Argument Essay Guide and Rubric

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Overview

Your final assessment for this unit asks you to write an argumentative essay. An argumentative essay presents a clear claim or thesis statement, provides evidence and reasoning to support your position, addresses counterarguments, and concludes with a compelling summary of your main points. **The goal is to persuade readers or listeners to accept your viewpoint or at least consider it seriously.**

For this essay, you will choose a major decision, theme, or moral question presented in the drama you just read. You will then write an argumentative essay in which you make a claim about that decision, theme, or moral question. You will use textual evidence to support your claim, and address at least one counterclaim (a reasonable argument that someone might make against your position).

Argument Essay Guide		✓
Identify a Topic and Brainstorm Your Position		
Step 1	Discuss the major decisions, themes, or moral questions presented in the drama. Take notes on your ideas.	☐
Step 2	Choose a focus, brainstorm ideas through writing, and take a position.	☐
Draft a Thesis Statement		
Step 3	Reflect on your group discussion and your independent writing. **Draft** a thesis statement, or claim, that **takes a position** on a major decision, theme, or moral question presented in the drama.	☐
Step 4	Identify reasons **for** and **against** the position you've taken in your thesis statement.	☐
Step 5	Revise your thesis, if necessary.	☐
Step 6	"Pitch" your thesis, initial reasons, counterargument, and rebuttal to your classmate for feedback, and reflect on new ideas.	☐
Collect Evidence		
Step 7	Complete the evidence collection chart with quotations from the text. Use proper MLA citation and include a brief description of what's happening (context) **and how this piece of evidence either supports your argument or refutes (argues against) a counterargument.**	☐

Step 8	Make revisions (again!) to your thesis based on the evidence you collected.	☐
Evaluate an Example Essay		
Step 9	Review the outline and use it to highlight the components of an example argument essay.	☐
Outline Your Essay		
Step 10	Outline your essay using the guidelines below.	☐
Dig in to the Rubric and Draft Your Essay		
Step 11	Review the rubric for this essay. Highlight key words and circle any words or phrases you don't understand. Then, evaluate the example body paragraphs with counterclaims using the rubric.	☐
Step 12	Use the rubric, example essay, and outline to draft your essay following the guidelines.	☐
Practice Peer Review and Revise Your Essay		
Step 13	Follow the steps below to give and receive peer feedback.	☐
Step 14	Review, revise, and edit your essay one last time before sharing it. Follow the process below to guide your review.	☐

IDENTIFY A TOPIC AND BRAINTORM YOUR POSITION

Step 1	Discuss the major decisions, themes, or moral questions presented in the drama. Take notes on your ideas.

Discuss the questions on the left with your small group and take notes on your ideas.

Discuss	Take Notes
Identity and External Pressure • How does a character try to stay true to who they are? • In what ways do other people (family, society, culture, authority figures) pressure the character to be someone else? • What happens when a character's personal identity conflicts with what others expect of them? • How does the play explore the cost of choosing your own path—or the cost of following what others want?	★ Write down a moment when a character faces a difficult choice between staying true to themselves or meeting others' expectations. What does the play seem to say about that struggle?
Discuss	**Take Notes**
Right, Wrong, and Conflicting Beliefs • What shapes a character's sense of right and wrong? (Family values? Religion? Fear? Justice?) • What happens when characters disagree about what's morally right? • What does the play suggest about whether or not it is easy to do the right thing? Why do you say that? • When a character breaks the rules for something they believe in, does the play support or challenge their choice?	★ Write down a moment when a character's beliefs clash with others'. What moral or ethical question does that raise?

Discuss	Take Notes
Decisions and Consequences • What major decision changes the outcome of the play? • What was the motivation behind that decision—fear, loyalty, pride, love, justice? • What are the consequences of that decision, and what message does the play send about it?	★ Write down a key decision in the play and what it reveals about the character or the theme. What point do you think the playwright is making?
★ Write down one decision, theme, or question that seems central to the drama.	

Step 2	Choose a focus, brainstorm ideas through writing, and take a position.

