

Honors Literature and Short Stories

Week 6

This week we will continue learning about writing the 5-paragraph literature essay.

We have learned to:

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

This week we will learn to:

6. Write your transition sentences
7. Write the opening and closing paragraphs

Writing the transition sentences

You have created three distinct paragraphs – one for each of your main ideas (subtopics). However, they cannot just stand alone. There must be a transition from one paragraph to the next. This is usually a sentence at the end of each of your paragraphs (actually at the end of supporting paragraph 1 and the end of supporting paragraph 2) that will make a connection to the next paragraph. The easiest way to do this is to look at your topic sentence for the next paragraph, find a key word or idea in it, and then include it (or a synonym) in the last sentence of the preceding paragraph. This may mean adding a sentence to the end of your paragraph, or revising the words in your topic sentence to help make the transition – OR – both.

Example:

(Note the **bold, italicized words** – do you see the transition?)

As his tyranny grew even more fervent, Napoleon realizes that he can do anything. Stretching the truth and using all forms of propaganda, he gains control of a reluctant, but hard working farm. Napoleon did, however also control his own future with these ideas. Fortunately for him it is a future that works to his advantage. Unfortunately for him, even with all of his greed and power, Napoleon's ideas fail to convert ***a select few of the farm's inhabitants***.

These select few, the others, were a group whose intelligence and lack of materialism allowed them to completely avoid the chaos and contribute only slightly to the overall fate of the farm.

Writing the Opening and Closing Paragraphs

Opening Paragraph

The opening paragraph of an essay is your reader's 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. Include the title of the book and the author’s name. Often a good way to do this is something like: Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird is the story of....
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 pink:

“The only way to have a friend is to be one,” declares Ralph Waldo Emerson. The keys to friendship include building esteem, listening, and developing tolerance; the characters in John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* demonstrate these characteristics. **In this poignant novel, two men; one huge and dumb, who does not know his own strength, and one smaller, but smarter, guide each other through the perils of ranch life in the Great Depression. They find work and friendship on a ranch, while surviving the tedium which is their daily life. The relationships between George and Candy, Lennie and Crooks, and George and Lennie exemplify some of the key components of a successful friendship.**

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. 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.

- 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:

Clearly, this diverse collection of characters enhances its outlook on life through unlikely friendships. Friendship requires effort by all parties and provides benefits for those involved. George, Lennie, Crooks, and Candy provide examples of the virtues of friendship. Candy gains a realization of hope he never knew he would have at his age. Crook gains some self-respect and loses his cynicism. George develops a sense of tolerance and responsibility, and Lennie gains his feeling of security. **Friendship is the glue that holds the characters in *Of Mice and Men* together:**

The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him. (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Note the restatement of the thesis is in **bold**. Also note that there is a tie-in to the first paragraph with an additional quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Essay Points:

*Note: the points for the drafts (10 points each) are progress points only. These are in addition to the final point value for the essay. However, if you do not turn in the drafts, you will not only not receive the **draft progress** points, but you will also have these points **deducted** from the final draft of the essay – so this is a big hit. Keep up with the weekly drafts.*

First draft of three supporting paragraphs: 10 pts.
Second draft of three supporting paragraphs: 10 pts.
First draft of opening and closing paragraphs: 10 pts.
Final draft of essay: 150 pts.

Assignments

1. Write the *second* draft of your three supporting paragraphs, including transition sentences. Include any edits I have given you. **Due this week 10 points**
2. Write the *first* draft of your opening and closing paragraphs **10 points Due this week**
3. **Weekly Shorts: 5 points**
4. **Journal: 10 points** Read the short story “To Build a Fire” by Jack London beginning on page 54 of *A Book of Short Stories 1*.
 - Briefly describe the *type* and *kind* of conflict in the story (see lesson 3).
 - On page 71 of *A Book of Short Stories 1*, Method question #1 explains protagonist and antagonist. Read that and then identify in your journal the protagonist and antagonist and explain.

(If you do not have *A Book of Short Stories 1*, this story is available online at:
<http://www.americanliterature.com/SS/SS09.HTML>