

Essay #1: Topic Sheet

Exploring Arguments in *World Without Mind*

Essay Task:

After reading *World Without Mind*, write an argument/persuasion essay over one of the following topics in which you present Franklin Foer's views found in his book. For each of these essay topics, you need to find support for your argument exclusively from the book—not research or personal experience.

Topic #1: You are at a party where the discussion of the 1960s is raging—hippies, flower power and drugs. From reading our book, you talk about how the big tech companies of today--Google, Amazon, and Facebook—each have idealistic social and philosophical visions based in the thinking from the 1960s. But then you add, “But according to Foer, these companies are hypocrites and much of what they do contradicts their vision.” You get questioning looks from your friends. One person is interested and asks: Are Google, Amazon, and Facebook really contradictory and even dishonest? Your purpose is to represent Foer's arguments and help your friends see beyond the façade of these companies.

Topic #2: You are taking a Computer Science class, and your professor is teaching you about the power of algorithms and Artificial Intelligence. He has a glowing, positive vision for the potential of algorithms. However, from reading *The World Without Mind*, you have been exposed to a different view about algorithms. You decide for your term paper in the class to write on this question: Are algorithms in the hands of Google, Facebook, and Amazon dangerous? Your purpose is to present Foer's arguments related to how these companies use algorithms unethically and get the class and teacher to have a more critical view of algorithms and these company's use of algorithms.

Topic #3: For your Journalism I class, you get to write about some current issue with the state of journalism today. After reading *The World Without Mind*, you are upset at technology and the internet's influence on journalism. You decide to write your paper answering this question: Has the tech revolution, especially through the actions of tech giants of Amazon, Facebook, and Google, had a negative effect on journalism and publishing? Your purpose is to present Foer's arguments on this issue and help your peers understand the ways these companies have hurt journalism, writing and the sharing of information in public discourse.

Topic #4: You just finished reading *World Without Mind*, and you are upset. Something must be done to reign in these “knowledge monopolies.” You even called your favorite candidate for Congress' office and spoke to someone who listened but asked: What should this candidate's stance be regarding legislation to regulate these tech giants? You decide to write to your favorite candidate for Congress and present Foer's arguments for why the tech giants like Google, Amazon, and Facebook are dangerous and need to be regulated. You want this candidate to make this regulation part of their campaign platform.

Essay Requirements:

Compose a 1,000 word essay presented in MLA Manuscript format (heading, double-spaced, 1” margins) that incorporates specific facts and details from Foer's book by quoting, paraphrasing or summarizing and citing according to MLA guidelines. You should incorporate quotes from only the Foer book.

Create an appropriate title for your essay that previews your purpose, an engaging introduction paragraph, a body which “divides up the proof” presenting one reason per paragraph, and a clear conclusion paragraph. Include a Work Cited page that lists **ONLY** Foer's book. No outside research is needed.



Discussion of Essay Topic and the Learning Objectives

This essay will build upon what we have done in the last two essays, so you will need to transfer things we have learned in these essays into your writing of this essay. Much will be a new challenge in this essay, but also much will be the same.

This next essay will be an essay with essay form—that is, it will have an introduction, body, and conclusion. We learned a lot about writing introductions in Essay #2, so we will practice crafting another sharp introduction following those same principles of connecting to your reader, clarifying the issue/question, and presenting your thesis (in the last sentence). Likewise, we will try to start with an engaging title and first line or lines. Also, in the Body of the paper, you will “divide up the proof” by putting one primary support per body paragraph.

Probably the biggest difference for Essay #3 is that you will be *writing from your reading*. That means your writing will depend upon your reading, so working on reading skills and also on strategies for moving from reading to writing will be fundamental. You will have to read well to develop your thinking and understanding in order to write well.

Another different for this essay is both the type of essay and the content we use to build support for our thesis. This essay will be an argument/persuasion essay. The most important feature of an argumentative essay is that it structures its support around REASONS. Last essay, your primary supports were stories that showed your illustrative truth; in this essay, each body paragraph will develop one primary reason that supports the thesis. Also, rather than narratives to develop the body paragraphs, you will use textual evidence in the form of quotes and paraphrases. That means you will need to use quotes from the book to back up your ideas. It also means we will have to “document” this source following MLA Documentation Style. This task of handling and documenting quotes correctly will be a big new aspect of this essay.

