

or 'Throughout', Be sure to underline it!
In TITLE, AUTHOR Just the last name is fine.

WHAT

to

VERB

that

WHY.

obvious plot content or author choice, not a complete thought (a fragment or list)

- suggest
- convey
- demonstrate
- illustrate
- imply
- warn

- introduces
- makes use of
- emphasizes
- deploys
- utilizes
- presents

- complete thought
- THEME
- meaning of the work as a whole
- 0% plot
- no "you"
- not a cliché

• Madness

• Deceit

• Revenge

• Sexuality

• Mortality

• Gender

• Corruption

• Family

• Certainty

• Religion

• Art / Theater

HAMLET ESSAY PROMPTS



the
READINESS
IS ALL

2012. “And, after all, our surroundings influence our lives and characters as much as fate, destiny or any supernatural agency.”

--Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces*

Choose a novel or play in which cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings shape psychological or moral traits in a character. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how surroundings affect this character and illuminate **the meaning of the work as a whole.**

2013. A bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, recounts the psychological or moral development of its protagonist from youth to maturity, when this character recognizes his or her place in the world. Select a single pivotal moment in the psychological or moral development of the protagonist of a bildungsroman. Then write a well-organized essay that analyzes how that single moment shapes **the meaning of the work as a whole.**

2014. It has often been said that what we value can be determined only by what we sacrifice. Consider how this statement applies to a character from a novel or play. Select a character that has deliberately sacrificed, surrendered, or forfeited something in a way that highlights that character's values. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the particular sacrifice illuminates the character's values and provides a deeper understanding of **the meaning of the work as a whole.**

2015. In literary works, cruelty often functions as a crucial motivation or a major social or political factor. Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which acts of cruelty are important to the theme. Then write a well-developed essay analyzing how **cruelty** functions in the work as a whole and what the cruelty reveals about **the meaning of the work as a whole.**

2016. Many works of literature contain a character who intentionally deceives others. The character's dishonesty may be intended either to help or to hurt. Such a character, for example, may choose to mislead others for personal safety, to spare someone's feelings, or to carry out a crime.

Choose a novel or play in which a character deceives others. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the motives for that character's deception and discuss how the deception contributes to **the meaning of the work as a whole.**

2017. Select a novel, play, or epic poem that features a character whose origins are unusual or mysterious. Then write an essay in which you analyze how these origins shape the character and that character's relationships, and how the origins contribute to **the meaning of the work as a whole.**

2018. Many works of literature feature characters who have been given a literal or figurative gift. Then gift may be an object, or it may be a quality such as uncommon beauty, significant social position, great mental or imaginative faculties, or extraordinary physical powers. Yet this gift is often also a burden or a handicap. Select a character from a novel, epic, or play who has been given a gift that is both an advantage and a problem. Then write a well-developed essay analyzing the complex nature of the gift and how the gift contributes to **the meaning of the work as a whole.**

2019. In his 2004 novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul writes: “It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That's where the mischief starts. That's where everything starts unravelling.”

Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which a character holds an “ideal view of the world.” Then write an essay in which you analyze the character's idealism and its positive or negative consequences. Explain how the author's portrayal of this idealism illuminates **the meaning of the work as a whole.**