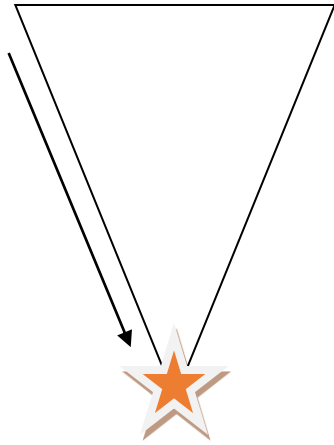


BASIC STRUCTURE OF A FORMAL LITERARY ESSAY

I. Introduction



- engage reader with opening
- identify text and author
- narrow/focus discussion, often achieved by providing brief synopsis of literature



Thesis = Controlling Idea

- interpretation of text in response to the topic establishes direction of paper
- generally the last sentence (or sentences) in your introduction
- EVERYTHING in your essay should support this purpose

II. Body

Topic Sentence (maintain controlling idea by incorporating key words or synonyms from thesis)

- Point (supporting idea develops argument in topic sentence)
- Proof (precise evidence from text)
- Discuss (discuss significance = so what?)

x 2 (or 3)

Concluding Sentence (synthesize key ideas in paragraph; establish relevance by connecting to your controlling idea)

Topic Sentence (*transition from previous idea*, maintain controlling idea by incorporating key words or synonyms from thesis)

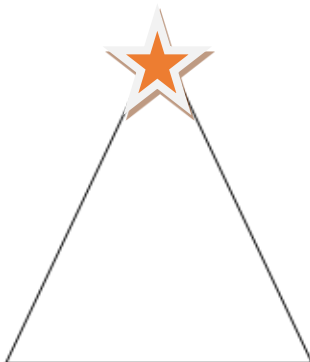
- Point (supporting idea develops argument in topic sentence)
- Proof (precise evidence from text)
- Discuss (discuss significance = so what?)

x 2 (or 3)

Follow this format for as many additional body paragraphs as necessary.

Concluding Sentence (synthesize key ideas in paragraph; establish relevance by connecting to your controlling idea)

III. Conclusion



- restate/rephrase controlling idea
- return to method of engagement used in introduction, if possible and appropriate
- **synthesize** your main ideas as you work towards a final conclusion
- broaden the topic, show importance and/or relevance (What do you understand after working with the text and topic? Aim for insightful closure.)

THESIS STATEMENT MODELS

Remember – It is important to have your thesis in mind as you start writing. This is your purpose for writing. It should provide an interpretation in response to the prompt and a sense of direction for the essay.

1. BASIC “ROADMAP”

In this type of thesis, you provide a straightforward “map” of your response to the prompt and the topics of your body paragraphs.

For example:

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare suggests that the pursuit of revenge will destroy a character through Hamlet’s adoption of an antic disposition, his isolation from his friends and family, and his eventual death.

2. CHARACTERIZATION PYRAMID

This structure encourages you to deal with the whole narrative, recognizing the change or consequences of a character’s actions.

