**Brainstorming about your thesis**

Start with a working thesis or topic. You can think about your thesis by answering these questions:

* + - 1. Conflict or problem:

1. What is an important conflict in this play (example: men & women, native vs. foreign, commerce vs. passion, groups vs. individuals, what works in wartime vs. what works in civilian life) OR
2. What problem does this play expose/ explore in Shakespeare's society?
3. Working thesis (subject to revision):
   1. What generalization can I make about how this play addresses this conflict/ problem (What does Shakespeare want to say about it)?
   2. What’s his purpose in creating the conflict? Does he want to solve the problem (argue a particular side) or does he want to make us think more deeply about it? If the second, why?  
        
      **Example generalization:** *In Hamlet, Shakespeare suggests that great political dramas are first of all family dramas.***Example purpose:** *Shakespeare does this to humanize all monarchs, but especially monarchs of England.* **OR** *Shakespeare makes the parallel between politics and family to show how antithetical power is to happiness.* **OR** *Shakespeare is deliberately making a parallel with the “incestuous” politics of his own time.*
4. What kind of imagery can I examine to illustrate how the problem is imaginatively explored? Is there enough of this type of imagery to use?
5. What other technique (rhetorical tropes, battles of wit, modal verbs, “and yet” statements, cancelled suggestions, malapropism and social climbing, punning, etc. might support my thesis?

Since the point of the play is to show you can read passages of Shakespeare carefully and understand them in the context of the larger play, your next sstep should be to locate quotes related to the topic. Try to find quotes that use imagery (metaphor, simile, symbol, rich and evocative description) to illustrate an idea. Write down each quote on a separate note card with the act, scene, and lines next to it.

The next step should be to arrange the quotes. Can you categorize the way imagery is used? For example, why does Othello uses metaphors of eating or appetite (“more fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea”)? Are there different categories, or do different people use it different ways? What about fashion or disguise, religion or conversion, animal or monstrosity? Does Shakespeare seem to be making an overall point? Do you want to talk first about imagery of black and white and then wordplay or rhetorical tropes of reversal (chiasmus or antithesis) that does the same thing?

The last thing you should do before you write the paper is to create another thesis, at least a working thesis (you may and probably will change it as you progress through the paper). The thesis should be a statement in the form of an argument, and an argument cannot be a fact and it cannot be a phrase. It must be something that is provable by the data you have found. It should be a statement of your reading of the play (theme) either as an argument about the play’s central conflict or as an argument about a central concern of Shakespeare’s culture and time. It should not be just a statement of your paper’s organization.