

Dialectical Essay Instructions: *Was the Trial of Eloise Mercier Just?*

Was Eloise Mercier afforded fair rights as the accused in her trial?

Write a **4-paragraph dialectical essay** analyzing the fairness of the trial in the context of Enlightenment ideas and the evidence from the Mercier case. Use specific references to Enlightenment philosophers and details from the trial.

Paragraph 1: Introduction & Thesis

- Briefly introduce the Mercier case (1-2 sentences)
- Introduce the Enlightenment idea of "rights of the accused"
- Clearly state your **thesis**: Was the trial fair or unfair? Why?

Paragraph 2: Philosophical Argument That the Trial Was Unjust

- Explain how 1–2 philosophers would argue the trial was unfair
- Use specific evidence from the trial to support the claim
- Tie in Enlightenment views on natural rights, due process, or gender equality

Paragraph 3: Philosophical Argument That the Trial Was Just

- Explain how 1–2 philosophers might argue the trial was fair
- Use specific trial evidence to support that perspective
- Tie in Enlightenment ideas of social order, utilitarianism, or justice through law

Note: Paragraphs 2 and 3 can be reversed depending on your thesis.

Paragraph 4: Personal Analysis & Judgment

- Do you think Eloise was guilty or innocent? Was her trial fair?
- Reflect on the rights of the accused in the trial process
- Address gender: How might Eloise's gender have influenced how she was treated or judged?

Expectations:

- Use at least **3 pieces of evidence** from the Mercier case
- Reference **at least 3 Enlightenment philosophers**
- Maintain historical perspective (write as if you understand both the Enlightenment era and the case)
- Write clearly with proper structure, transitions, and analysis

Dialectical Essay Rubric

Category	Exceeds (5)	Proficient (4)	Approaching (3)	Needs Improvement (1–2)
Thesis & Introduction	Strong, clear, and well-contextualized thesis; introduces both case and Enlightenment ideas	Clear thesis and context for the case	Thesis present but weak or unclear	Missing or confusing thesis
Philosophical Reasoning – Unjust	Insightful use of philosophers and strong evidence from trial	Correct use of philosophers with some relevant evidence	Limited or partially accurate analysis	Vague or inaccurate use of philosophers or case
Philosophical Reasoning – Just	Sophisticated analysis and effective use of Enlightenment ideas and trial details	Reasonable argument using some relevant philosophers and examples	Limited explanation or weak evidence	Minimal understanding or unsupported claims
Personal Judgment & Gender Analysis	Strong personal insight and clear, thoughtful reflection on gender and fairness	Student gives opinion with some mention of gender and trial fairness	Opinion is underdeveloped or vague on gender	Lacks clear judgment or ignores gender issue
Writing Quality & Organization	Clear, well-organized, few/no errors; strong transitions	Generally clear with minor issues; organized	Some unclear parts or weak structure	Many grammar or structure issues; disorganized