

The Prompt

One of the strongest human drives seems to be a desire for power. Write an essay in which you discuss how a character in a novel or a drama struggles to free himself or herself from the power of others or seeks to gain power over others. Be sure to demonstrate in your essay how the author uses this power struggle to enhance the meaning of the work.

Intro and Thesis

Opening paragraphs should set up the essay and establish the writer's argument. This argument (the thesis statement) should be last in the paragraph, though it need not be a single sentence.

DIRECTIONS: Use the sample essays to answer the following questions.

1. Read the thesis statement and conclusions for each of the essays and rank the essays in order of clarity and effectiveness in answering the prompt (with 1 being the most effective).
2. Indicate which of the essays (if any) only answers part the prompt; which of the essays (if any) answer part of the prompt but implies the second part; and which of the essay (if any) clearly answer both parts of the prompt. This should be a list for the three categories.
3. Rank the introductory paragraphs in order of effectiveness in terms of clearly setting up the thesis for someone who may not have read the novel (with 1 being the most effective).
4. Choose ONE of the sample introductions, and analyze (no more than a paragraph) in more detail what works well and what works less well about it. The more effective you are at doing this, the better your grade.

Body Paragraphs

Body paragraphs should divide the topic in some way, so that each body paragraph sets up the next body paragraph as part of a unified argument. The alternative-- where writers have one paragraph is one reason why the thesis is true and another paragraph that is another reason why the thesis is true-- is really to write two superficial mini-essays instead of crafting a multi-part argument.

Topic sentences should establish what the paragraph will prove. Topic sentences need not literally be the first in a body paragraph, but they should be close to the beginning to give the paragraph direction. A topic sentence has to actually take a stand on something; it has to introduce an argument. If it is a factual statement, you're probably writing a plot summary. "Lila is a bad person" is an argument; it is an opinion statement that would have to be defended with evidence. "Lila is a poor girl growing up in Naples" is a factual statement; it is a plot point that is not advancing an argument.

Treat paraphrase in open-ended essays just like you would quotation-- setting up the context and specifically using the detail from the work to demonstrate that your claim is correct. It must be explained clearly enough that even someone who hasn't read the work should be able to still follow your argument.

The explanations should engage the examples specifically and directly. They should also immediately follow the examples. Do not list a bunch of evidence, and then explain at the end.

DIRECTIONS: Use the FIRST body paragraph of each of the sample essays to answer the following questions.

5. Indicate which of the body paragraphs (if any) does not have a topic sentence; which of the essays (if any) have a topic sentence that only partially introduces what the paragraph proves; and which of the essays (if any) clearly introduces the argument for that paragraph. This should be a list for the three categories.
6. Choose one of the essays (indicate which one) and explain to what extent the evidence supports the topic sentence? What is effective or ineffective about the use of the evidence? Explain in a single paragraph, referring back to details from the novel if necessary.
7. Choose a different essay (indicate which one). Do the warrants in the argument truly explain the connection between grounds and claim, or do they merely make claims without a true explanation? What is effective or ineffective about the explanations here? Explain in a single paragraph, referring back to details from the novel if necessary. You may also want to consider hypothetical alternatives to the way that the explanations are actually developed when writing your paragraph.
8. Rank the body paragraphs in order of overall effectiveness (with one being the most effective).

Conclusion

After summarizing what you have proved, a conclusion should actually conclude. Most often this takes the form of an overarching inference made from the argument that you have developed or an attempt to connect the argument to a broader theme developed in the text. A good conclusion should suggest how the argument in the essay fits into the bigger picture.

DIRECTIONS: Use the conclusions of each of the sample essays to answer the following questions.

9. Rank the body paragraphs in order of overall effectiveness (with one being the most effective).
10. Choose one of the sample conclusions (indicate which one) and explain (no more than a paragraph) in more detail what is effective and ineffective about it. In your paragraph, make sure that you are addressing to what degree it is engaging a theme in the novel.