

Essay 3: The Elements of Thought

(In a pre-writing exercise submitted in Blackboard, students responded to the prompt below by “going around the wheel” with the Elements of Thought.)

Go "around the wheel" to fill out one or more answers for each element based on your working thesis for essay 3. You probably already have the Question at Hand and Purpose from class today, although you may choose to revise your "question" at hand or change it from the form of a question into a thesis statement. (Either a specific research question or a working thesis statement will be useful, as you start to draft your essay.) I've listed the 8 Elements below for you to fill in your answers. To use the Elements as a pre-writing tool, you're thinking in first person: so Purpose = What is **my** purpose as a writer? Assumptions = What are **my** assumptions as a writer?

Purpose (and Audience):

Question at Issue or Problem to Solve:

Information (a brief list – for example: statistics on graduation rates, or current costs of imprisoning someone on a drug charge per year versus the cost to place the same person in a six-month quality rehab resident program -- rather than listing specific statistics or costs here -- save the actual info for your first draft) Consider both the information you HAVE from essay 2 and the information you will NEED to prove your thesis.):

Concepts:

Assumptions (What are you just assuming without question? What are you taking for granted about your topic which other people might not take for granted?):

Interpretation and Inferences (What conclusions are you drawing from your data, statistics, examples, etc.):

Implications (If readers buy your argument, what should they think or do differently regarding your topic? -- the core of "so what?" in your conclusion):

Point of view:

a) **YOUR point of view on this topic:**

b) **What are OTHER points of view that you need to be aware of?**

Essay 3: An Argument Essay

For your third essay in English 102, you'll write a **formal argument** on the topic you researched when you composed your annotated bibliography. While readers could learn about your topic from reading your essay, this paper must do more than inform. You'll need to **take a position** with which some reasonable people might disagree. You don't need to take sides on some controversial "hot topic" issue, but you must offer your interpretation and your conclusions on your topic – not just present "facts" the way we'd expect most textbooks or encyclopedia articles to do.

- Early in your pre-writing process, you'll need to write a one-sentence question that summarizes the arguable issue which you discovered during your research for your annotated bibliography or in our brainstorming/pre-writing work since. You'll use your essay 3 to shape the best possible answer to that question, given the information available now and your own reasonable assumptions and values.
- As you're deciding what you have to say about your topic, you must also consider **who needs to hear what you have to say**. I'll need to know – when I'm grading your final paper – **your intended audience and purpose for this paper**, in order to assess how effective the essay is.
- We will do a pre-writing assignment using the Elements of Thought. Each of you will be using the Elements as a *heuristic*, a series of questions or prompts to help you generate ideas and text.
- Your paper (like all papers!) needs to have a beginning, middle, and end. (That division seems obvious, but it doesn't always happen). Your conclusion will **not** be a mere rehash of what you've already said in the paper, but it should consider the **implications** of your argument. "***You've read my thesis and evidence to support it; so what?***" What should your readers do differently or at least understand differently if they have read and been persuaded by your argument?
- If you spent some time finding useful sources for Essay II, you have probably done *most* of the research you'll need to do on your topic. Even if you did a solid job on your annotated bibliography, however, you may discover you need that extra statistic, fact, or background information as you put together your argument. **I never want source material just "dropped" into your paper to meet some quota for the number of sources, but to earn a good grade on this essay, you do need "enough" evidence to prove your case.** You will need some information as evidence or background information **beyond your own experience and observation**, and that's where sources come into play -- on an "**as needed**" basis.

Grading Criteria for Essay Three:

- A strong thesis that directs the paper
- A sense of audience and purpose that is evident in the essay
- A persuasive argument (not only an informative essay)
- Skillful incorporation of source material through summary, paraphrase, or quotation
- Citation as needed to avoid accidental plagiarism
- Timely completion of specific process work using the Paul-Elder model assigned as homework or as an in-class activity
- A Works Cited page listing all the sources you actually cite in the essay (**not annotated!**)
- Consideration of opposing points of view
- A conclusion that considers the **implications** of your argument rather than simply rehashing what you've already said in the essay
- A text that has few errors in grammar/spelling to distract the reader (in particular, sentence-level errors)
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Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced (including your Works Cited / Bibliography page in MLA or APA style, but not counting a coversheet with only the title, course, and your name on it!)