

## ENGL 115 – *A Visit From the Goon Squad* – Paper Assignment

Due Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, dropbox outside Johnson Chapel #5

*nostalgia*, *n.*

**1.** Acute longing for familiar surroundings, esp. regarded as a medical condition; homesickness.

**2a.** Sentimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual's own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past.

**2b.** Something which causes nostalgia for the past; freq. as a collective term for things which evoke a former (remembered) era.

Cf. [memorabilia](#) *n.*

Nostalgia: the word combines *nostos*, meaning a journey back home, and *-algia*, meaning pain. Nostalgia is that ache of wanting to go home—but also, perhaps, the pain or poignancy you feel once you've arrived home. After all, home is never *exactly* the way you remember it. While you weren't looking, it changed—or you changed. Nostalgia, then, can entail the notion that *home* isn't a place; it's also a moment in time. This is a painful realization, because, while you can revisit a *place*, the past itself is irrecoverable.

With Thanksgiving break upon us, most or all of you will be making your *nostos* soon. This is an appropriate time to think about the experience of nostalgia. What does it feel like? What does it accomplish? What is it good for?

In *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Bennie remembers being dismissive of Lou's claim that rock and roll peaked at Monterey Pop in the seventies. "You're finished . . .," Bennie reflects, "Nostalgia was the end—everyone knew that" (37). And yet Bennie himself is caught up in the pleasure and the pain of nostalgia. All of these characters are. Why is nostalgia such an important feeling in this book?

In answering this question, feel free to refer to your own experiences of nostalgia.