Thesis: Robert Bolt’s Sir Thomas More is selfish and complacent; his stubborn morality is a tragic flaw that leads to his useless, unnecessary death.

Paragraph one
Topic sentence: In order to stay faithful to his religion, More disregards the wishes and welfare of his friends and family, and indeed all of England.
-- his refusal to swear to the act authorizing the King’s divorce makes More “dangerous to know” (120)
-- his acquaintance makes More’s peers complicit in his refusal
-- Margaret is a character of “ardent moral fineness” (xxiii) and she tells More to “say the words of the oath and in your heart think otherwise” (140)
-- More’s wife tells him “your death’s no ‘good’ to me!” (144)
-- as Chancellor, More is able to have a positive influence on English affairs: “what has been done badly, might have been done worse, with a different Chancellor” (86)
-- More is told that if he swears to the oath “there is no honor which the King would be likely to deny you” (114)
-- More ignores what might be good for his country and what his family wants and chooses to die

Paragraph two
Topic sentence: More’s refusal to budge on the issue of the oath is the result of his rigid self-definition.
-- More “knew where he began and left off” (xii) and is too cowardly to continue to grow
-- he would rather die than put his precious conscience at risk

Paragraph three
Topic sentence: More refuses to question authority, even though his own morals are borrowed.
-- More doesn’t “stand out,” as Norfolk claims – he does everything he can to conform to Roman Catholic doctrines
-- More unquestioningly carries out the will of his Pope and his church, even though the Pope is “strikingly corrupt” (75) and the church is “monied…inflexible…plagued with many heresies” (vii)
-- More’s wife recognizes that he is simply conforming to others’ morals: “Is this wisdom – to betray your ability, abandon practice, forget your station and your duty to your kin and behave like a printed book!” (90)
-- despite his refusal to consider compromising, More admits that he doesn’t know what God wants: “I find [God] rather too subtle…I don’t know where he is nor what he wants” (67)