writing guides

writing about literature

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writing guides

The Writing Guides are our course text. They were created by writing professors at CUNY colleges (including me) and academic writing instructors outside of our college. They are tools to help you compose academic arguments to participate in the many conversations that exist in our intellectual communities at QC and beyond.

They are short documents, but they are packed with important information that will help you develop as an academic writer (and ensure that you don't have to buy a textbook).

You are required to read writing guides for every class.

contents

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8 strategies for critically engaging secondary sources

The following strategies are adapted, and the figures reproduced, from Mark Gaipa's "Breaking into the Conversation: How Students Can Acquire Authority in Their Writing," *Pedagogy 4.3* (2004): 419-37. Note that these strategies may be used globally, as a way of framing an argument, or locally, as a way of engaging sources at a particular stage in an argument.

Strategy 1

Picking a Fight

Knock down a scholar's argument and, in the best version of this strategy, replace it with one's own.

Strategy 2

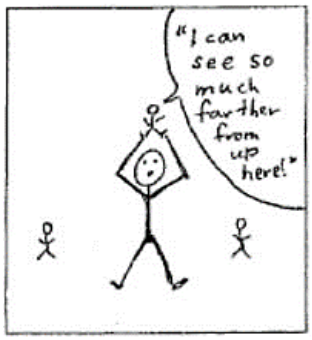
Ass Kissing, or Riding a Scholar's Coattails

Agree with a scholar to gain evidence and authority. Possibly go on to defend the scholar from attack by another scholar, thus resolving a larger controversy.

Strategy 3

Piggybacking, or Standing on the Shoulders of a Giant

Agree with a scholar (i.e., kiss ass), but then complete or extend the scholar's work, usually by borrowing an idea or concept from the scholar and developing it through application to a new subject or new part of the conversation.



Strategy 4

Leapfrogging, or Biting the Hand That Feeds You

Agree with a scholar (i.e., kiss ass), then identify and solve a problem in the scholar's work—for example, an oversight, inconsistency, or contradiction.

Strategy 5

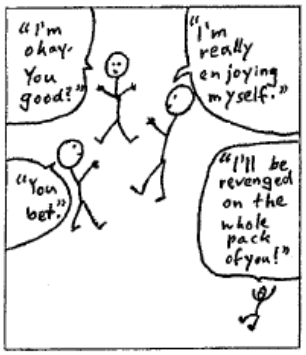
Playing Peacemaker

Identify a conflict or dispute between two or more scholars, then resolve it using a new or more encompassing perspective.

Strategy 6

Taking on the Establishment, or Acting Paranoid

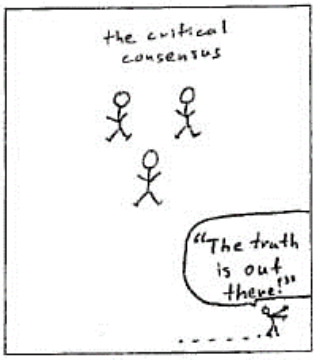
Pick a fight with everyone in a critical conversation—for example, by showing how the status quo is wrong, a critical consensus is actually unfounded, or a dispute is based on a faulty assumption.



Strategy 7

Dropping Out, or Finding Room on the Margins

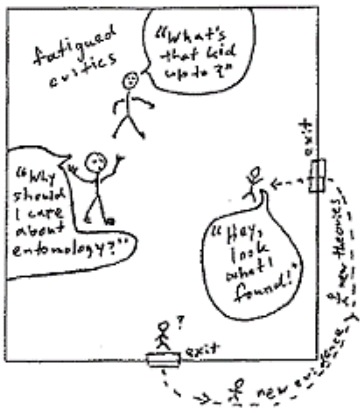
Focus on an issue in the margins of the critical conversation, illuminating that issue and (in the best version of this strategy) ultimately redefining the conversation itself.



