



Helen: An Argument for the Defense or Prosecution

Due Date: Monday, 2 May 2011

Length: 8-10 pages (not including your Works Cited)

This assignment provides you with the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the epic tradition of Troy by making use of all of the texts read during this course in order to compose an exhaustive argument in defense or in prosecution of Helen.

Your thesis should be a clear statement of Helen's guilt or innocence. For example, "There can be no doubt that Helen is guilty of treason and adultery" or "Helen had the misfortune of being a beautiful women situated among powerful men, but unless it is a crime to be the passive object of masculine lust and greed, Helen cannot be shown to be responsible for any criminal action." Your argument should appeal to all textual evidence of Helen's deeds and words and may also take statements of witnesses into account. One tactic that you may make use of is to appeal to the general character of the defendant, as that character is presented in the texts you've read.



A successful argument must take opposing arguments into consideration. It must also take into consideration and address the beliefs and values of the jury—which, for the purpose of this essay, may be your instructor or peers. Although a modern jury may no longer believe in the direct and physical intervention of gods, it may still believe in divine providence—that is, that a superintendent mind or force coaxes events toward the working out of a greater purpose. Even though you may be uncertain of the beliefs or values of your audience, you need to form a general idea so that you can design arguments that will have a maximum impact upon your audience.

Instead of posting your thesis and principle arguments on the Discussion Board, you will be expected to participate in a courtroom forum to be held during the class period on the day that your essay is due. Your participation in this forum is equivalent to participation in a rough draft workshop, and failure to participate will lower your final essay grade up to one full letter (*e.g.*, from an A to a B).

Procedural Guidelines: The court session is to be divided into four principle parts: Pt. 1: The prosecution briefly states the charge or charges brought against Helen. These might be written on the chalkboard. Pt. 2 (15 min.): Initial arguments in defense of Helen. Pt. 3 (20 min.): Response by the prosecution, and presentation of additional arguments. Pt. 4 (10 min.): Response and final words by the defense. Each team should have a moderator, whose job is to keep his or her team's presentation structured and from going over the time limitations.