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Inherit the Wind: Formal Essay [Liberal Arts]

Luke Cardaio

CUNY La Guardia Community College

Ian Alberts

CUNY La Guardia Community College

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Liberal Arts Seminar
Humanism, Science and Technology
LIB 200.6503 (37275) and LMF 101.329 (37430)
Profs. Luke Cardaio (English) and Ian Alberts (Natural Sciences)

LaGuardia Community College, CUNY

This common assignment was designed for students in an LMF 101 (First-Year Seminar for Liberal Arts: Math & Science) class and those in a capstone LIB 200 (Science, Technology, and Humanism) class. The assignment is aligned to the Integrative Learning Core Competency and the Written Communication Ability. In this assignment, the students in both classes critically read the play, *Inherit the Wind* by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, and the LMF 101 class is also shown the film based on the play. The play is based on the connection of two of the major themes of these classes: humanism and science. The students are then required to write a comprehensive essay, which addresses a declared thesis statement based on the conflicts and intersections of the overarching themes, inherent within the play. In preparation for the formal essay assignment, there are in-class discussions and activities that are focused on critically thinking and analyzing several key quotations from the play significant to character and plot development, as well as the connections between humanism and science. Subsequently, the LIB 200 students peer review the essays of the LMF 101 students, who in turn, respond to these peer reviews. The peer-review process comprises two combined class meetings and discussions focused on the LIB 200 student reviews and the LMF 101 student responses. The overall goals for this assignment include the following:

1. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills as well as integrative learning.
2. Students will analyze and integrate evidence connected to a specific thesis statement.
3. Students will construct arguments to support the thesis, which should not be limited to the story or plot development but can incorporate societal issues.
4. Students will critically assess the reliability of claims made in the play.
5. Students will cite sources of quotations and paraphrases appropriately.
6. Students will appreciate the value and importance of the peer review process, recognize how constructive criticism can lead to improvements in scholarly work, and gain experience in responding to feedback from peers in order to enhance the quality of their work.

LMF 101 is a dynamic, interactive course with a variety of objectives that have been designed to address key issues connected to college life, the utilization of on-campus resources, the learning process for students and the pathway to their major. The introductory nature of this course serves as an orientation to the academic disciplines in the program, and provides exposure to the content that students will learn to develop and organize as they progress, as well as the connections they will make between academic content and their own experience. The overwhelming majority of students enrolled in this course are concurrently enrolled in remedial writing or introductory composition courses; the concept/process of peer-reviewing and peer-critiquing is introduced in students' writing courses, and then applied to diverse context in this collaborative project with the Capstone students.

LIB 200 is a culminating capstone course in the college experience that explores, in depth, the relationship between humanism, science and technology. It is a writing intensive class, in which students

apply knowledge, writing, and critical thinking strategies acquired in earlier courses to relevant contemporary and historical societal issues, as well as reflect on their responsibilities in a diverse society.

Framed by the dimensions of the Written Communication Ability rubric, this assignment helps students build the ability to critically examine and interpret a relevant text in order to enhance their critical thinking, synthesis, analysis, reflection and evaluation skills within the context of societal ethics and values. Overall, the assignment is worth 15% of the final grade in the LMF 101 and LIB 200 courses. The assignment was developed and implemented as part of a Learning Matters mini-grant project that aimed to enhance the Liberal Arts experience to students across the academic spectrum. The assignment was also discussed in detail in the mini-seminar sessions and revised based on the feedback obtained from such interactions with colleagues.

Timeline:

Week 2: Students are introduced to the central theme of Humanism, Science and Technology and they conduct an introductory assignment based on these issues.

Week 3: The high-stakes assignment is introduced to students. They are required to read the play: *Inherit the Wind*.

Week 4: LMF 101 students watch the film based on the play.

Week 5: Evidence and Argument Construction is introduced, in the context of the play and film as well as student work in their English Writing courses.

Week 6: Reflection formal essay assignment is due. The essays by the LMF 101 students are distributed to the LIB 200 students for peer-reviewing.

Week 7: LIB 200 students peer reviews due.

Week 8: Joint LIB 200/LMF 101 class meeting #1, and discussion based on the peer-reviewing.

Week 9: LIB 101 students respond to the peer-review. Joint LIB 200/LMF 101 class meeting #2 and discussion based on the response to the peer-review.

LMF 101 and LIB 200 Course Goals Associated with Assignment:

1. Demonstrate understanding of habits of mind essential to college success (e.g., persistence, flexibility, and metacognition) and foundational knowledge in mathematics and science.
2. Interpret the values and ethics of humanism, science and technology and discuss how these values and ethics directly influence personal, academic, and professional success in their careers.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the structure and logic of academic writing; show a level of proficiency in the fundamental writing, reading and speaking skills necessary to deliver information in a contextual and coherent manner.
4. Demonstrate the use of skills and knowledge gained from diverse experiences to enhance learning and success.
5. Describe the diversity of LaGuardia Community College and demonstrate capacities to collaborate across differences in culture and perspective.

