Your essay is expected to raise a question about a reading or prove an argument about it. You can follow either of these strategies (A or B). Also, take note of the common mistakes students make in formal academic essays (Section C). A. HOW TO CREATE AN ARGUMENT ABOUT WHAT YOU READ To create an argument about a reading, imagine how other people read it and offer your response in which you disagree with their interpretation. Here is an example of how you could develop an argument about the story of Adam and Eve (in the Book of Genesis): 1. Find an important question to discuss about the text. For example, if you read the story of Adam and Eve, you might wonder whether God knew about the serpent’s plan to corrupt people. This question is a foundation of your argument: Did God know about the serpent’s plans? 2. Show two different ways of answering the question: Perhaps some readers of the story will say that God did not know about the serpent’s plans. You, on the other hand, might say that God actually know about the serpent’s plans. 3. State your argument in one sentence. Here is the basic formula: Many readers of [the work’s title] seem to believe that the serpent acted independently of God, but I argue that he acted with God’s tacit approval. It is important that the argument shows the contrast between what you want to a) disprove and b) prove. 4. Compile evidence from the text to support both sides of your argument