Essay 3: A Social Role as Depicted in a Short Story

According to a story you will choose from the list below, ***what does it mean to be one of the following: husband, wife, father, son, daughter, sister, minister, landlord, sharecropper, veteran, spinster, object of gossip or desire, head of household, person of color, functional member of society, or even just a responsible adult?***

For this essay, create a claim about **one message** the chosen story sends about a specific role men or women play –or supposedly should play—within society (see the question above for a potential role to discuss). The claim will be your **thesis statement**, and you must craft **three strong topic sentences** to support it, pretty much **walking readers through key parts of the story that best support your thesis, showing how your support is actually support**. When in doubt about what such an argument could look like, refer to the sample thesis and argument re: “The Story of an Hour.” (Note that you may *not* write about “The Story of an Hour.”)

**Story options:**

* “A&P” by John Updike (p. 746-750 in *Bedford* 10th ed. or p. 200-204 in 11th ed.)
* “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner (p. 99-105/10th ed.; 77-83/11th ed.)
* “Barn Burning” by William Faulkner (p. 480-491/10th ed.; 406-417/11th ed.)
* “Why I Live at the P.O.” by Eudora Welty (<http://art-bin.com/art/or_weltypostoff.htm>)
* “The Minister’s Black Veil” by Nathaniel Hawthorne (p. 480-491/10th ed.; 406-417/11th ed.)
* “Soldier’s Home” by Ernest Hemingway (p. 187-192/10th ed.; 162-166/11th ed.)
* “Desiree’s Baby” by Kate Chopin (<http://www.katechopin.org/pdfs/desirees-baby.pdf>)

Remember that as long as your ideas are reasonable—and you support them with properly-integrated, explained **evidence**, then you’re safe. **Don’t generalize** about men and women or the past or the present (after all, you have no real backup for such claims); *stick to the society described within the story and make sure you have solid support (quoted, cited, etc.) from the story and from academic research for the claims you make*.

**\*\*In addition to the story (your primary source), you must find at least TWO secondary sources to help support your argument. That means you’ll have a total of at least THREE sources on your Works Cited page and in-text citations to match them all inside the body of the paper.\*\***

***Remember that your essay needs the following:***

* A thesis & topic sentences that are clearly about your story—not just a social role/life itself
* A minimum of 5 well-developed paragraphs (introduction, 3 body paragraphs, conclusion)
* *Evidence, including* quotations, from your primary source + secondary sources (properly integrated + cited in-text and on a Works Cited page)
* MLA format (1 inch margins, double-spaced, etc.)

**Example Argument (re: the social role of wife)**

**Thesis statement**: Louise Mallard's experience dramatically suggests that the only freedom for a wife is created by death.

**Topic sentence 1:** **In marriage,** **Louise Mallard has lost her sense of self; rather than being herself, she is just her husband’s wife.**

**Proof:** Her first name is not revealed until the story is practically over. She is not herself; she is Mrs. Mallard.

* The lines on her face, those that “bespoke repression” (Chopin 15)
* The reflection about the imbalance of power in marriage, especially regarding “a powerful will bending hers” (Chopin 16) and the notion that she’s never been able to “live for herself” (Chopin 16)

**Topic sentence 2:** **It is only when Mr. Mallard is presumably dead that Mrs. Mallard has anything she can identify as freedom.**

**Proof:** Just look at all of the freedom Louise is feeling due to Mr. Mallard's death during the window/bedroom scene!

* "new spring life” (Chopin 15)
* “‘free, free, free’”(Chopin 15)
* “‘Free! Body and soul free!’” (Chopin 16)

**Topic sentence 3: Upon learning that her husband is in fact alive, and her newfound freedom is no more, Mrs. Mallard finds freedom in the only way she can: she dies.**

**Proof:** Well, Louise falls over dead when she sees her freedom was incredibly short-lived: Brently Mallard is actually alive.

* Lean heavily on the irony in the line "the joy that kills," explaining that Louise is quite the opposite of happy at seeing her husband is still alive (Chopin 16).
  + She is *not* returning to a life full of what we catalogued back under topic sentence one, even if escaping that means death itself.

**To open the conclusion:** Clearly, the only freedom a wife can have, at least within the realm of “The Story of an Hour,” is via death: the wife’s or her husband’s.

REMEMBER: No generalizations about history or the real world are allowed anywhere in the paper. Stick to what you can and do prove via evidence from the story you’re analyzing, as well as from some academic research. This is a literary analysis paper, not an I’m-pretending-to-know-stuff-about-history paper. :D