

Writing Assignment #3: Njal

Note: Evidence for your essay must be based only on the assigned texts. Limit your evidence to specific passages or episodes in the text in order to analyze the text in detail.

1. The characters in *Njal's Saga* often mention fate, and their willingness to join risky ventures depends on their attitude toward fate. Compare the view of fate in *Njal's Saga* with the view in *The Aeneid* or St. Augustine's *Confessions* (**choose one**). Consider whether the conversion to Christianity affected Icelanders' view or response to fate.

Formulate a question about this topic and then answer it (your thesis). **The introduction to your paper should state your thesis and explain how you will argue for it.** The body of your paper should be an argument, based on evidence from the texts. In this paper, as in the second paper, **you must include a counterargument.** See below for an explanation of a counterargument.

2. Friendship plays a significant role in *Njal's Saga*, as it does in Augustine's *Confessions*. Write a paper comparing the nature **OR** role of friendship in these two works.

Formulate a question about this topic and then answer it (your thesis). **The introduction to your paper should state your thesis and explain how you will argue for it.** The body of your paper should be an argument, based on evidence from the texts. In this paper, as in the second paper, **you must include a counterargument.** See below for an explanation of a counterargument.

Thesis: Make sure that your thesis meets the standards outlined in the "Thesis" handout. 4 tests for a good thesis:

1. Is it an explanation, not a fact? Remember: An observation about the text(s) is not a thesis; it is an observation.
2. Is it precise?
3. Can someone argue against it?
4. Is it too obvious to be worth arguing?

Note: when you write an essay in which you compare two texts or two parts of one text, you must do the following in the introductory paragraph:

- A. Introduce the question and thesis. (If you write on the first prompt, you will merely state your thesis.)
- B. Explain how you will argue that your thesis is sound, characterizing the authors' views on the topic.

**Counterargument:** A counterargument is an alternative interpretation of some of the evidence you use to support your thesis. It is not an argument for an alternative thesis. A counterargument challenges your interpretation of a piece of evidence you use to support your thesis, so if the counterargument is very strong it weakens your argument. A counterargument that is so strong that it seriously weakens your defense of your thesis will force you to reconsider your thesis. Showing that the counterargument is wrong or weak strengthens the argument for your thesis.

Length: 4-5 pages.

Due: In lecture, **June 1, Thursday**. Please hand your essay to your section teacher after lecture. You will also need to turn in an electronic copy to Turnitin.com.