

Honors Literature and Short Stories
Week 14

John Steinbeck novels

Opening Paragraph

As you remember from Expository Writing, your opening paragraph is your first impression. In the case of Literature Analysis, your opening paragraph should begin with a grabber – something interesting either from the book, or a question, or another quote that will want your reader to continue. It will introduce your book and the author. It will also provide a brief summary of the story as it relates to your topic of your paper. In other words, if you are discussing specific symbolism in your essay, your summary of the story will be tilted in that direction.

Often it is difficult to write an introduction – it may take some trial and error. It may help to follow these steps in this order initially:

1. Write an opening sentence that will “grab” your reader’s attention. This should be a broad statement about your topic – or find a quote which presents a broad statement about your topic. Or perhaps it could be a question to your reader.

2. Introduce the title and author

When we begin writing about a book or short story, we introduce the title and the author of the book. The title of a book is always underlined or *italicized* – either way is acceptable, as long as it is consistent. Each word of the title, except for articles (the, a, an), prepositions (of, in, on, for etc.), and conjunctions (but, and, so) begins with a capital letter. If the article, preposition or conjunction is the first word of the title or the last word of the title, it also begins with a capital letter.

Examples:

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Freak the Mighty by Rodman Philbrick

Castle in the Attic by Elizabeth Winthrop

The Door in the Wall by Marguerite De Angeli

Sign of the Beaver by Elizabeth George Speare

Island of the Blue Dolphin by Scott O'Dell

The sentence that introduces the title and the author gives a brief overall picture of the book.

Introducing the title and author is accomplished in different ways:

To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee, tells the story of a small town whose prejudice causes an innocent man to be convicted of a crime.

Harper Lee, in her novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, shows the devastating effects of prejudice on the lives of one small town.

Harper Lee relates the events caused by prejudice in a small southern town in the early 1930's in her book To Kill a Mockingbird.

3. Write a very brief summary of the story – one or two sentences.
4. Write a more specific statement that is closer to your main idea.
5. Write an even more specific statement that is even closer to your main idea.
6. Write your thesis statement.

Note this sample – the story summary is in blue, and the thesis statement is bold:

“It ain’t right, Atticus,” says Jem. “No son, it’s not right,” (243) agrees Atticus as he and his son reflect on a black versus white case that Atticus has lost. In Harper Lee’s book To Kill a Mockingbird Lee shows prejudice in many ways, as a young girl watches her father defend a black man against a false charge. Bias develops between blacks and whites and people who are noticeably different. Prejudice can also divide family and friends or put them on different sides. Narrow-mindedness can cause many major misunderstandings. **In Maycomb, prejudice causes difficulties between the town and Boo Radley, Tom Robinson, and Mr. Ewell.**

The paragraph should be long enough to let your reader know briefly about the book, and introduce your thesis.

Closing Paragraph

Conclusion paragraphs are very difficult for many people to write. As you learned in Expository Writing, your closing paragraph will provide a wrap-up – including **the thesis statement restated in different words**. It will also leave a final impression on your reader.

- Sometimes it helps to read your three supporting paragraphs and then ask yourself, “So what?” Show your readers why the paper is important, meaningful and useful.
- Give your reader something to think about. Tie it to the “real world”.
- Although you cannot add NEW information to your closing paragraph, you may be able to take your ideas and show a new picture for your readers.
- Provide commentary on what you have written – still remaining in the third person.
- You may also want to tie together what you discussed in your three supporting paragraphs. You don’t want to simply repeat what was already said, but show your reader how they tie together.
- A good strategy is to tie in something from your introduction to bring your essay full circle.

A sample:

In Maycomb, prejudice causes tragedy, and even young Jem knows it is not the right thing. Tragically, prison guards shoot Tom because of discrimination. Narrow-mindedness causes Mr. Ewell to try and hurt or murder Atticus' children. **While prejudice clearly affects the lives of the novel's characters**, unfortunately, even today it still causes harm to citizens in this and other countries. As Atticus tries to teach his children about the vileness of prejudice, perhaps parents today can continue to help their children overcome this short-sighted behavior.

Notice the real world connection at the end, and notice the tie-in to the opening paragraph with the mentions of Jem knowing it is not right.

Assignments

1. Complete any edits on your supporting paragraphs and add your opening and closing paragraphs to your essay.
Draft of entire essay due this week. 20 points
2. **Weekly Shorts: 5 points**
3. **Journal: Journal:** Finish reading "Ransom of Red Chief", by O. Henry. Refer to your Literary Techniques handout, and identify what techniques are used (and explain why and how). Respond to any of following questions you have not already answered from last week.

Foreshadowing is evident in the first paragraph (§1). Identify it.

What literary special effect did O. Henry use for "as flat as a flannel-cake, and called Summit"?

What element of foreshadowing is evident in paragraph six (§6) or the paragraph just before the kidnappers begin to speak to the little boy?

What literary special effect is "crackle of a twig or the rustle of a leaf"?

What literary special effect is the reference to Geronmino (§13), Buffalo Bill (§13), David (§37), Goliath (§37), and King Herod (§41)?