Reflection Formal Essay: Inherit the Wind

Integrative Learning using the Written Modality

Step #1:

For this assignment the LIB 200 and LMF 101 students will read the play: *Inherit the Wind* by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee (1955). In addition, LMF 101 students will watch the 1960 movie adapted from the play, and directed by Stanley Kramer. Based on the play, the students will write a formal essay of a minimum of 1,000 words. In this essay, they must address one of the questions shown below. The essay must follow the format of a college-level composition: introductory stage, developmental stage and concluding stage. The play *Inherit the Wind* will be the sole source of material (primary source) as student's attempt to develop a thesis statement and arguments to support their position. Students must use both direct quotation and paraphrasing from the text/source material, with proper in-text citations. Note: Students in LMF 101 course may have varied skill levels and experience in formal composition writing. As this is a first semester course, some students are required to take remedial writing, others may be beyond remedial writing needs, and there are often students who are taking ESL (English as a Second Language) writing courses. While the process for all students is shared and collaborative, expectations for the final results of the assignment vary from student to student, depending on proficiency in essay/composition writing.

Inherit the Wind Essay Questions:

Choose one as the basis of your Composition. Your response to the question is the basis of your thesis statement:

- Drummond is more of a humanist than Brady, because...
- Of all the characters in the text, the character that is the best example of a humanist is _____, because...
- What is the fundamental conflict in *Inherit the Wind*, and what are the pivotal examples that exhibit this conflict?
- Why do the playwrights imply, in their note preceding the play, that the themes of their play are timeless and universal? What relevance do these themes have today?
- How does the play highlight the struggle of the individual versus larger society? What message does it contain about the power of the individual to change society?
- Detail the various humanist techniques Drummond uses over the course of the trial to undermine Brady's literal interpretation of the Bible.

Step #2:

A capstone student in the LIB 200 class will peer-review the assignment of an LMF 101 student. Capstone students are paired with First-Year Seminar students and are prepared to work with their counterparts, including the first-year students who are remedial and ESL writing students. This critique of the work of the LMF student will provide constructive feedback on the Introduction, Development and Conclusion paragraphs. It will also provide general comments based on the following questions:

Where is the writer's essay the strongest and why?

Which style(s) or approach to analysis does the writer excel at?

Does the writer utilize quotations and paraphrases appropriately?

What other ideas could the writer consider?

Does the student clearly analyze, evaluate and organize evidence to support claims?

Step #3:

After the formal essays have been peer-reviewed, the LMF 101 student will have the opportunity to modify their work based on the feedback from the LIB 200 peer. The LMF 101 student is required to revise their essay draft and also respond to each of the concerns of the reviewer about the essay. The student will explain why they did or did not consider each of the reviewer's suggestions, explaining their reasoning behind each decision.

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Formal Essay
Common Assignment 1

For your formal essay assignment, you are required to write a comprehensive essay, which addresses one of the questions listed on the reverse side of this handout. Your composition will rely solely on *Inherit the Wind* as your source material (primary source) and will be subjective, as you develop a thesis statement and arguments to support your position. Additional, outside sources or conducting research for this assignment, is prohibited for this essay. This assignment requires a minimum of 1,000 words.

Inherit the Wind is the first of two major works of literature that we are examining, and a prime example of the intersection of two or more of our course themes: in this case, *humanism* and *science*. The goal of this assignment is for you to apply a critical lens, and analytical skills, to a significant text that transcends any one field of study, and appeals to a wide audience with themes of universal and permanent interest. This integrative learning approach to the assignment provides the opportunity to reflect on the comprehensive work you have done in previous courses and across academic disciplines, and will allow you to make connections between your diverse experiences and develop them for this multi-faceted assignment that is unique to the Liberal Arts.

Your essay must follow the format of a college-level composition: introductory stage, developmental stage and concluding stage. The introduction and conclusion should be substantial. The *introduction* should: introduce and summarize your source, and preview the lens for your analysis. The thesis statement (determined by the answer to the question you choose) should declare your position (in terms of your analytical lens). Your *conclusion* should review your overall analysis and include references to the themes of our course.

Your *developmental paragraphs* should focus on the arguments you construct to support your thesis, and should not be limited to the story or simple plot development. In other words, each developmental paragraph should include your analysis of the components of the text that illustrate your main points. You must construct a minimum of 3 arguments to support your thesis/position. Therefore, your essay should be no shorter than 5 paragraphs at the minimum.

