

Issue Proposal Worksheet

in preparation for an Exploratory Paper and a Position Paper
(adapted from *Perspectives on Argument* 111)

To Begin:

- Pick a story, speech, or poem which critics disagree about (from the handout “Literature & Criticism: Short Works of Literature with Contrasting Critical Interpretations”).
- Pick an issue that critics disagree about (a single question that your sources give three or more different answers to; your position can be the third position if you disagree with both of the other two).

Complete the Following:

1. Write your issue (question) in a complete sentence.
2. Provide any necessary background information, and describe the exigence (need) for writing on this topic: the reasons this question is interesting or important for the purposes of interpreting the literary work. (Your sources may give such reasons, and you can give theirs, with appropriate citation.)
3. Describe at least three different positions on this issue, identifying those who hold each position, and give some of their reasons for holding them. You may explain more than three positions, if you want or need to do so.
 - a. Position 1:
 - b. Position 2:
 - c. Position 3:
4. Indicate which is your position.
5. Identify what are sometimes called the “constraints” of each interpretation: the thoughts, values, and beliefs that shape each one.

Guidelines

Suggestions and Example

It helps to articulate the issue as a question, with each position as a different answer to the question. (In Essay I, the essay to which you responded answered a question one way, and if you disagreed, you were answering the question in a second way.)

Issue and Sources

Published research (including the critical essays you responded to in Essay I) discusses its relationship to other published research and usually disagrees with other published research in some way. (The critical essays you have been provided have, in fact, been selected because they disagree with each other.) If you want one of your sources for the next essay assignment to be the same as the critical essay you used for Essay I, then that critical essay can be your source for one of the positions you describe above. The issue would be the thing that it disagrees with another source about.

How do you find sources with opposed positions on the same issue? The easiest way would be to use other critical essays about the same literary work:

- the critical essays already provided
- sources cited in those critical essays (find these through the college library)
- sources which cite these sources (using Google Scholar)
- other sources through the college library

You need at least one source for each position (either critical essays already provided or other appropriate sources). You do not need sources that endorse each position (although that may be helpful), but the different positions must at least be described in your sources.