Strategy 8

Crossbreeding with Something New

Inject really new material into the critical conversation to produce a new argument. For example, bring in a theory from another discipline to reinterpret the evidence, bring in new evidence to upset an old theory or interpretation, or establish an original framework (a combination of theories, a historical understanding) to reinterpret the evidence.



actively reading and annotating texts for rhetorical conversation

To actively read a text, use a combination of color coding, highlighting, underlining, etc.—whichever system works best for you—to highlight content. Then, respond to the author's text with questions (how and why questions are best) or your own argument. As you read, stay open to possibilities that may contradict your currently held views. With these practices in mind, once you've finished reading a text, you should already have the foundations for your response to the author. **In other words, you've already begun to write!**

When You Begin to Read the Text

- Set **purpose** for reading. **Ask a question** about the title.
- **Identify rhetorical information:** the author, audience, purpose, context (setting), and topic.
- **Survey (aka skim) the content:** To engage with the author's argument, glance over the headings to see how the author structures his or her argument and content. **Turn those headings into questions.** Also read the first and final paragraphs of the essay and, if the essay has one, the introduction.
- Read the entire text without marking anything.

When You Read the Text Again

Make any content notes on the **left side** of the page and responses on the **right side** to separate the "they say" from the "I say." On the following page, you'll find strategies for doing just that.

Image credit: Brandi Redd, Unsplash.com

The Left: Understand What "They Say"

- Highlight or underline the author's **thesis or stance**.
- Highlight any **writing choices**, such as repetition, parallel structure, and restatement, along with **rhetorical questions** to consider **how** the author expresses his or her point of view. Choose different colors to help you highlight the text for different reasons, such as the parts of an argument, secondary sources, etc.
- **Underline signal/cue words** that help you identify the structure of the text—cause and effect, compare-contrast, chronological, etc.
- **Answer questions** you created from subheadings.
- **Translate:** Translating texts into everyday language will help you to better understand the author's argument and the rhetorical situation. Make sure to stay true to the author's ideas.
- **Research Key Terms:** You will likely encounter vocabulary and context with which you are unfamiliar. Briefly research that context.
- **Pose Questions to Clarify:** Remember that you are entering a conversation with the writer.
- **Summarize Each Section and the Entire Text:** As you read each section, summarize it **in your own words,** as if you were explaining it to a friend in a conversation. Summarize accurately and fairly—you're explaining what the author says in order to respond with your own argument.
- **Consider What Each Paragraph is Doing:** As you read each paragraph, try to determine what the author is doing with it: **presenting** (examples, facts, or ideas from a source for [later] analysis—essentially narration, description, or summary); **analyzing** (dissecting and interpreting relevant evidence, arguments, and theories); or **synthesizing** points or ideas (to make new theories, develop previous points, raise new questions, or draw conclusions).

The Right: Respond to the Text (I Say)

- **Identify Patterns:** Look for patterns, key terms, and repeated words. Write any thoughts you have about the author's writing choices i.e, why he or she used specific phrasing.
- **Draw Conclusions and Connections:** Writing brings our own unique perspective to intellectual problems, and as you read, you'll automatically make connections to what you already know outside of the text. For example, if you're interested in feminist studies, economics, or politics, you will likely apply that perspective as you read. Seemingly random connections may prove to be points of entry into a conversation.
- **Note Reflections, Reactions, and Comments:** While what we initially write may be reactive or emotional, it's often a starting point for analysis.
- **Review Your Responses:** Review any responses or questions you included in your annotation. **How would you discuss the text with the author if you were to encounter him or her in a coffee shop?** What did the author leave out that you think should have been discussed? How does this author's response to an intellectual problem generate entirely new intellectual problems?

Adapted from content from *"They Say / I Say" The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein and Gordon Harvey's "Elements of the Academic Essay."

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argumentation

Foundational Elements

These three main elements—**claims, analysis (reasons), and evidence**—are the foundation for most academic arguments. If you at least have a strong claim in your paper, support it with clear, insightful reasons, and back up those reasons with sound evidence, you are virtually guaranteed to generate a reasonably good paper, both in this course and others.

