

English II Pre-AP - Research Essay

Choose one of the topics below and write a 3-4 page, double-spaced paper. Make sure to follow MLA style guidelines. The plays themselves are still the primary sources for this paper and should remain your most important evidence, but you must also investigate secondary sources. You must use at least 2 different sources (not counting the plays themselves). Make sure to include a works cited or bibliography page with your paper (not included in the page count).

The broader focus of this paper is to consider how we interpret the different types of primary sources available to the study of the ancient theater and what these sources tell us about society, politics, and culture.

Research Essay Topics:

1. Antigone as a feminist play: women vs. patriarchal power
2. Polarization: You're either with us or you're with the terrorists mentality (research current political rhetoric)
3. Desecration vs. Burial: (see research concerning religious/spirituals beliefs about death and the dead). Research the value of burial ceremonies for the grieving family and for society.
4. The Plague of Thebes: Punishing the city to punish the King (discuss how it operates in Oedipus and perhaps in the Bible or in our lives as citizens today)
5. Creon says to his son Haemon, "If we must lose, / Let's lose to a man, at least! Is a woman stronger than we?" How do you think this idea is dealt with throughout the play? What does the play seem to say about a woman's place in society? What ideas about this topic does the play seem to call into question or not to call into question? How do the two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, offer up different comparison points throughout the play? Be sure to use cite specific quotes from the play and use your own explanations to support your answers.
6. Compare Oedipus and Creon as leaders. How do their "tragic flaws" compare? How do the flaws of both rulers affect their state and their abilities as leaders? What is their downfall? Remembering that these plays were an important part of societal discussion in Sophocles' time, think of a thesis that deals with what their personal flaws said about which qualities are needed or not needed in a ruler. Be sure to use cite specific quotes from the play and use your own explanations to support your answers.
7. What connection between injustice, tyranny, and civil disobedience can be found in Antigone? To uphold the moral law, Antigone breaks the civil law. Down through the ages and into modern times, citizens have used this theme to guide them in redressing their grievances. Can you think of an example? How does it relate to the ideas on this issue expressed in Antigone?
8. After more than two thousand years, *Antigone* continues to impart relevant themes upon modern audiences. In a well-organized, unified essay, identify a theme from the play and analyze its relevance to today's readers.

STEP 1: BRAINSTORMING

Once you have decided on a subject, brainstorm your ideas by writing down any facts, thoughts, and insights you have. Actual brainstorming will include many entries-- questions, answers, quotations from the work, and/or specific examples from the work. One of the tricks to effective brainstorming is to really logically think about the topic, considering as much as possible about it.

STEP 2: CRAFT A THESIS STATEMENT

The thesis statement is the summary sentence that supports your opinion and ideas-- the LAST sentence in the introduction paragraph. The purpose is to put your main ideas into one summary sentence, to better organize and develop the opinion/argument of your essay, and to provide your reader with a "guide" to your argument. The thesis should answer a single question that resulted from your brainstorming, which will give the main idea of your essay.

Come up with a question based on your opinion.

Question: "What does Sophocles' work, *Antigone*, reveal about the early Greek's ideas of fate and free will?"

The answer to the question is the thesis statement for the essay. *Answer / THESIS:* In *Antigone*, Sophocles exhibits the paradoxical idea held by early Greeks that mankind is helpless so far as fate is concerned, but each individual is able to make choices in the exercising of their free will, and it is these choices which reveals their heroic nature.

STEP 3: PLAN THE OPENING SENTENCES OF YOUR INTRO PARAGRAPH: There are three common techniques that are utilized to open the introductory paragraph:

- **Factual Information:** The writer opens his or her paragraph by giving a list of facts that will eventually lead to his or her thesis. (In the days of Sophocles, the ancient Greeks believed that an individual could not alter his/her fate; however, they believed that one could exercise their free will.)
- **Anecdote:** The writer opens the paragraph with a story that relates to the thesis.
- **Quotation:** The writer builds the introductory paragraph around an applicable quote (e.g. The blind and homeless Gloucester in Shakespeare's *King Lear* laments, "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; / They kill us for their sport" (IV.i. 37-38). This idea of mankind being controlled by some outside force is reflected in the ancient Greek idea that an individual could not alter his/her fate. However, the ancient Greeks of Sophocles' time also held to the idea that

in spite of a person's predetermined fate, one was able to exercise free will, and it was the choices one made in the midst of uncontrollable fate that revealed their heroic nature.)

Due Dates:

___ Prewriting (**due Monday, Feb. 27th**)

___ Rough draft (**due Thursday, March 2nd**)

___ Conference/Peer Edit/Revision time (**March 3 - March 6**)

___ Final draft due (**Tuesday, March 7th by midnight**)