This assignment is one that I would give either as a midterm/final in class or as a take-home large assignment. Were it to be take-home, I would allow the students to work together but their final paper must be their own.

“One of the queer themes in Reflections In A Golden Eye by Carson McCullers is Captain Penderton’s sexual ambiguity. How does his ambiguity develop as the story progresses in both his actions and behaviors? How does his largely private struggle with sexuality begin to seep into his day-to-day life? In your essay site specific examples (and page numbers if necessary) of noted behavior.” (Janus)

This assignment asks students to not only delve into the actual content of the story, but also requires them find examples of the queer content of the story that may or may not be stated explicitly. It incorporates not only the obvious queer theory but also incorporates feminist tradition because it asks the students to examine the actions of a man who suppresses his sexuality and is the oppressed. In the story, Captain Penderton lashes out in anger, which is by and large driven by his latent homosexuality, which he refuses to acknowledge but we, as the readers, are honed into this turmoil. .

The topics of sexuality, oppression of homosexuality (specifically in the story’s context as well as the oppression presently), how we are tuned into his struggle all would be topics for discussion in class which would lead up to this essay topic. The story is very overt in its indirect references to Penderton’s homosexuality; thus it would be an appropriate and accessible way for students to have an introduction to the complex area of queer theory and identifying as it is used in texts.

The feminist tradition would be further utilized, as the students would be allowed to work together in forming ideas and share their thoughts on the prompt. While their papers would be separate, collaboration on ideas is often helpful for students that need to work their ideas out before putting them on paper. Having previous experience doing take-home collaborations in this manner, I can attest to its benefits. However it must be stressed to the students that ideas and brainstorming can be shared, but the paper must be done separately. This would prevent from students copying from each other and taking collaboration to a plagiarizing/cheating level.

Any suggestions on how to make this assignment better would be greatly appreciated. While the collaboration may present problems, I believe the actual assignment requires a careful study of text, the motivation of text and plot, as well as critical reading for the student.