

# Writing a Literary Essay

# The Literary Essay Defined

- A literary essay is, essentially, a persuasive essay based on a literary work.
- Your goal is to formulate a thesis and prove that thesis using three arguments that are based on evidence from the text.
- The purpose of a literary essay is **NOT** to retell the story. You should always assume that your audience is already familiar with the text.

# The Introduction

- 1) Writing your opening statement:

Introduces the essay's topic. It is a general statement about what the essay will be about. You must include the author's name, the title of the work (*italicized* / underlined), and the main idea that you will be discussing (maximum of 2 sentences).

# The Introduction

- **2) List your arguments:**

Using one sentence per argument, list your arguments. Try to make one argument flow into the next. \*Note: an argument is not a random example from the text. Just like a thesis, it needs to be developed.\*

# The Introduction

- **3) Write your thesis statement:**

Your thesis is the main idea of the essay, or, the point that you are trying to prove. A thesis should be specific but not so much so that you are too limited in the points that you will make throughout the body of your essay.

# Body Paragraphs

- You must have three body paragraphs.
- Each body paragraph needs to link to your thesis and help in proving it in some way.

# What Makes a Good Body Paragraph?

- **1) Start with a strong topic sentence:**

A topic sentence contains the main idea of the paragraph. Think of a topic sentence as a mini-thesis - a topic sentence tells the reader what you will attempt to prove in your paragraph.

# What Makes a Good Body Paragraph?

- **2) Find proof:**

Each paragraph must contain 2-3 pieces of evidence. Your evidence can be a direct quote or you may paraphrase. \*You should have at least one direct quote in each body paragraph.\*

- a. State the evidence.

- b. Explain the evidence: show how the specific example you just stated proves your thesis (**analyze**).



# What Makes a Good Body Paragraph?

- **3) End with a closing sentence:**

Your closing sentence should summarize your argument and hint at what is to come in your next paragraph (transition).

# The Conclusion

- Restate your thesis. Re-word it, but keep the same idea.
- List your arguments in 1-2 sentences.
- **Closing line:** this closes the entire essay. This is the one and only place where it is acceptable to use dramatic language or a cliché.

# Keep in Mind...

- Write in the present tense
- **NO** contractions (e.g.: don't, can't)
- Do not announce that you are writing an essay (e.g.: "In this essay, I will write about...")
- **DO NOT** use "I"
- Do not make page references while writing (e.g.: "On page ten, Winston says..."). State the page number after your example
- Avoid praising the author or the book
- Show insight and be creative in your analysis
- In your introduction, state the author's full name. When you refer to the author in the body of your essay, use **only their last name**

# Checkpoints

- You **MUST** have your outline approved by me before you begin writing your rough draft.
- You **MUST** have your rough draft approved by me before you may bring it home to begin your good copy.

# Timeline

- **TODAY:** Explanation and begin writing outline.
- **Tuesday, October 22:** Finish outline and have it approved. Begin writing rough draft.
- **Wednesday, October 23:** Continue writing rough draft. Begin peer-editing if finished and have draft approved.
- **Thursday, October 24:** Finish writing rough draft. Begin peer-editing when finished and have draft approved.
- **DUE DATE:** Your **TYPED, DOUBLE-SPACED GOOD COPIES** are due **MONDAY, OCTOBER 28**

# The Question

- Winston reflects on the omnipresence of the Party: “He thought of the telescreen with its never-sleeping ear. They could spy upon you night and day, but if you kept your head you could still outwit them... Facts at any rate, could not be kept hidden. They could be tracked down by inquiry, they could be squeezed out of you by torture. But if the object was not to stay alive, but to stay human, what difference did it ultimately make” (147-148).

**What, in essence, is Winston saying about the lone individual in relation to The State (the Party)?**