

Essay #3 – Student generated question on *The Tempest*

Name: Trevor Swan

Final Comment:

Trevor,

I think that your paper does many things well, but also has some pretty noticeable structural issues that make it more confusing than it otherwise might be, particularly in the second half of the essay. Generally speaking, your argument does a pretty good job of using evidence to support its claims; the second body paragraph (on how easy it is to identify with Prospero) particularly sticks out, but the rest of the essay also seems well supported. You do a good job of introducing and setting up your question (though you may want to revise this if you choose to revise the paper), and also make nice use of counterarguments (particularly when you devote a full paragraph to them).

The main shortcomings with the essay are *structural*, and relate to both how you've worded the thesis statement, and then how this affected the second half of the essay. Your thesis focuses on two *very* different topics – one related to Prospero himself, and the second related to Ariel and Caliban's respective attitudes towards slavery. While they both generally follow an argument that the play "supports colonialism," they do so in totally different ways – the first by generating sympathy for the colonizer, the second by focusing on the behavior of colonized slaves – and rhetorically the differences prove more striking than the similarities. This proves less problematic in the first half of the paper (when you more tightly focus on Prospero) than in the second, where the argument starts to shift around a bit more. As you move from one topic to the next, it effectively feels like you are starting a new paper. More importantly, your argument seems to jump around a bit in the second half of the paper; you start out with an analysis of Ariel and Caliban and their attitudes towards slavery (a paragraph that tries to discuss too much in too condensed of a space), but then switch to a paragraph on the "success" of characters in the play (which ends with a discussion of Caliban), and finish with a paragraph on Caliban and Ferdinand (which in many respects jumps back to Prospero).

If you wanted to revise this, I'd suggest that you both reword/rethink the thesis, and that you work on the unity and transitions in the paragraphs in the second half. Generally speaking, doing one of these things will likely require doing both. One way that you could revise the thesis would be to focus the main claim on Prospero – simply argue that the play invites identification with him and in doing so promotes colonialism – and then deal with Ariel and Caliban as counterarguments (perhaps ones that you don't really mention in the thesis at all). You can separately argue something like, "Some readers might object to this argument, pointing out that

Prospero enslaves the island's native population and treats them quite violently." You could then have a separate paragraph both for Ariel and Caliban, if you wanted, picking whichever you think is the easier argument to make and putting it first. You don't necessarily have to make the same argument in each paragraph to raise the same objection about each character. If you want, I could work on the transitions with you in the WRC.

This is a solid paper, with many strengths, then, but also one with some room for another draft that helps to focus the argument a bit better, and make it clearer in its structure.

Green highlights went well

Yellow highlights need improvement

Problem & Introduction													
Criteria			20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	10	5	
Has an evocative title			Meets all criteria at high level; clear & readable			Meets some criteria; uneven; less clear			Meets few criteria; unclear				
Presents and develops debatable problem/question related to <i>The Tempest</i> and/or A. <i>Tempest</i>													
Problem/question addresses major concerns of text; does not seem trivial													
Opening paragraph includes/points to ambiguous/obscure evidence capable of supporting more than one reading													
Ends with clear, focused, arguable thesis													
Overall Quality of Ideas, Argument, Effective Evidence													
Criteria			30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	21	19	15
Adopts clear, consistent definitions for key argumentative terms – race, gender, genre etc.			Meets all criteria at high level; clear & readable			Meets some criteria; uneven; less clear			Meets few criteria; unclear				
Has well-supported argument that anticipates reader's objections													
Uses concrete, textual evidence from primary sources to support claims (references to specifics, including brief quotations, summaries of scenes, etc.)													
Observations about sources subtle, interesting or surprising													
Thoroughly explains the significance of textual evidence													

Some paragraphs are stronger than others, though.

Has strong insights; shows clear wrestling with complexity & ambiguity Avoids plot summary & reliance on obvious evidence and ideas			
Counter-argument			
Criteria	10 9	8 7	6 5 0
Introduces a reasonable counter-argument to essay's thesis statement Points to evidence that might be used to support this argument Rebuts this argument with evidence Counter-argument logically transitions into the essay; not arbitrarily placed Avoids engaging a "straw-man"	Meets all criteria at high level; clear & readable	Meets some criteria; uneven; less clear	Meets few criteria; unclear
Organization & Argument			
Criteria	20 19 18	17 16 15	14 13 10 5
Thesis statement clear, focused & contestable All parts of argument are developed thoroughly and logically; no inconsistencies or deviations from thesis Paragraphs support single claim, stated in topic sentence Claims of paragraphs logically support thesis statement, smoothly transition from previous paragraph Concluding sentences logically and effectively point reader back to thesis statement Effective concluding paragraph, considers larger significance of the paper and the topic	Meets all criteria at high level; clear & readable	Meets some criteria; uneven; less clear	Meets few criteria; unclear
Style			
Criteria	10 9	8 7 6	5 4 3 2 0
Uses sophisticated transitions to guide reader from one paragraph to another Sentences effectively guide reader from old to new information	Meets all criteria at high level; clear & readable	Meets some criteria; uneven; less clear	Meets few criteria; unclear

Sentences contain clear actors as subjects and concrete actions as verbs Has clear, graceful, grammatically correct sentences			
Formatting, Length, Citation			
Criteria	10 9	8 7 6	5 4 3 2 0
Paper uses appropriate font size, margins, etc. Paper meets length requirements (5 pages, 1500 words) Paper includes appropriate heading Follows MLA Conventions for in-text citation & documentation	Meets all criteria at high level; clear & readable	Meets some criteria; uneven; less clear	Meets few criteria; unclear
Penalty for Editing Errors			
0	-1 -2	-4 -6 -10	
Flawless paper or occasional but minor errors Strong professional ethos	Some distracting noise via spelling, punctuation, or apostrophe errors or occasional grammar mistakes (subject-verb agreement; fragments; run-ons, etc.). Writer seems careless, but understanding rarely impeded	Paper seriously marred by editing errors or grammatical mistakes; paper seems unprofessional; comprehension significantly impeded	