Additional Elements

The additional elements of acknowledgement and response and warrants also help to advance your argument and credibility as a scholar.

element of argumentation	what it means	what it does
Claim	The main idea, belief or opinion of an argument. Claims are debatable i.e. they may be true or false.	**What's the point?**
Analysis (Reasons)	Explanations, or interpretations of evidence, that help support the claim. Reasons, like claims, are debatable.	**What explanations help make the point believable? How is evidence interpreted to support the point?**
Evidence	Specific data that is presented and typically analyzed to support the claim e.g. personal experience, observations, facts, statistics. Evidence is not debatable, though its interpretation may be.	**What specific facts or details support and demonstrate the point?**
Acknowledgement and Response	Admission of possible counterarguments, followed by reassertion (and maybe revision or qualification) of your argument in your response.	**Is the claim still valid despite other opinions? How? Why?**
Warrants	Assumptions that connect your claim to supporting evidence and reasons. They should be explicit if you think your reader doesn't share your same assumptions.	**How are the claim and evidence (assumed to be) related? How are the claim and reasons (assumed to be) related?**

Identify the Elements of Argument

1. Given that Harry was born in Bermuda, we can presumably claim that he is British, since anyone born in Bermuda will generally be British (on account of various statutes), unless his parents were aliens, say.
2. Mr. X was an incredibly lazy anthropology teacher. In almost every class, while Mr. X napped at his desk, we watched movies that had very little educational value. Mr. X also used old tests that seemed to be designed to save him time rather than to gauge our knowledge of material. Some of the movies we watched included *Little Big Man* and *Last of the Mohicans*; he did not once discuss the relevance of these movies to the subject. During two tests, I had to show him as many as eight questions that covered material he had never assigned. Both times, he told the class to skip those questions. It's true that half the class named him as their favorite teacher; however, the same half of the class slept through class every day. Teachers ought to be engaged, attentive, and hardworking. Furthermore, teachers should only test students on material covered in class.
3. 66% of the Nigerian population lives below the poverty line on less than US$1 a day; only 40% of households have access to portable water. Lack of proper diet and clean environment negatively affect the health status of Nigerians and expose them to risk of infection by HIV. To compound this problem, young people assessing the poor economic circumstances in their homes often assume the responsibility of breadwinners by practicing prostitution, placing them at even higher risk of contracting HIV. For these reasons, the country's poor economic conditions are directly connected to the region's rising HIV rate.
4. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald uses both repetition and symbolism to draw readers' attention to the theme of time—and in particular, the past, for which his main characters yearn. The novel begins "In my younger and more vulnerable years..." and ends "borne back ceaselessly into the past." Fitzgerald goes on to use some 450 time-words, including 87 appearances of the actual word 'time.' The Buchanan lawn is described as "jumping over sundials"; Gatsby knocks over a clock during his reunion with Daisy; and Klipspringer plays "In the meantime, In between time—." The clock, sundial and frequent use of 'time' all reinforce for the reader the importance of the theme of time and the inevitability of time passing. Fitzgerald seems to want to remind the reader that time will always get in the way of Gatsby and his dreams, and his desire to return to the past—there's no turning back the clock.

citing sources

Summary, Quotation, Paraphrasing (and Patchwriting)

A general rule of thumb is to ensure that **your voice is the dominant voice in your essay**, allowing the voices and exact words of others to enter when it is necessary to convey, analyze, or interpret their language choices to build your own argument. A strong writer will use **many** of the following strategies in any given essay.

- When a writer **quotes**, he or she "reproduces the exact language" of a source, placing those words within quotation marks and provides citation.
- When **summarizing**, a writer conveys the main ideas of a source more concisely in mostly his or her own words. In other words, it is common for a writer to include quotations in a summary. A summary is a broad overview of a source text and therefore requires restatement *and* significant reduction of that source.
- When **paraphrasing**, a writer restates a source *in his or her own words* but without the significant reduction in length necessary when summarizing. The writer must strive not to reproduce the sentence structures of the original. If technical or specialized words from the original text are used, they may need to be placed within quotation marks. **Paraphrasing requires citation.**

Examples

Original Passage	"Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes." Lester, James D. *Writing Research Papers.* 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.
Legitimate Paraphrase	In research papers, students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).
Acceptable Summary	Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 46-47).
Patchwritten Version	Students often use too many direct quotations in notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in their paper. Probably only about 10% of your final paper should be direct quotations. You should try to contain the amount of exact transcribing of sources while taking notes (Lester 46-47).
Plagiarized Version	Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So, it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.

Patchwriting and Plagiarism

Patchwriting should always be avoided. When a writer patchwrites, he or she takes sections of verbatim text and links them together with additional sentences or with a few words or phrases switched out. This is considered plagiarism unless all directly quoted text is indicated with quotation marks and appropriately cited. Students often resort to patchwriting when they don't understand the text they're working with well enough to paraphrase or summarize.

