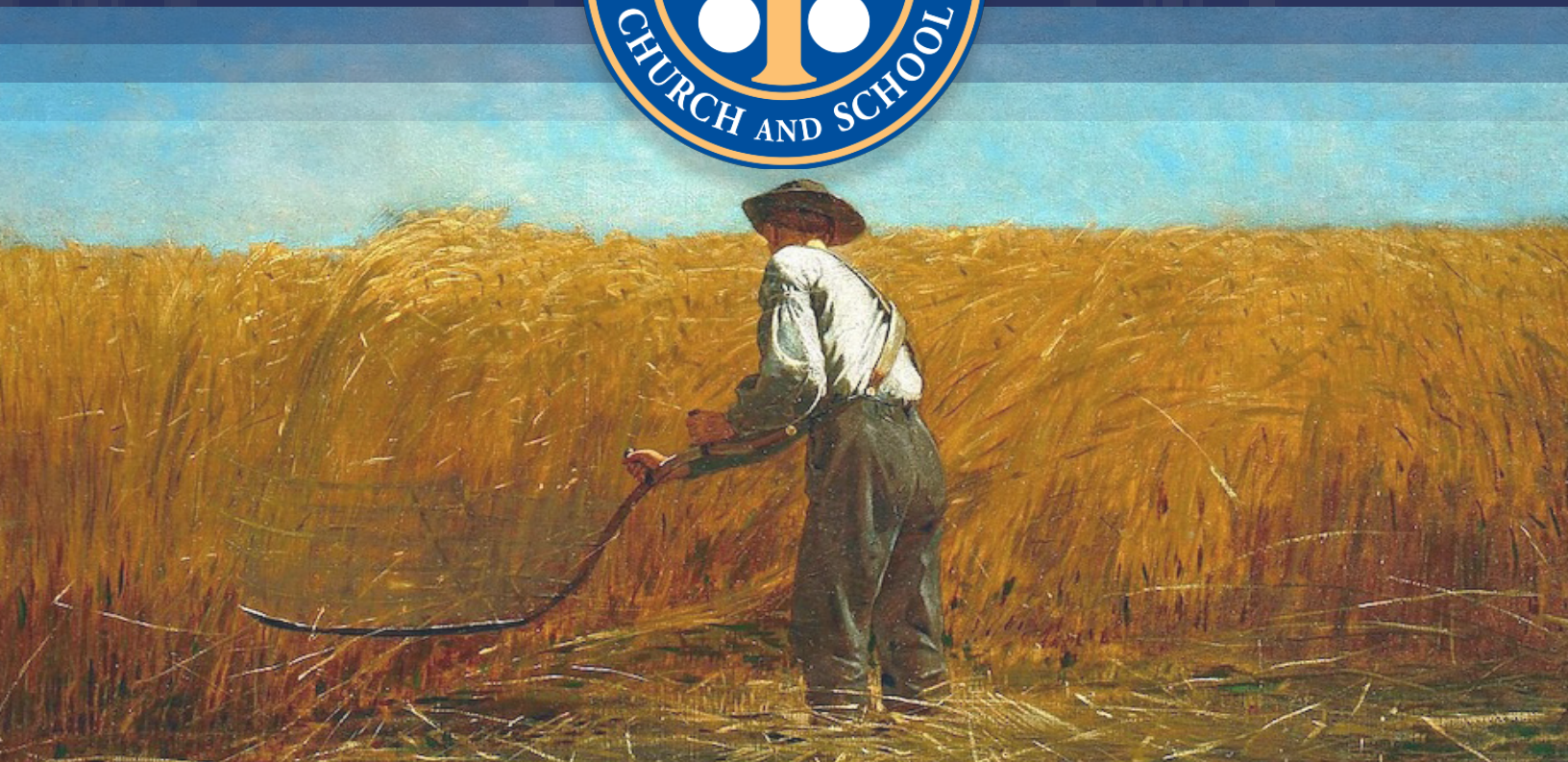
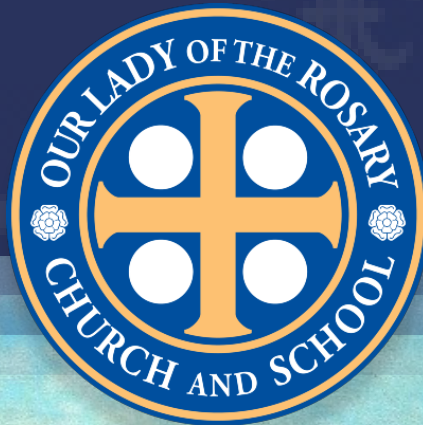