What Writing Skills Will You Be Building Upon From Our Last Two Essays

This essay incorporates the following skills, strategies, and knowledge you have learned and practiced from our Essay #1 and #2:

- Writing an “essay” with an introduction, body, and conclusion
- Building an introduction that does three things—connect with the reader, clarifies the topic/issue/question, and presents the thesis (or answer to the essay question)
- Creating an engaging title and lead sentence(s) as you connect with the reader
- Creating a body that “divides up the proof” by developing one primary support per body paragraph
- Writing to an audience with a purpose (or writing to the writing situation)
- Writing to make a point and persuade
- Using detail in writing to show and not just tell
- Continued work on punctuation and avoiding sentence fragments and run-ons
- Using the writing process effectively to craft an essay

What Is New in this Essay

- Using close critical reading skills for developing comprehension and for recall and reuse.
- Learning strategies for moving from reading to writing
- Writing an argument/persuasion essay
- Using textual evidence for support; how to handle quotes effectively (following the “sandwich principle” for integrating quotes into your text)
- Documenting your use of textual support from sources following MLA Documentation Style



Getting Started With Essay #3

Step One: Picking a Topic and Understanding It

Review the essay topics and pick one that you want to write on. Examine this topic closely for the issue it is asking you to investigate. Review the following breakdown of each topic to help understand what the topic is about and what it will ask you to argue for.

IMPORTANT: For each topic, I define the Essay Question and to a large degree the Thesis. In addition, embedded into the topic is a rhetorical situation defining an audience and purpose. Hence, the real task of the essay is finding and pulling together the support from Foer's book for each thesis toward this topic's audience to accomplish the stated purpose

Topic #1:	
Subject:	The idealistic social and philosophical visions behind each company.
Essay Question	Are Google, Amazon, and Facebook really contradictory and even dishonest?
Answer/Thesis	These companies are hypocrites and much of what they do contradicts their vision.
Audience	Friends at a party
Purpose	To represent Foer's arguments and help your friends see beyond the façade of these companies.
Argumentative Task	Present an argument for WHY or THE WAYS IN WHICH these companies are hypocritical and contradictory to their stated idealistic visions.

Topic #2:	
Subject:	The ethical or unethical use and application of algorithms.
Essay Question	Are algorithms in the hands of Google, Facebook, and Amazon dangerous?
Answer/Thesis	<i>Some declarative statement that basically says, "yes."</i>
Audience	Your computer science class teacher and classmates.
Purpose	To present Foer's arguments related to how these companies use algorithms unethically and get the class and teacher to have a more critical view of algorithms and these company's use of algorithms.
Argumentative Task	Present an argument for WHY or THE WAYS IN WHICH these companies use algorithms dangerously and/or unethically.

Topic #3:	
Subject:	The state of journalism, writing, and writers today.
Essay Question	Has the tech revolution, especially through the actions of tech giants of Amazon, Facebook, and Google, had a negative effect on journalism and publishing?
Answer/Thesis	<i>Some declarative statement that basically says, "yes."</i>
Audience	Classmates in your journalism class.
Purpose	To present Foer's arguments and help your peers understand the ways these companies have hurt journalism, writing and the sharing of information in public discourse.
Argumentative Task	Present an argument for WHY or THE WAYS IN WHICH these companies have harmed journalism and publishing.



Topic #4:	
Subject:	Monopolies, the size of these tech giants, regulation
Essay Question	What should this candidate's stance be regarding legislation to regulate these tech giants?
Answer/Thesis	<i>A declarative statement urging the candidate to support legislation to regulate the tech giants.</i>
Audience	Your favorite Congressman or Congressional candidate.
Purpose	You want this candidate to make this regulation part of their campaign platform.
Argumentative Task	Present Foer's argument for WHY these tech giants need to be regulated.

