

Literary Essay Body Paragraphs

Good literary analysis essays contain an explanation of your ideas and evidence from the text that supports those ideas. Each paragraph in the body includes: (1) a topic sentence, (2) textual evidence, (3) commentary (an explanation), and (4) a concluding sentence. In its simplest form, each body paragraph is organized as follows:

- Topic sentence
- Lead-in/Transition to textual evidence
- Textual evidence
- Commentary
- (Repeat if have additional evidence)
- Concluding or clincher sentence

Topic Sentence: the first sentence of a body or support paragraph. It identifies one aspect of the major thesis and states a primary reason why the major thesis is true.

Lead-In/Transition: word or phrase that prepares the reader for textual evidence.

Finally, in the climax... Another example: ...

Later in the story... In contrast to this behavior...

Not only... but also... Furthermore...

Textual Evidence: a specific example from the work used to provide evidence for your topic sentence. Textual evidence includes specific details such as names, exact quotes, and precise actions from the story.

Commentary: your explanation and interpretation of the textual evidence. Commentary tells the reader what the author of the text means or how the textual evidence proves the topic sentence. Commentary may include interpretation, analysis, argument, insight, and/or reflection. (*Helpful hint: In your body paragraph, you should have twice as much commentary as textual evidence. In other words, for every sentence of textual evidence, you should have at least two sentences of commentary.*)

Clincher/Concluding Sentence: last sentence of the body paragraph. It concludes the paragraph by tying the textual evidence and commentary back to the thesis.

Transition

Topic Sentence

Transition

Early in the story, there is evidence of the power of determination. For example, the narrator states that the Japanese-Americans didn't have anything they needed for baseball, but they found ways to get what they needed. They created the baseball field with shovels and water. They build bleachers out of trees. They sewed uniforms out of mattress covers. All the while, the guards were watching to make sure they did not step out of line. These Japanese-Americans were being confined after Japan had declared war on the United States – even though they had nothing to do with it. This shows that, through the power of determination, they were able to experience a part of the everyday life they once enjoyed.

Clincher