

August 30, 2018

Mr. Roets and Mr. Nicholas: Assignment #1

DUE DATE: Friday Sept. 7, turned in digitally into the Turnitin.com site (directions forthcoming). 3-4 pages, double spaced, MLA format

Uncle Tom's Cabin – A Roughly Formed Opinion

Welcome back to school! Let's get started. We will use your summer reading of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, by Thomas Foster, to create a "roughly formed" –or mostly uninformed - evaluation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (which you will be reading in the next few weeks) are of cultural and historical importance, particularly in how they have helped frame the discussion of slavery and race for Americans. That they have made that frame is not really in dispute, but *how* and *how well* and even *why* are all questions considered by critics since the novels were published. Both books have had claims made to establish them as "great American novels."

We want you to enter the fray. You've read the novel on your own (or at least without teacher input from Mr. Nicholas or Mr. Roets) and now we want your opinion. Using what you've learned from Foster's excellent primer on how to read literature, evaluate *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a work of literature. (This essay will become part of a much larger essay in which you will also consider other critical viewpoints on the novel as well.)

Choose three or four of the following list of nine angles to consider in your evaluation, and be sure to explain how Foster's lessons directly impact your understanding. Yes we want quotes from both Foster and Stowe, and we want those quotes to appear in MLA parenthetical notation in your paper. Be specific, be clear and be interesting.

1. Language/style (including dialect and slang)
2. Plot (see the first chapter of Foster!)
3. Characterization
4. Setting
5. Symbolism
6. Themes
7. Race as an issue
8. Historical value
9. Cultural value

Full Definition of EVALUATE (FROM MERRIAM-WEBSTER.COM)

transitive verb

1: to determine or fix the value of

2: to determine the significance, worth, or condition of usually by careful appraisal and study