

EN 121: Final Take-Home Exam

Instructions: Please answer **ALL FOUR** of the following questions with short essay responses [2-5 paragraphs each]. Each question is worth **10 points**.

You may type your answers into a separate Word (.docx) document. This take-home final is to be completed on your own, without consultation with peers or with online resources. You may, however, consult the course texts and your class notes.

Please use specific examples and quotations from the course texts where appropriate. No Works Cited page is needed; however, do give page numbers for any quotations.

Due Date: Thursday, May 11, by 5 pm (NO LATER. Any exams submitted after 5 pm will automatically receive a deduction of a full letter grade. I will not accept any exams after 11:59 pm on May 11). Please submit to me via email attachment at sdraucke@bu.edu.

1. Focusing on EITHER *Homegoing* or *The Vegetarian*, choose **ONE literary device** or **rhetorical strategy** used by the author. Make an argument about why the author uses this device/strategy. Be sure to give specific examples from the text.

2. Provide a **close reading** of the following scene. What are some of the central concerns in this passage? What literary devices does Lahiri use to convey these concerns? Are they effective or not? Why or why not?

The paper curled as Mr. Kapasi wrote his address in clear, careful letters. She would write to him, asking about his days interpreting at the doctor's office, and he would respond eloquently, choosing only the most entertaining anecdotes, ones that would make her laugh out loud as she read them in her house in New Jersey. In time she would reveal the disappointment of her marriage, and he his. In this way their friendship would grow, and flourish. He would possess a picture of the two of them, eating fried onions under a magenta umbrella, which he would keep, he decided, safely tucked between the pages of his Russian grammar. As his mind raced, Mr. Kapasi experienced a mild and pleasant shock. It was similar to a feeling he used to experience long ago when, after months of translating with the aid of a dictionary, he would finally read a passage from a French novel, or an Italian sonnet, and understand the words, one after another, unencumbered by his own efforts. In those moments Mr. Kapasi used to believe that all was right with the world, that all struggles were rewarded, that all of life's mistakes made sense in the end. The promise that he would hear from Mrs. Das now filled him with the same belief.

When he finished writing his address Mr. Kapasi handed her the paper, but as soon as he did so he worried that he had either misspelled his name, or accidentally reversed the numbers of his postal code. He dreaded the possibility of a lost letter, the photograph never reaching him, hovering somewhere in Orissa, close but relatively unattainable. He thought of asking for the slip of paper again, just to make sure he had written his address accurately, but Mrs. Das had already dropped it into the jumble of her bag.

-Jhumpa Lahiri, "Interpreter of Maladies" (55-56)

3. Discuss the theme of *cultural assimilation* as it appears in one of the following works: “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine,” “The Courter,” or *Persepolis*. For reference, Encyclopedia Britannica defines “assimilation” as “the process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society.”

4. Focusing on ANY ONE of the course texts, make an argument about how the text’s *genre* (novel, short story, argumentative essay, memoir, graphic novel) affects the author’s presentation of the work’s central thematic, social, or political concerns.

EXTRA CREDIT [worth up to 3 extra points]: Recall our discussions of Emily Apter and David Damrosch’s ideas about “world literature” at the beginning of the semester. First, give a brief summary of each of their central concerns (1-2 sentences). Then, offer your own (brief, 1-2 paragraph) discussion about both the possibilities and limitations of studying “world literature.” What should “world literature” courses look like in today’s universities?