Now that you've identified a key conflict, theme, or moral question in the drama, it's time to ask: *What is the play or playwright saying about this issue?*

Your goal for this essay is to take a position on what the play reveals about this key conflict, theme, or moral question. Choose ***one*** set of questions as your focus and respond to them individually in writing.

Question Set 1: Identity and External Pressures

- ★ Does the play suggest that staying true to yourself is worth the cost? Or is compromise sometimes necessary?
- ★ Who or what has the most control over a character's identity—family, society, fear, love?
- ★ What happens when a character tries to define their own path? Does the play seem to approve of or challenge that decision?

Take a position: What does the play argue about the tension between self and society?

Question Set 2: Right, Wrong, and Conflicting Beliefs

- ★ If your focus is How does the play show that people develop different ideas of right and wrong?
- ★ When values clash, does the play seem to support one belief over another?
- ★ Does the play argue that doing the right thing is always clear—or that it's complicated and risky?

Take a position: What point is the playwright making about morality, justice, or ethical decision-making?

Question Set 3: Decisions and Its Consequences

- ★ Why did the character make this choice—what was their motivation?
- ★ What does the play suggest about the cost of that decision? Was it worth it?
- ★ Does the play show that personal sacrifice is necessary—or that it's tragic?

Take a position: What does the play argue about the consequences of following your beliefs or desires?

DRAFT A THESIS STATEMENT

Step 3	Reflect on your group discussion and your independent writing. **Draft** a thesis statement, or claim, that **takes a position** on a major decision, theme, or moral question presented in the drama.

A strong thesis statement, or claim, must be valid, arguable, and specific. Your thesis should...

- ☐ **take a position** that **could be reasonably debated**,
- ☐ make a **connection to the playwright's message** or purpose, reflecting *what the text is communicating*, not just what a character does, and
- ☐ hint at the **reasoning or evidence** that will support the argument, giving the essay a sense of direction.

Example	Non-example
The characters and events in *Finding Nemo* reveal that love sometimes means letting go, as Marlin's decision to stop controlling Nemo and trust him reflects the moral truth that protection based on fear can hold children back.	In *Finding Nemo*, Marlin learns to be a better parent by trusting Nemo more and letting him go on an adventure, which almost leads to his death but ultimately makes them both happier.
In *Encanto*, Luisa's story suggests that expecting someone to sacrifice their emotional well-being for the good of others—even if they're capable—is ultimately harmful and unjust, because it turns a person's strength into a prison.	In *Encanto*, Luisa feels pressured to be strong all the time, but eventually she realizes it's okay to take a break, which makes the family better off and actually helps Mirabel save the miracle.
In *Charlotte's Web*, E.B. White presents self-sacrifice as the purest form of friendship, showing that true loyalty means giving without expecting anything in return—even if it costs you your life.	*Charlotte's Web* shows that Charlotte was a good friend to Wilbur, because she helped save him, even though it was dangerous for her and she ended up dying at the end.

Draft your thesis statement below:

Step 4	Identify reasons **for** and **against** the position you've taken in your thesis statement.

In an argumentative essay, your job is to persuade the reader to agree with your position on a topic that is debatable. In your essay, you have to state your claim and give reasons and evidence to support your position. However, for your argument to be truly persuasive, you also need to **acknowledge** and **argue against** the **opposite position**. That means a strong essay includes...

1. your position on the topic (presented in your **thesis statement**),
2. reasons and evidence in support of your position, *and*
3. a **counterargument** with a **rebuttal.**

KEY CONCEPTS		
Thesis Statement: a sentence that states exactly what you believe about a debatable topic. It makes a valid, specific claim that takes a position and sets up what your argument will prove in the essay.	**Counterargument (counterclaim):** the **opposite** side of the argument—what someone who disagrees with your position might say.	**Rebuttal:** your response that **refutes** (argues against) the counterargument by explaining why it is wrong and why your position is still stronger or more convincing.

