**Essay Topics for *The Color Purple***

**Essay Topic #1: Written vs. Spoken Word in *The Color Purple***

**Discuss the significance of the written versus the spoken word in this novel.**

Consider which medium lasts longer, who the audience is or can be, the usual uses of letters versus conversation, the stylistic choices available in each medium, accuracy, spontaneity, and the role of direct versus indirect human interaction (such as voice inflection and gesture in the spoken word, and other kinds of emphasis and subtleties in the written word). Which characters or kinds of characters may make use of each medium, and for which purposes? How does storytelling in each medium function, particularly with regard to self-assertion and ownership over one's language as a proxy for ownership of one's story and one's life?

**Essay Topic #2: Vulgarity and Violence in *The Color Purple***

From the very first page of The Color Purple, the reader is confronted with intense images, strong words, and morally difficult concepts. What are the purposes and functions of vulgarity and violence in The Color Purple? Are they gratuitous or “too much", or is it important for the reader to learn even the most difficult details of the characters’ lives in order to fully comprehend their situations? What, if anything, might Alice Walker be trying to relate about the world she creates in “The Color Purple” and what might her intentions be by making the reader uncomfortable?

**Essay Topic #3: The Philosophy of *The Color Purple***

Towards the end of the novel, the significance of the title, *The Color Purple*, is revealed during a moving conversation between Shug and Celie (see pages 199-204). How does the philosophy of the color purple, as explained to Celie by Shug, affect Celie’s life from that moment forward? Can this abstract lesson be useful for the difficult realities of these women’s lives? Why or why not?