

Essay Writing Checklist

Introduction

- The first sentence is the hook and is designed to grab the reader's attention
- Transition from the hook to the thesis statement
- Give the full title(s) of the work(s) you are exploring as well as the complete name(s) of the author(s)
- The thesis statement is the *last* sentence in the introduction paragraph
- The thesis statement is persuasive and clearly and directly responds to the writing prompt or assignment
- The introduction is at least 5 sentences

Body Paragraphs

- The topic sentence is the *first* sentence of each body paragraph
- The topic sentences are an extension of the thesis statement—each topic sentence is persuasive and clearly proves and supports the thesis statement
- Topic sentences do not summarize plot or make general comments
- Body paragraphs are developed with *at least two* supporting passages/quotes from the literature
- Introduce each quote effectively by providing the reader with the *context* for each supporting quote as necessary: *speaker + occasion*
- Follow each quote with *at least one* sentence of analysis that explain how the quote supports and proves the topic sentence and therefore the thesis statement
- The last sentence of each body paragraph is a concluding sentence that summarizes the paragraph and/or transitions to the next paragraph

Conclusion

- Restates the thesis statement
- Summarizes the main ideas without being repetitive
- May possibly revisit the hook or provides another creative ending
- Expands on the ideas in the essay, leaving the reader thinking and pondering
- The conclusion is at least 5 sentences
- Never write “In conclusion...”

Other Important Aspects

- Use formal writing style, tone, and language
- Avoid be-verbs
- Avoid slang, poor diction, non-specific language, and contractions
- Avoid addressing the reader and the use of first-person
- Be mindful and aware of MLA format in citing your sources in the text
- Pay attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Always proofread and self-edit your work
- Give your essay a creative, thoughtful and interesting title

Take pride in your work and give the essay 100% of your effort!

Topic Sentence Checklist

An effective topic sentence:

- Is persuasive and proves/supports the thesis statement
- States a claim, idea, or assertion—the author’s expert opinion about the literature
- Like the thesis statement, addresses *how/why questions*
- Is *very clear* and *very specific*
- Avoids 1st person point of view
- Avoids plot summary
- Avoids stating the obvious
- Avoids abstract ideas and language
- Avoids passive voice (aka be-verbs)

Using Supporting Details Checklist

Consider the following when using supporting quotes and passages in your writing:

- Lead into or set up your quote/passage with *speaker* (character/narrator) and *occasion* (context, or what’s happening in the plot), if possible and appropriate
- Follow up a quote with *at least one or two* sentences of commentary and analysis before moving on to the next supporting detail. The commentary should explain how the quote supports the topic sentence and thesis statement
- Avoid excessive plot summary – only summarize when it is necessary to prove your thesis!
- Be sure the quote is relevant to your topic sentence and thesis—does your quote help prove your point?
- Avoid letting the quote speak for itself—avoid “dropping” the quote; always surround a quote with your own words. See the “Integrating Quotes” PPT on Weebly for more help.

Active and Academic Verbs to Use in Critical Literary Analysis

Emphasizes

Elucidates

Compares

Suggests

Creates

Illustrates

Exemplifies

Parallels

Juxtaposes

Implies

Alludes to

Observes

Identifies

Organizes

Reinforces

Clarifies

Contrasts

Argues

Mirrors

Echoes

Develops

Connotes

Focuses

Balances

Relates

Expresses

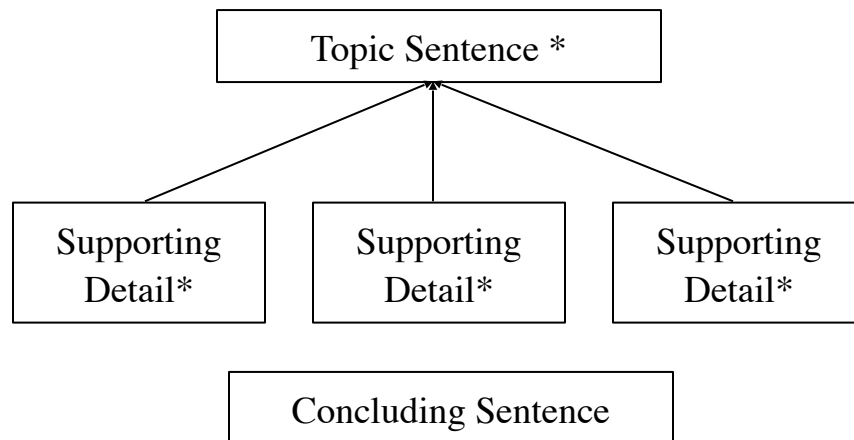
Insinuates

Demonstrates

Defines

Anatomy of a Paragraph & Paragraph Checklist

Consider the following model of a typical literary analysis paragraph:



Each supporting detail is made up of:

1. Lead-in or set-up: **Speaker + Occasion**
2. Direct quote or passage
3. **At least one-two** sentences of following commentary/analysis

The Concluding Sentence:

