

In-Class Writing Samples

Please refer to this for examples on how to get a high mark on your writing assignments.

Eng 11 - March 3, 2017

Answer the following question in a synthesis essay: What would Katniss, from The Hunger Games, think of Kevin's situation in "Home Alone"?

Who doesn't love to see children fight to the death? In both *The Hunger Games* film and *Home Alone*, there are characters who are far too young to take on the responsibilities given to them, and fight for their own survival. The two films are similar in that they feature young protagonists who defend themselves vigorously, but are different in the setting in which they fight. Given this difference, Katniss would likely find Kevin to be a spoiled young man.

Eng 10 - March 3, 2017

Which is more effective: Avengers or X-Men

All over the world, children will fight over who's the best: Captain America or Iron Man? Magneto or Professor X? These debates are enjoyable, but they don't often get into the deeper meanings of the movies themselves. In "Captain America: Civil War" from the *Avengers* franchise, as well as "X-Men: Days of Future Past" from the *X-Men* franchise, there are groups of superhumans who are engaged in large-scale conflicts over huge issues. While both films address the pain of civil war, the different groups fight for entirely different motivations, and this demonstrates that X-Men is a more effective movie, because they focus on civil rights.

Both "Captain America: Civil War" and "X-Men: Days of Future Past" explore the idea of civil war, and demonstrate the great damage that is done in fighting amongst ourselves. In "Captain America," there is a significant battle scene at an airport, in which the major players of the Avengers are divided into two camps, and fight each other. When Iron Man meets with Captain America, he tells him that he "has no idea what I'm trying to do." This tension between the two leaders demonstrates the pain and damage done by civil war - while the Avengers have always been united, there's clear path towards peace and healing for these groups, as they try to come to terms with a dangerous world. Similarly, "X-Men" explores civil war. Magneto and Professor X's longstanding feud once again erupts, when the government tries to create a registry for mutants, and develops weapons to destroy them. Professor X tells Magneto, at a key moment, that "we need to work with them, not against them." Just like "Captain America," the community of superhumans is torn between two camps, trying to survive their respective challenges. Clearly, both texts are sensitive to what happens when a small group is fractured, and feels compelled to fight amongst themselves. While they're similar in the focus on civil war, their main difference lies in the cause of that conflict.

While a community may very well be able to agree on a significant problem, the way to combating that problem is often a fractious process. In the two films, however, the nature of the problem is quite different. In "Captain America," the threat against the group is one of

bureaucracy and accountability. The UN has decided to make them a “task force,” and no longer a vigilante group. The fight they have is based on an ideal, rather than a true need for survival. “X-Men,” meanwhile, addresses a specific, mortal threat: governing bodies that wish to exterminate them. The parallels between the *X-Men* franchise and historical events like World War 2 and the Civil Rights movement are now well-established, and it is telling that in the movie they’re constantly fighting for their right to exist. In essence, the “Captain America” movies show a group fighting to maintain their status at the top of society, where “X-Men” shows a group fighting for minority rights, for recognition, and to simply survive. Because of this, “X-Men”’s motivations are more admirable: it is not just a lofty ideal, but a philosophy grounded in the daily need to live.

As we can see, the two films have many similarities: they both feature superhumans fighting for large ideals. Because of the nature of their fights, though, “X-Men” is a more effective franchise. In today’s world, where LGBT, religious, and ethnic rights are constantly under threat, what could be more meaningful than a powerful allegory of a small group fighting for recognition?

Eng 11 - March 2, 2017

Describe your favorite environment.

A few years ago, I sat at a restaurant, on the small Croatian island of Split. The day was hot and muggy, and relaxed people walked along a cobbled, white path designed to take them from one beautiful beach to another. As I watched the bright blue ocean come in and out in small waves, a handsome young waiter brought my food. The pizza that came was huge, and was covered in bits of ham and browned mushrooms. When I began to eat it, my mouth filled with the saltiness and the taste of herb-infused tomato sauce. To quench my thirst, I drank from a nearby tall glass of lemon water, which was crisp and fresh. I could hear seagulls crying in the distance, and children running nearby on the path, playing with their newfound friends. Nearby, someone ordered dessert, and I could smell the sweetness of the melting ice cream, and the heavy scent of a hot brownie. I spent the afternoon lazily watching tourists in brights reds and oranges and greens walk by, large smiles on their happy faces. It was the best place I’ve ever seen.

Eng 10 - March 2, 2017

Describe Mr. McLean’s class in a paragraph form.

