

Writing a Literary Essay

8th Grade English

What is a literary essay?

A literary essay is an essay about literature. The literature may be any genre.

The Introduction

The introduction to a literary essay has 3 parts. The parts are hook, TAG, and thesis.

Hook

The hook is the very first sentence of the essay. It should be very general and apply to almost anyone but still be on topic. To figure out what the topic should be, look for key words in the essay question or writing prompt. The hook should NEVER mention the specific literature or characters that will be discussed in the essay. If it did, it would be specific, not general.

TAG

TAG stands for **title, author, genre**. The second sentence of the essay should be more specific than the first. It should state the information about the literature that will be discussed in the essay. Remember titles of major works get underlined (or italicized if typed), authors' names start with capital letters (first and last), and genre is the type of work it is. By genre, we mean poem, short story, novel, play, song, etc...; we do not mean historical fiction, realistic fiction, science fictions, etc.... The TAG should also connect the literature to the topic of the essay mentioned in the hook. Usually all TAG information can be found in the essay question or writing prompt.

Thesis

The thesis ends the introduction. It is the most important sentence of the essay. It informs readers of the specific point that the writer will make in the essay. It is more specific than the hook or the TAG. It establishes the focus of the entire essay. It should encompass a bit of each body paragraph planned for the essay. To determine the point you are supposed to be making, you should look at what the essay question or writing prompt asks you to do or prove.

An essay introduction can be written just by reading the essay question or writing prompt. A person does not even have to have read the literature about which they are supposed to write in order to write the introduction.

The Conclusion Paragraph

The conclusion paragraph summarizes the entire essay for your reader. It starts by rewording the thesis in the first sentence. The second sentence should summarize the key points you made for your reader in body paragraphs one, two, and three. The last sentence rewords your hook and makes a final general statement about your essay.

Answering the Essay Question:

- What should you ask yourself after you read an essay question?
- How do you begin to decide what information you need to present in your response?
- How do you organize the ideas you have to present?