

Advanced Placement Literature & Composition
2009 Summer Assignments

This year I have assigned a collection of short stories, a novel, and a novella for you to read. With each work there is an associated assignment to complete. These assignments will lead you through the pre-writing process needed to produce an excellent paper.

This summer you will need to read:

Dubliners, James Joyce
Lord of the Flies, William Golding
Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad

Because the assignments build on each other, you will find it helpful to read these works in the order listed. I would strongly suggest you read the first two works and complete the associated assignments before beginning to read *Heart of Darkness* and attempting the third assignment.

The texts assigned may be borrowed from me or you may obtain your own copy. Getting your own copy will allow you to mark in the margins of the text which will be helpful as you read and, later on, when you are reviewing and writing about the work.

A note on *Heart of Darkness*: It is short, but dense, and I recommend that you read it twice. Historically, most of my students don't like it the first time through, but most change their minds after the second reading. Keep thinking it through and it will reward that second reading, so read it twice.

All assignments should be complete and ready to turn in on the first day of school. All work must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1" margins (prose should be double-spaced, though the outlines should be single-spaced).

If you have any problems or concerns that I can help you with over the summer, you can contact me via e-mail. My personal e-mail (for use over the summer) is doug_hanson@bellsouth.net; my school e-mail (for use during the school year) is dhanson@haywood.k12.nc.us.

Summer Pre-Writing I
Dubliners Thesis Assignment
AP Literature/Hanson

A good thesis statement is made up of two parts, an observation and an insight. The observation is, well, the thing you observe, and the insight is the bit about why the observation is important. The best observations are perceptive. For us that means ones that an average reader might miss on their first reading.

We will be focusing on formal literary analysis this year, which just means that we will tend to focus on the text itself and not on any outside sources such as histories or biographies. It also means that the insight bit of the thesis statement will usually be related to tone or theme. So if you figure out an important theme in the work and you observe some literary devices which reinforce that theme, you have the raw materials you need for an excellent thesis statement.

I'm going to copy some examples over from the rubric you'll be getting at the beginning of the school year for you to get some sense of what I am talking about (listed from weak to strong):

- The characters Regan and Goneril in King Lear are evil. [Awful thesis, states the obvious, no insight]
- Jane Austen, the author of Pride and Prejudice, has themes in her novel that involve marriage, love, and money. Many times throughout the book Pride and Prejudice Jane Austen makes an attempt to combine two or more of these themes to have each character achieve great happiness. [Weak, vague themes, vague ideas, no insight]
- Jane Austen's use of character foils in her novel, Pride and Prejudice, creates greater understanding and appreciation of the main character, Elizabeth Bennet. [Decent, thesis is that foils define character, but significance of that is less insightful – isn't that the definition of a foil?]
- Stoppard uses the literary devices listed above [non-linear plot, anti-heroic protagonists, lack of cohesion] in order to allegorically portray the feelings of insignificance, the lack of direction in life, and the general tone of uncertainty and disquietude so common in the individual's experience in the late 20th century. [Good, multiple elements, ties thesis to larger historical mood for significance, though do note that this falls outside of a formal analysis]
- In Beckett's Waiting for Godot, the passage of time in the play is uncertain and this supports the play's theme that life is a confused struggle for meaning which likely doesn't even exist. [Excellent]

The two parts of a strong thesis, the observation and the insight, are easy to see in the last example. The observation is “the passage of time in the play is uncertain.” The insight is that, “this supports the play's theme that life is a confused struggle for meaning which likely doesn't even exist.”

Important safety tip: Never refer to themes as in the first Austen example above where they are vague (themes that involve marriage). Always refer to themes as shown in the last example – they should be specific and clear. In this case, “life is a confused struggle for meaning.”

On to the assignment: *Dubliners* is a series of stories about characters in Dublin, Ireland. It would make sense that certain themes will emerge across these stories. I need you to identify two dominant themes that emerge from these stories. For each theme, explain what it is and which stories strongly suggest this theme, and, briefly, how they do so. Take about two to three hundred words for each.

Next, make three observations about either specific stories, or groups of the stories, or the work as a whole, and connect each observation to one of the two themes you have previously come up with. Write each of these out as a quality thesis statement.

Summer Pre-Writing II
Lord of the Flies Outline Assignment
AP Literature/Hanson

NOTE: Read *Lord of the Flies* first.

A strong thesis is the foundation of any good paper. But to turn that strong thesis into the good paper you must have a clear logical organization along with detailed and sufficient supporting evidence. Prior to this class, you may have been writing essays and papers where the organization followed a five-paragraph essay model. In these essays you have a number of body paragraphs, typically three, that, much of the time, could be rearranged in almost any order. Consider this thesis statement -- one that could have been written as an excellent response to a recent tenth grade writing test prompt:

New portable technology such as cell phones and iPods have given consumers new levels of convenience but at the price of creating a more impersonal and isolated society.

For this thesis, the first body paragraph deals with the convenience issue, the second with the impersonal nature of cell phones (consider texting v. face to face communication), and the third with the isolation created by personal music players (drowning out the sounds of the world around you with an iPod). Now this is a sophisticated thesis for tenth grade – the thesis is arguing that overall these things are bad, but acknowledges up front a key positive element. So the first body paragraph must go first – no other order makes sense. But the last two body paragraphs could go in either order (but always keep them relative to their location in the thesis statement). And in most of the five-paragraph essays you have come across, I'm sure you would agree that while the points may be strongest in a particular order, there was no logical reason they could not be arranged in any order.

