SCIENCE FICTION ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Learning Targets:
* I can analyze the development of the theme throughout a text.
* I can analyze how dialogue or specific incidents reveal information about characters or move plot forward.
* I can cite textual evidence that strongly support my inferences and analysis of a text.

Write 1 essay on any of the following topics, or suggest a topic of your own that relates to our Science Fiction stories/novels/unit in the area of THEME or CHARACTERIZATION. Your essay answers should follow a standard format, with: an introductory sentence, a claim or thesis statement (your OPINION without using “I”), at least 2 examples where you CITE SPECIFIC TEXT EVIDENCE and explain what that evidence means in your own words, & a concluding sentence. Use specific examples & quotes from the texts in order to prove your argument, and be sure to explain what your examples mean and how they prove your thesis. Below are some suggestions for essay topics:

THEME:

1. Discuss the theme of any one story, OR discuss the overall themes and/or connections any/all of the 4 stories have in common. What are the authors' message(s)? We've discussed how science fiction comments on the society/time it was written in, explain what we now can learn from these stories. (For example, write about the theme(s) in “There Will Come Soft Rains.” What is Ray Bradbury’s message re: nature & technology? How does the Sara Teasdale poem included reflect a similar message?)

2. How does the element of fear come into play in these stories? In each “world”/situation, fear is a part of what motivates and affects different characters. How does fear affect them? What are the similar or different themes (messages) each story has about fear? In addition, you could discuss how can we relate this to our own world and time — what can we learn from these stories' examples? You could write about 1 or more stories if you choose this topic.

3. What do these stories tell us about what it means to be “different” from others? What happens when people are “different?” In 3 of the stories, main characters are “different” in varying ways, but there are similarities in how they are viewed & treated. Using specific examples, explain what the messages are about being “different.”

CHARACTERIZATION:

4. Charlie Gordon is not a typical hero. He possesses many of the characteristics that heroes sometimes have, but what exactly makes Charlie a hero? Your thesis (and paper) would focus on explaining him as a character and the changes he undergoes, citing quotations and examples of what makes him a hero.

5. What are the advantages & disadvantages of “intelligence”/“knowledge” or lack thereof? There are good and bad elements to both for characters in the stories read in class. For example, entire societies or neighborhoods are affected by scientific knowledge or advances (“There Will Come Soft Rains” or “Monsters are Due on Maple Street”), how a society views education is impacted in “The Fun They Had,” and Charlie’s whole personality and personal interactions and insights change when his intelligence is altered in “Flowers for Algernon”). Were the changes good or bad for one or more of these situations, ultimately? You could also explore (compare/contrast) ideas re: Charlie & intelligence with the same concept in other stories.

6. Make any other important connections between stories, or between your novel and story(ies) as they relate to THEME or CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. Let me know if you have another idea or suggestion that you’d rather write about!
Writing Mini-Lessons: Thesis Statements (or Theses)

A thesis statement in an essay is a sentence that explicitly identifies the purpose of the paper or previews its main ideas.

A thesis statement is an assertion, not a statement of fact or an observation.

Fact or observation: People use many lawn chemicals.
Thesis: People are poisoning the environment with chemicals merely to keep their lawns clean.

*********************************************************************

A thesis takes a stand rather than announcing a subject.

Announcement: The thesis of this paper is the difficulty of solving our environmental problems.
Thesis: Solving our environmental problems is more difficult than many environmentalists believe.

*********************************************************************

A thesis is the main idea, not the title. It must be a complete sentence that explains in some detail what you expect to write about.

Title: Social Security and Old Age.
Thesis: Continuing changes in the Social Security System makes it almost impossible to plan intelligently for one's retirement.

*********************************************************************

A thesis statement is narrow, rather than broad. If the thesis statement is sufficiently narrow, it can be fully supported.

Broad: The American steel industry has many problems.
Narrow: The primary problem if the American steel industry is the lack of funds to renovate outdated plants and equipment.

*********************************************************************

A thesis statement is specific rather than vague or general.

Vague: Hemingway’s war stories are very good.
Specific: Hemingway’s stories helped create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentences, and strong words.

*********************************************************************

A thesis statement has one main point rather than several main points. More than one point may be too difficult for the reader to understand and the writer to support.

More than one main point: Stephen Hawking’s physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world-renowned physicist, and his book is the subject of a movie.
One Main point: Stephen Hawking’s physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world renowned physicist.

*********************************************************************

You can revise your thesis statement whenever you want to while you are writing your essay. Writers often discover what their real purpose and point is in the process of putting their thoughts into words and then reading what they’ve written.

Remember this: Claim + Reason = Thesis

For even more information about writing thesis statements, check out Purdue OWL.

from http://msmclure.com/?page_id=6539 Ms. McClure's Class Website