*Between Shades of Gray* Essay Topics

1. Characters are an important part of what makes "Between Shades of Gray" interesting. Discuss the following:

Thoroughly discuss and analyze one of the characters in the book. What are his/her strengths? Weaknesses? How does he/she contribute to the plot? Is he/she a sympathetic character? Is he/she always likable? Never likable? Does this character help develop any of the themes we discussed? Use specific examples from the novel to illustrate your ideas.

1. Trace and analyze the theme of courage in "Between Shades of Gray". Which characters struggle with this issue? Why? Which characters seem to possess courage? Why? Use specific examples from the novel to illustrate your ideas.
2. Trace and analyze the theme of death in "Between Shades of Gray". You could consider the physical and emotional/spiritual deaths that have taken place in the book as well as the death of innocence in Lina from the beginning of the book to the end. Feel free to mention other things that have been lost as well. Use specific examples from the novel to illustrate your ideas.
3. Trace and analyze the theme of survival in "Between Shades of Gray". Which characters struggle with this issue? Why? Which characters seem to possess the will and fortitude to survive? Why? Use specific examples from the novel to illustrate your ideas.
4. Trace and analyze the theme of good and hope in "Between Shades of Gray". Which characters struggle with this issue? Why? Which characters seem to show goodness and hope? Why? Use specific examples from the novel to illustrate your ideas.
5. Over the course of *Between Shades of Gray,* Lina grows as a person in both complexity and understanding. *Between Shades of Gray* might be considered a slice of Lina Vilka's larger story of her "coming of age." It might be said that *Between Shades of Gray* is a coming of age story of Lina. Discuss the following: Define "Coming of Age". Trace and analyze the character of Lina as she changes from a more carefree, innocent girl to a wiser, young woman. What are the significant events that change Lina? After thoroughly analyzing Lina's growth throughout "Between Shades of Gray", do you think "Between Shades of Gray" could be considered Lina's Coming of Age story? Why or why not?
6. Choose some significant symbols and trace and analyze their appearance in *Between Shades of Gray*. Are these universal symbols? Would they be understood in any culture? Are there other symbols that would portray the same idea? What are they? Why do you think Sepetys chooses the symbols she does? Symbols to consider: Handkerchief, Lina’s art, the stone, watches, dirt, the colour gray.
7. How does the use of “flashbacks” add to the story being told? Does it add to the themes? In what way? How do the flashbacks act as foreshadowing? Do the flashbacks give insight into why and how Lina and her family act and react?

It is important that your essay include a strong introductory paragraph, body and effective conclusion. Use the graphic organizer provided to help you plan and organize.

Essay should be between **500-600** words.

**Things to remember when writing a literary essay:**

1. Write about the characters and the book using present tense.

Correct: Lina **changes** from a more carefree, innocent girl to a wiser, young woman.

Incorrect: Lina **changed** from a more carefree, innocent girl to a wiser, young woman.

2. Cite all sources both in text and with a Works Cited page (see examples).

3. The title of the novel must be either italicized if typed, or underlined if handwritten, anytime it appears in the essay.

Correct: *Between Shades of Gray* or Between Shades of Gray

Incorrect: Between Shades of Gray

4. Use your own words and ideas to express your thoughts and opinions. If you do use someone else’s words or ideas from another source, you must cite this work properly to avoid plagiarism.

5. State the title of the novel and full name of the author somewhere in the introductory paragraph.

6. Double space and use Times New Roman Font size 12

**MLA Format: For this essay, we will be using MLA format for organization and citation. Throughout your academic career, you may be asked to use this format, or APA format.**

Here is a link to a great site that shares all the tricks of the trade for both formats.

Owl at Purdue: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/2/>

**Example of an in-text citation (student sample of a conclusion):**

In conclusion, one of the central themes in the novel, *Between Shades of Gray*, is death. Through the struggles and agonizing journey of the protagonist, Lina, the author depicts death in several ways – the physical aspect, the spiritual and emotional aspect, and finally the death of a child’s innocence. The question posed by Lina profoundly captures the sentiments of these suffering people, “Was it harder to die or harder to be the one who survived?” (Sepetys 319). Maybe the death of the body was not the worst thing that could have happened. But the death of spirit and innocence will endure forever.

(Sepetys): Author’s last name and page number

**Works Cited Page:**

* 12 point font
* at the top center of the page, write Works Cited (no bold, no underline)
* Go down two lines, and put *Between Shades of Gray* in the following format :

Sepetys, Ruta. *Between Shades of Gray.* Toronto: Scholastic Inc., 2011.

* *Between Shades of Gray* is the only work you will be using in the essay, so it is the only source you need to reference on your Works Cited page. If you mention the movie, or any other source, see me and I will show you how to put it on your Works Cited page.