

Honors Literature and Short Stories

Week 25

Expository Essay

We will have completed steps 1-8 by the end of this week.

1. Choose a topic and the three or more main ideas you will be discussing. I suggest you choose a topic that will tie in with something you are learning in one of your other subjects – probably history. Remember, choose a topic that has depth, and will require YOU to find answers by reading many resources.
2. Write your thesis statement. What question are you going to be answering with your essay? The answer to this question will be your thesis statement. Your thesis statement must include your three (or more) main ideas that you will be discussing in the essay.
3. Gather your resources and list them in MLA format (Works Cited Page). For your own use, list them on a sheet of paper and NUMBER them. Remember, the numbering is for your OWN use only, and will not appear on anything you turn in to me.
4. Take notes from all of your resources, following the **Note Taking** procedure at the end of this lesson. Be sure to choose good **quotes** to include in your essay.
5. Write topic sentences for each of your three (or more) main ideas. See **Topic Sentences** following this lesson.
6. Write your three (or more) supporting paragraphs, each beginning with one of your topic sentences.
7. Write your opening paragraph, ending with your thesis statement.
8. Write your closing paragraph, including a restatement (in different words) of your thesis statement.

Writing your opening paragraph

We all know how important first impressions are. Your opening paragraph is going to be your first impression for your audience. This introduction must grab the reader and make him want to continue to learn more. So, what does your opening paragraph need?

First you need to catch your reader's attention with a "grabber". You will remember learning about this in Creative Writing. In an expository essay, your lead, or grabber can be:

- An interesting or intriguing quote (either from your resources, or from some other source)
- A statistic that will surprise your reader

- A startling or unusual fact
- A question
- A bold opinion (here is your chance to put in your opinion!)
- A descriptive segment
- An anecdote (very brief story – true or made up as an example).

Consider your topic as you look at this list. One of these suggestions will work for you. The following are examples for an essay on teen smoking:

Using an anecdote:

Running the ball for a touchdown was the high school student's dream. The ball actually made it into his outstretched hands! He began racing for the goal. Suddenly, his breath became short and a fit of coughing overtook him. Tackle! As he lay on the ground in frustration, he wondered if smoking had anything to do with his trouble.

From there you would continue with the paragraph, changing to a more factual perspective. The paragraph will end with your thesis statement.

Using a statistic:

Lung cancer is a national killer. Ninety-nine percent of lung cancer deaths are due to smoking.

From there you would continue with perhaps a question about why people would smoke or something related to the rest of your essay. Remember, you don't want to present your whole topic in this opening – it is an introduction. Again, your paragraph will end with your thesis statement.

Using a quote:

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – / I took the one less traveled by,/ and that has made all the difference.”
Robert Frost wrote these words many years ago, yet people can apply them to choices they make every day. For teens, one of the choices is to smoke or not to smoke.

From there you would consider to give a little more information, and then end the paragraph with your thesis statement.

Using a question:

Would teen-agers begin smoking if they knew the almost certain, painful death that will occur in the future?

Again, from there you would continue to give some more background information and then end with your thesis statement.

Using a startling fact:

Cigarette manufacturers direct their advertising at the pre-teen and the teenager! According to xyz, young people ARE the target!

Continue with more information and then end with your thesis statement.

Using a bold opinion:

Forcing smokers to stay in a room with each other for a full day might open their eyes to the effects of their habit.

You would then support that with information that will then, again, lead into your thesis statement.

Writing an Opening Paragraph

Your opening paragraph must be related to your overall essay, obviously. It will introduce what you will be discussing, and lead your reader gently to your thesis statement.

Begin with a GRABBER. A grabber is something that will make the reader want to keep reading! This might be a startling fact or surprising statistic, or a quote that is related to your topic. It might be a bold statement about the topic. Clarify with another sentence if needed.

Following the grabber, you will provide BROAD background on your topic. It will put the topic in perspective. This will help your reader to understand the setting or events under which your narrower topic of your essay fits. If your essay is on employment issues of the Great Depression, for example, this part of the opening is going to briefly explain when the Great Depression was, and a little bit about it in **GENERAL**. This will usually be two or three sentences.

Next, you will begin to draw your opening closer to your actual topic. Narrow down the focus from the **GENERAL**, to some more specifics. This should be two or three sentences.

Finally, you will narrow this down to your thesis statement, which includes your main ideas (subtopics), in the order in which you introduce them in the essay.

You will also need to remember that if you put any information in your opening paragraph that has come from one of your sources, you must cite it. This, obviously, is going to be the case in

most opening paragraphs, since you are introducing your topic about which you have read. Do not plagiarize information!

WRITING THE CLOSING

Start by THINKING about your essay.