You may think that if you paraphrase someone else's words, they become your words, so you don't need to cite them. This is not true. A paraphrase is your version of someone else's ideas or words and must be cited or it is considered plagiarism.

To Quote or Not to Quote

Quote when:

- The language of the source is especially clear, vivid or memorable.
- The language of the source demands analysis, interpretation or explication because of its complexity, technicality, nuance, ambiguity, or inconsistency.
- The source is authoritative.

Do not quote when:

- Text is simply providing facts.
- No analysis or explication is necessary and there is nothing special about the original language. In other words, don't quote when you can easily paraphrase and your discussion is descriptive rather than analytical.
- You are making your own claim. In other words, don't quote an author's words (other than a key term perhaps) to finish off a sentence in which you make a claim.
- Starting or ending a paragraph.

Paraphrase when:

- You can say the same thing more clearly.
- You are most interested in the facts being presented.

Summarize when:

- You need to convey the main point of a work or passage.

Incorporating Quotations into Your Sentences

- Quote **only** the part of the sentence or paragraph that you need by identifying the precise word, phrase, or clause that meets one of the criteria for quotation.
- Incorporate the quote into the flow of your sentence. Try to work the material into your paper in as natural and fluid a manner as possible.

Consider the following examples:

Quoting a full sentence from the source with source citation: Said writes, "For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, them')" (43).

Quoting a partial sentence with explicit source citation: Said describes Orientalism as "a political vision of reality" that contributed to the division between "the familiar" and "the strange" (44).

Quoting a partial sentence with implied source citation: Orientalism was "a political vision of reality" that contributed to the division between "the familiar" and "the strange" (Said 44).

verbs commonly used to introduce sources

acknowledges
adds
agrees
argues
asserts
believes
claims
comments
compares
confirms
contends
denies
disputes
de-emphasizes
emphasizes
endorses
grants
illustrates
implies
insists
notes
observes
points out
reasons
refutes
rejects
reports
responds
suggests

Summarizing a Source

There is some *basic information* that your reader will always want to know about your sources:

- **The title:** Make sure the title is correct and complete. It's also a good idea to include the year of publication the first time you include the title (2021). Make sure that it is formatted correctly. Article and chapter titles belong in "quotation marks." Book, play, movie and artwork titles belong in *italics*.
- **The author:** Provide the author's full name. Thereafter, refer to the author by last name only.
- **The topic of the source:** Explain the basic topic of the source. The reader will always want to know the general topic of the source, even if you are only interested in one of its ideas.

There is some other information that the reader may need to know as well depending on how you intend to use the source:

- **The central question or problem the author is addressing:** If the source is going to be an important part of your essay, giving a more detailed summary of the article is a good idea. You might present the problem or question that the writing is trying to address.
- **The thesis of the source i.e. the answer to the central question:** Again, this is information you might want to give if the source is going to play a big role in your essay.
- **The year of publication:** The year of publication helps the reader figure out how current the ideas in the article are. Some ideas are more time sensitive than others, and the year may not interest your reader in every case. Also, sometimes the title or author of a work of literature is well-known enough that the year doesn't need to be mentioned. If I mention something that was written by Thomas Jefferson, the year might not be important, depending on the context.
- **The type of text or publication:** This can help a reader figure out how credible or authoritative the source is. It also lets the reader know whom the article is written for. Consider how much information your reader may need or want about this text based on how you are using it. Is it a book? A scholarly article? A news article? Where was it published?
- **Additional information about the author:** Like the type of text or publication, giving the reader some information about the author can help the reader assess the credibility and authority of your sources. Is the author a professor, a physicist, a journalist, a philosopher, an Olympic athlete?

Presenting the Key Idea

Unless you're writing a review of a source, you will not want to engage with every one of the source's ideas; that would lead to an unfocused essay. When responding to a source, you'll typically focus on one key idea. That idea will need to be presented in detail.

- Paraphrase that key idea carefully in your own words.
- Include a quotation from the text that most directly states this idea.
- Explain the quotation in your own words
- Use an example to help explain the idea—either one of your own or one that the author provides him or herself.

Image credit: Alex Iby, Unsplash.com

closely reading poetry and prose

When we closely read poetry and prose, we are exploring specific themes or patterns within a text, learning about language and rhetorical technique, and understanding how writers craft their work, all of which helps us to gain a deeper understanding of the text. With these practices in mind, once you've finished reading a text, you should already have the foundations of your analysis. In other words, you've already begun the writing process!