EXAMPLES

Thesis Statement *What is your position?*	Counterargument/counterclaim *What might someone with the opposite position say?*	Rebuttal (Attack back!) *How can you prove that the opposite position is wrong?*
Schools should offer healthier snacks in vending machines to encourage better eating habits.	**Some people might say** that students should have the freedom to choose whatever snacks they want.	While choice is important, schools also have a responsibility to promote student health. Offering healthier options still gives students choice—just better ones.

Thesis Statement *What is your position?*	Counterargument/counterclaim *What might someone with the opposite position say?*	Rebuttal (Attack back!) *How can you prove that the opposite position is wrong?*
Students should not be allowed to use cell phones during class because they are a major distraction.	**Others might argue** that phones can be used for learning tools, like looking up information or using educational apps.	Although phones can be helpful, most students end up using them for non-academic purposes during class. The risks of distraction often outweigh the benefits.

I. Complete the chart below **with reasons for and against your position in your thesis statement.** This will help you support the position you've taken in your thesis statement *and* offer a rebuttal to a counterargument.

Reasons for my position	Reasons against my position
Write down at least 4 reasons and/or evidence to **support your position.** *How can you prove your thesis statement?*	Write down at least 4 reasons and/or evidence **against your position.** *What might someone with the opposite point of view say?*

II. Review your chart. Choose three reasons from your "for" list that support your thesis most effectively and **circle them in the chart**. You now know what your major supporting evidence will be (**you can write your topic sentences from these!**).

III. Look at the chart again, paying attention to opposing points of view. Choose two counterarguments/counterclaims from your "against" list and write a rebuttal for each.

Thesis Statement *What is your position?*	**Counterargument/counterclaim** *What might someone with the opposite position say?*	**Rebuttal (Attack back!)** *How can you prove that the opposite position is wrong?*

Thesis Statement *What is your position?*	**Counterargument/counterclaim** *What might someone with the opposite position say?*	**Rebuttal (Attack back!)** *How can you prove that the opposite position is wrong?*

Step 5	Revise your thesis, if necessary.

How do you feel about your thesis statement? Do you still want to argue the same thing? Revise it if necessary.

Step 6	"Pitch" your thesis, initial reasons, counterargument, and rebuttal to your classmate for feedback, and reflect on new ideas.

Without a clear thesis, your writing can lack focus and direction, making it difficult to engage your reader with a well-supported argument.

Share your thesis and ideas with a peer in a 30-second elevator pitch to "sell" your thesis and get feedback. An elevator pitch is a persuasive introduction of an idea or a product that can be delivered in a short amount of time (like the length of an elevator ride!). Answer the following questions to prepare your pitch.	
What is your thesis statement?	
Why and how did you come up with this thesis statement?	
What have you already discovered in the text that will support that position?	
What counterargument do you plan to address? How will you refute that counterargument?	

What are you unsure about? Or, what ideas or suggestions would you appreciate?	

After you give your elevator pitch, ask your peer to verbally answer the following questions. Take notes as they talk.	
1. What ideas did you hear that are convincing and/or make sense to you?	
2. What ideas did you hear that are convincing and/or make sense to you?	
3. What should I add or change to strengthen my thesis statement?	
4. What are some other examples from the text that support my thesis?	
5. What other counterarguments should I consider? How else could I refute a counterargument?	

Now that you've received feedback, you need to reflect, evaluate it and decide what to do next! Feedback is only useful when you ***use it*** to learn and improve in order to move forward.		
	Based on the feedback you received, how will you improve your thesis statement in order to forward with this essay?	
	What new ideas do you have for your essay?	

COLLECT EVIDENCE

Step 7	Complete the evidence collection chart with quotations from the text. Use proper MLA citation and include a brief description of what's happening (context) **and how this piece of evidence either supports your argument or refutes (argues against) a counterargument.**

Quotation from the text, with proper citation	Description of what's happening in the text at this time (context)	How or why does this evidence support your thesis statement or refute a counterargument?

In this row, provide at least one quotation in support of a **counterargument**, NOT your thesis statement.	Quotation from the text, with proper citation	Description of what's happening in the text at this time (context)	How or why does this evidence support a counterargument (and go against your thesis?)?

