

Spring 2012

# Major Assignment # 1: Explicating Emerson's "The American Scholar"

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## Major Assignment #1: Explicating Emerson's "The American Scholar"

*explicate*: v. "To make clear the meaning of; to remove difficulties or obscurities from; to clear up, explain"

"explicate, v.". OED Online. September 2011. Oxford University Press. 12 December 2011

**Due: Midnight, March 9, 2012**

### Description:

For this assignment, you will choose a passage 2-3 paragraphs in length (~300-400 words) of Emerson's "The American Scholar" and explicate that passage for a general audience (i.e., people like you, who have read "The American Scholar" and seek to better understand it). This assignment will require you to apply a number of the skills by now familiar to you from earlier assignments: critical reading for argument, short-form writing, analysis for metaphor (both explicit and underlying metaphors), and the ability to search for related sources using both known-item and unknown-item discovery techniques and evaluate them in the context of a critical project.

Your explication will be created as a website using Google Sites, from the suite of Google Apps associated with your Trinity Tmail account. Technical instruction will be provided in class, and written instructions and an example of the assignment format will be provided on TLEARN.

**This assignment will have five main parts. Each part will take the form of a separate page in your website:**

1. A discussion of how meaning is made/argument is advanced by use of metaphor within the passage. This is to be your original analysis, the product of your direct engagement with the text of the passage. Here you are required to find and use a work (e.g., scholarly article or book chapter) on metaphor referenced in [I Is An Other](#), and present it as a framing device, using it to provide a definition or conceptual model of how at least one scholar has conceived of metaphor. That will establish the basis for your original analysis of how this metaphor makes meaning within the text. Your application of this definition or model of metaphor to the passage itself will be the largest component of this part.
2. A discussion of 'found' examples of how this passage is treated by common and influential secondary sources (e.g., Wikipedia, Cliff's Notes, highly-cited scholarly works and essays, etc.). This section will include thorough citation of the sources used, both in-text and in a Works Cited list. You are to make a claim about the strengths and weaknesses of each source's treatment of your passage, using quotation or paraphrase as evidence to support your argument. Sources will be also described using the criteria familiar from our earlier information literacy assignments (how you found it, evidence that it is common and influential, intended audience, credibility of author, scope of project/best uses).
3. A reflection on the passage in response to the following prompt: Starting with your sense of the meaning of the passage (and how the language of the passage makes that meaning using metaphor), how would you choose to present that message if you could use any

medium, format, or narrative technique (metaphorical or not)? In other words, if you wanted to get this message out to as many people, with as much impact as possible, how would you proceed? Would you alter the message itself in any way? If you were to use metaphor as a device, would you use a metaphor different from Emerson's, or alter his in any way? This section is intended to be speculative in nature; outside sources provided in support of your claims, or sources used simply as examples, will be helpful and appreciated, but are not required.

4. An introduction that will introduce your chosen passage and present the main ideas of your explication, and the text of the passage itself. The introduction will serve as an abstract of your work, and should be written last. This page will be the Home page of your site.
5. A glossary which provides cited definitions of key terms and annotations of the words and phrases that comprise the central metaphor you have identified in the passage. This content will be linked from the terms and passages as they appear in the text of the passage in your introduction.

