

Critical Thinking Essay Topics

English 1101: Create an argument supporting or opposing the continued use and development of nuclear power. Overcome possible objections to your argument.

English 1102: Analyze “The Story of an Hour” from a feminist perspective. Why would the main character feel that she has been liberated by the death of her husband.?

Psychology: Analyze the psychological problems revealed in “The Rocking Horse Winner.” (Infantilism, compulsive behavior, narcissism)

History: Analyze Richard Wright’s “The Man Who Was Almost a Man.” from an historical perspective. What special problems did Blacks face prior to the reforms set in motion by the Civil Rights Movement? (Peonage, class and racial discrimination, sharecropping system)

Sociology: Analyze “Once Upon a Time” from a sociological perspective. (Class and racial discrimination in apartheid South Africa)

Government: Analyze the social controls found in “The Lottery.” How does the behavior noted in the short story exemplify the control mechanisms used in totalitarian states? (The story has been analyzed as a metaphorical treatment of McCarthyism and Cold War paranoia.)

Economics: Imagine that you are an economist. Analyze “Midas and the Golden Touch,” making some of the observations an economist might make. (Opportunity cost, supply and demand, moral hazard, gold vs. fiat money)

The Procedure

1. Introduce the topics and provide some background information.
2. Assign the reading for homework. Require the students to create organized notes. Grade the notes.
3. Assign the in-class essay, allowing the students to make use of their prepared notes but nothing else.
4. Evaluate the essays, making use of the critical thinking rubric. In order to motivate the students to put forth sufficient effort, all essays would be graded. Incoherent or illegible essays would receive a failing grade. Students writing off topic or writing summaries would receive a failing grade. Grades would be weighted so that the first attempt does not wreak havoc on the grade for the class. The first attempt will be terrible, but we already know that we have our work cut out for us and that any improvement must be counted as a signal victory.