

## Essay Assignment

Compare and Contrast Jorge Luis Borges' *Collected Fictions* and another work:

Submit a MS Word file with a filename in the form "yourlastname\_Borges.doc" (or .docx) via email to [stonekim@lawrence.edu](mailto:stonekim@lawrence.edu) by **Tuesday 8 March 2011 at 4:00 PM**. Be sure to keep a copy for your records.

The paper should conform to the following format and style expectations:

- 5 – 7 pages, double-spaced, 10-12 point font with approximately 1 inch margins
- Number and put your last name on each page.
- All citations should be in MLA style (see Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual* for details).
- Reaffirm the honor code at the end of the paper. Also acknowledge (in a note at the end of the paper) the assistance of the writing tutor(s) who helped you craft the paper.
- The paper should have a title, but does not need a separate title page.

You are encouraged to work with a CTL writing tutor (preferably Sam McGraw-Schuchman [samantha.j.mcgraw-schuchman@lawrence.edu](mailto:samantha.j.mcgraw-schuchman@lawrence.edu) or Carly Roe [carly.f.roe@lawrence.edu](mailto:carly.f.roe@lawrence.edu)). Remember to contact only one tutor at a time.

Choose a paper topic that compares and contrasts Borges with one (or perhaps two) of the other Freshman Studies work(s) from this list: Zhuangzi, *The Tempest*, Plato, *Rashomon*, or one (or more) essays by Stephen Jay Gould (note that I have excluded Kandinsky, *Martin Guerre*, Milgram, and Stravinsky). You must formulate an interesting question or problem. Be sure to clearly phrase the issue and present a clear assertion (thesis) that can be argued. Support your thesis with cogent examples drawn from the texts (and/or film).

Possible paper topics:

1. Explore the role of "chance" ("fate" or "free will") in one or more of Borges' stories ("Death and the Compass" comes to mind, but you might find other suitable stories). Compare and contrast its role in Borges' to its role in Zhuangzi's philosophy OR in one (of more) of Gould's essays.
2. *Prospero* might be seen as the author or creator of the events that take place on the island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Compare *Prospero's* role in that play to one or more authors who appear in Borges' short stories. Alternatively you might explore the role of magic or books in *The Tempest* and in Borges' stories.
3. Borges expresses skepticism about the reliability of words. Compare *and* contrast his view to the one expressed by Zhuangzi.
4. How may the "book of books" that contains all other volumes in "The Library of Babel" be interpreted as a Platonic "form"? Consider the allegory of the cave or the simile of the sun. Is there a parallel between Borges's library and Plato's universe? Do Borges and Plato view these universes similarly? Why or why not?
5. How might Plato interpret Borges's "Death and the Compass," particularly Eric Lönnrot's geometrical and idealistic abstractions (which may have ultimately led to his death)? Comment on the "reality" and the "truth" of Lönnrot's abstractions compared to the philosopher ruler's apprehension of the forms through the dialectic.

6. Zhuangzi uses the metaphor of a mirror (p. 95) to describe how we view reality more directly and empirically without first trying to name its parts. Borges also uses mirror metaphors in his description of characters and events in his fictions. Are they making similar observations, or are they employing the characteristics of the mirror to make different points? Use examples and images from Borges and Zhuangzi (beyond p. 95) to support your thesis.