

ESSAY-WRITING PROCESS

The key to a good essay is CLARITY and FOCUS. To achieve this, you need to:

Say What You Are Going to Say (Thesis);
Say It (Body, with Topic Sentences and supporting information);
Then Say It Again (Conclusion).

1) ANALYZE THE QUESTION

- a) Read the question and break down its parts - what is it asking of you?
(Is it asking HOW? WHY? WHAT? to DESCRIBE? to EXPLAIN? to COMPARE? Etc.)
- b) What are the Key / Important words?

(Is it asking you to compare and contrast two things? What are these two things? What are their similarities (to compare them) and differences (to contrast them)?)
- c) What do you need or want to prove?

For example - "To what extent are dogs better pets than cats?" can be approached by arguing for dogs as better pets (OR) cats as better pets. If you choose dogs as better pets, you should provide examples / evidence of why you hold this opinion (i.e. they are more friendly, they are more loyal, etc.) and how your evidence relates back to your thesis. However, in a "to what extent" question, there should also be some mention of reasons why people might choose the opposite opinion.

2) BRAINSTORM

- a) Once you have determined what the question is asking - BRAINSTORM EXAMPLES/IDEAS from the text (story).
- b) Brainstorm examples for both sides of question (i.e. positives and negatives, all of the possible angles to the question)
ÿ evidence: events; what characters said, did, did not do, observations of the narrator

3) EVIDENCE

- a) Once you have your brainstormed list, make sure you have specific examples from the story to back up your ideas
ÿ go through book, find quotes, page numbers for specific examples of scenes

4) THESIS - CENTRAL, CONTROLLING IDEA

- a) What do you want to argue as the main point/ idea of your essay?

- i.e. - do you want to argue that there are more negatives than positives, or that there are an equal amount of both, etc.

5) OUTLINE

- a) INTRODUCTION - Includes Thesis, opening remarks.
- b) BODY - 3-4 paragraphs
 - Choose 3-4 examples from the novel to back up your thesis - 1 paragraph each.
 - Explain WHY/HOW these scenes /quotes from the book relate to your argument / prove your case (point).
 - Write TOPIC SENTENCES for each paragraph - main point of the paragraph.
 - Don't forget to devote a paragraph to the other side of the argument/issue if it is called for in the question (To what extent).
- c) CONCLUSION
 - Summarize the main points from the body of the essay and how they support your thesis.

6) ROUGH DRAFT

- a) Write your rough draft based on your outline.

7) EDIT

Questions to keep in mind while editing:

- a) Correct spelling and grammar? (i.e. Verb Tense agreement? Active Voice?)
- b) Did I answer all elements of the question? (Key words, showed both sides of issue/opinion?)
- c) Do I have a clear thesis?
- d) Do I have clear topic sentences?
- e) Do I have good examples to back up my argument?
- f) Have I explained my points/ argued my point of view effectively and clearly?
- g) Have I gone off topic (digressed)?
- h) Are my quotes directly relevant to my points? Have I included page numbers after quotes?
- i) Do I have any short sentences that have ideas that go with another sentence? (Then combine them!)
- j) Have I used several words to describe something when one or two words will do? (Then try to use more precise / concise words).
- k) Does my essay follow some sort of logical order? Do I jump back and forth between ideas?

8) GOOD DRAFT - FINAL COPY

- a) Write your good copy with revisions!!