

# January 2013 English Regents review



New York State English Regents Exam  
Part 4 The Critical Lens

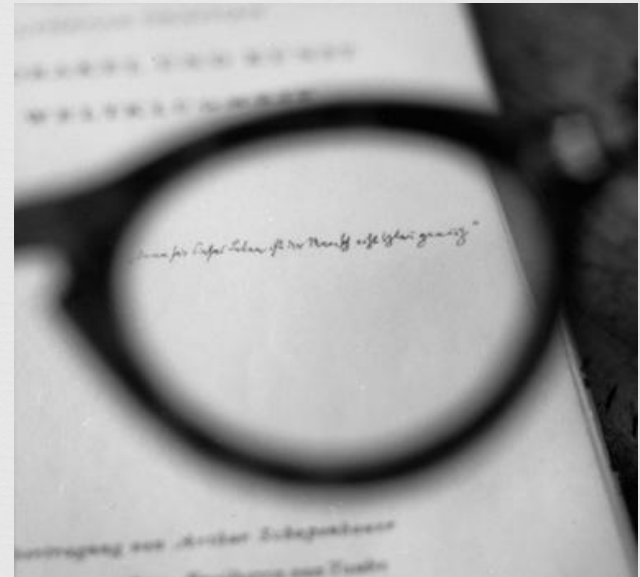
# Part 4 – The Critical Lens



## ✧ Writing the Critical Lens Essay

### ✧ What is a Critical Lens Quote and why is it called that?

The *critical lens* is a quote that you use as a tool to analyze a work of literature. It draws focus to certain aspects of the text. The critical lens essay is an exercise in literary analysis. Before a story, the author may place a critical lens quotation from another author which relates to the theme of the story to follow.



# Your Critical Lens:



“The real hero is always a hero by mistake...”

--Umberto Eco

*Travels in Hyperreality, 1986*

# Critical Lens – Your Guidelines



- ❧ Provide a valid interpretation of the quote
- ❧ Clearly establish criteria for analysis
- ❧ Indicate whether you agree or disagree
- ❧ Choose **two** works to support your opinion
- ❧ **AVOID PLOT SUMMARY**
- ❧ Use specific and appropriate literary elements for analysis
- ❧ Organize your ideas clearly
- ❧ Specify titles, authors and details
- ❧ Follow the conventions of English

# Introduction



- ❧ Introduce and state the quote
  - ❧ Interpret the quote fully and in your own words – what does this quote mean?
  - ❧ Show agreement or disagreement\*
  - ❧ State thesis (aka your stance) and State two works of literature and the authors you will use to support your statement.
- ❧ *\*Disagreeing will be 100% more challenging. The main challenge will be writing in the positive and avoiding an argumentative, combative, and antagonistic tone.*

# Introduction (actual)



Umberto Eco once stated, “The real hero is always a hero by mistake.” This means that sometimes people or characters are faced with tough choices that are unexpected. In these times of tough choices, heroes can arise. This quote is shown to be true in the novella Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck and the novel The Crucible by Arthur Miller. In these two works, characters are forced into difficult situations where they ultimately make a “heroic” choice.

# Body Paragraphs



- ❧ Include a topic sentence to introduce the text and author (TAG=Title, Author, Genre)
- ❧ Transition and include your literary elements (may be multiple sentences)
- ❧ Connect back to the lens (may be multiple sentences)
- ❧ Concluding sentence.

# Body Paragraph 1 (sample)



In the novella Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck, George Milton is one character who is forced to make a very difficult decision. One literary element that helps support this is the theme of friendship. George and Lennie are very good friends, but when Lennie unintentionally kills Curley's wife, the men on the seek revenge. When George finds Lennie hiding in the brush by the river, his friendship is put to the test as he is faced with an impossible decision. George acts in Lennie's best interest by making sure that Lennie's last words are uplifting and optimistic. In chapter 6 of the novella, George decides, as Lennie's friend, it is best for him to end Lennie's life rather than leave him to face the imminent torture at the hands of Curley. George proves to be Lennie's "hero" by sparing him the unnecessary guilt and pain. Of Mice and Men exemplifies how heroes can emerge from unexpected and even unpleasant situations.



# Body Paragraph 2 (sample)



Another great example of a “mistaken” hero is protagonist John Proctor from Arthur Miller’s The Crucible. In this play, John Proctor is a simple man who is characterized by Miller to be honest, trustworthy, and hardworking. These qualities prove him to be heroic in a time of madness and injustice. Proctor becomes a spokesperson for the average citizen in a Puritan world where accusations lead to prosecution and death. In the novel, John Proctor sacrifices his good name in order to help his wife escape lynching, he is seen as heroic. Other members of the community idolize his selflessness and realize that through this difficult time, Proctor rose to face the unfairness without fear. Arthur Miller created a true hero when he created the character of John Proctor. Although Proctor did not succeed with his goals, he still achieved greatness by simply trying to stand up for what he believed.

# Conclusion



- ❧ Re-state an interpretation of the quote
- ❧ You may make a general statement that includes everyone if it is fitting. (ex. We often see heroes...)
- ❧ Show agreement/~~disagreement~~
- ❧ Briefly review main points made
- ❧ Tie main ideas back to the lens and your thesis

# Conclusion (sample)



Heroes often come from accidental situations where characters have been able to rise from an unfortunate situation. In unpredictable times, both George from Of Mice and Men and John Proctor from The Crucible were able to do what was right despite a devastating circumstance. In making a monumentally difficult decision for the benefit of a loved one, both characters were able to become heroes in one way or another. This proves that true heroes can make difficult choices and rise above even when they don't necessarily intend to.

# Final Step



- ❧ **Review your writing!**
- ❧ Does your essay and the examples support the quote interpretation?
- ❧ Does your essay maintain a SINGLE controlling idea or does it digress?
- ❧ Avoid summary! Summary weakens an essay!
- ❧ Use the guidelines provided to make sure your response completely answers the question.
- ❧ Re-read for spelling or grammatical errors.
- ❧ **Neatly** cross-out and revise any mistakes.