Tips for Academic Success

Argumentative (Persuasive, Opinion) Papers

When writing an argumentative paper for an instructor, for an employer, or for publication in a newspaper, you must consider your audience. This is important to keep in mind because each audience will require different approaches, background information, and details.

Who Owns history?
Since ancient times, people have fought over who owns precious artifacts. Historical pieces have changed hands as spoils of war, tribute, and even downright theft. But who truly owns these pieces of history? Does the culture that created the object have ownership or people who find them and lay claim? The question to who rightfully owns historical artifacts has grown into a worldwide battle between the museums that now own the artifacts and the countries from which the artifacts originated. Historical artifacts should not be returned to the country of origin because museums would eventually be non-existent and the artifacts are at risk of being lost every time they are moved due to their fragile nature.

Countries around the world have recently stepped up the campaign for the return of cultural artifacts. A country leading the effort is Egypt. Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities has written to museums around the globe demanding that their heritage be returned. Egypt has requested the return of such artifacts as the Rosetta Stone from the British Museum, the Dendra Zodiac from the Louvre in Paris, the death mask of Ka Nefer Nefer from the St. Louis Art museum, and the legendary bust of Nefertiti from the Altes Museum of Berlin. The current battle for historical artifacts has most likely begun anew in past years over another beauty. Queen Nefertiti’s 3,400 year old bust has sparked a heated debate over who has ownership over historic pieces. Nefertiti was queen of Egypt during the reign of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaton and was stepmother to the legendary King Tutankhamen. Her statue was found in the ruins of a court sculptor’s workshop in Egypt over 95 years ago by a team of German archeologists. Ever since the statue’s discovery in 1912, the queen of Egypt has been in German hands (Field 1). There is dispute over how Nefertiti left Egypt, but the popular account is that the statue was intentionally covered with grime to conceal the statue’s identity and the Frenchman, Pierre Lacau, gave permission for the artifact to leave the country.

Wildung argues “finders keepers,” and that the Berlin museum obtained the bust after the proper authorities inspected and signed the statue’s release, “Borchardt’s find wasn’t thought to be anything special at the time and was allowed to ship her out of the country without a fuss,” he related. Pierre Lacau was the Director of Antiquities at the time and had every right to approve artifact’s removal from Egypt (Curry 9-10). During the time the statue was found, it was general practice that the findings of archeologists were theirs to keep. Before the 1940’s there were no strict laws regulating the removal of artifacts, resulting in many museums taking the claim “finder’s keepers” (Field 8).

Nonetheless, Dr. Hawass believe that German archeologist Borchardt in 1912 smuggled the statue out of the country and falsified records. Hawass admits that the statue of Nefertiti was removed before there were strict laws about removing historical artifacts from their country of origin.
origin. “The queen was removed under curious circumstances,” states Hawass. “The statue’s appearance was most likely altered because the records don’t match up.” Dr. Hawass believes that Nefertiti was “removed without proper documentation and permission resulting in the bust being a stolen piece” (Hochfield 3-4). Regardless of how the statue was removed, officials gave permission for the piece to leave Egypt. The German archeologists state the piece was not intentionally disguised and they have documents disclosing the appearance of the object.

Although she may be a foreigner in Berlin, Nefertiti has become a national treasure to Germany. Wildung argues “Nefertiti has been a treasure of our museum for over 95 yrs and she is now a part of our own history. Thousands of German citizens visit Nefertiti every year and for almost 100 years we have thought of her as our queen” (Curry 101). The Altes Museum has refused to even loan the Nefertiti bust to Egypt for the grand opening of the Egyptian National Museum in 2011, sparking more anger and calls for the return of the queen. Dietrich Wildung rebuts, “Our Egyptian colleagues know very well that Nefertiti will never leave Berlin: Firstly due to reasons of conservation. Secondly, for security reasons. Given the current international political situation, it would be completely irresponsible to allow such a piece of art to travel such a far distance.” The Berlin museum believes that attempting to transport the queen would lead to her destruction (Curry 13).

Besides believing that the statue was stolen, Dr. Hawass argues Nefertiti is Egypt’s cultural heritage, not Berlin’s. “Nefertiti was an Egyptian Queen, a leader of our ancestors,” stated Dr. Hawass. “She deserves respect and needs to be returned to her people. What would the queen think if she knew her commissioned likeness was removed from Egypt and taken thousands of miles away? She would want her image returned to her homeland, of Egypt.” Dr. Hawass also stated “Nefertiti is a symbol of Egypt, she is a significant part of Egyptian culture and history and should be returned to her home” (Hochfield 5-6). While the statue is a cultural artifact, the Egyptian government continues to sell “precious heritage” to museums worldwide. The popularity of this object appears to be the motivation for the recall of this artifact rather than sentimental value.

The fight over pieces of history has occurred throughout time. The battle over the queen of the Nile shows no sign of reconciliation soon. Around the globe, respected museums and world leaders fight over artifacts. Nobody seems to agree who owns history, so maybe history isn’t meant to be owned. Overall, I believe artifacts belong in museums for all to enjoy because if cultural items are returned to their country of origin then museums will be history as well.

Your paper will be double spaced.
**Topic:** Select a topic that is controversial, one you can take a firm position on.

**Research:** What information is available that supports your opinion? What information is available that opposes your view?

**Thesis statement:** Include your point and support. What do you believe? Why?

Outline your paper:

I. Thesis statement

II. Introduction: Here you will introduce your subject and give your reader background information. The depth you go into depends upon your audience. A group of research scientists who are reading a paper about a controversial cancer treatment will need less and/or different background information than a lay person will need.

III. Supporting Reason 1 (Lead with your strongest argument)
   A. Explanation for Reason 1 (What is your opinion?)
   B. Counter-argument against Reason 1 (What might someone else think?)
   C. Response to counter-argument (Your response to the counter argument.)
   D. Transition to Part B

IV. Supporting Reason 2
   A. Explanation for Reason 2 (What is your opinion?)
   B. Counter-argument against Reason 2 (What might someone else think?)
   C. Response to counter-argument (Your response to the counter argument.)
   D. Transition to Part IV (Or transition to your conclusion)

*Depending upon the length of your paper you may have several more supporting reasons before presenting your conclusion.

V. Conclusion (Repeat your thesis and strongest argument. This is the information you want your reader to remember most when they are done reading.)
Suggested Paper Topics

- Going green is/is not worth the costs.
- Certain books such as Harry Potter, Twilight, and Stephen King novels should/should not be banned from school libraries.
- Prisoners have it too easy/difficult.
- The world is/ is not a better place since the usage of the computer or internet.
- Sex education should/ should not be a mandatory part of a school’s curriculum.
- Steroid testing should/should not be mandatory for athletes.
- Textese (Texting Language) is/is not destroying the English language.
- Texting while driving should/shouldn’t be against the law.
- Door-to-door Trick-or-Treating should/ shouldn’t be outlawed.
- Cell phones should/shouldn’t be banned from schools.
- There should be more/less penalties for DUI (Driving Under the Influence) or DWI (Driving While Intoxicated) offenders.
- Should the age to obtain a driver’s license be lowered or raised?
- Facebook is degrading/ improving socialization.
- Touch-screen technology is/ is not worth the investment.
- Schools should/should not have expanded hours (8 hours +)
- Fast food restaurants should/should not have to pay for lawsuits awarded to customers who have become obese.
- College or University students should/should not pay for campus parking.
- Test scores are/ are not a good indication of a school’s competency.