

Sample Argument Structure

Note: Each of these arguments will require evidence from the literary work and/or from academic sources or primary sources (with citations).

- I. **Your main claim:** In Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the children are never "innocent."
- II. **Opposed position:** In Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the children are corrupted by the ghosts.
Academic source: Coveney, Peter. *The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society, a Study of the Theme in English Literature*, revised edition, Penguin, 1967.
 - A. **Opposed position's warrant:** If the children behave badly (e.g., manipulating the governess), then the ghosts have corrupted them. (Because the children are innocent, they would not behave badly unless they were corrupted.)
 - B. **Opposed position's support:** The children behave badly.
 - C. **Your counterargument:** (Attack the warrant.) Bad behavior does not imply corruption, because children (in Henry James's fiction, just like in real life) are not innocent, but are capable of bad behavior and manipulation.
- III. **Opposed position:** In Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the children remain innocent until the end, uncorrupted by ghosts.
Academic source 1: Edel, Leon. *The Life of Henry James: The Treacherous Years (1895-1901)*, vol. 4, Lippincott, 1969.
Academic source 2: Goddard, Harold C. "A Pre-Freudian Reading of *The Turn of the Screw*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 12, June 1957, pp. 1-36.
 - A. **Opposed position's warrant:** If there are no ghosts, the children remain innocent.
 - B. **Opposed position's support:** There are no ghosts.
 - C. **Your counterargument:** (Attack the warrant.) The children in the story are perfectly capable of bad behavior and manipulation without being corrupted by ghosts.
- IV. **Position you agree with (taken from one of your sources):** In Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the children are not corrupted by anyone else; instead of being "innocent" they behave badly in order to get what they want.
Academic source 1: Spilka, Mark. "Turning the Freudian Screw: How Not to Do It". *Literature and Psychology*, vol. 13, Fall 1963, pp. 105-11.
Academic source 2: Pifer, Ellen. *Demon or Doll: Images of the Child in Contemporary Writing and Culture*. University Press of Virginia, 2000.
 - A. **Your source's support for the position:** James does not represent children as "innocent" in this story or in other stories.
- V. **Subclaim (part of your support for your main claim):** Throughout the story the children are self-interested and try to manage adults to get what they want.
Primary source: James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw and Other Stories*. Edited by T. J. Lustig, Oxford University Press, 2008.
 - A. **(Warrant/assumption that connects this subclaim to the main claim:** "Innocence" is not supposed to include self-interest and manipulation.)
 - B. **Your support for the subclaim:** (1) The children play the role of good children in order to get time alone to play. (2) The boy plays the role of a slightly bad boy in order to get sent back to school. (3) The children play the role of little lady and gentleman to intimidate the governess into giving them what they want.

VI. Conclusion

- A. **Restated argument:** In Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the children are neither "innocent" nor corrupted; they simply behave badly in order to get what they want. We know this because:
1. James does not represent children as "innocent" in this story or in other stories.
 2. The children in *the Turn of the Screw* are self-interested and try to manage adults to get what they want.
 3. Critics who argue that the ghosts corrupt the children, and critics who argue that the ghosts do not corrupt the children, both assume that children are normally innocent, but this is not consistent with either the story or with real life.
- B. **Significance and impact (including comments on literary work's meaning):** Henry James is criticizing the assumption that children are innocent.