

## Essay Outlines & The Claim, Evidence, Warrant Model

The following is an outline for what an essay of literary analysis does. Please use this outline in organizing your essays in class.

- 1) Introduction Paragraph: where you first tell what the thesis is.
  - a) Some mention of the title of the work, the author's name, and the genre (drama, novel, poem, etc.) This is often called a T-A-G sentence. When you hand-write an essay in class, underline the title of a novel or play (this indicates it would be italicized in print on a typed essay), and put the title of a poem or short story in quotation marks.
  - b) A basic summary or "overview" of the work. This is a concise 2-3 sentence description of the work's setting (place and time), storyline, central conflict, main characters, etc. NB: use literary present tense throughout the essay when referring to plot events.
  - c) A specific statement of your thesis or topic. This must be an expression of your opinion on a debatable issue relating to the work. This is the central assertion you will attempt to prove in your essay. NB: No first-person (I, me, we, etc.) in an essay of literary analysis.
  - d) A transition sentence leading into the next paragraph.
  
- 2) "Body" Paragraphs (Claim, Context, Evidence, Warrant—or Claim, Context, Quotation, Commentary--format): in which you make a claim that relates to your thesis; cite evidence in the form of specific quotes or passages from the text that relate to the claim; and provide a warrant that analyzes the evidence in relation to your thesis. In its simplest form, each body paragraph is organized as follows (these are explained below):
  - i. topic sentence / support thesis
  - ii. lead-in to concrete detail
  - iii. quotation/concrete detail
  - iv. warrant/commentary
  - v. transition and lead-in to next quotation/concrete detail
  - vi. quotation/concrete detail
  - vii. warrant/commentary
  - viii. concluding or clincher sentence
  
- b) Topic sentence: the first sentence of a body or support paragraph. It identifies one aspect of the major thesis and states a primary reason why the major thesis is true. It is expressed as a claim (assertion).
- c) Context for the quote you have chosen, also called "lead-in". For example, who will be quoted, and what is the context in which the character makes the statement you plan to quote? Make sure the claim and quote both relate directly to your thesis.
- d) The Quotation itself. When you make an argument about literature, the evidence most valued by your audience is likely to be details of the work itself. Direct quotations from the text are an especially powerful means of indicating that your claims are well grounded. You may also concisely refer to some other specific concrete detail from the story, such as an especially important event or sequence of events. Be very careful not to fall into the trap of simply retelling the story. Assume your reader has read it (I have!).

Also, remember to cite the page and or line reference for each direct quote. Parenthetical citations usually appear after the final quotation mark and before the period, for example: “When Bernard invites John to travel to London, John quotes Shakespeare’s Miranda from The Tempest, and with naïve enthusiasm exclaims, “O brave new world that has such people in it. Let’s start at once” (139).

- e) Commentary about the quote or concrete detail, also called a warrant, which is an intelligent, tight translation (if necessary) and interpretation of the quote. Be sure to discuss all the ways in which your quote shows something about the claim you make in that body paragraph. Avoid saying, “In this quotation...” or “this quote shows...” You really don’t need this. Assume the reader knows you are discussing quotes from the book. Focus on writing warrants to explain the assumptions that make you think the information you have given reinforces your case. Remember, quotes don’t speak for themselves; if you want a reader to accept a quote as evidence that proves a claim, you must spell out how or why the quote you’ve selected supports your argument. (*Helpful hint: In your body paragraph, you should have twice as much commentary as concrete detail. In other words, for every sentence of concrete detail, you should have at least two sentences of commentary.*)
- f) Rinse and repeat. In other words, have a transition sentence after your first “chunk” of Context, Evidence, and Warrant and then offer a second chunk of Context, Evidence, and Warrant. Why? One piece of evidence is not usually sufficient to prove a point, especially if you are trying to establish a pattern.  
TRANSITIONS: words or phrases that connect or “hook” one idea to the next, both between and within paragraphs. Transition devices include using connecting words as well as repeating key words or using synonyms. Some examples: Another example... Finally, in the climax...Later in the story... In contrast to this behavior...Not only...but also... Furthermore...
- g) Clincher/concluding sentence: last sentence of the body paragraph. It concludes the paragraph by tying the concrete details and commentary back to the major thesis.

There will be a number of these “body paragraphs.” The trick is to try to make them flow smoothly from one to the other. Also, remember to prioritize which come first, second, etc. Often, chronological ordering works best.

### 3) Conclusion

- a) Some kind of restatement of your thesis, but not a word-for-word repetition from the introduction.
- b) A general summary of what, taken all together, your quotes prove about your thesis.
- c) A synthesis of the ideas in your quotes. Discuss how they contributed to the meaning and the development of the thesis.
- d) Be sure to deal with how the central conflict is resolved and how the book ends, either in your later body paragraphs or in your conclusion. Essays that do not explain how the resolution of the central conflict/end of the book relate to the writer’s thesis usually appear underdeveloped.