Read your essay aloud and then ask yourself, “So what? How is this important or how does it affect the world as I know it – either the world as a whole, or the smaller society of which I am part? Write down all of your thoughts and answers to these questions.

Look back at your opening!

What technique did you use for your grabber and the sentences following it? If you can continue this technique in the closing, it will bring it all together. For example, if you started with a startling statistic, perhaps you can refer to that statistic again. If you have some background on the setting or time period – in GENERAL – you can tie this back in at the end again. Be careful not to repeat yourself, though.

Remember your thesis!

Restate your thesis statement – in DIFFERENT WORDS

Bring it all together

Now that you have gathered all of these notes for your closing, bring it together! Begin with a sentence that shows transition: Of course.... Certainly Indeed Clearly It is certain that... Surely ... Unquestionably ... or any other method you like.

- ❑ NEVER start your closing with In conclusion, or In closing.

Again, if you include any information from any of your sources in your closing paragraph, be sure to cite it correctly. Here, again, you can share your overall view in subtle words – without using I, me, us, we, you.

Common Errors

As you are writing and revising your essays, be sure to check for these common errors.

- Citing your source within text.
 - For a book, make sure to put author's last name and page number in parenthesis before the period of your sentence.
 In Canada, FAS children and adults make up 50% of those in jail (McLean 32).
 Note that you do not put a comma, or the word page or any abbreviation for page. Simply put author's last name and page number.
 If your next sentences are from the same source, but with different page numbers, put it in the format shown above for the first citation, then just put the page number – in parenthesis – until you change sources. That is, do not keep including the author's last name after each sentence. When you cite another source, and then return to the previous author again after that, you will again cite author's last name and page number again.
 - Citing other resources. You all have a list of your resources in proper MLA format. You will use the first word of that resource. For example:
 Kids Health. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. 16 Jan. 2002
 <<http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/medical/brain/fas.html>>.
 When you cite this within your paper, you will put it as (Kids). This will make sense if you realize that if your reader wants to check your source, he/she will look at the Works Cited page and look for the resource on your list (which will be in alphabetical order). He will look for something beginning with "Kids".
- Leading into a quotation.

You have all included some good quotes in your essays. However, you cannot insert a quote without a lead-in. This is like dialogue in a story. Some examples of lead-ins might be:

According to so-and-so...

So-and-so, in *Book Title* shares that...

So-and-so, of such-and-such explains...

Vary your use of lead-ins (or it may appear after the quote) so that you aren't always saying "According to..."
- Shortening your quotations

While incorporating good quotations is important, there are times when you do not need the entire sentence. You may only need a few words. If you are leaving off the beginning of the sentence, simply start your quote with the words you plan to use. If you are leaving out information in the middle, you need to put an ellipse within brackets. This looks like this: [. . .] and would appear in this way in a quotation.

Original sentence: During breeding season the Humpback males are known for singing the longest and most complex songs in the animal kingdom.

Change to: According to the Whales In Danger Information Service, “humpback males are known for singing the longest [. . .] songs in the animal kingdom” (Whales).

Notice that I left out “and the most complex” and indicated I had left out something by putting in the ellipse within the brackets.

Sometimes a quotation is confusing without the previous information. In this case, you can clarify it by including the information in brackets. For example:

Original quote: In the words of one adoptive parent, “They burn the house down and two days later they’re playing with matches again”

Clarification (since perhaps we wouldn’t know who “they” is): In the words of one adoptive parent, “[Children affected by FAS] burn the house down and two days later they’re playing with matches again”

Notice that we put in our own words within the quote to clarify who we are talking about. This is enclosed within brackets.

Assignments

1. Continue work for your Expository essay. Send me the work from step 7 and 8 above. **Due Friday. 10 points (for progress – you will receive final essay points upon completion)** *Final Draft due week 27: 200 points*
2. **Weekly Shorts: 5 points**
3. **Journal 10 points** Finish reading either *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley or *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson. **You will finish this book by the end of this week.** Use your close reading guide to respond each week. Make sure you have included responses to everything (including the following). **Journal Entry #3 Due.**

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Discuss the method of narration used for this story. How does it affect the development of the story?

Discuss techniques used to create the mood of dread. Be specific.

Discuss the development of the characters. How do the minor characters contribute to the story?

Frankenstein

Discuss the novel’s shifts in narrative perspective. What is the effect of presenting different characters’ viewpoints, especially those of Victor and the monster?

Does the monster’s eloquence help you to develop sympathy for the monster? In most movies the monster is portrayed as being mute or inarticulate. Why do you think this was done?

Discuss the role of suspense and foreshadowing in the novel. Is it used effectively, or is the foreshadowing too obvious?