Name

Dr. Coffman

ENGL 2120

Date due

*Desire under the Elms*: Responding to the Acts

After reading each act, you will write a response demonstrating your thinking about the play. We will use the responses to generate discussion during class, so try to really dig into the play and demonstrate critical thinking rather than staying on the surface. Your response should be typed and in MLA format. The total response should be a minimum of 250 words and should not exceed 500 words. Divide your response into the following four sections (with each section clearly labeled): Themes, Characters, Quotes, and Questions. Be sure to include specific evidence from the text to support your ideas. Do not simply summarize the text.

**Themes**. What themes do you see developing in the play? What are your feelings about the ideas presented in this act? To think about themes, you might ask, “What is this play really about?” Of course, there is the plot (what happens in the play), but that is not what the play is *really* about. What is O’Neill trying to say about people or the world? What message(s) could we take away from the play?

**Characters**. In this section talk about how you feel about the various characters. You don’t have to discuss every character. What motivates the various characters and have you ever acted out of the same motivation? What decisions do the characters make and do you agree or disagree? Do you understand why the person might act the way he/she does? What advice might you give a character? What image does the character try to display but who is the person underneath? How do you know? There are many ways to discuss characters and to dig into their significance.

**Quotes**. Select two or three quotes that stood out to you for analysis. For each quote, consider what the quote really *shows*. You have the quote on the surface, but what can you infer from the quote? Is it ironic? How? What does it show about the character? How does it relate to a theme? What does it show about the society? Do you think it foreshadows what is to come? Dig beyond the surface. Dig some more.

**Questions**. Finally, compose three questions for the act that you would like to discuss in class. Try to write questions that will generate discussion. Think about various types of questions. Some questions might be factual--something you need clarification on; however, questions that invite analysis of the text or interpretation of some part of the text are more useful for generating discussion. They might not have one correct answer. Some questions are more open ended and go beyond the text. They provoke discussion of an abstract idea or issue.