Hamlet Literary Analysis

A <u>motif</u> is any recurring element in a work of art (literature, film, music, etc.) that, by its repetition, attains symbolic significance. Tracing a motif throughout a work (or collection of works) and analyzing its significance often points to thematic elements. Using the Exponential Approach to literary criticism (<u>exponent</u>— sign of a theme; in this case, your motif) you will be noting every reference to your team's given motif—the "what."

Once you've gathered all your specific details, you and your team will then interpret and organize the collective data and draw conclusions that will reveal the "Big So What" (<u>theme</u>—a message about life/the human experience that the work as a whole communicates to the reader through the exponents of your motif). Your ultimate goal is to write a scholarly essay, analyzing the overall thematic significance of your given topic's recurring references throughout the play to present to the rest of the class.

Motif Topics: Identify all images of or references to (whether stated directly or implied) anything related to your team's assigned topic.

- Acting and Directing (any references to theater)
- Animals and Traps (Check the Oxford English Dictionary—OED—to look up any animals not defined in your New Folger Edition notes.)
- Money and Finance (any terminology you would hear in an economics class)
- Ears and Hearing (listening, etc.)
- Decay and Corruption (body, soul, spirit, political states, etc.)
- Truth and Indirection ("by indirection find direction out")

Remember: You are NOT to use any secondary sources (works *about* the play, i.e. SparkNotes, articles, Websites, essays, etc. about *Hamlet*) or any other unauthorized assistance. If you do, you're missing the point and do not belong in this class.

The Process:

1. **Take notes**. Using either the given motif chart or note cards (follow specific guidelines), write down every reference to your assigned motif throughout the play (whether stated directly or implied).
2. Then **evaluate and organize** your compiled notes. Look for patterns and associations. Separate them into like groups (3-4), and identify the main idea that ties each group together (unity).
3. Record your main points and the textual details you'll use to support each one. On your own paper, set up the following template to structure your notes:

→ Main point/heading of group of notes: _____

List supporting details below each point (brief description/passage/parenthetical documentation):

o

o

o   *Use your own paper to create your own organization of notes—this is a template only!*

o

→Main point: _____

Supporting Details:

o

o

o

Etc.   *Again--use your own paper to create your specific organization of notes!*

4. Create a **thesis** that states clearly your team's conclusion about your motif. Include the author's full name and the title of the work in your thesis statement.

   Ex. In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the recurrence of _____suggests that (theme goes here)   .

   Please use your own wording to craft a coherent thesis statement.

5. After determining the final organization for your main points and supporting details, create a detailed **outline** that follows all given instructions for structuring and formatting.
6. Create a well-argued, thoroughly developed **paper** that presents and proves your argument (thesis).

Project Work Breakdown Structure and Due Dates

Motif Notes	Notes for each day's reading are due the next day, beginning of class. Entire compilation of notes due the day after we finish the play.	**3/20**
Evaluating & Organizing Notes	Preliminary organization of notes into groupings with headings; Continue to work and re-work groupings to create an outline.	**3/23-24**
Preliminary Thesis	From initial teamwork organizing notes, create preliminary thesis.	**3/24**
Preliminary Outline	Create a thoroughly developed topic outline from revised notes groupings and thesis; use prescribed format.	**3/24-5**
Final Outline	Revise preliminary outline; use as organization for presentation; Submit typed copy.	**3/30**
Paper Rough Draft	Due typed (2-3 pages)	**4/1**