I am sitting in Mr. McLean’s English class, on the morning of March 2nd, 2017. When I look around the small, blue classroom, I see several wooden, thin tables lined in a horseshoe. A dozen happy students are dressed fashionably and respectfully. I hear the creak of the old, metal chairs, and the sighs of tired, young people. The room smells like industrial glue, because Brady got angry and destroyed our beautiful, valuable clock. On my tongue, I taste bitter, hot coffee, which I’ve been drinking all morning. The air is cold, but has been warming since the beginning of school, on this gray, winter day. It is a comforting and happy place.

Eng 11 - Feb 15, 2017

Using examples from "Macbeth," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Hunger Games," answer this question:

Immoral behaviour is acceptable to reach a personal goal. Agree or disagree?

Plan

Thesis: Immoral behaviour is unacceptable to reach a personal goal, if it negatively affects a person's community

BP1: Macbeth's actions in *Macbeth*

BP2: Friar Lawrence's actions in *Romeo and Juliet*

BP3: President Snow in *Hunger Games*

Introduction

Can murder ever be a good thing? In "Macbeth" and "Romeo and Juliet" by William Shakespeare, as well as *Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, there are dystopian societies, where killing and unethical actions are everywhere, and personal ambitions drive the stories. In these texts, immoral behaviour is unacceptable to reach a personal goal, if it negatively affects a person's community. This can be seen in the actions of Macbeth, Friar Lawrence, and President Snow. The ambitions of these men end up with the death of those around them - especially in the tragedy "Romeo and Juliet."

The character Friar Lawrence is rarely blamed for his role in the death of the two protagonists in "Romeo and Juliet," but his actions, however well-intended, ended up doing great damage to his community. When he first hears of Romeo's love for Juliet, the Friar notes that "this alliance may so happy prove / To turn your households' rancor to pure love" (2.3.91-92). This clearly demonstrates his optimism for what will happen next. His behaviour is immoral, in that he does not consult with the families, but at this moment it is an acceptable risk, since he does not intend to harm the community. However, towards the end of the play, Friar Lawrence states: "Fear comes upon me. / Oh, much I fear some ill unthrifty thing" (5.3.133-34). His premonition proves correct, and he finds the two lovers dead. Their families, witnessing this, are immediately upset. The effects of his actions have created the deaths of two young people, and has greatly endangered the possibility of peace in Verona. Because his actions ended up doing so much damage, his immoral behaviour is unacceptable, and should not be condoned. Not only does Friar Lawrence conduct himself badly, so does Macbeth.

(BP2)

(BP3)

As can be seen, if a person's community is harmed, immoral actions are unacceptable. In many ways, the actions of the characters described above mirror modern society, and encourage the reader to consider the effect of the decisions of powerful people today - and to decide for themselves what is moral or not.

Eng 10 - Feb 15, 2017

Using examples from *The Hunger Games* and "Romeo and Juliet," answer this question:
How does community affect a person's behaviour?

Plan

Thesis: Unfair societies can force people to make bad decisions

BP1 Topic: Unfair societies in HG and RJ

BP2 Topic: Katniss' bad decisions in HG

BP3 Topic: Juliet's bad decisions in RJ

Introduction:

How can society protect young women? In *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, and "Romeo and Juliet" by William Shakespeare, there are dangerous societies that make life incredibly difficult for young people, especially women. The two stories use female characters to show that unfair societies can force people to make bad decisions. This can be seen in the structure of both societies, as well as in the choices made by Katniss and Juliet. After all, despite their different societies, both communities have significant problems that would of course affect all characters.

The structure of the societies in *The Hunger Games* and "Romeo and Juliet" make both of them unfair places to live. Once The Reaping begins in *The Hunger Games*, a video is shown, describing "Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens" (18). The passage then goes on to describe the function of the Hunger Games, which are to suppress and sacrifice the citizens of the poorer districts. This clear use of propaganda, as well as the unfair punishment of children, show that the society of Panem is inherently unfair: the rich Capitol uses its resources to oppress all other citizens of the country. In an environment like this, it is difficult for people to have the option of making fair and moral choices. Similarly, "Romeo and Juliet" features an unfair society. The Prince, in his entrance to the play, notes that "old Capulet, and Montague, / Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets" (1.1.83-84). This accusation shows that this fight is not new: the two families have been fighting for a long time, and the society has changed itself to adapt to it. It is similarly difficult for people not to take a side, in such an unfair environment, and any decision they make would be affected by those around them. Clearly, the environments in both stories are unfair, which forces the main characters to make bad decisions.

(BP2)

(BP3)

As can be seen, the female characters in both *The Hunger Games* and "Romeo and Juliet" have to make bad decisions, because they live in unfair societies. In many ways, this is similar to modern society, where full equality between men and women has not yet been reached - whether it has improved greatly between Shakespeare and Collins' time is up to interpretation.