English Curriculum

Grade 08



Course Overview

Course Description


This course leads students through the rich landscapes of American literature, from the early accounts of Jesuit missionaries to the enduring short stories and plays that have shaped the nation's moral imagination. Along the way, they will encounter the artistry of Edgar Allan Poe, Washington Irving, O. Henry, Harper Lee, and William Shakespeare, learning to see how each author reveals truth through character, setting, and theme. Students will study the power of literary devices—meter, metaphor, irony, and symbolism—while also practicing the arts of recitation, dramatic performance, and critical analysis. Through these works, they will discover how stories transmit a people's deepest values, how language shapes thought, and how literature can form both mind and heart.

Why We Teach It...

We teach American literature because it tells the story of a people learning to order liberty toward the common good. From the steadfast faith of Jesuit missionaries to the moral courage of Atticus Finch, these works show how character is tested, justice pursued, and beauty shaped in the language of a young nation. In the wit of O. Henry, the haunting verse of Poe, and the drama of Shakespeare, students learn to discern truth from falsehood, measure freedom by responsibility, and see the human heart as both noble and frail. Such study forms citizens rooted in truth, goodness, and beauty—virtues essential for a just and flourishing society.








Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

-  Identify and analyze major literary elements—plot, character, setting, theme, and conflict—across multiple genres.



Course Objectives | Continued...

-  Identify and analyze major literary elements—plot, character, setting, theme, and conflict—across multiple genres.
-  Recognize and explain the use of key poetic and rhetorical devices, including meter, rhyme, metaphor, personification, irony, symbolism, and allusion.
-  Evaluate how literature reflects and shapes the moral vision of its time, particularly within the American tradition.
-  Compare differing portrayals of virtue, justice, and human nature through the lens of natural law and Catholic tradition.
-  Demonstrate mastery of classical rhetoric through Socratic discussion, literary essays, oral recitation, and dramatic performance.
-  Develop habits of close reading, interpretive charity, and moral reflection through sustained engagement with primary texts.
-  Articulate the meaning of key texts, characters, and themes within the broader narrative of American and Western civilization.

Source Material


Read Literature to Learn and Love Truth by Anthony Esolen
Jesuit Relations – Sts. Isaac Jogues and Kateri
Selected American Poetry and Short Stories
“The Cask of Amontillado” by Edgar Allan Poe
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare
Supplementary materials as provided in class





Key Concepts


Plot Structure	Foreshadowing	Alliteration
Types of Conflict	Symbolism	Hyperbole
Protagonist / Antagonist	Extended Metaphor	Metonymy
Dynamic vs. Static Characters	Imagery	Tone
Point of View	Allusion	Mood
Theme vs. Moral	Personification	Central One Idea (COI)
Biography	Meter and Rhythm	Character Development
Memoir	Rhyme and Rhyme Schemes	Dialogue and Monologue
Historical Narrative	Foot Types	Soliloquy
Irony	Stanza and Enjambment	Dramatic Devices

Central Themes

 **Faith and Witness** – The lives and words of the Jesuit missionaries show that true courage springs from fidelity to God and the willingness to suffer for the salvation of others.

 **Justice and Moral Responsibility** – From Harper Lee’s courtroom drama to Shakespeare’s tragic stage, literature reveals that justice demands both truth and mercy, and that freedom must be guided by conscience.

 **The Power of Story** – Short stories, novels, and plays transmit a culture’s deepest convictions, shaping the imagination and forming moral judgment across generations.

 **The Human Condition** – Through humor, tragedy, irony, and romance, literature portrays the nobility and frailty of the human heart.

 **Beauty and Form** – Poetry and drama unite sound, rhythm, and meaning to awaken the mind and stir the soul toward what is true and good.



