

7-2018

# A Literary Argument Developed with Scholarly Research for ENG102 [Composition]

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### Recommended Citation

Bromley, Robin, "A Literary Argument Developed with Scholarly Research for ENG102 [Composition]" (2018). *CUNY Academic Works*.

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**Essay #3: A Literary Argument Developed with Scholarly Research**  
(250 points)

Purpose: This essay invites you to examine a character or an important moral or philosophical question in *Oedipus Rex* or *Othello* that has made a powerful impression on you, and read what three literary critics say about it, in order to, as X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia put it, “test your ideas against those of others, and in doing so, to clarify your own,” (1414). You will then write an argument that defends *your* analysis, in light of your research and key passages in the play.

Assignment: **Develop an important question about one of the themes or characters in *Oedipus Rex* or *Othello* that matters to you and, after reading at least three professional articles from the Gale Literary database\* about your question, write a well-supported argument defending your answer to the question.** (\*The annotated bibliography at the end of Gale’s study guide called *Drama for Students* is a good place to start.)

I have listed few possible questions below to spur your thinking. You are welcome to write about one of them, or if you prefer, about a statement that you passionately agree or disagree with in one of the articles you read. Or, better yet, come up with a question of your own that comes from your own vehement response to the play.

If you write about *Oedipus Rex*, for instance, you might ask what brings about Oedipus’s terrible reversal of fortune. Do you believe his downfall is the result of a tragic flaw in his character, like hubris? Or is it the result of a mortal mistake, or error in judgment? Or you might consider why he gouges out his eyes, and what it accomplishes. Or, what, if any, insight about himself, life, or the gods he gains in the end?

If you write about *Othello*, you might consider what drives him to his terrible end. Is it insecurity or some other flaw in his character, or is he the victim of Iago, or some other terrible force of evil in the world? Or, if you prefer, look at what drives Iago.

Another tack to take is to consider what the play seems to say about one of the following themes: love or marriage, honor or reputation, trust or evil. You might look at trust between two specific characters – Desdemona and Othello or Othello and Iago– and think about how it is defined. What fruit does it bear?

### AUDIENCE

College-educated readers who are familiar with the literary work you are debating

### STAGES

1. **PLANNING: Formulate a question that you feel strongly about, about a debatable issue in the play**
  - a. Use free writing or clustering to help you decide which character or issue matters to you. Which do you feel the most passionate about? Which scenes or lines stand out?
  - b. Do preliminary research from one of the resources in the **Gale Literary** database to get an overview of the topic, find possible sources, and learn what questions other writers address.
  - c. **Draft a proposal answering the following:**
    - Which question about a character or a theme do you want to write about?

- **Why is that question important to you personally?**
- **What do you know about the character or theme so far? What else do you want to know?**

**2. RESEARCH: Find and read three relevant articles in Gale Literary Sources**

- You must use LaGuardia library's online database to find scholarly articles from the **Gale Literary database**. The bibliography at the end of *Drama for Students* study guide is especially accessible. Keep a list of promising articles.
- See a reference librarian if you are having trouble finding articles. (That is what they are here for—to help students like you with research.)
- Evaluate sources and **take notes**. **Your notes must contain: 1) a summary of the article's thesis, in your own words, 2) a summary of the reasons he/she gives for this thesis and his or her chief evidence for each; 3) what you think of the article and how you might use it in your argument; 4) outstanding lines you might want to quote with page numbers; 5) the information you need for the Works Cited page.**
- Review notes and our textbook's explanation of what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

**3. DRAFTING: Write and type a draft for peer review**

- Free-write or cluster to generate ideas and a working thesis.
- Outline
- Draft paper (in sections if that is useful)
- Refine your thesis
- Add in-text citations and a Works Cited page
- Note sections of your paper that you are unsure of and ask your peer reviewer

**4. REVISING: Revise the paper, incorporating feedback from peers and other readers like the Writing Center tutors**

- Refine your thesis.
- Check for paragraph unity and make sure you have supported each claim with evidence from the play or your sources.
- Check accuracy of quotations. Be sure you have signal phrases and an explanation for each line you have quoted (i.e, used the sandwich technique).
- Include an in-text citation for each quotation and each time you use another writer's ideas; then include that source in your works cited page.
- Edit: check to make sure sentences are clear and complete and for grammatical errors, such as subject-verb agreement errors, and shifts in tense. Delete unnecessary words.

**5. PREPARING THE FINAL MANUSCRIPT**

- Proofread for spelling mistakes, typos, missing words (preferably by reading aloud).
- Assemble final packet: prewriting, outline, draft, peer feedback, final paper, and reflection (written in class).

**REQUIREMENTS**

- 2000 words
- Format: Titled and typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins on all sides. Times Roman font is preferred. (See sample student essay in HE)
- Incorporate at least three scholarly articles from LaGCC library database
- Use MLA style for Works Cited and to document ideas, original research and quoted material. (See samples in LaGCC library website)
- Submit prewriting, outline, draft and peer feedback with final paper.