Step 8	Make revisions (again!) to your thesis based on the evidence you collected.

Review and reflect on the evidence you've collected. Answer the following questions:	**YES**	**NO**
Do you have enough evidence to support your thesis statement?	☐	☐
Explain:		
Do you have enough evidence to **refute** a counterargument?	☐	☐
Explain:		
Did any new or different ideas emerge as you collected your evidence?	☐	☐
Explain:		
Based on the evidence you collected, do you need to revise your thesis statement?	☐	☐
If yes, write your revised thesis statement below:		

EVALUATE AN EXAMPLE ESSAY

Step 9	Review the outline and use it to highlight the components of an example argument essay.

Introduction

A strong introduction should include the following:

- ☐ a hook or attention-grabbing statement
- ☐ relevant background information on your topic and text
- ☐ the title and author of the text
- ☐ a thesis statement (also known as the claim, typically placed at the end of the introduction)

Body Paragraphs (at least 2)

Each strong body paragraph should include the following:

- ☐ **Assertion:** Create a topic sentence(s) explaining your point in support of your thesis statement.
- ☐ **Proof:** Provide evidence (a quotation) in support of your thesis statement.
  - ☐ Provide context for the quotation
  - ☐ Blend the quotation into your sentence
  - ☐ Cite the quotation correctly, "like this" (Cisneros 17).
- ☐ **Explanation:** Explain how the quotation supports the assertion you are making in this paragraph.
  - ☐ Explain the significance of this specific piece of textual evidence: what about *this quotation* provides proof of this specific assertion in this paragraph?
- ☐ **Connection:** Connect the assertion, proof, and explanation to your thesis statement. Explain how they support the position you've taken in your thesis statement.
- ☐ Transition: Include a word, phrase, or sentence that connects to the next body paragraph, guiding the reader smoothly from one part of your writing to the next.

Last Body Paragraph (Counterclaim & Rebuttal)

A strong counterargument paragraph should include the following:

- ☐ **Counterargument**: Introduce the opposing viewpoint in a fair and respectful way.
  - ☐ Begin with a transition phrase like *Some might argue…*, *Others believe that…*, or *A common objection is…*
  - ☐ Explain why someone might believe this opposing viewpoint. Show you understand the reasoning behind it, even if you disagree.
- ☐ **Rebuttal (your response – attack back!):** Refute the counterargument by explaining why your original position is stronger or more convincing.
  - ☐ Use transition words like *However…*, *But this view ignores…*, or *Still, this argument fails to consider…*
  - ☐ Provide evidence for your rebuttal with a quotation or specific example from the text that backs up your point.
  - ☐ Explain how your evidence proves that your position is more valid or reasonable than the counterargument. What does this example show, and how does it strengthen your case?
- ☐ **Connection to Thesis:** Make it clear how this entire paragraph supports your original thesis statement. Remind the reader what your argument is and why it matters.
- ☐ Transition: Include a word, phrase, or sentence to connect this paragraph to your conclusion.

Conclusion

A strong conclusion should include the following:

- ☐ a thesis statement (without repeating it word-for-word)
- ☐ a summary of your main points (without just directly repeating your topic sentences)
- ☐ a final thought for your reader

Now, read the **example argument essay** below. Use the outline above as a guide and **highlight the components of an argument essay in this example essay**. For example, when you find the thesis statement (claim) in this example essay, highlight that sentence yellow.

EXAMPLE ESSAY

The Destructive Power of Lies in *The Children's Hour*

In Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, a single lie told by a vengeful student destroys the lives and reputations of two innocent women. A major theme of the play is the moral responsibility individuals have to tell the truth, and the devastating consequences of dishonesty. Hellman argues that lies—especially those told with malicious intent—can cause irreparable harm and should never be taken lightly.

