

Long Branch High School English Department
Summer Reading List
Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition

Mrs. Masi and Mrs. Lagowski
AP English Literature and Composition 2015-2016

All students will read two books over the summer and compose a draft of an analytical essay in response to one of the prompts listed below.

Assigned Reading:

- *How To Read Literature Like a Professor*, by Thomas C. Foster
- *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen

Suggested Purchase: *A Writer's Reference Guide*, Diana Hacker

Assigned Composition:

Student will compose an analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* by writing a paper in response to **one** of the prompts listed below. In a well-developed essay of 800-1200 words, explore one of the essay topics below. Include quotes and specific references to the text to support your thesis. Developing an organic structure for this essay is essential. Refer to the information at the bottom of this page for suggestions about organizing an essay in this way.

Automatic deductions will be taken for the following:

- Not including the author's full name and title of the work in the essay
- Not citing quotes using the following format: (Author's Last Name Page Number)
- Not falling within the word range

Topics

The following essay prompts have been culled from Advanced Placement English Literature exams. Each one appeared as Question 3, the open-ended question. These prompts require a response that shows how specific elements of a story work to reveal something larger, a task which lends itself to organic structuring.

1. Some novels and plays seem to advocate changes in social or political attitudes or in traditions. Choose such a novel or play and note briefly that the particular attitudes or traditions that the author apparently wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader's or audience's views. Do not merely summarize the plot. (1987)
2. "The true test of comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter" –George Meredith
Choose a novel, play, or long poem in which a scene or character awakens "thoughtful laughter" in the reader. Write an essay in which you show why this laughter is "thoughtful" and how it contributes to the meaning of the work. (1993)
3. In a novel or play, a *confidant* (male) or a *confidante* (female) is a character, often a friend or relative of the hero or heroine, whose role is to be present when the hero or heroine needs a sympathetic listener to confide in. Frequently the result is, as Henry James remarked, that the author sometimes uses this character for other purposes as well. Choose a confidant or confidante from a novel or play of recognized literary merit and write an essay in which you discuss the various ways this character functions in the work. (1993)

4. In questioning the value of literary realism, Flannery O'Connor has written, "I am interested in making a good cause for distortion because I am coming to believe that it is the only way to make people see." Write an essay in which you "make a good cause for distortion," as distinct from literary realism. Analyze how important elements of the work you choose are "distorted" and explain how these distortions contribute to the effectiveness of the work. Do not merely summarize the plot. (1989)

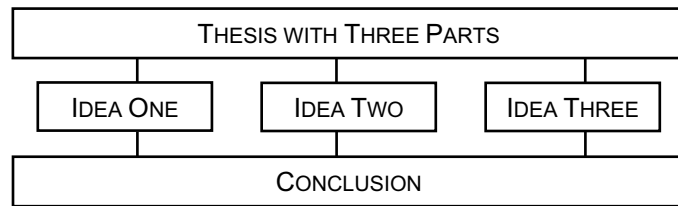
5. A critic has said the one important measure of a superior work of literature is its ability to produce in the reader a healthy confusion of pleasure and disquietude. Select a literary work that produces this "healthy confusion." Write an essay in which you explain the sources the "pleasure and disquietude" experienced by the readers of the work. Do not base your essay on a movie, television program, or other adaptation of a work. (1984)

Organic Essays

The easiest way to explain an organically structured essay is first to look at a common structure that is not organic, the five paragraph essay:

- I. THESIS WITH THREE PARTS
- II. IDEA ONE
- III. IDEA TWO
- IV. IDEA THREE
- V. CONCLUSION

or



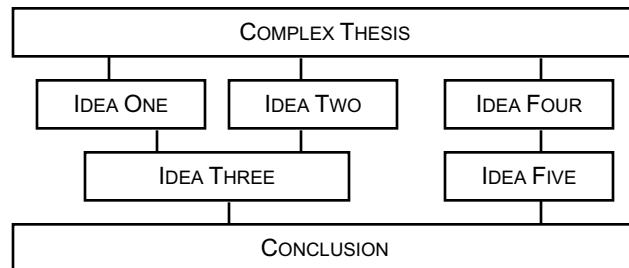
Note that unlike a formal outline, the Roman numerals in the above example simply indicate the paragraph order and the indentation indicates the depth of the argument.

The five paragraph essay is useful as a basic technique for teaching structure and support, but it yields flat and boring writing. The individual ideas presented in the body paragraphs are only superficially connected through the common topic and so the development of the argument over the course of the essay is minimal.

An organic essay begins with a complex thesis, which, like a five paragraph essay, needs multiple pieces of support. The difference is that the ideas presented in the body paragraphs may also need significant support. Look at the sample of one possible organic structure below:

- I. COMPLEX THESIS
- II. IDEA ONE
- III. IDEA TWO
- IV. IDEA THREE
- V. IDEA FOUR
- VI. IDEA FIVE
- VII. CONCLUSION

or



Why is this called an organic essay? The answer lies in how the argument must be structured. In the example above IDEA ONE and IDEA TWO must be established before introducing IDEA THREE. In reading the essay, IDEA THREE will be a logical outgrowth of the previously explored ideas. The organization will seem equally as natural and strong moving from IDEA FOUR to IDEA FIVE, and from IDEA THREE and IDEA FIVE to the CONCLUSION. We call this an organic essay because one idea seems to grow naturally out of another.

While the structure is powerfully enhanced in this type of essay, the key difference between an organic essay and a five paragraph essay is in the depth of the presented ideas. In a five paragraph essay, each main idea is directly related to the thesis and the conclusion. Each main idea is on the same level and parallel to the others; therefore all the supporting ideas are more or less interchangeable. In organic essays, some ideas which support the thesis and conclusion are contingent on other ideas. In the example above IDEA THREE and IDEA FIVE along with their respective supports could possibly be swapped, but IDEA TWO and IDEA FOUR could not. Note that similarly shallow essays could be written with four, six, or any number of paragraphs following the five paragraph model just as easily as an organic essay could have exactly five paragraphs.

The above illustrations simplify the process, and as with any writing endeavor it is important to remember to approach the task with an open mind and a great deal of flexibility. Identifying the different pieces and establishing the relationships between them will be more difficult in writing about a complex topic. Taking the time to think about ideas first will improve the final product.