

## ESSAY 1 ENGLISH 1102

### Engaging the Text: *ATLANTA MONSTER* Podcast

Length: 2-3 pages minimum (750-1000 words)

**PURPOSE:** Critically engage with a text, focusing on determining what that text contains, what it's arguing, and what your original response is to that argument.

One of the foundational skills of an educated citizen is your ability to comprehend complex and multifaceted arguments. This essay practices some of those skills.

**TASK:** Write a 750-1000 word essay that engages with a single argument from an episode of *Atlanta Monster* [hosted by documentary filmmaker Payne Lindsey in 2018]. Identify the/an argument the text makes; respond to that argument with your own claim.

### **EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS ESSAY:**

- *PREPARE TO WRITE:* Develop critical reading skills: read/listen/watch slowly and deliberately, annotating the text.
  - Begin developing genre awareness. As a reader, you should be asking: What kind of text am I reading? What are its features? What makes it credible (or not)? Who wrote it? Where did it come from? What kinds of biases should I expect from it? What are my biases about the topic?
  - As a writer, you should be asking What kind of text am I writing? What are its features? What makes it credible? Who is my audience? What is my purpose?
- *INTRODUCTION:* Clearly and independently summarize the text's argument (in your introductory paragraph), choosing active verbs
- Your introduction is your first impression on your readers. If it's bland, boring, and uninspired, you're starting off behind the eight ball. It's like wearing sweatpants to a job interview; you're not going to come off well.
- In the intro, present a summary of the author's/text's main argument and key points (you don't need to give examples yet; you'll do this in the body of the paper). Aim for roughly 1/2 a page and write your intro entirely in your own words, followed by an in-text citation. Remember, the argument isn't simply what the article is "about," but rather what the author is trying to actively

persuade you to think or feel about a particular issue or subject. As we've discussed at length, sometimes the argument is explicit, but often it is implied. Be sure to review your class notes as you prepare.

- *THESIS STATEMENT*: Create a thesis-driven, argumentative response to the argument the documentary makes. Your thesis statement (or controlling idea) for Essay One will identify your argument in response to the text's argument. It should be a debatable claim for which you provide evidence in the essay's body. The intro leads logically and smoothly into this statement, which will come at the end of the introductory paragraph.
- *BODY PARAGRAPHS (2-4)*:
- *TOPIC SENTENCES*: Craft topic sentences that support your thesis. Topic sentences drive the paper's organization (how you organize each body paragraph AND how you support your thesis statement). They help you build a logically-structured argument. These sentences will be argumentative claims since your task is building an argument. Makes sense, right? Topic sentences are like mini-maps that carry your thesis statement from the beginning of your paper to the end. They should specifically identify what the body paragraphs will be about while also connecting back to the thesis. Topic sentences are your paper's skeleton; your paper will struggle to stay on point without clear, direct topic sentences.
- *TEXTUAL SUPPORT*: Incorporate relevant textual support to strengthen your argument and make it more compelling. Support takes the form of specific and exact quotes, paraphrasing, and scene description from the primary text. Choose one format (APA, MLA, Chicago) and stick to it. Use the Purdue OWL website or the University Writing Center website in formatting your essay, your citations, and your source page.
- *CONCLUSION*: Conclude with a paragraph that doesn't just summarize what you already said. Like your introduction, which is important because it's your first impression, your conclusion is equally important because it's your last impression. Leave your reader(s) with something to think about. Challenge them. Provoke them. Make them feel something. Like the rest of your paper, your conclusion should *do* something.
- *STYLE AND CONVENTIONS OF STANDARD ACADEMIC ENGLISH*: Develop mindfulness of the usage conventions of academic English. Begin understanding how the choices you make concerning those conventions impact your readers, as well as your own ethos as a writer/thinker.

As you do this, you will work to develop or hone an understanding of dialect awareness.

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### **THE BIGGER PICTURE:**

Your underlying job in this course is to develop a metacognitive awareness of your own writing process; continue cultivating the areas below where you are stronger, while strengthening the areas below where you are weaker. Remember, this is ongoing, recursive work that takes practice and repetition!

Your ability to clearly and concisely respond in writing to such arguments in a way that sets aside your own bias (even if you disagree with the author's/director's/text's position) demonstrates to others that you are a respectful thinker and communicator whose thoughts and words should be taken seriously. We call this process developing your ethos, or your credibility.

Even though comprehending complex arguments is an essential skill, it's not worth much if you can't also bring your own argument to bear on the topic. When you understand a text and respond to it with your own claims, you are effectively engaging with the text. After all, life requires more of us than demonstrating that we know what other people are saying. Life also requires us – in both our personal and professional lives – to make up our own minds about the world around us and to clearly express and convincingly support our positions to others.

**SUPPORT:** Remember, the University Writing Center is open and waiting to serve you!