Hellman demonstrates how lies, especially when believed without evidence, can quickly escalate and destroy innocent lives. The play centers on two teachers, Martha Dobie and Karen Wright, who run a girls' boarding school. When a spoiled and manipulative student named Mary is punished, she retaliates by inventing a lie that the teachers are in a romantic relationship. Mary tells her grandmother, "It's unnatural... and I heard things—bad things" (Hellman 1.2). Although the accusation is completely false, the suggestion alone is enough to ruin the teachers' careers and reputations. Karen and Martha lose everything as a result of the lie: their school, their community standing, and in Martha's case, her emotional stability

Even when the truth is eventually revealed, the damage cannot be undone. In one of the play's most powerful moments, Martha tearfully confesses, "Maybe I did have that feeling. I didn't know it. I never felt that way about anybody before. I don't know. But I do know one thing. I am guilty. I've been telling myself that since the night we heard the child's story" (3.1). Hellman uses this confession to show how deeply lies can wound, not just in terms of reputation, but also in terms of identity and self-worth. The lie forces Martha to question her own truth, blurring the line between reality and false perception.

Some might argue that Mary is just a child and therefore not fully responsible for the damage she causes. However, Hellman makes it clear that Mary is not innocent—she manipulates others, lies with intent, and even blackmails a fellow student to support her story. The play shows that while children may be young, they are still capable of moral wrongdoing. As one character states, "She always gets what she wants, and nothing stops her" (1.1). This characterization emphasizes that even youth is not an excuse for malicious behavior, especially when it leads to such severe consequences.

In conclusion, *The Children's Hour* presents a powerful argument about the moral importance of truth. Through the tragic downfall of Martha and Karen, Hellman reveals how a single lie, especially when fueled by malice, can devastate lives. The play challenges both characters and audience members to think about the weight of their words and the ethical responsibility we all share to be honest. In a world where lies can spread quickly, *The Children's Hour* reminds us of the lasting damage they can do.

OUTLINE YOUR ESSAY

Step 10	Outline your essay using the guidelines below.

Introduction

A strong introduction should include the following:

- ☐ a hook or attention-grabbing statement
- ☐ relevant background information on your topic and text
- ☐ the title and author of the text
- ☐ a thesis statement (also known as the claim, typically placed at the end of the introduction)

Body Paragraphs (at least 2)

Each strong body paragraph should include the following:

- ☐ **Assertion:** Create a topic sentence(s) explaining your point in support of your thesis statement.
- ☐ **Proof:** Provide evidence (a quotation) in support of your thesis statement.
  - ☐ Provide context for the quotation
  - ☐ Blend the quotation into your sentence
  - ☐ Cite the quotation correctly, "like this" (Cisneros 17).
- ☐ **Explanation:** Explain how the quotation supports the assertion you are making in this paragraph.
  - ☐ Explain the significance of this specific piece of textual evidence: what about *this quotation* provides proof of this specific assertion in this paragraph?
- ☐ **Connection:** Connect the assertion, proof, and explanation to your thesis statement. Explain how they support the position you've taken in your thesis statement.
- ☐ Transition: Include a word, phrase, or sentence that connects to the next body paragraph, guiding the reader smoothly from one part of your writing to the next.

Last Body Paragraph (Counterclaim & Rebuttal)

A strong counterargument paragraph should include the following:

- ☐ **Counterargument**: Introduce the opposing viewpoint in a fair and respectful way.
  - ☐ Begin with a transition phrase like *Some might argue…*, *Others believe that…*, or *A common objection is…*
  - ☐ Explain why someone might believe this opposing viewpoint. Show you understand the reasoning behind it, even if you disagree.
- ☐ **Rebuttal (your response – attack back!):** Refute the counterargument by explaining why your original position is stronger or more convincing.
  - ☐ Use transition words like *However…*, *But this view ignores…*, or *Still, this argument fails to consider…*
  - ☐ Provide evidence for your rebuttal with a quotation or specific example from the text that backs up your point.
  - ☐ Explain how your evidence proves that your position is more valid or reasonable than the counterargument. What does this example show, and how does it strengthen your case?
- ☐ **Connection to Thesis:** Make it clear how this entire paragraph supports your original thesis statement. Remind the reader what your argument is and why it matters.
- ☐ Transition: Include a word, phrase, or sentence to connect this paragraph to your conclusion.