Eng 11 - Feb. 10, 2017

Discuss the use of literary terms in "Poem on the Underground Wall"

In "Poem on the Underground Wall," by Simon & Garfunkel, the speaker uses imagery of darkness to show that sometimes, our surroundings can affect our decisions. In the poem, the speaker says that he is in a "dark, deserted station." This imagery clearly creates a setting of difficult visibility and obscure intentions. Because it is set in the nighttime, the character can hide easily in the shadows. This type of setting encourages immoral behaviour, because he is unlikely to get caught. Similarly, after he completes his graffiti, it says he "seek[s] the breast of darkness and [is] suckled by the night." This vivid metaphor of nighttime as a place to find comfort gives the character a clear escape route after he commits a crime. Without the cover of darkness, his decisions would be different. As we can see, imagery of darkness is used to show that our decisions can be affected by our environment.

Works Cited

Simon, Paul, and Art Garfunkel. "A Poem on the Underground Wall." *Google Play*. Universal Music, n.d. Web. 10 Feb. 2017.

Eng 10 - Feb. 10, 2017

Discuss the use of literary terms in "I Am A Rock"

In "I Am a Rock" by Paul Simon, the speaker uses metaphors to show that sometimes, loneliness can protect us. The speaker says, "I am a rock" (3). This metaphor compares the author to something that is not alive. A rock is isolated, and is not connected to others. Most importantly, it is hard, and difficult to damage. By using a metaphor, the speaker is saying that he is lonely but safe - like a rock. The speaker also compares himself to "an island" (3). Like a rock, an island is alone. While it is not hard like a rock, an island is protected by distance - it is very difficult to harm an island, just like it is difficult to harm the speaker. As we can see, metaphors are an excellent way to show that loneliness can be protective.

Works Cited

Simon, Paul. "I Am a Rock." *Sightlines 10*. By Mary Crane, Barbara C. Fullerton, and Amanda Joseph. Toronto: Prentice Hall Canada, 2000. 3. Print.

SS10 - Feb. 3, 2017

How do Canada and Croatia compare, geographically? How does this affect the people living there?

Canada and Croatia are quite different in size, but are quite similar in their proximity to the ocean. Because of its dependence on water, the people in both countries rely on transportation as a means of supporting the economy. In Canada, we have a significant amount of water, from BC with its long coastline, and the St. Lawrence Lowlands, with its great river flowing from the Great Lakes. Along these waterways, a significant industry has thrived of boats carrying goods, like produce and minerals, and this keeps many people employed. Similarly, in Croatia, they rely heavily on the ability to travel between their islands. In their case, they don't move products like Canada does, but people: they have an industry based on tourism. Despite their differences, both countries make a significant amount of their money on their ability to use the water to make gain profits. As we can see, they're not that different after all.

Eng 11 - Feb. 3, 2017

What is a theme of *Macbeth*?

The theme of *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare is that the people we trust the most can betray us. At the end of Act 1, the King of Scotland is killed in his sleep by the ambitious Macbeth. This act demonstrates a clear betrayal of a close trust for two reasons: Macbeth is Duncan's friend, and he is also his host. By coming into his home, Duncan became immediately vulnerable, hoping to solidify his relationship with Macbeth. By placing his trust in him, Duncan exposed himself to danger, and Macbeth used that opportunity to betray him. Similarly, Lady Macbeth, as Macbeth's wife, ideally would play a supportive role in Macbeth's successes. However, she famously uses her own ambition to push Macbeth towards immoral decisions. Because of her pressure, he acts to kill Duncan - setting of a sequence of events that lead to his death. While he needs to take responsibility for his actions as well, her pressure is a betrayal of the role she should play as a wife. As we can see, we can't always trust the people closest to us.

Eng 10 - Feb. 3, 2017

What is a theme of *Batman*?

The theme of *Batman* by Frank Miller is that sometimes, evil can create heroes. When Bruce Wayne is young, his parents are killed in front of him, and this creates the impetus for him to fight crime later in life. This shows that evil can create heroes, because Bruce takes a horrendous event and turns into a force for positivity: fighting the same type of crime that killed his parents. Similarly, Captain Gordon has his children kidnapped by Two-Face, and they are almost killed. This terrible event gives him motivation to continue to fight crime in Gotham city, successfully. This also demonstrates the power of evil actions, since he uses this experience as a means to find the energy to continue fighting evil, so that future families don't have to worry about kidnapping. As we can see, in *Batman*, evil is not always a negative force; it can do us good.

SS11 - Feb 3, 2017

I expect that the aging population of Canada will have a negative effect on the society, and this will put an undue burden on the government, on business, and on individuals. The government relies on a large population of working-class men and women to sustain their budgeting. If you consider figure 11-19, it is clear that the working population will largely be retiring in the future. This will have an effect of putting more strain than has historically been true on the younger general. Business, also, will suffer.