***The Chrysalids* Essay Topics**

1. The significance of a title such as The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is so easy to discover. However, in other works the full significance of the title becomes apparent to the reader only gradually. Through an exploration of the novel, explain the significance of the novel’s title with respect to plot, characters, and themes. (Morgan)

2. In a novel or play, a confidant (male) or a confidante (female) is a character, often a friend or relative of the hero or heroine, whose role is to be present when the hero or heroine needs a sympathetic listener to confide in. Frequently the result is, as Henry James remarked, that the confidant or confidante can be as much “the reader’s friend as the protagonist’s.” However, the author sometimes uses this character for other purposes as well. Choose a confidant or confidante from *The Chrysalids* and examine the various ways this character functions in the work. Make sure to examine their role in relation to the hero, and their place in the overall theme of the novel. (Roni)

3. On the surface, the role of women in *The Chrysalids* appears to be a subservient one to the men of the society. While this may be the case, John Wyndham creates many strong, independent, and powerful women in order to convey his themes. Explore the characterization of the women in the novel, and make sure to examine their role in relation to the overall theme of the novel. (Note: either choose one character and give three examples, or three characters following a single point) (Kaylie)

4. Writers often highlight the values of a culture or a society by using characters who are alienated from that culture or society because of gender, race, class, or creed. Choose a character in *The Chrysalids* who plays a significant role and show how that character’s alienation reveals the surrounding society’s assumptions or moral values. (Josee)

5. Some novels and plays seem to advocate changes in social or political attitudes or in traditions. Examining *The Chrysalids,* note briefly the particular attitudes or traditions that the author apparently wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader’s or audience’s views. Avoid plot summary. (Kyra)

6. Many great pieces of literature depict a conflict between a parent (or a parental figure) and a son or daughter. In *The Chrysalids*, David and his father are at odds throughout the novel. Analyze the sources of the conflict and explain how the conflict contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid plot summary. (Janessa)

7. The word “chrysalid” means a state into which the larvae of most insects pass before becoming perfect insects. The chrysalid takes in no food and is inactive. In general the word can mean a sheltered state of growth. IF we use this definition as a description of life in Waknuk, what are the people sheltering themselves from? What is the “perfect state” they are trying to achieve? Does the title of the novel apply to the eight characters who can communicate in thought-shapes? Explain. (OPEN)

8. Discuss Joseph Strorm’s ideas of purity and “the norm” in relation to those of other powerful/knowledgeable adult characters in the novel. (Katherine)

9. One of the themes of *The Chrysalids* is that blind acceptance of traditions and strict social conformity leads to the persecution and destruction of fellow human beings. Discuss how this idea is illustrated in the novel. (Shannon)

10. Discuss David as a dynamic character and how he changes throughout the storyline. What factors lead to him abandoning his family and starting a new life in Sealand? (Madison)

11. *The Chrysalids* shows the dangers of people believing that they belong to a superior race or group. Discuss the novel in relation to the theme of the dangers of religious extremism and intolerance. (Nathaniel)

12. Joseph Strorm is a very powerful and influential man, but his overall character often comes into question in the novel. Discuss how others in the play see and view him, and draw conclusions about people’s overall feelings towards him. (Heather)

13. Deviation is not considered a virtue in Waknuk’s society, though many characters have “elastic principals” regarding them. Discuss various examples of these types of characters in the novel. Why do they possess such principals? What do their actions/dialogue reveal about the nature of the “norm”? (David)

14. The novel is told in the 1st person point of view, but as a flashback to David’s youth. Discuss the idea of youthful naivety and conformity, and how that plays a role in the control that a society can exercise over a population. Think in terms of education and exposure to the outside world. How is this shown in the novel? (Callie)

15. Relationships play a large role in David’s growth as an individual. Discuss some of the relationships he has, citing both negative and positive ones, and show how each contributes to David’s evolution as a character. (Tiffany)

16. Violence, death, and ostracism are a part of Waknuk’s society because of its principals relating to the norm vs. deviation. Provide examples of each, and show how they result from societal values. (Paige)