

Writing a Literary Essay

8th Grade English

What is an essay?

An essay is an expository piece where you analyze or interpret information, often to address a specific task or assignment.

What is a literary essay?

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

How does this include the paragraphs that you have been writing?

The essay allows you to build an argument or make a case using multiple paragraphs. The body of the essay is comprised of the kinds of paragraphs you have been writing. It adds an introduction paragraph and a conclusion paragraph to tie the body paragraphs together. It also incorporates transitions between paragraphs, like the language in the paragraph rubric's conclusion sentence suggests.

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 almost be written just by reading the essay question or writing prompt. You can get almost everything you need for an essay's introduction from the question.

The Conclusion Paragraph

The conclusion paragraph summarizes the entire essay for your reader. In this paragraph you should summarize your body paragraphs and remind the reader of the focus of the essay. You should do this by summarizing your body paragraphs in a unique way and rewording your thesis in a unique way. You can also “unhook” your reader by reminding them of the general idea in your introduction's hook.

So, you have a question and know the essay parts. Now what?

- Make sure you understand what the essay question is asking you to do.
- Decide how many body paragraphs you need and what the focus of each should be.
- Set up your planning box and label all of the sentences.

When I do a 5 minute plan, I:

1. Set up the boxes by drawing three horizontal lines on the page to make four boxes (or more lines if I need more paragraphs).
2. Then I label each sentence with its abbreviation.
3. **When I fill in a sentence's information, I use abbreviations and only crucial words. I try to do no more than 4 words per sentence.**
4. I start with the thesis and the topic sentences.
5. Then I fill in the body paragraph's CDs and CMs.
6. Then I do the Thesis, TAG, HOOK, Conclusion Sentences and Conclusion Paragraph.

When the plan is done and I am ready to write, I:

- Craft each sentence for the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion sentence in order, based on the information I have planned to write. I turn those brief ideas into complete, engaging, and effective sentences that fulfill their purpose and answer the question.
- I am sure to indent each individual paragraph.
- I keep in mind trying to be engaging while staying focused and organized.
- I do not use any common informal habits like contractions, referring to myself, addressing the reader, and stating the parts of the essay.
- If there is any time left, I reread what I wrote and fix any errors that I see.