ENG 360: Italian American Literature

**Topic:**

In Weeks 9-10, you read Helen Barolini’s essay, “Italian American Women’s Writing” and the autobiographical pieces by M. Bella Mirabella and Tina De Rosa. The experiences of these women writers were quite similar in many ways. For example, they grew up surrounded by *italianita.* They experienced conflicts common to the second generation who were torn between two cultures. They became educated and fought against stereotypes. In other ways, their experiences were very different.

Your task for this essay is to compare and contrast Mirabella’s autobiographical essay with De Rosa’s speech. You may discuss what they have in common and/or how they differ. You may discuss how they reflect second and/or third generation Italian American experience. You may refer to earlier material to discuss specific themes, ideas, or display of italianità. You are required to refer to Helen Barolini with at least one quotation or detail from her essay. Use your Discussion Boards and other material to explore this topic. Notice that I use the term “explore.” Please look at this as an exploration; your essay should be filled with your observations and discoveries. You may also use what you have learned this semester so far.

Since you have already identified what Helen Barolini notes as characteristic of Italian American women’s writing in Week 9, you should begin there. You can see if those characteristics are present in the stories. You can even use Barolini as a framework for your discussion and include her in your introduction.

**Steps to Completing this Essay**

1. First, re-read the essay by Helen Barolini and make notes that may be useful for your essay. (it may give you ideas for a focus)
2. Then, re-read the autobiographical pieces by Mirabella and De Rosa. Note what is common in their experiences. List the subjects/ topics they write about. Or make a list of your observations on their literary techniques, use of figurative and Italian language, etc.
3. Figure out your focus. What did you notice?
4. Complete a draft of your essay (see below)

**The Essay**

In your introduction, make sure you have a clear thesis statement that informs readers of your focus. You may want to include a discussion of the topic in general. In your body, first describe what you found in common and/or what you found different, then follow with supporting examples. So, if you focus on “traditional expectations of women’s roles” first explain those roles, then give examples of where you see this in the texts. Don’t forget a conclusion and Works Cited list.