You must use both direct quotation and paraphrasing from the text/source material, with proper in-text, MLA citation: a minimum of 3 direct quotes and 3 paraphrases (total of 6 references, minimum). Research and outside sources are prohibited; therefore, this essay is a reflective analysis of this text. This assignment relies heavily on the research process that was first introduced to you in ENG 101 (Introduction to Composition), further developed in ENG 102 (Composition II) and utilized in various Liberal Arts courses throughout your educational journey. This project will allow you integrate the knowledge and skills learned in those courses and demonstrate your prowess as critical thinkers and writers.

In terms of grading, I will take into account your organization, structure, paragraph development, GUM (Grammar Usage and Mechanics) and language use (word choice and style), and most importantly, the quality of writing/critical analysis in your essay. Late essays will be penalized one full letter grade for each day beyond the due date.

You must type your essays, and...

- use one-inch margins on each side, top and bottom.
- use Times New Roman, font theme and 12 pt, font size
- use double space, format
- write your name, the course number and section, professor's name, and the date at the top left
- (below that) write the title of your essay at the top center.

Inherit the Wind - Essay Questions

Choose One as the basis of your Composition

- 1- Drummond is more of a humanist than Brady, because...
- 2- Of all the characters in the text, the character that is the best example of a humanist is _____, because.....
- 3- What is the fundamental conflict in *Inherit the Wind*, and what are the pivotal examples that exhibit this conflict?
- 4- Why do the playwrights imply, in their note preceding the play, that the themes of their play are timeless and universal? What relevance do these themes have today?
- 5- How does the play highlight the struggle of the individual versus larger society? What message does it contain about the power of the individual to change society?
- 6- Detail the various humanist techniques Drummond uses over the course of the trial to undermine Brady's literal interpretation of the Bible.

Inherit the Wind - Essay Preparation

Suggested Outline for Preparation of your Essay

I. INTRODUCTION

- Summary of the source material
- Preview of your Analysis
- Thesis Statement
- Introduction of your Arguments/Main Points

II. DEVELOPMENTAL (BODY)

A. MP#1

B. MP#2

C. MP#3

III. CONCLUSION

- Crystallize your analysis
- Restate your Thesis
- Reiterate (or introduce new) Supporting Material
- Provide Closing Commentary

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Peer Review of FYS Students Work

Based on the play: Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, *Inherit the Wind*.

Name of LIB Reviewer(s) _____ Name of LMF Student _____

Please print out this sheet and the papers of your two assigned peers. Upon reading and reviewing their work, provide comments and annotation in response to the questions in the **Introduction**, **Developmental Stage**, **Conclusion** and **General Comments** sections listed below. Your reviews should focus more on the quality of content, analysis and critical thinking applied in each paper, and not on technical grammar and mechanics usage.

Introduction

Does the introduction lead from the general to the more specific?

Does the introduction include a summary of the play (plot and characters)?

Does the introduction include the writer's position (a clear thesis statement)?

Does the writer introduce the main points/arguments of their thesis?

Developmental Stage

Paragraph 1, explain if it contains:

- a clear topic sentence that establishes the first main point/argument and connects to the thesis statement
- a supporting quotation or paraphrase
- analysis connecting the supporting material from the text to the main point/argument

Paragraph 2, explain if it contains:

- a clear topic sentence that establishes the second main point/argument and connects to the thesis statement
- a supporting quotation or paraphrase
analysis connecting the supporting material from the text to the main point/argument

Paragraph 3, explain if it contains:

- a clear topic sentence that establishes the third main point/argument and connects to the thesis statement
- a supporting quotation or paraphrase
analysis connecting the supporting material from the text to the main point/argument

Conclusion

Does the conclusion restate the thesis, main points, and any significant evidence presented in the developmental stage?

General Comments

Which paragraph is the strongest in its analysis of the primary text? Explain why.

Which paragraph(s) need(s) more development/analysis? Provide specific suggestions for revision.

What other ideas or connections could the writer consider?

Does the student clearly analyze, evaluate and organize evidence to support claims/main points?

Does language and grammar usage and mechanics (GUM) enhance or impede reading comprehension of the student's paper?

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Capstone-FYS Peer Review Response

A LIB 200 Capstone student has peer-reviewed your essay assignment based on *Inherit the Wind* and provided you with feedback to revise your draft.

1. Please revise your draft. Use a red color to highlight the changes you made in the revised draft. Please upload the modified assignment to your ePortfolio.
2. In a letter to the reviewer, explain why you did or did not take into account each of the reviewer's suggestions, explaining your reasoning behind each decision.
3. How will this feedback help you improve as you progress with your education?