On Writing | *The Progymnasmata*

All written work in this course is integrated with Classical Composition (Memoria Press), a program rooted in the ancient art of the progymnasmata—the graded exercises in eloquence used by the Greeks and Romans. In 8th Grade, students will continue building upon the skills gained in previous years with Fable and Narrative, Chreia/Maxim, & advancing to Refutation/Confirmation. This stage trains students to develop a concise statement of wisdom or moral truth, expand it with examples, and defend it with reasoned argument.

In preparation for the 9th Grade study of the full sequence of the progymnasmata, students will also begin learning how these exercises provide the foundation for the Classical Oration—the structured form of essay writing used throughout the classical tradition. By practicing these forms, students will learn to write with clarity, order, and persuasive force, discovering that writing is not merely a skill but a means of seeking truth and communicating it rightly.

Assessments

Summative: 45%

- Unit Exams
- Classical Composition Projects (Fable, Narrative, Chreia/Maxim)
- Essays in the Classical Oration form
- Recitations
- Quizzes

Formative: 35%

- Weekly Classical Composition exercises
- Short written responses and narrations
- Draft components of Chreia/Maxim & Classical Oration
- Oral reading and performance practice
- Homework

Conscientiousness 20%

- Pop quizzes
- Homework
- Classwork
- Preparedness and participation



Scope & Sequence

Unit 1 | Types & Structure of Non-fiction 2 Weeks

Week 1-2 Overview

Students will be introduced to nonfiction as a literary form, distinguishing between biography, memoir, and other styles. Through close reading of Anthony Esolen's *Read Literature to Learn and Love Truth* and selected informational texts, they will learn to identify key features of non-fiction writing and the ways structure supports meaning. Class discussion and short written responses will emphasize clarity of definition, comparison, and recognition of form.

Central-One-Idea

Nonfiction, when crafted with truth and skill, preserves memory, conveys wisdom, and orders facts toward understanding.

Great Question(s)

- What distinguishes nonfiction from other genres?
- How does a writer's choice of form shape meaning?
- Why read another person's life story?
- Can facts alone tell the whole truth?

Key Figures & Concepts

Biography; Memoir; Nonfiction Styles; Structure; Purpose; Audience

Sources

Read Literature to Learn and Love Truth by Anthony Esolen

"Types and Structure of Nonfiction" (class handout)



Week 3-8 Overview

Students will read selections from Jesuit Relations, studying the lives and witness of St. Isaac Jogues and St. Kateri Tekakwitha. They will examine the cultural and spiritual impact of the missionaries on the New World, identifying how point of view, character development, and conflict shape a narrative. Special attention will be given to distinguishing dynamic and static characters, recognizing “coming of age” themes, and evaluating how faith is expressed in times of trial.

Central-One-Idea

The Jesuit Relations show that true heroism is measured by faithfulness to God and the willingness to serve others, even at the cost of one's life.

Great Question(s)

- How can a missionary change the course of a culture?
- What does it mean to remain faithful in suffering?
- How does point of view shape our understanding of events?
- What makes a life worth remembering?

Key Figures & Concepts

St. Isaac Jogues; St. Kateri Tekakwitha; Missionary; Explorer; Setting; Conflict; Point of View; Dynamic vs. Static Characters; Coming of Age; Vocabulary in Context

Sources

*“Background and Introduction to American Literature”
(class handout)*

Jesuit Relations — Sts. Isaac Jogues and Kateri

Week 9-12

Overview

Students will study the life and works of Edgar Allan Poe, focusing on how his poetic and narrative craft creates mood and conveys central ideas. They will memorize key biographical facts, analyze the use of extended metaphor and imagery in “To Helen,” and examine how poetic devices in “The Raven” shape tone and meaning. In “The Cask of Amontillado,” they will identify and distinguish verbal, situational, and dramatic irony, evaluating how each builds suspense and deepens the reader’s understanding of character.

Central-One-Idea

Poe’s art reveals that beauty and terror often dwell side by side, and that the human heart can both long for truth and hide from it.

Great Question(s)

How does a writer create a mood that lingers in the mind?

- What is the purpose of irony in a dark story?
- Can beauty exist in a tale of horror?
- How does knowing an author’s life shape how we read his work?

