

Free Will & Characters

The notion of free will centers on the belief that individuals make various choices in life based on humanity's independence from control of any outside sources. In creative writing, protagonists make decisions based on either **Determinism or on **Free Will**. Your papers need to start taking this debate into consideration, heightening the analysis process and influencing your particular choice of a critical lens.**

1. Western Civilization has discussed and argued over this topic for many centuries. The primary debate is outlined as whether the universe follows a logic of **Freedom of Choice** or **Determinism**.
2. **Is humanity given the choice of free will in a deterministic universe?** (or)
Is humanity actually constrained by the laws of a deterministic universe and struggles to be free?
3. These types of questions tread into territories of the Sciences as well as Philosophy and Religion. This class itself falls into the range of these higher thinking academics.
4. To the Ancients, Immortals controlled all aspects of human life. The Ancient Gods were not seen as caretakers of the world; often these deities were shown as selfish, demanding creatures, unwilling to allow mortals any true sense of self-value or importance. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* brings forward these general attitudes of the developing civilizations and their relationship with abstract concepts such as Love, Death, and Sacrifice. Ultimately, early forms of literature often question what type of relationship exists between mortals and the Spirit World.
5. In the Ancient World, it is not until the Greek philosophers **Plato** and **Aristotle** that ideas of self-independence were formally defined. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, **Plato** asserted individuals must seek out virtuous living in order to be free from the control of base desires. Self-control therefore equates with a basic concept of freedom.

6.

Aristotle later confirms this idea by stating humanity has a voluntary choice of following righteousness or sinfulness. Making strong virtuous selections reinforces the positive possibilities in one's life; selecting the negative only reinforces vicious behavior. His **Golden Mean** outlines a strategy for everyone to follow.

7.

Christian views of free will emerge with the Greek **Stoic** philosophies of **Epictetus** (circa 55 BCE - 135 CE) and the early church leaders such as **Saint Augustine** (354 - 430). **Epictetus** specifically believed that although God (Zeus) controls the universe through Fate, he allows humans to make choices which affect one's purpose. External items such as wealth, popularity, possessions, these can deter individuals from the proper path.

8.

Augustine in his *Confessions*, acknowledges that he knows he has self-will, as much as he knows he has a life (7.III.55). Further, he meditates on the purpose of humankind being allowed to have choices by a Being of All Good. Why then, he questions, are mortals allowed to stray away from "the light"?

9.

When building an analysis of your readings, it is important to further examine these rhetorical issues and debates in terms of the characterizations of the protagonists and antagonists. In this fashion, a better grasp on plausible themes are uncovered.

10.

Likewise, what results is a greater understanding of the author's intentions with the plot and final message of the novel. All writers operate with an agenda of some fashion, specifically within the readings for English 23332 / English 2333. Be sure to make notations and annotations within the text defending or suggesting the philosophies of the characters and how their actions reflect back on the author. *Are such reactions examples of what is good about society or are these situations detailing what is wrong in society?*

Free Will **Determinism** Fatalism

Free Will	Determinism	Fatalism
Consequences are determined by human choices independent of outside sources	Consequences are dependent on causality (Cause and effect formula)	Consequences are not dependent on causality (All causes are independent of each other)
The future is undetermined	The future is causally determined	The future is a “fixed” path; fate exists
Life cannot be formulated; an individual’s thoughts and actions cannot be predicted	The formulated causal process affects an individual’s actions and thoughts	Fate as a formula controls an individual’s path, including how he/she acts or thinks
Individuals control their future	Individuals can affect their future	Individuals cannot affect their future
Religion may or may not factor into the understanding of one’s final resolutions	Provides a secular understanding of causality	Provides a religious dogma of how God or a deity controls fate



Philosophy

Classifications



Idealist	Materialist (Physicalism)
Plato	Epicurus
Descarte	Lucretius
Nietzsche	Karl Marx

Theist	Deist	Agnostic	Atheist
Plato	Thomas Jefferson	Epicurius	Jean-Paul Sartre
Johannes Kepler	René Descarte	Lucretius	Karl Marx (poss.)
Isaac Newton	Locke	Camus	
Galileo Galilei	Ben Franklin	Einstein	
	Thomas Paine	Carl Sagan	
	Abraham Lincoln		

Monism	Dualism	Pluralism (Philosophy)	Nihilism
Doctrine of Unity	Doctrine of Duality	Doctrine of Multiplicity	Doctrine of Nothingness
mind/body	Soul and Body	Fire, Air, Water, Earth	
body/mind	Matter and Spirit	Earth, Wind, Fire	
	God and Nature		
Universe (Matter)	Good and Evil		
God (Essence)			
Nature			
Nothingness			
...
		Anaxagoras	Albert Camus
Heraclitus	Saint Thomas Aquinas	Archelaus	Jean-Paul Sartre
Thales	René Descartes	Empedocles	Friedrich Nietzsche