Class Materials

Argumentative Essay: Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*

For this assignment, you will follow the basic structure of all of our previous essays—thesis and support. But for this essay, your topic will be an argumentative one, a controversial subject that demands your taking a side on an issue. The body of the paper will support your thesis with a few specific reasons for your position. The topic of your essay will come out of your reading of Hansberry’s play, *A Raisin in the Sun*.

*In the play, all the different characters have dreams. Dreams become the motivating factor for working hard and, sometimes, for being optimistic. Dreams can also become what motivate the characters to give up, to never live in the present and to take huge risks.*

*For this essay, you will develop an argumentative thesis statement based on the following question: Of all the major characters’ dreams, which one is the most deserving?*

Make sure that you limit your focus to a single character and a single dream for this essay, clearly articulating that person’s dream as the most deserving in your thesis statement. Then, you will need to develop your thesis through the careful selection of two or three specific reasons why that person’s dreams is the most worthy. These reasons/support/evidence for your assertion will be the major focus for your essay, so select them carefully.

Effectively developing an argumentative essay means that you convince your reader of your idea (in this case, your thesis). So, your purpose for this essay is to provide evidence and support for your choice of dream. Your essay will develop support for your argumentative thesis in two or three body paragraphs that identify, discuss and provide evidence for your reasons. Most of the evidence will come from the text of the play, so make sure that you take good notes on each character’s dreams as you read. We will be discussing in class how you will be able to support your ideas and use the text well in the development of your reasons.

The final essay should be about three pages in length, typed and double spaced. It should follow MLA-style formatting for page numbers, headers, margins, etc. Additional assignments for this essay will be due along the way, so make sure that you come to class for more information. If you have any questions or concerns about your paper, see me as soon as possible.
**Argument Essay-- Peer Review Questions**

For each of your classmates’ essays, respond to the following questions. You are welcome to add to your discussion ideas which are not covered here as well. Keep your focus on the most significant ideas, and remember that you are not a proofreader.

### 1. Topic/Focus

- Does the entire essay address the topic of arguing for one character's dream?
- Does the thesis statement identify the character and his or her dream?
- Does the thesis provide good, clear reasons for that choice?
- Does the writer have a clearly argumentative purpose, not just describing the character or summarizing the plot of the play?
- If a counterargument and rebuttal are used, are they in a separate paragraph? Is the focus of the paragraph clearly on the rebuttal? Is it effective in its rebutting of the opposing idea?

### 2. Paragraph

- Does each paragraph focus on a SINGLE reason?
- Does the discussion of each paragraph provide quotes, examples, and other specific references to the text?
- Is each paragraph balanced in length?
- Are the paragraphs appropriately developed for the length of the essay?
- Are the paragraphs unified around a central focus—the reason? Is that focus clearly identified with a topic sentence?
- Is there a logical order of progression used to order and organize the reasons? Do the transitions used help emphasize the order?
- Are the paragraphs coherent, using logical and verbal bridges to develop ideas?
- Does the introductory paragraph provide a good entrance into the discussion, including one of the techniques discussed in class?
- Does the conclusion work in a clear way, dealing with general ideas?

### 3. Expression

- Does the language seem too informal for a college essay?
- Does the writer maintain a credible, reasonable tone throughout the essay?
- Can the writer find ways to avoid using “I,” “we,” or “you” pronouns?
- Does the language flow clearly, without interrupting the flow of ideas?

### 4. Editing

- Is there a serious pattern of error that needs to be corrected?
1. **Thesis/Focus**: clear focus on arguing a defined position; thesis clearly identifies reasons; clear focus on argumentative strategies

   Weak       Average       Strong

2. **Content/Development**: clear discussion of each reason; good choice of discussion and examples for each paragraph; balanced paragraph length

   Weak       Average       Strong

3. **Organization and Structure**: clear essay order; topic sentences connect with thesis/plan of development; transitions emphasize a logical progression of ideas/order; unity, coherence, development; clear introduction and conclusion

   Weak       Average       Strong

4. **Style/Expression**: phrasing and word choice are clear; appropriate tone and level of formality

   Weak       Average       Strong

5. **Proofreading/Editing**: few sentence errors; punctuation doesn’t interfere with content; follows MLA format

   Weak       Average       Strong

**Topic Proposal**: ______ / 10

**Peer Review**: ______ / 15