Key Figures & Concepts

Edgar Allan Poe; Extended Metaphor; Imagery; Poetic Devices; Verbal Irony; Situational Irony; Dramatic Irony; Mood; Tone; Central One Idea (COI)

Sources

“To Helen” by Edgar Allan Poe

“The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe

“The Cask of Amontillado” by Edgar Allan Poe



Week 13-16 Overview

Students will explore the works of Washington Irving, examining how early American literature blends humor, social observation, and symbolic meaning. They will identify major movements in American literature and connect Irving's work to the ideals and challenges of a young nation. Through "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," students will analyze how characters can symbolize larger ideas, how tone reflects the author's vision of society, and how themes of change and resistance to change emerge through narrative.

Central-One-Idea

Irving's stories reveal that while change is inevitable, the heart of a people lies in how they remember, adapt, and hold to what is good.

Great Question(s)

- How can a fictional character symbolize an entire culture?
- What does humor reveal about a society?
- When is resisting change a virtue, and when is it a flaw?
- How does literature help a young nation define itself?

Key Figures & Concepts

Washington Irving; American Literary Movements; Symbolism; Tone; Central One Idea (COI); Resistance to Change; Humor in Narrative

Sources

"Rip Van Winkle" by Washington Irving

"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" by Washington Irving



Week 17-21 Overview

Students will study the life and works of O. Henry, focusing on his mastery of irony, foreshadowing, and the surprise ending. In “The Gift of the Magi,” they will examine how sacrifice and love are revealed through character choices. In “The Ransom of Red Chief,” they will identify examples of irony, hyperbole, and metonymy, and explore how humor arises from the ineptitude of the narrator. Through these stories, students will consider how literary style can both entertain and convey moral truth.

Central-One-Idea

O. Henry’s tales show that life’s twists often reveal the deeper value of humility, love, and unexpected grace.

Great Question(s)

- How does an author keep a reader guessing until the last line?
- Can humor teach a moral lesson?
- How does foreshadowing shape the way we read a story?
- What makes a surprise ending satisfying?

Key Figures & Concepts

O. Henry; Verbal Irony; Situational Irony; Dramatic Irony; Foreshadowing; Hyperbole; Metonymy; Surprise Ending

Sources

“The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry

“The Ransom of Red Chief” by O. Henry

Week 22-25 Overview

Students will study poetry as both a written and spoken art, exploring how sound, rhythm, and imagery convey meaning. They will learn to identify poetic forms, meter, rhyme schemes, stanza structure, and key devices such as alliteration, symbolism, and allusion. Through memorization and recitation of selected poems, students will practice volume, clarity, pacing, posture, and emotional expression, discovering how performance can deepen interpretation.

Central-One-Idea

Poetry unites form and feeling, training the mind to seek truth and the heart to delight in beauty.

Great Question(s)

- How does sound shape the meaning of a poem?
- Why is memorization valuable in a modern world?
- Can performance change the way a poem is understood?
- How do poets use form to reveal truth?

Key Figures & Concepts

William Wordsworth; Robert Frost; Edgar Allan Poe; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; Meter; Rhyme Scheme; Foot Types; Stanza; Enjambment; Alliteration; Symbol; Allusion; Recitation Skills

Sources

“The Virgin” by William Wordsworth

“The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost

“Annabel Lee” by Edgar Allan Poe

“A Psalm of Life” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Week 26-33 Overview

Students will read Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, examining how themes of justice, prejudice, and moral growth are developed through character, setting, and plot. They will follow the novel in three major sections, using quizzes, essays, and discussions to trace moral dilemmas, central ideas, and shifts in perspective. Special focus will be placed on how individual choices shape community life, how compassion influences justice, and how innocence confronts the complexity of the adult world.

Central-One-Idea

True moral courage is the willingness to do what is right, even when it is unpopular, costly, or misunderstood.

Great Question(s)

- What does it mean to truly understand another person?
- Can a community be just if its members are not?
- How do prejudice and fear distort truth?
- What is the relationship between innocence and moral responsibility?

Key Figures & Concepts

Harper Lee; Justice; Prejudice; Compassion; Coming of Age; Point of View; Central One Idea (COI); Moral Responsibility; Community

Sources

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee



Course Catechism

This section is structured as a series of questions and answers—intended to cultivate wisdom, virtue, and a love of tradition in the soul of the reader. Drawing from classical education, Christian orthodoxy, and the accumulated insights of Western civilization, this catechism aims to form not only the mind but the moral imagination.