- Wraps up and summarizes the paragraph
- Transitions to the next body paragraph
- Avoids the words “in conclusion” or “in summary”

Consider the following reminders when composing a literary analysis paragraph:

- Use the strongest argument, or supporting detail, last
- Be mindful of spelling, grammar, and punctuation
- Use present tense verbs when writing literary analysis
- Be mindful of proper MLA format when citing a source
- Avoid poor diction and slang

- Avoid clichés, first-person point of view, and addressing the reader

The Introduction Paragraph: Strategies & Checklist:

The introduction paragraph in an essay of literary analysis functions as follows:

- It focuses the reader's attention on the topic and arouses curiosity
- It specifies your subject and implies your attitude/tone
- It provides background necessary to understand the thesis statement
- It is concise and sincere
- It comes to a point with the thesis statement

Anatomy of the Introduction:

1st Sentence: Hook or Opening Sentence

- Engages the reader's attention

2nd – 3rd Sentence

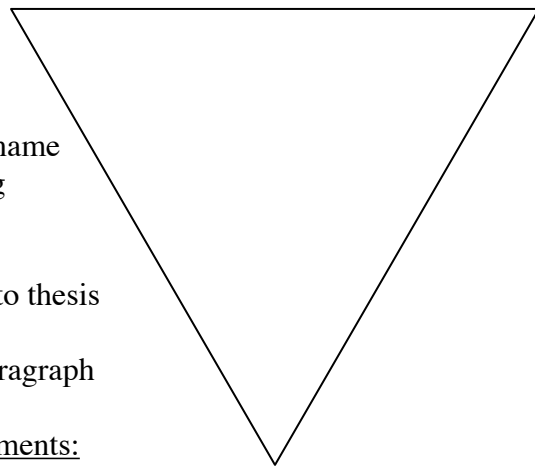
- Should mention the author's complete name and the complete title of the work being analyzed

3rd - 5th Sentences

- Function to transition ideas from hook to thesis

Thesis Statement

- Final sentence(s) of the introduction paragraph



Strategies for Composing Hooks or Opening Statements:

- Use a vivid quotation
- Create a visual image that represents your subject
- Create an analogy for your subject
- Offer a surprising/interesting statistic or other fact
- State an opinion related to your thesis
- Ask a question or define a word central to your subject (Note= Use these techniques very sparingly and cautiously, as they may be considered cliché)

Consider the following checklist when writing an introduction paragraph:

- The opening sentence or hook engages the reader's attention
- The introduction avoids 1st person point of view, slang, and poor diction
- Specific terms or language are clearly defined
- Necessary background information is provided
- The paragraph clearly and logically transitions from the hook to the thesis statement
- The thesis statement appears at the end of the introduction
- Avoid vague/abstract language
- Avoid an attempt to be cute, funny, or terribly clever
- The introduction is usually 5 – 6 sentences (longer introductions tend to ramble and detract from the topic)
- Uses present tense verbs consistently

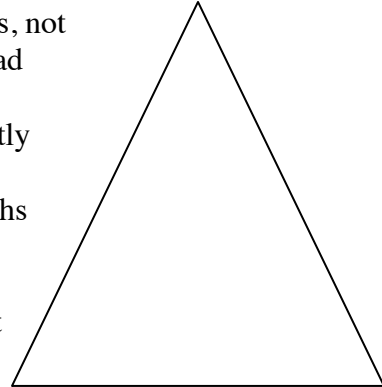
The Conclusion Paragraph: Strategies, Checklist, & Samples

The conclusion paragraph in a literary analysis essay functions as follows:

- It finishes off the essay and tells readers where the writer has brought them
- It restates the thesis and contains echoes of the introduction and body paragraphs without listing the points covered in the essay
- It creates a broader implication of the ideas discussed and answers the question “So what?”

Anatomy of the conclusion:

- The conclusion begins with a restatement of the thesis, not a repetition, and gradually widens toward a final, broad statement of implication
- Borrows from the body paragraphs, without being flatly repetitive or listing points already covered
- Creates echoes of the introduction and body paragraphs to reinforce analysis/ideas
- Moves outward with a statement that relates the thesis to a broader implication so the reader can see it in a larger perspective



Strategies for Composing Conclusions:

- Strike a note of hope or despair
- Give a symbolic or powerful fact/detail
- Create an analogy that relates your topic to a larger implication
- Give an especially compelling example
- Create a powerful visual image that represents your topic
- Use a meaningful quotation
- Recommend a course of action
- Echo the approach/language of the introduction/hook

Consider the following checklist when writing a conclusion:

- ☐ Avoid first person point of view, abstract/vague language, poor diction, and slang
- Avoid simply repeating the thesis and/or listing the main points
- Don't conclude more than you reasonably can from the evidence you have presented
- Echo the language/ideas from your introduction and body paragraphs
- Expand on the implications of your ideas—So what?
- Avoid any attempts to be funny, cute, or clever
- The conclusion is usually 5 – 6 sentences