Midterm Prep: Prompt, Thesis, and Outline

**Overview**: Below is the prompt for the midterm and a sample thesis statement and rough outline, such as you might scratch out before you launch into writing the midterm essay. It is based on “Mrs. Midas” and the elements of character and setting/objects.

**Midterm Essay Prompt**

**Goals:** This in-class essay is see how well you can analyze a poem using the elements we have been working with so far: character, setting, plot, and POV. This meets GE Learning Objective 2 and the English Department’s Learning Objectives 1 and 2, if you’re keeping track.

**Procedure**: Read the poem carefully and determine what it’s about. Then read it again and think about how the elements of **character**, **setting/objects**, **plot**, **point of view** are used to develop the poem’s meaning (**theme** or thesis). Choose ONE or TWO of these elements to discuss. Depth is more important than breadth here. Support your idea with **evidence from the poem—specific words and phrases,** as well as **summary of the plot,** if you choose plot.

**Grading Criteria:** Your work will be judged on the **depth of your thinking**, the **persuasiveness** of your support (development); **clarity**, **organization**, and command of **mechanics** (grammar and punctuation). All of these matter, but the first two are the most important.

**Details**: Please SKIP LINES and write as legibly as you can. The essay should have an introduction, body, and conclusion, with a clear **thesis statement** about what the poem means and clear **paragraph breaks**, but you don’t need to produce a 5-paragraph essay. Do your best with grammar, but don’t agonize. \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Sample Thesis opening paragraph and statement:**

“Mrs. Midas,” a poem by Carol Ann Duffy, tells the Midas story in the voice of a person not usually mentioned, or mentioned only peripherally: his wife. Through the gradually revealed details of her response to Midas’s strange affliction, Duffy paints a portrait of a marriage that was challenged by the egos of both the king and queen. Though it seems to be a marriage as solid as most in this social strata—upper-middle class, not royalty in Duffy’s version—the serious, life-threatening situation posed by the Midas touch breaks whatever bond had survived from their passionate beginnings. [Thesis] Through her careful depiction of the setting and the development of the speaker’s character, Duffy suggests that Midas isn’t the only one in this family who seems to care more about material objects than about people.

**Points to develop in the body paragraphs**:

* The details of setting, including particular objects, help illustrate the character of Mrs. Midas and point toward the theme.
* Mrs. Midas’s character is further developed through what she says directly about her husband, and how she says it.
* Mrs. Midas’s character if also developed by what she does, and doesn’t do, which also help illustrate the poem’s theme.