• Slides 2-4 are general information about the requirements of the assignment.

• Slides 5-16 walk students through the process of writing a paper using prompt #1 as an example.
  o Slides 5-8, 16 are specific to prompt 1. This paper has a thesis already written on slide 5, a possible plan for the body organization on slide 10, ideas for evidence or support of their argument on slide 16, and some conclusions (the “so what”) for the paper on slide 6.
  o Slides 9-15 are general information about how to write any paper.

• Slides 17-20 are about prompt 2. I was surprised about the amount of student interest in particular prompt. I think that this paper was the most popular choice of all the prompts because students seemed to have something to say about broken relationships. Since so many students were interested, I did some additional planning with them on the board. I’ve put those notes on page 2 of this document. Just like prompt #1, a lot of the prep-work has been done, so students can concentrate on selecting good evidence from the text and on writing eloquently. I did not make a thesis for this prompt because it will depend upon what relationships the students choose to talk about. Next week, I will work on polishing a thesis with students wishing to do this prompt.

• Slides 21-26 are about prompt 3. This prompt is, I think, one of the most challenging prompts due to the philosophical nature of the prompt and the wording of thesis that I have provided:
  In Saints at the River, Ron Rash’s portrayal of nature’s paradoxical essence serves to illustrate the Romantic sentiment he associates with nature, especially regarding the Romantics’ ability to see the divine in nature.

• Slides 27-29 are about prompt 4. This prompt is another challenging prompt in that a minimal amount of prep-work has been done. There is no thesis, no suggested structure, and minimal suggestions for both evidence and conclusions. I included this prompt just in case anyone was really intrigued by the parallel structure of the novel.
Additional information for prompt #2:

Topic: theme of redemption

Conclusion: The conclusion should explain what Ron Rash is trying to tell readers about redemption in general, that relationships are good and necessary and SHOULD be redeemed. Don’t forget to mention the last line of the book as final proof that everyone was forgiven and redeemed. If the river, a symbol of divine authority, forgives and forgets, then the characters are truly redeemed. Page 23 of this document provides other concluding thoughts. Just remember to relate the specific to the universal; tell the reader what the specifics of this novel reveal about the truths of his life.
Saints at the River Paper
Format: formal essay

- Typed, 12 pt, Times New Roman, double-spaced, black printer ink
- Length: min. 2 pgs., will probably take 3 if you’re doing a thorough job
- Multi-paragraph: no less than 4 (intro., 2 body, conc.)
- MLA heading
Content:

You will select from four prompts:

- Discuss how the literary elements setting and character merge in Luke Miller to illustrate Romantic sensibilities.
- Discuss the theme of redemption in Saints at the River.
- Discuss how Ron Rash characterizes nature and to what effect.
- Discuss the parallel plot lines of Maggie and Ruth.
Prompt: Discuss how the literary elements setting and character merge in Luke Miller to illustrate Romantic sensibilities.

Turn your prompt into a thesis statement that lets your reader know what you’re trying to prove and why. If you can, get the name of the author and the name of the book in there. If you can, list the main portions of your arguments or categories of evidence in the order they will appear in your paper.

For example:
In Ron Rash’s *Saints at the River*, the literary elements setting and character merge in Luke Miller to illustrate Romantic sensibilities.
What exactly are you trying to prove? In Ron Rash's *Saints at the River*, the literary elements setting and character merge in Luke Miller to illustrate Romantic sensibilities.

- Prove that nature and Luke are connected.
- Prove that the combination shows Luke to be a Romantic.
- So what? Conclude something:
  - Show that nature is nurturing on its own terms, not on man's terms. Sometimes that nurturing is painful or comes with a price. Since all of creation is connected and sometimes pain produces growth, some part of nature has to endure the pain so that another part can grow.
Brainstorm: In Ron Rash's *Saints at the River*, the literary elements setting and character merge in Luke Miller to illustrate Romantic sensibilities.

- What do you know about your prompt?
- Make a bubble map to generate ideas about Luke as he relates to the setting.
- Make a bubble map to generate ideas about setting as it relates to Luke.
- Make a bubble map about characteristics of Romanticism.
- Draw connecting lines to show connections between the ideas in the three maps.
Organize your thoughts

A bubble map only generates ideas, it doesn't organize them. Use tree map to categorize and organize them into a logical presentation of your argument (anytime you prove something, like a thesis, you’re using argument).
Use a tree map to create a structure for the body of your paper.
Structure of the whole paper

- Introduction
- Thesis
- Body: multiple paragraphs representing multiple sections of your paper
- Conclusion
- Retained fluids
Introductions

1. Don’t jump right into your argument: Begin with broad, general statements about your topic. You can do this by finding some term or idea in your prompt or thesis.
2. This paragraph doesn’t have to be long. It can be as short as five sentences.
3. Your thesis should be the last sentence in this paragraph.
The body of your paper:

- **Number of sections**: You should have at least 2, but preferably 3 sections of evidence/argument in your paper.

- **Paragraphing**: Each section can consist of multiple paragraphs. So, the "5-paragraph essay" can really be 17 paragraphs long. It all depends upon how you organize your information.
Paragraphing, cont.

