

The Body of the Essay and the Importance of Topic Sentences

The term regularly used for the development of the central idea of a literary analysis essay is the **body**. In this section you present the paragraphs (**at least 3 paragraphs for a 500-750 word essay**) that support your thesis statement. Good literary analysis essays contain an explanation of your ideas and evidence from the text (short story, poem, play) that supports those ideas. **Textual evidence** consists of **summary, paraphrase, specific details, and direct quotations**.

Each paragraph should contain a **topic sentence** (usually the first sentence of the paragraph) which states one of the topics associated with your thesis, combined with some assertion about how the topic will support the central idea. The purpose of the topic sentence is twofold:

1. To relate the details of the paragraph to your thesis statement.
2. To tie the details of the paragraph together.

The substance of each of your **developmental paragraphs** (the body of your essay) will be the explanations, summaries, paraphrases, specific details, and direct quotations you need to support and develop the more general statement you have made in your topic sentence. The following is the first developmental paragraph after one of the introductory paragraphs (C) above:

TOPIC SENTENCE	Sammy's descriptions of the A & P present a setting that is ugly, monotonous, and rigidly regulated. The chain store is a common fixture in modern society, so the reader can identify with the uniformity Sammy describes. The fluorescent light is as blandly cool as the "checkerboard green-and-cream rubber tile floor" (486). The "usual traffic in the store moves in one direction (except for the swim suited girls, who move against it), and everything is neatly
EXPLANATIONS AND TEXTUAL EVIDENCE	

The Conclusion

Your literary analysis essay should have a concluding paragraph that gives your essay a sense of completeness and lets your readers know that they have come to the end of your paper. Your concluding paragraph might restate the thesis in different words, summarize the main points you have made, or make a relevant comment about the literary work you are analyzing, but from a different perspective. ***Do not introduce a new topic in your conclusion.*** Below is the concluding paragraph from the essay already quoted above (A) about Browning's poem "My Last Duchess":

If the Duke has any redeeming qualities, they fail to appear in the poem. Browning's emphasis on the Duke's traits of arrogance, jealousy, and materialism make it apparent that anyone who might have known the Duke personally would have based his opinion of him on these three personality "flaws." Ultimately, the Duke intended that the reader feel this way.

The Title of Your Essay

It is essential that you give your essay a title that is descriptive of the approach you are taking in your paper. Just as you did in your introductory paragraph, try to get the reader's attention. ***Using only the title of the literary work you are examining is unsatisfactory.*** The titles that follow are appropriate for the papers (A, B, C) discussed above:

Robert Browning's Duke: A Portrayal of a Sinister Man
The A & P as a State of Mind
Theme in "The Secret Lion": The Struggle of Adolescence

Audience

Consider the reader for whom you are writing your essay. Imagine you are writing for not only your professor but also the other students in your class who have about as much education as you

USING TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Using Direct Quotations

Quotations can illuminate and support the ideas you are trying to develop. A judicious use of quoted material will make your points clearer and more convincing. ***As with all the textual evidence you use, make sure you explain how the evidence is relevant—let the reader know why the quotes you cite are significant to your argument.*** Below are guidelines and examples that should help you effectively use quotations:

1. Brief quotations (four lines or fewer of prose and three lines or fewer of poetry) should be carefully introduced and integrated into the text of your paper. Put quotation marks around all briefly quoted material.

Prose example:

As the "manager" of the A & P, Lengel is both the guardian and enforcer of "policy" (487). When he gives the girls "that sad Sunday-school-superintendent

a dreary bureaucrat who "doesn't miss much" (487). ***Make sure you give page numbers when necessary. Notice that in this example the page numbers are in parenthesis after the quotation marks but before the period.***

Poetry example:

From the beginning, the Duke in Browning's poem gives the reader a sense of how possessive he really is: "That's my last Duchess on the wall, / Looking as if she were alive" (1-2). The reader cannot help but notice how, even though the Duke is talking about her portrait, his main concern is that she belongs to him. ***Notice that line # 1 is separated from line # 2 by a slash. Make sure you give the line numbers when necessary.***

2. Lengthy quotations should be separated from the text of your paper. More than ***four lines of prose*** should be double spaced and indented ***ten spaces*** from the left margin, with the right margin the same as the rest of your paper. More than ***three lines of poetry*** should be double spaced and ***centered*** on the page. ***Note: do not use quotation marks to set off these longer passages because the indentation itself indicates that the material is quoted.***

Prose example:

The first paragraph of "The Secret Lion" introduces the narrator as someone who has just entered adolescence and is uncertain what to make of it:

I was twelve and in junior high school and something happened that we didn't have a name for, but it was there nonetheless like a lion, and roaring, roaring that way the biggest things do. Everything changed. Just that. Like the rug, the one that gets pulled -- or better, like the tablecloth those magicians pull where the stuff on the table stays the same but the gasp! from the audience makes the staying-the-same part not matter. Like that. (41-42) ***Make sure you give page numbers when necessary. Notice in this example that the page numbers are in parenthesis after the period of the last sentence.***

Poetry example:

The Duke seems to object to the fact that his "last Duchess" is not discriminating enough about bestowing her affection. In the following lines, the Duke lists examples of this "fault":

Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the west,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace -- all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech.
(Browning 25-30)

Be sure to provide the line numbers.

3. If any words are added to a quotation in order to explain who or what the quotation refers to, you must use **brackets** to distinguish your addition from the original source.

Example:

The literary critic John Strauss asserts that "he [Young Goodman Brown] is portrayed as self-righteous and disillusioned" (10). ***Brackets are used here because there is no way of knowing who "he" is unless you add that information.***

Brackets are also used to change the grammatical structure of a quotation so that it fits into your sentence.

Example:

Strauss also argues that Hawthorne "present[s] Young Goodman Brown in an ***Brackets are used here to add the "s" to the verb "present" because otherwise the sentence would not be grammatically correct.***

4. You must use **ellipsis** if you omit any words from the original source you are quoting. ***Ellipsis*** can be used at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the quotation, depending on where the missing words were originally. ***Ellipsis is formed by either three or four periods with a space between each period.***

Original: "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

Example (omission from beginning):

This behavior ". . . makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." ***Ellipsis formed by three dots after the quotation marks.***

Example (omission from middle):

This maxim claims that "Early to bed . . . makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." ***Ellipsis formed by three dots used in place of the words "and early to rise."***

Example (omission from end):

He said, "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy" ***Ellipsis is formed by four dots before the quotation marks -- the fourth dot is really a period which ends the sentence.***

5. Use a single line of ***spaced periods*** to indicate the omission of an entire line of poetry.

Example:

The Duke seems to object to the fact that his "last Duchess" is not discriminating enough about bestowing her affection:

She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

.....

The dropping of the daylight in the west,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, while the white mule
She rode around the terrace -- like and each
Wou
(Browning 24-30)

Punctuating Direct Quotations

You will be able to punctuate quoted materials accurately if you observe the following conventions used in writing about literature:

1. When the quoted material is part of your own sentence, place