The arguments and analysis we are going to attempt this year should not be so malleable. Anything really worth writing about for this class is going to require a step by step organization that makes a sophisticated argument as clear as possible for the reader. And any argument that is made needs to be rooted in specific evidence.

For this assignment I am going to provide you with a strong thesis and an incomplete outline. It will be up to you to finish out the outline, in the manner of the example I have provided in section IIA. Make sure this outline is typed in the format of the example. The explanatory commentary needs to reveal your thought and logic as to the significance of the linked evidence. Be sure to be thorough and explicit in your commentary.

I have written a sample introduction for you to review. Notice the introduction takes the classic form of moving from the general to the specific, with the thesis statement located at the last sentence of the introduction.

Having read *Lord of the Flies* I hope the argument makes sense. If not, let me help you out. Piggy, Ralph, and Jack represent different aspects of an individual, with Piggy and Jack as opposing forces with Ralph as the central force and, at times, attracted to each of them. If you're

not familiar already, try checking out Wikipedia (or another source of your choice) for help on the id, ego, and super-ego as well as the concept of allegory.

I'm sure there will be questions, so let me help you with the logic of the argument. Our first bit of the paper is going to define Jack as some form of the id – passion, emotion, short-term thinking, self-preservation. It's going to do this in two paragraphs. The first paragraph shows Jack's tendencies to these things across the work as a whole in short examples, and the second paragraph shows the same but in a sustained, significant example. You'll provide enough evidence to firmly and concretely make the point that Jack is as you say he is. The next two paragraphs will work similarly, but will define Piggy as the opposite of what you defined Jack is, perhaps logic, reason, or long-term thinking. With this done you should have soundly and accurately shown that Jack and Piggy represent two opposing aspects. Next we have to show their natural animosity toward another. So we have a paragraph that fully explores the rivalry that exists between these two boys that covers the breadth of the novel. Now we have to show Ralph in the middle. So we have a paragraph detailing Ralph's connections with Jack throughout the novel, followed by a paragraph detailing Ralph's connections with Piggy throughout the novel. Now we move to the end game of the paper, where we start tying all these threads together. In this case, Ralph is the ego, the conscious element struggling between the rival forces of the id and the superego. And most importantly we start connecting this idea to the key theme from the introduction – that “the shape of a society depends upon the ethical nature of the individual.” This is where you delve into the idea that the forces at work between the characters of Ralph, Piggy, and Jack are all forces at work inside each of us, that we all have, in essence, a Jack and a Piggy inside us, and we, like Ralph, have to sort out their influences. And to the extent that the Jack force wins out, society loses. This is the key paragraph of the paper, where you make sense out everything that came before. Don't skimp on it.

I hope that helped.

Introduction

William Golding's Lord of the Flies is a modern allegory and, as such, works on multiple levels. On its surface, it is an adventure story about survival and conflict amongst a group of marooned boys. Allegorically, however, below that surface it is an examination of the root cause of dysfunction in human groups. While the story at the literal level is about the external conflicts of the boys, particularly between Jack and his hunters on the one side and Ralph, Piggy, and a few others on the other side, the story at the allegorical level is about the internal conflicts within an individual. The key characters in the story, Jack, Piggy, and Ralph, collectively represent various aspects of a single individual and it is these symbolic internal conflicts that help solidify

Golding's stated theme that "the ethical nature of the individual" is the key to the nature of society as a whole (Golding 204).

Outline

- I. Introduction – thesis statement: The key characters in the story, Jack, Piggy, and Ralph, collectively represent various aspects of a single individual and it is these symbolic internal conflicts that help solidify Golding's stated theme that "the ethical nature of the individual" is the key to the nature of society as a whole (Golding 204).
- II. Defining Jack
 - A. Jack as emotion, passion, short-term thinking, action, violence, id – the reason that things fall apart
 1. Jack's vow to kill pigs, slamming his knife into a tree (33) – established his focus on action and violence from early in the novel.
 2. Jack's excited over rules b/c he'll be able to punish rule-breakers (33) – shows Jack as representing short-term thinking, action
 3. Compulsion to track down & kill, swallowing him up, madness in eyes (51) – shows Jack as dominated by passion (in the crazy-psychotic sense of the word)
 4. Characterized as "demoniac" and savage – dressed only in paint and a belt (140) – his outer appearance matches his inner madness
 5. Jack's affirmative reaction to Piggy's murder: "See? See? That's what you'll get!" (181) -- his reaction shows his support of the violence.
 - B. A fuller, more detailed single example that shows Jack as the id.
- III. Defining Piggy

[same pattern as above for Jack – two paragraphs]
- IV. Jack & Piggy as rivals – the key conflict – showing this across the breadth of the novel
- V. Ralph in the middle of the two
 - A. Ralph's link to Jack throughout the novel
 - B. Ralph's links to Piggy throughout the novel
- VI. Ralph as the Freudian ego – struggling between two sides of himself
- VII. Conclusion – Moving from the specific to a generalization

Summer Pre-Writing III
Heart of Darkness Thesis/Outline Assignment
AP Literature/Hanson

Create a detailed outline of a literary analysis on *Heart of Darkness* based on a thesis statement you create yourself. Use the previous two assignments as guides for your outline and thesis statement.

Good luck!