

English 431: Shakespeare Thesis sentences for paper 1

Thesis	Comments
Problem: Thesis doesn't state an argument or the argument is too broad	
In his play <i>The Life and Death of Richard III</i> , Shakespeare strengthens the position of the divine right of kings by imposing the imagery of deformity on Richard III and his attempts to take the throne.	This is a fascinating idea, but I'd like you to take it a bit further. If Kings are kings by divine right, what does that make Richard, who is after all a king by the end of the play. Doesn't it expose a central problem—A king can do no wrong, even if he kills another king, if the definition of divine right as explained by (the future) James I in his <i>Basilikon Doron</i> is correct. And yet murder is one of God's first proscribed acts. James says (find link on the web site somewhere) that a kind cannot be a tyrant by definition, no matter what he does (he uses a discussion of David and Saul in the bible as a model).
Shakespeare's " <i>The Life and Death of Richard III</i> " seeks to show the public the problematic aspects of the monarchical society and the idea of divine right in relation to morality.	
Henry V is an example of Shakespeare using language in an intentional way to reach both a courtly and common audience; which can be seen through his use of imagery of war, literal conflict, to highlight on the conflict between the monarchy and the public without offending either.	I like this as an organizational strategy, but you're not yet making an argument. What is the conflict between the king and the public, and what generalizations can you make from it? Is the problem that the king has to manipulate public perception to make them forget his problematic claim to the throne? Is it that he has to make them feel they have a stake in the conflict, when in fact they are the first people sacrificed? I agree that he wants to keep both groups on his side.
In <i>Henry V</i> we see Shakespeare use the main character, Henry, as a way to show the differences and the similarities between nobility and the common people. This can be seen in many scenes throughout the play, and is a vital aspect of the overall story.	Two issues. The most important is that similarities and differences isn't an argument, it's a way of comparing. What is your point? Is it to show that he and his peers aren't that different from the common people? Is it to show that war, despite all the rhetoric used to justify it, is fundamentally no different from streetfighting and pick-pocketing? Also, it would be easy to support this interesting notion through a comparison between the major and minor plot, but I want you to look at imagery. What kind of imagery supports this notion? Imagery of raping and maiming, for example, highlights that the poor are safer working as criminals and prostitutes than as soldiers or victims of war.
In <i>Henry the Fifth</i> , Shakespeare uses the eternal conflict between the wild and the domesticated to highlight the differences between the English and the French as seen through each party's own point of view.	Very interesting notion (and plenty of imagery to support it). But I don't see an argument here. You could say that each side uses similar imagery to justify the legitimacy of their own position to the exclusion of the other side. That makes an argument where "differences" does not.
Problem: The Thesis doesn't address the play's central conflict	
In <i>Julius Caesar</i> , Shakespeare suggests that Julius Caesar is destroyed by his own refusal to change despite the need for change around him, and backs this up with imagery of the statue (stone) and the Northern Star.	Since the problem of the play involves the protagonist Brutus and his fellows' decision to kill Caesar, the problem of what Caesar, obviously a flawed character anyway, does is less central. However, if you want to connect the notion of Caesar to Shakespeare's England, you could find support for parallels between Caesar and Queen Elizabeth.

<p>Richard III is a classic example of the “Byronic Hero”, coined after Lord Byron’s notability for creating antiheroes in the late seventeen hundred’s. While Richard III was written much earlier, Shakespeare’s iteration of Richard shows all the right qualities, and compares interestingly to many Byronic Heroes through the ages.”</p>	<p>This could definitely be argued—and has—but I’d like you to stick to an argument about the play’s central conflict OR an argument about how the play speaks to Shakespeare’s audience about events of that time.</p>
<p>In the play Julius Caesar, Shakespeare constructs subtle commentary on the qualities of an effective leader, the most important of which including masculinity, a vision of unity, and abidance to the accepted rules of the hierarchy.</p>	<p>If this were related to the question of England’s leadership and Queen Elizabeth/Essex, that might be a good thesis. But I would still like you to bring in the play’s conflict—that is, the question of whether to assassinate a ruler who has the capability of becoming a tyrant, and how to judge whether that action will be good or bad.</p>
<p>Problem: the thesis is good but needs to be more specific</p>	
<p>Shakespeare, through the lens of the female characters, attempts to expose Richard’s misdeeds and true nature in Richard III with animalistic imagery.</p>	<p>This isn’t quite an argument yet, though it’s getting there. For one thing, Richard’s misdeeds don’t need to be revealed. Also, an argument would go beyond Richard and make a generalization about government, human nature, gender, etc.</p>
<p>Through the play Richard III, Shakespeare portrays the way in which women are used as modes of getting power, and how women themselves come into positions of power.</p>	<p>For example: The women of Richard III, through their reactions to Richard and the animal imagery they use to describe him, reveal that the ideal prince as described by Machiavelli and epitomized by Richard reduces humans to their most depraved and elemental.</p>
<p>Problem: thesis could involve central questions of leadership/Richard more...</p>	
<p>The supernatural imagery in Richard III reflects the dark, easily corrupted nature of the human psyche, and Shakespeare makes this point most effectively through minor characters</p>	<p>Wonderful idea. I’d add to your thesis something to the effect that Richard works/ succeeds by preying on the easily corrupted aristocrats. I’d also make sure to use examples that involve them and not him—unless you want to connect them.</p>
<p>In Richard III, Shakespeare makes the point that women are equal to men by allowing women to see through Richard’s deceit before men.</p>	<p>I think this is doable, but not really central to the play’s argument so far. You could relate it to the question of what makes a great leader by exploring Richard’s bad leadership but then showing that women—including Queen Elizabeth—are more perceptive and so exempt from this criticism. This gets Shakespeare off the hook for exploring the whole nature of kingship in the first place.</p> <p>A related issue: consider what imagery you will explore. I would suggest, for example, that the monstrous birth /womb imagery deepens the paradoxical problem. It exposes women as the culprits for giving birth to Richard, but it also exempts Elizabeth who has not given birth and is reputed a virgin. I would suggest that the birth imagery also shows that the violence done by Richard to women is more personal, more intimate, than that done to men.</p>

Great thesis.	
<p>In Richard the Third, Shakespeare uses repetitive devices like epistrophe, anaphora, and parallelism in arguments between the characters to demonstrate the short-sightedness and superficially obsessive nature of the aristocrats at the center of the plot. The repetition mirrors the very nature of the monarchy and cycles of power, as well as the tendency of those in power to become distracted by ephemeral and elitist concerns.</p>	<p>This sounds interesting. I would include anadiplosis and antimetabole. I'd love to see how this works out.</p>
<p>Thesis: In The Life of Henry the Fifth, Shakespeare uses imagery of bastardy to show the political complications of popularity and legitimate absolute power under a monarchical rule as King Henry V coerces the common folk to fight an unjust war.</p>	<p>Really interesting notion. Lots of imagery of plant hybridity too.</p>