Conclusion

A strong conclusion should include the following:

- ☐ a thesis statement (without repeating it word-for-word)
- ☐ a summary of your main points (without just directly repeating your topic sentences)
- ☐ a final thought for your reader

DIG IN TO THE RUBRIC AND DRAFT YOUR ESSAY

Step 11	Review the rubric for this essay. Highlight key words and circle any words or phrases you don't understand. Then, evaluate the example body paragraphs with counterclaims using the rubric.

Argument Essay Rubric

W.9-10.1.a-e. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
RL.9-10.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Criteria	Exceeds (4)	Meets (3)	Approaching (2)	Below (1)
Introduction with thesis statement (claim) **W.9-10.1.a.** Introduce precise claim(s)[…]and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.	Introduction skillfully provides relevant background information on the text. Includes an engaging hook, the title and author of the text, and thesis statement. Thesis statement presents a valid, arguable, specific and insightful claim that takes a position on a major decision, theme, or moral question presented in the drama.	Introduction provides relevant background information on the text, includes a hook, title and author of the text, and a thesis statement. Thesis statement presents a valid, arguable, and specific claim that takes a position on a major decision, theme, or moral question presented in the drama.	Introduction attempts to provide relevant background information on the text and may be missing one element. Thesis statement is present but may be vague, inaccurate, and/ or only partially takes a position on a major decision, theme, or moral question presented in the drama.	Introduction does not provide relevant background information and/or is missing one or more elements. Thesis statement is missing or does not take a position.
Organization/Structure **W.9-10.1.c.** Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the	Essay follows a logical and consistent progression of ideas from introduction to body paragraphs to	Essay follows a logical progression of ideas from introduction to body paragraphs to conclusion.	Essay attempts to follow a logical and consistent progression of ideas from introduction to body	Essay does not follow a logical and/or consistent progression of ideas from

relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence[…].	conclusion. Uses transitions skillfully and effectively to connect ideas and move from one idea to the next.	Uses basic transitions to move from one idea to the next.	paragraphs to conclusion. Uses some and/or ineffective transitions to move from one idea to the next.	introduction to body paragraphs to conclusion. Does not use transitions.
Topic Sentences (Assertions) **W.9-10.1.c.** Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, [...].	Each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence (assertion) that clearly connects back to the thesis statement, supporting the essay's organization.	Each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence (assertion) that connects to the thesis statement.	Some topic sentences (assertions) are present, but may not consistently connect to the thesis statement.	Topic sentences (assertions) are missing or do not connect to the thesis statement.
Body Paragraphs **W.9-10.1.b**. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns. **RL.9-10.1.** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	Each body paragraph supports the thesis statement with well-chosen, persuasive reasoning and strong, relevant textual evidence. At least one paragraph thoroughly addresses a legitimate counterclaim and clearly explains why the main argument is more convincing.	Each body paragraph supports the thesis statement with clear reasoning and appropriate textual evidence. At least one paragraph acknowledges a counterclaim and explains why the main argument is stronger.	Some body paragraphs include support for the thesis statement and some evidence, but the reasoning or explanation is underdeveloped. One paragraph may mention a counterclaim but it is not fully explained or addressed.	Most body paragraphs lack support and evidence for the thesis statement, or the reasoning is confusing. A counterclaim is missing, inaccurate, or irrelevant.

Conclusion **W.9-10.1.e.** Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.	Conclusion thoughtfully synthesizes the main points of the argument and leaves the reader with a lasting impression.	Conclusion effectively summarizes the main points of the argument.	Conclusion is present but may be underdeveloped or only partially summarize the argument.	Conclusion is missing or does not relate to the argument.
MLA Format **W.9-10.1.d.** Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.	Correctly formats in-text citations and the Works Cited page according to MLA guidelines.	Mostly correctly formats in-text citations and the Works Cited page according to MLA guidelines.	Attempts to format in-text citations and the Works Cited page, but contains multiple errors.	Does not correctly format in-text citations or the Works Cited page.
Language				

Review the two versions of the example body paragraph with counterclaim below. Then, review the rubric criteria for the body paragraphs, paying specific attention to the counterclaim language. Discuss and take notes on how each version **does or does not meet** the body paragraph criteria.