Each question is crafted to provoke contemplation, and each answer is more than mere information—it is a small liturgy of truth, designed to be memorized, internalized, and lived. In the tradition of ancient catechisms, this section assumes that learning is not just for passing tests, but for becoming someone.

Section I | Unit I

Q: What is a biography?

A: *A nonfiction account of a person's life written by someone else.*

Q: What is a memoir?

A: *A nonfiction account in which the author tells the story of their own life or experiences.*

Q: Name two similarities between a biography and a memoir.

A: *Both are nonfiction and focus on a person's life and experiences.*

Q: Name two differences between a biography and a memoir.

A: *A biography is written by another person and usually covers the subject's whole life; a memoir is written by the subject and focuses on selected events or themes.*

Q: What is one purpose of nonfiction writing?

A: *To present factual information in order to inform, explain, or preserve memory.*



Section II | Unit II

Q: Who was St. Isaac Jogues?

A: *A 17th-century Jesuit missionary martyred while evangelizing Native Americans in New France.*

Q: Who was St. Kateri Tekakwitha?

A: *A Mohawk woman who converted to Catholicism and lived a life of holiness in New France.*

Q: What is a missionary?

A: *A person sent to spread the faith and serve others, often in a foreign land.*

Q: What is point of view in literature?

A: *The perspective from which a story is told.*

Q: What is the difference between a dynamic and a static character?

A: *A dynamic character changes significantly during the story; a static character remains largely the same.*

Section III | Unit III

Q: Who wrote “The Raven”?

A: *Edgar Allan Poe.*

Q: What is an extended metaphor?

A: *A comparison that continues throughout a passage or entire work.*

Q: Name the three types of irony.

A: *Verbal, situational, and dramatic.*

Q: What is the mood of a story?

A: *The atmosphere or emotional feeling it creates for the reader.*

Q: In “The Cask of Amontillado,” which type of irony is most prevalent?

A: *Dramatic irony.*



Section IV | Unit IV

Q: Who wrote “Rip Van Winkle”?

A: *Washington Irving.*

Q: What is symbolism?

A: *The use of a character, object, or event to represent a larger idea.*

Q: What is tone?

A: *The author’s attitude toward the subject or audience.*

Q: What is the central one idea (COI) in “Rip Van Winkle”?

A: *The challenges and consequences of resisting change.*

Q: Name two movements in early American literature.

A: *Romanticism and Transcendentalism.*

Section V | Unit V

Q: Who wrote “The Gift of the Magi”?

A: *O. Henry.*

Q: What is foreshadowing?

A: *A literary device that gives hints about events that will happen later in the story.*

Q: What is hyperbole?

A: *An intentional exaggeration for emphasis or effect.*

Q: What is metonymy?

A: *A figure of speech in which something is referred to by an associated term.*

Q: What makes O. Henry’s stories distinctive?

A: *Their use of surprise endings and situational irony.*



Section VI | Unit VI

Q: What is meter in poetry?

A: *The rhythmic pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line.*

Q: Name the four common foot types in English poetry.

A: *Iambic, trochaic, dactylic, and anapestic.*

Q: What is enjambment?

A: *The continuation of a sentence beyond the end of a line of poetry.*

Q: What is the purpose of recitation?

A: *To internalize a work and convey its meaning through spoken performance.*

Q: Name one poem studied in this unit.

A: *“The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost.*

Section VII | Unit VII

Q: Who wrote To Kill a Mockingbird?

A: *Harper Lee.*

Q: Who is the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird?

A: *Scout Finch.*

Q: What is prejudice?

A: *A preconceived opinion not based on reason or actual experience.*

Q: What is moral courage?

A: *The willingness to do what is right despite fear, opposition, or personal cost.*

Q: What is the setting of To Kill a Mockingbird?

A: *The town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the 1930s.*



Section VIII | *Recitations*

“The Virgin” - William Wordsworth

“The Road Not Taken” - Robert Frost

“Annabelle Lee” - Edgar Allen Poe



Week 1

Weekly Logos

Preserve Memory, Seek Truth..