- A paragraph is a group of sentences that elaborate or support a single topic.
- If you find that your paragraph is going on for more than 12 sentences, you should consider revising. If you can’t find a way to break it up, perhaps what you’ve written is too unfocused.
Conclusions

- Restate your thesis: this is a restatement of your thesis in different words, not a recopying. Try wording it in such a way that will lead your reader to begin to draw the same conclusions you want to make.
- Do not introduce any new information in your conclusion, just tell your reader what to think about the information.
- This paragraph should be longer than your introduction. In fact, since the purpose of the conclusion is to draw conclusions about the information presented in several paragraphs, your conclusion should be one of the longest paragraphs in your paper.
Some things to consider for prompt # 1:

- Luke’s loyalty to the river even unto death
- Images of Luke painting him as animalistic (wolfish)
- The name of the falls Wolf Cliff Falls
- Hydraulic
- Luke’s profession of love for the river “purest kind of love”
- Interconnectedness of creation
- Self-reliance
- Appreciates nature’s creative/destructive forces
- Sees the divine in nature
- Luke is predatory, but wants to enlighten others; the river is dangerous, but allows people to encounter the spiritual in its presence; the river can be hard to deal with, and so can Luke
- Neither the river nor Luke will be contained by men.
Prompt # 2: Discuss the theme of redemption in *Saints at the River*.

- Redemption is reclaiming something lost. How do we reclaim lost things in *Saints*?
- Thesis should say what is getting redeemed and what that redemption means in the great scheme of life.
- What are you trying to prove?
  - Establish redemption as a theme of the story by discussing the Biblical allusions
  - Discuss who or what gets redeemed and how
  - SO WHAT?: What is Ron Rash trying to teach us about redemption?
Consider the following ideas for your paper on prompt #2:

- Redemption of relationships
  - Maggie/Dad
  - Kowalsky family
  - Man and nature
  - Allen and his family
  - Man and God (Biblical allusion)
Consider the following ideas for your paper on prompt #2:

- Redemption of self:
  - Maggie becoming whole by
  - Release of grudge
  - Being self-reliant (she forgave herself, so she was able to forgive Dad and reclaim that relationship; she did what she knew was right and was then able to feel worthy of self-trust)
  - Taking her place in the community/family
  - Maggie's dad becoming whole by admitting his fault and communicating with her
  - Luke redeeming himself by communing with the river
  - Allen redeeming himself by helping a daughter in need (Ruth) and by trying to be a good partner to Maggie when he hadn't been with Claire
Prompt #2’s SO WHAT?

- Forgiveness → Redemption → Growth
- Once Maggie forgives herself and her dad, she is free to remember all of her childhood/culture and be whole instead of isolated from a part of herself.
- Once Allen forgives himself, he can move on to a new family, perhaps with Maggie.
- Once Dad forgives himself and gets forgiveness from Maggie, he can die peacefully.
- Redemption, in this life, isn’t always painless or perfect, but it’s possible.
Prompt #3: Discuss how Ron Rash characterizes nature and to what effect.

In plainspeak, this prompt wants to know how the author presents nature and what he's trying to tell us by presenting it that way.
What is this prompt asking?

- Ask yourself how nature is presented
  - Delicate and strong
  - Nurturing and destructive
  - As good and holy
- Do you notice the paradoxical nature of these descriptions?
- Now ask yourself what other entity can be described in this same paradoxical manner. God? (Remember what Maggie says about God and nature being a part of one another.)
  - Merciful and wrathful
  - Provider and destroyer “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.”
Coming up with a thesis

Now that you've noticed some connections, let's think about why Ron Rash would make that comparison:

- Ron Rash connects attributes of God with attributes of nature. So do the Romantics. Perhaps Rash is trying to get us to see something about God through showing us nature.
- THESIS: In Saints at the River, Ron Rash's portrayal of nature's paradoxical essence serves to illustrate the Romantic sentiment he associates with nature, especially regarding the Romantics' ability to see the divine in nature.
So What?:

An appreciation of nature is like an appreciation of God in that it requires experience, not just knowledge; those who haven't been through it just can't understand. Non-believers have a very hard time believing what believers experience through faith. Just like the outsiders who haven't experienced the river can't really understand it like the locals. Kind of like "it's a local thing," "it's a Christian thing."
Some other ideas to consider for prompt #3:

- God is omnipotent, but a lack of faith on our part can limit His ability to bless us.
- The river is strong enough to withstand drilling and even dynamite, but a scratch on the surface of its banks can alter its course and/or destroy its ability to sustain life.
- Not appreciating the divine in nature and the interconnectedness of creation inhibits nature's ability to restore one's spirit. We'll destroy it and it won't be there to nurture us.
One final slide on prompt #3

- In my original notes, I suggested that “This is a story of redemption, both physical and psychological.”
- You can discuss the physical redemption of the bodies and how the images in that scene evoke Biblical allusions to Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection which enables mankind’s redemption.
- You can discuss the psychological redemption of self and relationships through forgiveness.
Prompt #4: Discuss the parallel plot lines of Maggie and Ruth.

Parallel means “similar,” so the assumption is that what happened to Maggie is similar to what happened to Ruth. Well... only one dies, so we'll have to look deeper than that.
Connections

A double-bubble map would be great here.

- Both sections of the book begin with a description of a violent act the girls have endured that involves water.
- Both girls are from emotionally closed-off families.
- Some good comes from both the incidents. (Now Kowalsky will be more attentive to his family, it brought Maggie back home and gave her a chance to reconcile with Dad, and it gave Allen a way to pay penance for his neglect of his daughter.)
So What?

The girl's being physically suffocated by the river acts as a reflection of Maggie's psychological state, suffocating from the memories of Ocone county.