

Persuasive Analysis Paper Assignment

This paper will give you the opportunity to use all of the appeals you have been taught. You will write a comparative analysis and evaluation of Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Many people consider these two essays to be American prose classics because of the content of each essay and because of the persuasive arguments of each author. In these essays, Henry David Thoreau and Martin Luther King, Jr., write about situations that led to their imprisonment for purposely disobeying certain laws.

If you look carefully at these essays, you will find many strategies and techniques used to convince the audiences to accept the writers' arguments. You will want to use clustering and/or listing, probably, as you prewrite for your paper. You may want to consider the following questions as you do this preparation.

- What is the thesis of each essay?
- What is the tone, occasion, and purpose for writing?
- Does the tone remain consistent throughout?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What is the focus of each main idea discussed?
- What is the attitude of each author toward the law? Justice? A citizen's duty? The majority in society?
- What comparisons and analogies does the author use?
- Does each author clarify why a change is needed? Where?
- How practical are the ideas each author suggests?
- Under what circumstances do Thoreau and King advocate breaking the law?
- Are both essays effectively written? Is neither? Why or why not?
- Is one essay more effective than the other? For you or for the original audience? Why?
- Is one essay more focused than the other? For what reasons?
- Are these essays equally effective but in different ways?
- What argumentative strategies or appeals are used in each essay?

Your essay should identify an idea common to both authors and compare how each author conveys this idea using a stylistic device. Your essay should address attitude and tone and logical or emotional or ethical appeals (including appeals to tradition and authority) Limit your topic by constructing your thesis carefully.

Select one of the two methods of comparison to structure your paper.

1. **Point-by-point** presents information about each essay according to the points of similarity or difference.

For example:

- I. Introduction
- II. Topic of Comparison
 - A. Thoreau
 - B. King
- III. Topic of Comparison
 - A. Thoreau
 - B. King
- IV. Conclusions

2. **Whole-by-whole** presents all the information about one essay before discussing the other. This organization tends to be more difficult to handle. For example:

- I. Introduction
- II. "Civil Disobedience"
 - A. Topic of Comparison a
 - B. Topic of Comparison b
- III. "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
 - A. Topic of Comparison a
 - B. Topic of Comparison b
- IV. Conclusions

Use plenty of textual support, of course! Subordinate ideas of lesser importance. Save your strongest evidence for last. Try to be logical and coherent. **Revise! Revise! Revise!**

Your paper should be no less than two typed pages and no more than three. Correct MLA style should be used for documentation and Works Cited. Time will then be scheduled for peer response and conferences. A final draft is due in correct MLA style on _____.

Hints:

- *Your title should be interesting and informative.
- *Your introduction should be more than one sentence and should identify the works, authors, and dates of publications as well as contain your thesis.
- *Be accurate, especially in identifying the genre of the work you are discussing.
- *Address topics in your essay in the order in which they appear in your introduction.
- *Use strong transition words to begin each paragraph.
- *Do not end a paragraph with a quotation, including a block quotation. End with your discussion.
- *The last sentence of a paragraph should sum up the paragraph.
- *Use key words in your conclusion from your introduction paragraph.
- *End your essay with an important word, preferably one from your introduction.
- *Cannot is a compound word. Check for compound words; your computer spell check will not catch them.
- *Leave “the reader,” “I,” and “you” out of your essay. Revise to eliminate them.
- *Refer to your Self -Edit Assignment to help with editing.
- *Do not revise the same day you write.