Nonfiction is the art of telling the truth about real people, events, and ideas. In this first week, students will learn how different nonfiction forms shape both what is said and how it is understood. They will see that the structure of biography, memoir, and other nonfiction styles is not neutral—it guides the reader toward a certain vision of the truth. Through Anthony Esolen’s Read Literature to Learn and Love Truth and a study of “Types and Structure of Nonfiction,” students will discover that facts gain meaning when ordered, and that telling a life story is a moral act as much as a literary one.

What Are We Assessing?

The Facts

- ▣ Definition of “biography” and “memoir”
- ▣ Two similarities and two differences between a biography and a memoir
- ▣ Six of the eleven nonfiction style

What Are We Assessing?

The Skills

- ▣ Distinguishing between literary forms
- ▣ Comparing two related genres
- ▣ Identifying nonfiction styles in examples

What Are We Assessing?

The Truths

We Read to preserve memory, convey wisdom, and seek truth

These truths unify every element of the lesson:

- That the way we tell a story reveals what we value
- That preserving truth in writing is a form of justice to the person or event
- That form and content together shape meaning



Assessments | *Suggested Types*

- ▣ Identification Quiz: Define “biography” and “memoir” and list six nonfiction styles
- ▣ Short Written Response: Compare biography and memoir (two similarities, two differences)
- ▣ Classification Exercise: Match nonfiction examples to their correct style

Pacing | *By Week*

Day	Focus	Homework
Monday	Introduction to course and the role of nonfiction in literature	Read <i>Read Literature to Learn and Love Truth</i> by Anthony Esolen (pp. 1–3)
Tuesday	Define biography and memoir; Class discussion: purposes of life writing	Write one paragraph on the life of someone you know, choosing either biography or memoir form
Wednesday	Compare biography and memoir (two similarities, two differences)	Begin identifying nonfiction styles from examples
Thursday	Learn six of the eleven nonfiction styles	Group activity: match sample passages to nonfiction style
Friday	Review & Quiz	None



Teacher Tips

Begin by asking: What is the last true story you read, and why did you read it?

Emphasize that even nonfiction involves choices—what to include, what to leave out, and how to frame events.

Draw on familiar examples (memoirs of saints, historical biographies) to connect to Catholic tradition.

Catechetical moment: Truth in writing is an act of charity—honoring both the subject and the reader.



Appendix

Essays In This Course...

Each of the three major essays in this course will follow the structure and spirit of our Classical Writing Curriculum at Our Lady of the Rosary. Students are expected to write with clarity, order, and persuasive force, employing the Classical Oration form:

- Exordium – The introduction that gains attention and builds ethos
- Narratio – Background/context, statement of facts/narration of events
- Divisio – Outline of major arguments
- Confirmatio – 3 Proofs & Sub-Proofs (body paragraphs)
- Refutatio – Address and refute opposing arguments
- Peroratio – The conclusion: moving the heart, restating the truth

Each essay must be a minimum of 2 (except long essay) full pages, MLA formatted, and include a bibliography with at least five primary sources and three scholarly secondary sources. This level of work prepares students not only for collegiate academic writing, but more importantly, for thoughtful, ordered argument in service of truth, which lies at the heart of classical education.

Prompt I

Explain how Edgar Allan Poe uses poetic devices and structure to convey the Central-One-Idea of “The Raven.”

Objective: Analyze how elements such as meter, rhyme scheme, repetition, and imagery work together to create mood and deepen the meaning of the poem. Support your analysis with direct textual evidence, noting how each device shapes the reader’s understanding of beauty, loss, and longing.



Prompt II

Drawing on Washington Irving’s “Rip Van Winkle,” explain how the theme of resistance to change is developed through character and setting.

Objective: Describe at least three ways Irving uses characterization, symbolism, and tone to illustrate the tension between tradition and progress. Discuss how Rip’s long absence becomes a lens for the author’s commentary on post-Revolutionary America, and support your analysis with specific examples from the text.

Prompt III

“Mayella must have been the loneliest person in the world. She is even lonelier than Boo Radley.” — Explain why Mayella is a tragic character. Consider what her life has been like and how much she is to blame for her actions in falsely accusing Tom.

Objective: Evaluate how Harper Lee uses character development, setting, and moral conflict to explore themes of justice, compassion, and moral responsibility. Support your analysis with direct textual evidence, explaining how each example shapes the reader’s understanding of the chosen topic.

