

## Honors Literature and Short Stories

### Week 4

All essays are structured around a basic format. This format includes:

- ❑ Opening paragraph with a thesis statement
- ❑ Supporting paragraphs
- ❑ Closing paragraph

The 5-paragraph essay is the type of essay that we use first, and for most assignments in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level. This essay has:

- ❑ Opening paragraph with a thesis statement which includes the three main ideas that will be discussed in the essay.
- ❑ Three supporting paragraphs, each which will discuss one of the three main ideas.
- ❑ Closing paragraph

Our steps to writing this essay are:

1. Determine the topic
2. Determine the three main ideas about the topic
3. Write a thesis statement
4. Write the topic sentences for your main ideas
5. Write the three supporting paragraphs
6. Write your transition sentences
7. Write the opening and closing paragraphs

We will later learn how to write an expository essay – a research essay. For now we will be learning how to write a literature analysis essay. Our first analysis is of the allegorical novel *Watership Down* by Richard Adams.

### **Determining the topic**

Since we are writing about the allegory of this novel, our topic will be related to that.

### ***Writing about Allegory***

As we discussed last week, an allegory is a fictional work that makes a commentary on some aspect of the real world (individual people, historical events, society in general) through the behaviors, actions, or structures of the characters and situations in the book. These allegorical behaviors in the story are often exaggerated. Allegories often use exaggerated one-dimensional characters (those who don't change or develop) to represent certain types of people in society.

Some questions we will want to answer prior to even starting to write the essay include:

- ❑ Does the allegory in the story refer to a specific person or group of people?
- ❑ Does the allegory in the story refer to a specific period of history?
- ❑ Or, is the allegory more general; does it refer to general human tendencies or ideas?
- ❑ Does the allegory seem applicable in today's society, or is it outdated? If it is outdated, can it be applied for today?
- ❑ Is the allegory used consistently throughout the book, or is it something that appears only intermittently?

- ❑ Which characters or objects in the story are part of the whole allegory?
- ❑ What behaviors or actions show the symbolic or allegorical significance?

*Watership Down* presents a commentary on different societal, political and government systems in the past and present, and how the differing leaderships affect the society and people they rule (positively and negatively). Your job for this essay is to choose a topic about which to write.

**Suggested topics:**

- ❑ **The types of political leadership (i.e. fascism, decadent humanism, democratic, tolerant and environmentally aware) as compared to historical human political leadership**
- ❑ **The rabbits' class system and human society.**
- ❑ **The gender roles of the rabbits and human society.**

**Determining the three main ideas**

At this point we have now chosen our topic from the list above. Now we need to determine the three main ideas about the chosen topic about which we will write:

- ❑ **The types of political leadership (i.e. fascism, decadent humanism, democratic, tolerant and environmentally aware) as compared to historical human political leadership. Write about three of the leaders and groups. You will include examples from the book of the actions, and your commentary on the leaders (specific or in general) as they represent historical (or current) political parties. You must clearly show the parallels.**
- ❑ **The rabbits' class system and human society. Write about three classes of human society represented by specific characters or groups in the story. Show examples of how the allegorical characters demonstrate the characteristics, and the parallel classes in society. Be specific. Clearly show the parallels.**
- ❑ **The gender roles of the rabbits and human society. Write about three different viewpoints of gender roles as shown in the story, and their parallels in human society and history. Use examples from the story and relate directly to specific people or groups of people in human society. Clearly show the parallels.**

Once you choose the topic and three main ideas for your essay, you must review the book and find support for your ideas. You will also find specific material from the book, which you will quote, to support your ideas.

**Writing a thesis statement**

A thesis statement is also called your purpose statement. Basically you will ask yourself, "What question will I be answering with this essay?" You have chosen your topic and you have chosen

your three main ideas (subtopics). Once you have asked yourself, “What question will I be answering in this essay?”, you will put that into the form of a statement. This will be your thesis statement. In our class I want your thesis statement to include references to each of your main ideas. Since you have determined the topic about which you will be writing, your thesis statement will be the sentence that ties this together. For example:

**The relationships between George and Candy, Lennie and Crooks, and George and Lennie exemplify how friendship holds together even through duress.**

- Another important aspect of the thesis statement is the structure. It needs to be INTERESTING. You do not ever want to say, “This essay is about....” Or, “I will tell you about....” Try different ways of presenting the information. Let us say you are doing an essay about the EILEEN: MISSING SOME WORDS HERE

Devise this so that it makes a point by relating some aspect of the work to your topic and purpose. Indicate the direction of your thinking. In other words, what do you plan to say about your idea? Once you have the thesis devised, you will have the boundaries and limits your essay will need to stay within. Once you start writing, you will need to make sure you do not stray from the idea expressed in the thesis statement.

- When you write your thesis statement, you are taking a stand. This means that you will write something which you believe and which you can support with examples from the book. In this first essay, you will be supporting the idea of the allegory of the novel.
- A thesis statement must be a complete sentence and it must be specific.
- A thesis statement will be YOUR opinion (**without** using the words “I” or “you”). It is what YOU assert as being true. It is **not** a statement of fact or an observation.

**Example:**

**Fact or observation:** Some people in Maycomb are prejudiced against blacks and others are not.

**Thesis:** As the people of Maycomb choose sides in the trial of Tom Robinson, the issue of prejudice creates divisions between those who formerly were friends.

For your essay, you will write a thesis statement that shows you are writing about the allegory of the novel (subject) and the three main ideas about it. Keep in mind that this thesis statement, although standing alone right now, will later be the last sentence of your opening paragraph. Therefore, you don’t need to mention the title and author in this thesis statement right now. One suggestion for this thesis statement might be to begin: The story clearly presents the allegory of..... through....(the three main ideas/examples).

### Writing your topic sentences

You have written down your three main ideas about your topic previously. Now you will need to know how to create topic sentences using these main ideas. Your topic sentence should be creative and include the main idea in a manner that will lead into the rest of your paragraph. Here is an example of a thesis statement and then the three topic sentences that incorporate the three main ideas which are included in that thesis statement:

**Thesis statement:** George may be compared to the farmer or poet, as Lennie could be equated to the mouse, and their shared dream represented by the destroyed house.

**Topic sentence #1:** George, comparable to the farmer in the poem, is in control of the situations that arise, but is still surprised under certain circumstances.

**Topic sentence #2:** Similar to the mouse's predicament, the outside forces of Lennie's world control his life, and he is dependent on others for his survival.

**Topic sentence #3:** The dream that George and Lennie share, of having a "little place an' live on the fatta the lan—an' [having] rabbits" (Steinbeck 62), is comparative to the mouse's home, destined to be smashed.

- You will create one topic sentence for each main idea. Use varied sentence structure and make it intriguing. Remember that all of your supporting details for each main idea will be related to the topic sentence. You might even want to use a quote in your topic sentence if you have found an appropriate one.

Once you have completed these first four steps, you have a basic outline for your essay and you are ready to begin writing!

### Assignments

1. Choose your topic for your essay. **5 points Due this week**
2. Determine your three main ideas for your essay. **15 points Due this week**
3. Write your thesis statement for your essay. **10 points Due this week**
4. Write your three topic sentences for your essay. **15 points Due this week**
5. **Weekly Shorts: 5 points**
6. **Journal:** Read the short story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson on page 74 of *Literature and the Writing Process*. Respond briefly (clearly) with your reaction and note elements of symbolism. **10 points**  
(If you do not have *Literature and the Writing Process*, download is at lessons site next to this week's lesson).