

English 9: Important Terms

Text: The original words of something that is written or printed.

Summary: A general description of a text that cannot be disputed.

Romeo and Juliet is the story of star-crossed lovers who are kept apart by their feuding families. The lovers choose their love over their families but end up dying tragically.

Argument: A broad interpretive assertion about a text that *can be disputed*.

Local claim: An argument that only applies to a specific text:

Juliet makes the right choice when she kills herself.

Global claim: An argument that works on the universal level and applies to all people (see “human nature” below)

Love is worth dying for.

Reasoning: An answer to a why question. Every thesis or argument should have reasoning to make it complete. Your reasoning will most often contain a “because clause.”

Love is worth dying for because it is the deepest and most genuine emotion a person can experience.

Thesis Statement: A full thesis statement includes an argument about a text expressed locally and globally and reasoning (the above 3 examples combined). It will likely take more than one sentence to express.

“Human nature”: The general condition and qualities of the human species. Arguments at the global level most often offer an interpretation of the nature of humanity.

Rebuttal: An argument designed to dispute another argument. Also known as the opposing argument, the counterargument or the refutation.

To Annotate: To actively engage with the text by using a pen or pencil to underline and write questions, comments, and/or responses to the text.

Close reading: Analysis of very small details in the text: vocabulary choices, uses of figurative language, repetition of words or phrases, and specific plot details. The analysis that comes from close reading should make up the majority of evidence used to support your local or global arguments.

Think of close reading as a “close-up” shot of the text you are reading. Just as directors and screenwriters make deliberate choices in the details of movies, authors and poets make detailed choices in their texts. In this regard, a thesis or argument can be understood as the “wide angle” or “long shot.” You then support these larger claims with close readings or “close up” shots of the text—interpretations of small details.

Example:

The phrase “star-crossed lovers” suggests that Romeo and Juliet ultimately have no control over their situation and neither does anyone else in the play. The lovers’ fates have already been determined by the stars, so it is a good that they choose love over their families desires.