

# Sample thesis on name

Life



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

**‘ Instructor’s Name’**

‘ Subject’

Literary Analysis of the Play Arcadia

Hayden White, in his essay titled " The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" argues that, every historian is a storyteller, and the ability to construe historical events into coherent narrative form is significant to the art of historiography. He conveys that literary imagination is crucial to a historian and stresses on the need to recognize that there is a fictive element to any historical narrative. This essay, by analyzing the play ‘ Arcadia’ written by Tom Stoppard, aims to find out, how literary genre and literary elements used by the author alter or impact our understanding of the historical facts. Arcadia, first premiered in the year 1993, is a quasi-historical play written by Tom Stoppard, which moves back and forth between two eras – one during the present day (1993) and one happening in the period 1809-1812. The play’s set features a house, which was resided by the character Thomasina Coverly, a brilliant young girl, in 1809, who is tutored by Septimus Hodge, a friend of Lord Byron. Almost two centuries years later, Hannah Jarvis, a writer, and Bernard Nightingale, an academician investigating the life of Lord Byron, converge at the house, and try to unlock the mystery of the lives of Byron and the hermit, who lived in the grounds of the house.

The portrayal of history in a play can be disconcerting, to those who deem that historical events cannot be objectively reproduced in fiction. However, Stoppard’s play offers its viewers/readers, a different perspective of the events of a bygone era, by making use of modern characters. Stoppard, by the use of a range of devices such as plot, dialogues, and characters,

introspect the events happened during the enlightenment era, with both hard facts and circumstantial proofs or 'gut instincts'.

According to White, stories are made of 'emplotment' of historical facts or events. An emplotment of a play involves the suppression or subordination of certain historical facts and the highlighting of the others, by use of various literary elements such as plot, characterization and motifs. Historical sensibility is produced by interweaving various abstract historical facts, which gives no meaning to the reader in an unprocessed form, into a fictional plot. Stoppard, in this play, has used historical facts pertaining to the lives of personalities such as Lord Byron, Caroline Lamb, and Ada Lovelace to 'emplot' his play.

The character Hannah, in particular, acts as the voice of Stoppard in the play, viewing the past via prism of assumptions backed up by facts.

"The whole Romantic sham, Bernard! It's what happened to the Enlightenment, isn't it? A century of intellectual rigour turned in on itself. A mind in chaos suspected of genius. In a setting of cheap thrills and false emotion".

This above commentary on the enlightenment ideas is a proof of her belief in rationalism than romanticism. Hannah is a person, who places more value on the objectiveness than emotionalism. She is attracted to Sidley Park, the house where Thomasina lived, because of the opportunity it provided for an objective review of the past.

White argues that every fictional work has both a fictional aspect and a thematic aspect, and as the work moves from the fictional projection towards the assertion of the theme, it becomes discursive writing. Arcadia has both fictional and thematic contents. While the fictional part is obvious, there are <https://assignbuster.com/sample-thesis-on-name/>

lots of inherent themes strewn all over the play, and the character of Hannah is entrusted with the responsibility of conveying it to the readers.

Historians arrive at their evidence by interpreting possible outcomes of different kinds of human situations. Ezra Chater's duel and his eventual death is one such situation used in *Arcadia*, which is explored in detail to find out historical evidence. The same historical facts can be offered from different perspectives by different writers. Lord Byron's life, for example, is analyzed from various perspectives by various writers throughout the last couple of centuries.

"Byron the spoilt child promoted beyond his gifts by the spirit of the age!  
And Caroline the closet intellectual shafted by a male society!"

In this play, Stoppard mostly dwells on his romantic relationships, and the focus is mainly on Thomasina, whose character was inspired by Ada Lovelace. Stoppard believes that enlightenment ideas did not contribute anything to human progress and this view is expressed through Hannah's character. It is reflected in the way Hannah is bent to prove that the hermit, who was a genius mind of that era, is a symbol of the failure of enlightenment ideas as he is reduced to live in a hermit hut. Hannah's character's interest in investigating the life of hermit is mainly because, she thought he was a brilliant person, but one who was disillusioned by the enlightenment ideas and in the end was reduced to live in a hermit hut. A great fiction, with the help of language and symbolism, illuminates its readers the facts about the world they inhabit. *Arcadia* through its characterization and plot takes the reader/viewer through an illuminating journey through scientific and social developments of the nineteenth century, and it also reveals its relevance in the present times. With the aim

<https://assignbuster.com/sample-thesis-on-name/>

of appearing scientific and accurate, history has, according to White, lost sight of its origins in the literary imagination. Language and narrative abilities of the writers offer a more presentable version of history, and it is a better modality, than to instruct the students to ' find out what happened' and report it back as it happened.

## **Works Cited**

Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*. 1993. Pdf.

White, Hayden. *The Historical Text As Literary Artifact*. n. d. pdf.