Body Paragraph with Counterclaim Version 1	**Body Paragraph with Counterclaim Version 2**
Some might argue that Mary is just a child and therefore not fully responsible for the damage she causes. However, Hellman makes it clear that Mary is not innocent—she manipulates others, lies with intent, and even blackmails a fellow student to support her story. The play shows that while children may be young, they are still capable of moral wrongdoing. As one character states, "She always gets what she wants, and nothing stops her" (1.1). This characterization emphasizes that even youth is not an excuse for malicious behavior, especially when it leads to such severe consequences.	Some people might say that Mary is just a kid and doesn't understand the full effect of her actions. And it's true that children don't always realize how serious things are. But at the same time, Mary spreads lies and gets other people involved. This makes things worse for everyone. There's a part in the play where someone says that Mary always gets what she wants, which shows that she's kind of spoiled. Kids can do bad things too, even if they don't totally understand what they're doing. So Mary might not be completely innocent. It's hard to say for sure how much she meant to hurt people, but she still caused a lot of harm. That's why people should think more carefully about what kids are capable of doing.

Criteria	Exceeds (4)	Does **Body Paragraph with Counterclaim Version 1** meet expectations? Why or why not?	Does **Body Paragraph with Counterclaim Version 2** meet expectations? Why or why not?
Body Paragraphs **W.9-10.1.b.** Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns. **RL.9-10.1.** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	Each body paragraph supports the thesis statement with well-chosen, persuasive reasoning and strong, relevant textual evidence. At least one paragraph thoroughly addresses a legitimate counterclaim and clearly explains why the main argument is more convincing.		

Step 12	Use the rubric, example essay, and outline to draft your essay following the guidelines.

MLA essay formatting guidelines

Your Full Name

Teacher's Name

English 9

Date

Center Title Here

Use Times New Roman 12 point font and 1-inch margins around all four sides. Be sure to double space your paper (do not double-double space paragraphs). Also be sure to properly indent paragraphs, *Italicize titles*, cite and punctuate quotations (textual references) correctly, like this, "I love to write!" (Author 2). Check to make sure your paper is in literary present tense! Include a separate **Works Cited** (just one citation of the book you have used) page. Bring in a printed copy on the due date, and also submit electronically to _____.

PRACTICE PEER REVIEW AND REVISE YOUR ESSAY

Step 13	Follow the steps below to give and receive peer feedback.

I. Switch and read.

Switch papers with a partner. Read your partner's essay (out loud, if possible).

II. Use THEIR single point rubric to review the content and structure of their essay.

Below is a single point rubric – a simpler version of the rubric you just saw. In this single point rubric, the criteria for meeting the standard are listed in the middle column. Read the expectations for each of the criteria, then use the following questions to reflect on your peer's essay so you can give them feedback:

- Did they meet expectations for the standard?
- Exceed expectations for the standard?
- Or, do they need to make improvements in order to meet expectations?

Give your partner feedback in the appropriate column based on your reflection. (For example, if they need to make improvements, you only need to write notes and suggestions in the lefthand column.)

Areas that Need Improvement 🛠️	Criteria for Meeting the Standard ✅	Evidence of Exceeding the Standard 🚀
🛠️**Notes:**	**Introduction** provides relevant background information on the text, includes a hook, title and author of the text, and a thesis statement. **Thesis statement** presents a valid, arguable, specific and insightful claim that takes a position on a major decision, theme, or moral question presented in the drama.	🚀**Notes:**
	✅**Notes:**	

Areas that Need Improvement 🛠️	Criteria for Meeting the Standard ✅	Evidence of Exceeding the Standard 🚀
🛠️**Notes:**	Essay follows a **logical progression** of ideas from introduction to body paragraphs to conclusion. Uses **basic transitions** to move from one idea to the next. ✅**Notes:**	🚀**Notes:**
Areas that Need Improvement 🛠️	**Criteria for Meeting the Standard ✅**	**Evidence of Exceeding the Standard 🚀**
🛠️**Notes:**	Each body paragraph begins with a **topic sentence** (assertion) that connects to the thesis statement. ✅**Notes:**	🚀**Notes:**

