

Exploratory Paper Assignment

(adapted from *Perspectives on Argument* 97-98, 108-110)

This paper should be **2-3 pages long**, in MLA format, and include the following sections.

Background

Explain the issue (an interpretive question about the work which critics disagree about).

Write your issue in a complete sentence. Explain it, and provide any necessary background information.

Provide the following context for the interpretive issue.*

Exigence: Describe the exigence (need) for writing on this topic, including 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.)

Interested Parties: Describe at least three different positions on this issue, identifying those who hold each position, and give some of their reasons for holding them. (The interested parties would be the authors of your sources, or others described in your sources.)

Constraints: Identify what are sometimes called the “constraints” of each interpretation: the thoughts, values, and beliefs that shape each one.

(*Note: The context for writing/speaking, including the opportunity for writing/speaking and the relationship between the writer, the audience, the message, and the meaning, is called the rhetorical situation, a situation that is already in place as you begin to write [cf. *Harbrace Handbook* 4].)

First Position

Describe the first position on this issue.

State who holds this position.

Give some of their reasons for holding this position.

Use summarized ideas and/or quotes from your sources.

Second Position

Describe the second position on this issue.

State who holds this position.

Give some of their reasons for holding this position.

Use summarized ideas and/or quotes from your sources.

Third Position (and so on, if you are presenting more positions)

Describe the third position on this issue.

State who holds this position.

Give some of their reasons for holding this position.

Use summarized ideas and/or quotes from your sources.

Your Position (may be the same as the third position)

Describe your perspective.

Explain why you hold this position.