**Criteria for Grading**

	Needs Work	Competent	Commendable
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<p>Analysis of metaphor</p>	<p>Source chosen for framing of use of metaphor is not relevant or not appropriate, or is not authoritative. This could mean it addresses an unrelated aspect of metaphor, is not a scholarly paper, or does not deal substantially with metaphor.</p> <p>The metaphor(s) identified as central to the passage is not clearly explained, and few or no examples from the text are provided as supporting evidence.</p> <p>Original analysis of the metaphor(s) is cursory or missing, and mechanics of the passage's argument are not addressed substantially.</p> <p>Claims about the text are not supported with textual evidence, and/or original interpretations of evidence are not provided or do not advance your claims.</p> <p>Some or all citations are missing or inaccurate, and/or a Works Cited list is absent or poorly presented.</p> <p>NOTE: falsifying citations is a violation of the Honor Code.</p>	<p>Source chosen for framing of use of metaphor is appropriate to the passage and its key metaphor, and is authoritative and relevant to our course reading on metaphor.</p> <p>The metaphor(s) identified as central to the passage is clearly explained, and examples from the text are provided as supporting evidence.</p> <p>Analysis of the metaphor(s) includes original points about the way the metaphor(s) serve to create and advance the argument. The argument, or central claim of the passage, is discussed in these terms.</p> <p>Evidence is provided from the text whenever helpful, and is in turn interpreted in your original prose to further your own argument.</p> <p>All textual evidence and all references to the work of others are cited in MLA style for in-text citations and accurately formatted in a Works Cited list.</p>	<p>Source chosen for framing of use of metaphor is appropriate to the passage and its key metaphor, and is authoritative and relevant to our course reading on metaphor.</p> <p>The metaphor(s) identified as central to the passage is clearly explained, and examples from the text are provided as supporting evidence. The analysis provided revolves around a probing question or questions (probing questions could look like the following: how finely can the metaphor be articulated before it no longer serves to advance the argument? What are the implications of the metaphor when considered beyond its specific use in Emerson's text? What further associations does the metaphor have? How does that metaphor resonate with others found in the text as a whole—particularly the overarching metaphors Emerson uses to unify the ideas of the text?)</p> <p>Evidence is provided from the text whenever helpful, and is in turn interpreted in your original prose to further your own argument.</p> <p>All textual evidence and all references to the work of others are cited in MLA style for in-text citations and accurately formatted in a Works Cited list.</p>
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<p>Discussion of prominent secondary sources</p>	<p>Key sources (e.g., those easily found on a cursory Google search of the passage or of "TAS") are missing or are treated too briefly. That is, strengths and weaknesses of the source are not clearly expressed; textual evidence from the secondary sources is not used substantially or is not cited appropriately.</p> <p>A Works Cited list is either missing, incomplete, inaccurate, or contains unused references. Annotations are absent or fail to address the criteria described at right.</p>	<p>Strengths and weaknesses of each source's claims about the passage are clearly expressed, with one or two minor exceptions, and are supported with relevant textual evidence from the source, which is accurately cited using MLA format for in-text citations, with minor exceptions.</p> <p>Key sources (e.g., those easily found on a cursory Google search of the passage or of "TAS") are present and accounted for.</p> <p>Secondary sources are cited properly in MLA style in a Works Cited list; annotations address the credibility of the author, intended audience, the category of source it belongs to and discovery techniques used to find it, and the best uses of said source, with one or two minor exceptions.</p>	<p>Strengths and weaknesses of each source's claims about the passage are clearly expressed and supported with relevant textual evidence from the source, which is accurately cited using MLA format for in-text citations.</p> <p>Key sources (e.g., those easily found on a cursory Google search of the passage or of "TAS") are present and accounted for.</p> <p>Secondary sources are cited properly in MLA style in a Works Cited list; annotations address the credibility of the author, intended audience, the category of source it belongs to and discovery techniques used to find it, and the best uses of said source.</p>
<p>Introduction</p>	<p>Introduction is missing, or is too short or too long. Clarity, logical flow, and grammar are comprised or not present. Does not introduce the claims of your analysis adequately.</p>	<p>Introduction is appropriate in length (~150 words) but does not fully address the content of the site in a clear and succinct manner.</p>	<p>Provides a clear and concise (~150 words) overview of the subject and major claims of your analysis; briefly addresses findings from the discussion of prominent secondary sources.</p>
<p>Glossary</p>	<p>Obscure, dated, or confusing terms are NOT defined appropriately in a number of cases. Definitions are not cited accurately in MLA style in a number of instances, or do not come from credible dictionaries or subject encyclopedias. Metaphorical language from the textual passage is left unacknowledged and unexplained in a number of cases.</p>	<p>Obscure, dated, or confusing terms are defined appropriately, with one or two minor exceptions. Sources are cited accurately in MLA style, and come from credible dictionaries or subject encyclopedias. Metaphorical language from the textual passage is highlighted and briefly explained.</p>	<p>Obscure, dated, or confusing terms are defined appropriately. Sources are cited accurately in MLA style, and come from credible dictionaries or subject encyclopedias. Metaphorical language from the textual passage is highlighted and briefly explained.</p>
<p>Overall presentation</p>	<p>Site is missing one or more required elements. Graphic elements and other cosmetic touches create legibility problems or other significant distractions.</p> <p>Frequent instances of carelessness in formatting, spelling, organization, and adherence to instructions are evident.</p>	<p>Site is structured so that the Introduction appears as the home page, and other sections appear as secondary pages listed in the menu, with minor exceptions. Text is sized appropriately (10-12pt) and spacing, left-alignment, and indentation is used to facilitate readability.</p> <p>Graphic elements and other cosmetic touches create no or very minor legibility problems or other visual distractions.</p>	<p>Site is structured so that the Introduction appears as the home page, and other sections appear as secondary pages listed in the menu. Text is sized appropriately (10-12pt) and spacing, left-alignment, and indentation is used to facilitate readability.</p> <p>Graphic elements and other cosmetic touches do not create legibility problems or other visual distractions.</p>