Writing about Hamlet: Essay Task

A literary essay necessitates a thorough analysis of a text to support an argument that pertains to the development of the characteristics of fiction (plot, theme, character, devices, etc.).

TASK: Write a literary essay on one of the following topics:

1. In comparing parent/child relationships in the play, what message is sent about the duty of a child to obey a parent’s orders? Consider the motivations of each party.
2. The theme of surveillance: Text-film comparison – How are the conventions of film use to develop this theme? What do they add to/detract from specific elements of the play? Consider character and plot development.

1. Of the themes presented in *Hamlet*, decide which was most important and justify your selection.
2. The role of secondary characters: There are several secondary characters who have specific functions in the play. Consider what their role is, and their importance beyond their initial appearance in the plot. You may write about one or several of these characters.
3. Topic of your own creation: This MUST be cleared with me.

NOTE: ABSOLUTELY NO SECONDARY SOURCES ARE ALLOWED. Do not access the internet for any reason at all. Plagiarism is a slippery slope….

When writing a literary essay, there are a few points to remember to make sure that your writing is clear and interesting.

1. PLAN FIRST. It is important when writing a comparative essay to clearly structure your comparison, so that each point develops the thesis and both texts are addressed.
2. Consider the following types of organization:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| BLOCK METHOD | CHRONOLOGICAL METHOD |
| Thesis: Text reveals X through point A, B, C | Thesis: An examination of X throughout the novel reveals Y. |
| Paragraph 1: Point A | Paragraph 1: Beginning of text |
| Paragraph 2: Point B | Paragraph 2: Middle of text |
| Paragraph 3: Point C | Paragraph 3: End of text |
| Paragraph 4: Conclusions drawn from analysis | Paragraph 4: Conclusion drawn from analysis |

1. Open with a statement that sets the stage for your thesis. It should give information about the theme or ideas that inspired the thesis statement. NEVER make a broad statement that is impossible to prove. For example, “In society” or “People believe that” – Which society? What people?
2. The thesis and its elaboration must be clearly stated; be very careful of faulty parallel structure. Each paragraph must have a distinct argument that is explicitly stated in its opening sentence..
3. Use transition statements to build your points, and to show comparison and contrast. Some examples: additionally, above all, as a consequence, although, however, etc. DO NOT start a sentence with “as” or verbs that end with “-ing”.
4. Always start with the text and go back to the text. You must double check the text to make sure that your claims are accurate. There is no reason to consult outside sources. Don’t be tempted to look online for ideas – this often ends up in unintentional plagiarism.
5. Never leave a quotation hanging without examining its importance in detail. Even better is to incorporate words and phrases into your own argument.
6. Know who your audience is, and keep the tone appropriate. Use formal language, and avoid being too sarcastic or flippant. Avoid passive language, and wordy phrases such as “it can be seen that”.

Writing a Literary Essay

STEPS TO FOLLOW

PLAN

1. Choose a TOPIC, and then a POSITION on the topic (what is your argument?)
2. Draft a SENTENCE (THESIS) stating your position.
3. List (at least) three points that support your position.
4. In point form, outline an explanation and/or example for each point.
5. Organize your points. Place your strongest point last unless working through the chronological structure.
6. Find textual evidence to support each point.

WRITE

1. Write the body of your opinion piece. State each point, providing explanations and examples for each. Examine each quotation and elaborate on the significance of elements such as diction and rhetorical devices. Always PEE! (Point, Evidence, Explain)
2. Write an introduction. Write a lead (opening sentence) to grab the reader’s attention. Include a sentence that states your position (thesis).
3. Write a conclusion: restate your position in different words, and draw a conclusion about the ideas you proposed in your thesis and what can be learned from the exploration of this topic.

REVIEW

1. Correct: Make sure each sentence is clear, and there are no spelling or grammar mistakes.
2. Review: Ask yourself, “Does each paragraph develop and support my thesis statement?”

NB:

* The bulk of the work is to be done at home, but you will have some time to write in class. You must submit the attached rubric and your planning sheets with your essay.

Rubric – Literary Essay

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Level 4 – A  80-100% | Level 3 – B  70-79% | Level 2 – C  60-69% | Level 1 – D  50-59% |
| Knowledge/  Understanding  - handling of argument  - thesis  - logic and skill of arguments  /20 | * thorough understanding of the text * excellent thesis * arguments very logical and skillful | * + clear understanding of the text   + good thesis * arguments logical and reasonably skillful | * some understanding of the text * weak thesis * some logic and skill in arguments | * limited understanding of the text * very weak thesis * very little logic or skill to arguments |
|  | (16-20) | (14-15) | (12-13) | (10-11) |
| Thinking/Inquiry  - insight  - analysis  - drawing inferences  - close reading  - interpretation  /10 | * penetrating insight * excellent analysis * clever inferences drawn * detailed, illuminating close readings * -fine interpretation given | * clear insight * good analysis * fairly good inferences drawn * clear close readings * -reasonable interpretation given | * some insight * some analysis * some inferences drawn * adequate close readings * some interpretation given | * limited insight * weak analysis * few inferences drawn * weak close readings * limited interpretation given |
|  | (8-10) | (7-7.9) | (6-6.9) | (5-5.9) |
| Communication  - structure and organization  - stylistic skill  - paragraphing  - coherence  - use of supporting quotations  /20 | * very structured; effective organization * strong and sustained controlling idea * excellent paragraphing * clear and coherent throughout * -a number of supporting quotations used, and used well; very good formatting of quotations | * good structure; clear organization * clear controlling idea * clear paragraphing * good coherence; clear * a reasonable number of supporting quotations used; minor issues with formatting of quotations | * some structure; some organization * some sense of paragraphing * some coherence; intermittent clarity * some supporting quotations used, but not enough | * limited structure; weak organization * weak controlling idea * limited sense of paragraphing * poor coherence; often unclear * very few supporting quotations used |
|  | (16-20) | (14-15) | (12-13) | (10-11) |
| Application  - mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure  - formal qualities  /10 | * almost no errors in mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure * strong formal qualities | * very few errors in mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure * acceptable formal qualities | * some errors in mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure * some formal qualities | * several errors in mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure * few formal qualities |
|  | (8-10) | (7-7.9) | (6-6.9) | (5-5.9) |

What you did well:

Next steps: