

Essays – Essay #1

The first essay uses *The Epic of Gilgamesh* to write about Sumer.

The assignment: Write a 3- to 4-page essay that uses three moments from *Gilgamesh* to take a position on the culture, beliefs, and social expectations of ancient Sumer.

What you need to do

● Get ready.

Review the requirements. Review the Requirements for All Papers. This page has important guidance and videos on formatting your document, structuring your essay, and using evidence.

Watch the video. The overview video linked above explains what I want you to cover in the essay and what I'm expecting in terms of arguments, evidence, and structure.

Another resource you may find helpful is the Elephant Pamphlet, which gives step-by-step guidance on preparing for and writing a position paper.

● Choose your topic from one of the three prompts below

Option A

The mortal and the divine. Choose any of the mortal characters from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and discuss his or her relationship with the gods. (Note: your best bets are either Gilgamesh or Enkidu; Utanapishtim is also a possibility.)

What does the *Epic* show us regarding Sumer's take on religion and the gods, and what it means to be human?

Option B

Gender in Sumerian society.

Choose any of the female characters from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and discuss her relationship with the other characters and Sumerian society. (Note: your best bet is Shamhat; Ninsun and Ishtar are also possibilities.)

What does the *Epic* show us regarding gender expectations and the roles of women in Sumerian culture?

Option C

Life and death. Mortality is one of the major themes of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, but what is the epic saying about it?

What does the *Epic* show us regarding Sumerian ideas of death and legacy, and how Sumerian culture thought about death?

● Find three moments from the Epic that are strong examples of your topic.

Option A

For the “mortal and divine” option, find three moments from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* showing your character interacting with or contemplating the gods.

Option B

For the “gender” option, find three moments from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* showing your character's actions or behavior and how it relates to her role as a woman in Sumerian society.

Option C

For the “life and death” option, find three moments from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* that involve death or mortality—either an actual death, or discussion of death and mortality.

● **Write a 3- to 4-page essay in which you take a position on Sumerian culture.**

You'll need an Introduction State what you believe the *Epic* shows us about the culture, beliefs, and social expectations of ancient Sumer in a way that answers the question in the prompt you chose. (This is your thesis statement.)

... **a Body** Describe and discuss, one by one, each of the three moments you found from the *Epic*. For each section, discuss what the evidence tells us about ancient Sumer.

... **and a Conclusion.** Tie your examples and assertions together and show how they support your overall thesis.

● **Finalize your essay.**

Citations are important. Make sure your evidence is cited and that you include a bibliography. For how to do citations and bibliographies, see the Research and Citation Center. You will be marked down drastically if your paper is not properly cited.

Optional draft. You may email me an optional draft two weeks before the final due date. It should include most of your paper (at least two-thirds of the final content, with sections to be written described in square brackets). I'll give feedback, but not a grade, to help you refine your final paper.

Double-check the requirements. Make sure your essay meets the Requirements for All Papers for formatting, structure, and evidence, as well as the specifications given above for what's expected for this assignment.

Once you're sure your essay meets the requirements, upload it as DOCX or PDF to BlackBoard.