

Research Paper Proposal (100 points total)¹

This proposal is for a 1,000 + words analytical, thesis-based research essay on some aspect of *Bloodchild and Other Stories* whose argument is supported by scholarly sources.

The first draft of the proposal is due on **Saturday, October 22 at 9:00AM**. Failure to turn in a proposal on time will mean 0 (zero) out of 80 points. Then you need to find two readers to comment on your proposal by **Monday, October 24 by 9:00AM** (20 points). Then you need to submit a revised proposal by **Wednesday, October 26 at 9:00AM** for my perusal. ***You may not write your paper until I approve your proposal.***

As you write the proposal, keep in mind that I am requesting that your intended audience be readers who have **NOT** read *Bloodchild and Other Stories* nor the secondary sources for it. Think to yourself, “What do I need to explain to this audience to help them understand this topic and my take on it?”

Required sections

1. MLA-style Header (see page 22 of the class packet for an example)
2. Tentative Title: If possible, think of an informative but catchy title. An effective title not only engages the reader's interest, but also predisposes him/her favorably towards the proposal.
3. Abstract: A brief summary of approximately 300-500 words. It should include
 - a. The topic of the paper
 - b. Context or background to understand the topic
 - c. The importance of the topic
 - d. The approach/methodology to the topic of the paper
 - e. A tentative thesis
4. Annotated Tentative List of References: At least three sources, formatted in proper MLA style, each with an explanation of what kinds of sources they are (reviews, journal articles, encyclopedia entries, etc.) and how they will benefit the paper.

Thesis: Keep in mind that your thesis should only be a sentence or two long and it is an answer to a specific relevant question; it isn't a question. Often your thesis will be more effective if it answers a “how” or “why” question instead of a “who,” “what,” “when” or “where” query. (For examples of theses and action verbs to perhaps use, see page 5 of the class packet)

Approach to the subject of my paper: There are several ways you can present material in your paper in support of your thesis statement. Will you have to define certain terms? Will you include opposing views and comparing and contrasting them to your views? You want to think of a logical, orderly fashion in which you will lay out your research paper so it transitions well from thesis to conclusion. Your choice of target audience should influence your approach.

Annotated Tentative List of References: If you are struggling finding good sources for your research paper while creating your proposal, it's a good indication you should pick another topic. When you state the types of sources you will be using, include how these sources will strengthen your paper.

¹ Adapted from <https://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/researchcourse/images/literaryresearchproposal.pdf>

Common Mistakes in Proposal Writing

- Failure to provide the proper context to frame the research question.
- Failure to delimit the boundary conditions for your research.
- Failure to cite key sources.
- Failure to accurately present the theoretical and empirical contributions by other researchers.
- Failure to stay focused on the research question.
- Failure to develop a coherent and persuasive argument for the proposed research.
- Too much detail on minor issues, but not enough detail on major issues.
- Too much rambling -- going "all over the map" without a clear sense of direction.
- Too long or too short.
- Failing to follow MLA style.
- Sloppy writing.