

Six Advanced Methods for Writing Introductions



AP Exam offers a BRIEF opportunity (2 to 4 sentences) to capture the reader's attention. You *need* to write a stand-out intro if you have time.



1. The Smattering

“On rare occasions, the writer may ‘flood’ the reader with impressions, bits, pieces, fragments, shards of description, facts, quotes, and notes, and eventually let the reader piece all these together into one unified whole.” (*Writing Solutions* by Thomas Fensch, 61)

This technique is a listing of appropriate bits of relevant information about the topic.

Example – Herman Melville's description of Benjamin Franklin:

- "Printer, postmaster, almanac maker, essayist, chemist, orator, tinkerer, statesman, humorist, philosopher, parlor man, political economist, professor of housewifery, ambassador, projector, maxim-monger, herb-doctor, wit: Jack of all trades. Master of each, and mastered by none--- the type and genius of the land, Franklin was everything but a poet."

2. Extended Metaphor/Epic Simile/ Analogy

- You've learned to use these in writing and poetry to create imagery and effective descriptions; here you will learn to write *extended* metaphors, similes, and analogies which are both stated and implied. This mature type of introduction allows you to create images within your paper. **You will be weaving a thread through the essay to tie together ideas and give yourself a stronger voice.**



Example for a prompt discussion
Thoreau's purpose in a
description of the battle of the
ants and the rhetorical devices
he uses.

- (1) Ants are like warriors.
- Simile: the battle of the ants in this excerpt from *Walden* is like a battle between human warriors fighting to the death.
- Metaphor: Thoreau's battle description of the ants is a microcosm of fierce combat between warring factions of men fighting to the death.

Example – cont.

- (2) In *Brute Neighbors* from *Walden*, Thoreau deftly paints the ants as ferocious and as deadly as human warriors.
- **Battle:** barrage, assault, carnage, clash, crusade,
- **Fierce:** deadly, barbarous, tumultuous, vicious, brutal

3. Allusions

- Allusions are quite effective if carefully used. They enhance understanding by comparing events, characters, or situations to more familiar ones from literature or history.



Example from Patrick Henry's *Speech to the VA Convention:*

- “ We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the ***song of that siren, till she transforms us into beasts.***”

4. Parallel Characters

- When using parallels to other characters or people, it is important to be consistent and carry the parallel THROUGHOUT the paper. Remember, though, if your purpose is to analyze one particular person, analyze him/her primarily and simply indicate parallels to another person to emphasize the character traits of the first one. Do not get off target and spend too much time on the parallel instead of responding to the prompt.

Examples comparing MLK and HDT:

- I. Martin Luther King's advocacy of "civil disobedience" equals that of Henry David Thoreau; or perhaps Kings' zeal for human rights even surpasses Thoreau's.
- II. Henry David Thoreau, the Martin Luther King of his time, promoted "civil disobedience" when he spent a night in jail in defiance of what he considered an unfair tax.

5. Paradox

- Often a paradox may be easily identified by looking for phrases which seem contradictory but are actually true. This is a difficult device to master, but with practice it can be quite effective.



The background is a solid blue color with several white snowflake graphics scattered across it. The snowflakes vary in size and are positioned primarily on the right side of the slide, with some fainter ones in the background.

Example from *Putting in a Good Word for Guilt* by Ellen Goodman.

- “Feeling guilty is nothing to feel guilty about. Yes, guilt can be the excess baggage that keeps us paralyzed unless we dump it. But it can also be the engine that fuels us.”

6. Quotes from the Prompt Passage

- Read the passage carefully, underlining important words or phrases. In the margin, pre-write responding to the prompt. If the passage contains specific words or phrases which exemplify the author's tone, theme, or purpose in an emphatic, perhaps even dramatic way, embed them into the essay at appropriate points. By doing this, you will be creating images which are consistent and memorable.



Example from prompt asking for a discussion of Thoreau's purpose in his description of the battle of the ants and the rhetorical devices he uses.

- In *Brute Neighbors* from *Walden*, Thoreau describes the fierce struggle of red ants versus black ants, a combat easily as deadly as that of man pitted against man. The tale Thoreau reveals creates images of the ants'/warriors' fight till all life is out and the battlefield is strewn with the dead and the dying.

7 Advanced Methods for Writing Conclusions

Remember that the conclusion should be one or two sentences long and should **NEVER** summarize.



The Smattering

Use the same smattering technique from the introduction, but change the focus of the explanation to concluding material.