Areas that Need Improvement 🛠️	Criteria for Meeting the Standard ✅	Evidence of Exceeding the Standard 🚀
🛠️**Notes:**	Each body paragraph supports the thesis statement with **clear reasoning** and **appropriate textual evidence.** At least one paragraph acknowledges a **counterclaim** and explains why the main argument is stronger. ✅**Notes:**	🚀**Notes:**
🛠️**Notes:**	**Conclusion** effectively summarizes the main points of the analysis. ✅**Notes:**	🚀**Notes:**

Areas that Need Improvement 🛠️	Criteria for Meeting the Standard ✅	Evidence of Exceeding the Standard 🚀
🛠️**Notes:**	Correctly formats in-text **citations** and the **Works Cited page** according to MLA guidelines.	🚀**Notes:**
	✅**Notes:**	

III. Move forward with your feedback.

Reflect on the feedback you received on the single point rubric and make notes in the table below.

Now that you've received feedback, you need to reflect, evaluate it, and decide what to do next! Feedback is only useful when you ***use it*** to learn and improve in order to move forward.		
	Based on the feedback you received, how will you improve your essay?	
	What new ideas do you have for your essay?	

Step 14	Review, revise, and edit your essay one last time before sharing it. Follow the process below to guide your review.

I: Read your essay out loud.

Find a quiet space and read your essay aloud from start to finish. As you read, listen for places where sentences feel awkward, too long, or unclear. Mark these spots for review. Pay attention to punctuation as you read: does each sentence end where it should? Are there pauses where commas might be needed?

II: Use the questions below to check your essay for five common trouble spots.

If you need a refresher on what any of these mean, check out the "Refresher: Five Common Essay Trouble Spots" at the end of this document.

- Did I avoid comma splices?
- Are my quotations properly introduced and explained?
- Are all my MLA citations correct?
- Did I use the literary present tense?
- Is my essay written entirely in third person?

III: Read Your Essay Backwards

Start with the last sentence of your essay and read each sentence one by one in reverse order. This technique helps you focus on individual sentences without getting distracted by the content. Look carefully for any other mistakes you might have missed.

IV: Final Read-Through

Once you've made your edits, read your essay one more time from beginning to end. Focus on the flow and clarity of your ideas.

REFRESHER: FIVE COMMON ESSAY TROUBLE SPOTS

Avoiding Comma Splices:

A comma splice happens when two independent sentences are joined with just a comma. Correct it by adding a conjunction (e.g., *and, but, or*), using a semicolon, or splitting the sentence into two.

> Incorrect: *The protagonist is brave, he faces many challenges.*
> Correct: *The protagonist is brave, and he faces many challenges.*

Properly Integrating Quotations

Make sure all quotations are smoothly integrated into your sentences. Avoid dropping a quotation into your essay without introducing or explaining it. Use signal phrases to introduce quotations, such as *The narrator states...* or *The author describes....*

> Incorrect: *"It was the best of times" (Dickens 5).*
> Correct: *The narrator reflects, "It was the best of times" (Dickens 5).*

MLA Citations

Ensure that all quotations have proper MLA citations. Include the author's last name and the page number in parentheses after the quotation.

> Incorrect: *"The road was long and winding" (Smith, page 45).*
> Correct: *"The road was long and winding" (Smith 45).*

Use Literary Present Tense:

Always write about literature as if the events are happening now.

> Incorrect: *The character realized he was wrong.*
> Correct: *The character realizes he is wrong.*

Use Third Person Only:

Avoid first-person (I, we) and second-person (you) unless your teacher has instructed otherwise. Stay in third person (he, she, they, the reader, etc.).

> Incorrect: *I believe this shows courage.*
> Correct: *This demonstrates the character's courage.*