Smattering Example (compare to intro)

- INTRO: "Malice toward none... charity for all... firmness in the right... bind up the nation's wounds... care for him... cherish a just and lasting peace. **Lincoln's words reflect his desire to pull the nation together after the devastating Civil War. But these words have remained relevant through time – from wars to financial crises to disease to natural disasters to terrorism --- and remain relevant today."**

CONCLUSION: "Malice toward none... charity for all... firmness in the right... bind up the nation's wounds... care for him... cherish a just and lasting peace. **There is no question where Lincoln stood. Today's leaders, faced with similar problems, must attempt to stand as tall."**

Extended Or Implied Metaphor/Simile/Analogy

- Use the same technique from the introduction, but change the focus of the explanation to concluding material.



Extended metaphor/simile/analogy example (compare intro and conclusion)

- INTRO; Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address demonstrates his new role in the nation --- as a healer. His attempt to "bind up the wounds," puts him in the unenviable role of one who must cure the intangible diseases of prejudice and national unrest. Unfortunately, little has changed from his times to ours, for our leaders are still battling "sick" members of society today.
- CONCLUSION: Like Lincoln our contemporary leaders are still seeking a cure. They must prescribe the appropriate medicine in proper doses if we are to see our nation and our world healed.



Allusion

- Use the same technique from the introduction, but change the focus of the explanation to concluding material.



Allusion example (compare the intro and the conclusion)

- INTRO: As Lincoln tries to bring together “a house divided against itself” because he knows it “cannot stand,” so do the leaders of today try to bring together the warring nations of the world because they know that peace must prevail. (Biblical allusion)
- CONCLUSION: Since Lincoln’s time that “house divided against itself” has grown to a world “divided against itself.” How long will it stand?

Parallel Characters

- Use the same technique from the introduction, but change the focus of the explanation to concluding material.



Parallel Characters (compare the intro to the conclusion)

- **INTRO:** As Lincoln guided a nation through the divisiveness of the Civil War, hoping to find a just and a lasting peace, so Atticus Finch led his family and town in a time of prejudice and malice, striving for that same just and lasting peace. From Lincoln in the 1860's to Atticus Finch in the 1930's until today, we are still seeking to overcome that prejudice and evil with continue to poison our country.
- **CONCLUSION:** The ideals of both Abraham Lincoln and Atticus Finch serve as models for our leaders today. These men --- one real, one fictional --- epitomize the values that may hopefully lead us to "a just and lasting peace."

Paradox

- Use the same technique from the introduction, but change the focus of the explanation to concluding material.



Paradox (compare the intro and the conclusion)



- **INTRO:** Justice born of injustice was Lincoln's desire for his country, and the same goal holds true for those who lead America through the twenty-first century. The need for justice in an unjust world, Lincoln's nineteenth century dilemma, continues today.
- **CONCLUSION:** From the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, the quest for justice has endured. As the blight of injustice grows, the demand for justice prevails.

Quote from the Prompt

- Use the same technique from the introduction, but change the focus of the explanation to concluding material.



Quote from the Prompt example (compare the intro and the conclusion)

- INTRO: Lincoln's wish for a world "With malice toward none, with charity for all.." reverberates today in a society still torn by hatred and intolerance, still searching for peace. History is supposed to teach us certain lessons, but will we ever learn?
- CONCLUSION: (notice that this is a quote with a "turn")

Let us hope that we can learn from Lincoln's example. Perhaps then we will not deteriorate to a world "With malice toward all, with charity for none."

Statement of Theme

- This conclusion technique can apply to any of the introductions. It is versatile.
- Remember, the theme is always a statement of an abstract concept which is made concrete through the literature itself. **Themes do not moralize or preach; they make observations about life. Themes are statements that are universal--- they usually apply to any culture or period of time.** They are central insights, generalizations, or truths which are **ALWAYS** stated in a complete sentence or sentences.
- Themes are not quips such as "life is tough," and they do not use absolutes like "all" or "everyone;" instead, they use qualifiers such as "often" or "some."

Statement of Theme cont.

- One of the best ways to end a paper is with a statement of theme; it is also an excellent way to show your understanding of a passage. The conclusion offers an opportunity to make a memorable final comment. Choose your words carefully and make them empathetic.
- This is highly recommended for timed writing.

Statement of Theme example

- Tolerance, forgiveness, and charity --- necessary components for “a just and lasting peace” --- remain as relevant today as when Lincoln first invoked them.