Reading (and Writing)

- Slowly read the poem **aloud** at least twice.
- Poetry and prose are not always logical, so **read intuitively *and* logically**.
- Look for **patterns**.
- **Annotate** words, phrases, and sections that seem important to you.
- **Make connections** between phrasing that loses you and that speaks to you to make meaning.
- **Summarize** the poem in your own words and/or rewrite or translate the poem as prose.

Analyzing Poetry

As you read the poem, begin to analyze its meaning.

- **Annotate and Respond:** Highlight or underline content that stands out to you. Then, respond to the poem with questions about its meaning. Keep in mind that your interpretation of a poem may contradict that of your peers.
- **Make Connections:** Writing brings our own unique perspective to intellectual problems, and as you read, you will make connections. Seemingly random connections may prove to be points of entry into a poem. Include them in your response annotations.
- **Translate:** As you read, you will likely encounter places in a poem that "lose" you. Translating texts into everyday language will help you to better understand the poem. Make every effort to stay true to the poet's overall rhetoric as you translate.

Rhetorical Patterns of Poetry

- What is the **subject** (or subjects) that the poem is addressing?
- Who is the **speaker** of the poem?
- What is the poem's larger **context**?
- What **genre** or **mode** of poem are you reading?
  - Lyrical mode uses associative, vivid language, expresses strong thoughts and feelings, and is usually focused inwardly.
  - Narrative mode tells a story.
  - Dramatic lyric mode uses lyric and narrative elements.
  - Descriptive mode describes the world around the speaker using elaborate imagery and adjectives.
  - Elegy poems reflect on death or loss.
  - A soliloquy is a monologue in which a character speaks to him or herself.

Form and Structure

- Is the poem a **closed or fixed form**, which follows a pattern of lines, meter, rhymes, or stanzas (sonnets, villanelles)? Or, is it open form, which is free from structure?
- What is the **stanzaic makeup**? In other words, how are the series of lines grouped together and separated from each other? What are the number of lines in each of the stanzas?
- What **literary devices**, such as repetition, punctuation, or section divisions, can you detect?

Language

Look closely at the language in the poem. Poets are often trying to help us see things in a way we may not have before. Think about how their language makes something surprising or new.

- Is the **language** in the poem multi-syllabic, formal or informal, elaborate, or some combination of various language types? Language helps you to determine the tone.
- What is the **tone** of the poem? Tone helps you to determine the **mood**.
- What **images** stand out and why? What does the image **embody**? Images provide a **relationship between emotion and idea**.
- How does metaphor to **alter or layer** the poem?

Literary and Figurative Devices

Understanding the literary or figurative devices at work in poetry allow you infer meaning and provide you with a conceptual vocabulary that facilitates focused analysis.

- **allegory:** a representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning
- **alliteration:** the repetition of consonant sounds, particularly at the beginning of words.
- **allusion:** a reference to a person, event, or work outside the poem or literary piece.
- **ambiguity:** a word or phrase that can mean more than one thing, even in its context.
- **connotation:** the emotional, psychological or social overtones of a word; its implications and associations apart from its literal meaning.
- **hyperbole:** exaggerated language, description, or speech that is not meant to be taken literally, but is used for emphasis
- **imagery:** word or sequence of words representing a sensory experience—visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory.
- **irony:** a contradiction of expectation between what is said and what is meant (verbal) or what is expected in a particular circumstance or behavior (situational), or when a character speaks in ignorance of a situation known to the audience or other characters (dramatic).
- **metaphor:** a direct comparison between two unlike things, stating that one is the other or does the action of the other.
- **metonymy:** a figure of speech in which a person, place, or thing is referred to by something closely associated with it.
- **onomatopoeia:** the use of words to imitate the sounds they describe.
- personification: attributing human characteristics to an inanimate object, animal, or abstract idea.
- **simile:** a direct comparison of two unlike things using "like" or "as."
- **symbol:** an object or action that stands for something beyond itself.
- **synecdoche:** indicating a person, object, etc., with only a certain part representing the whole.

Adapted from "Poetry Close Reading" from Purdue OWL and from the American Academy of Poets.

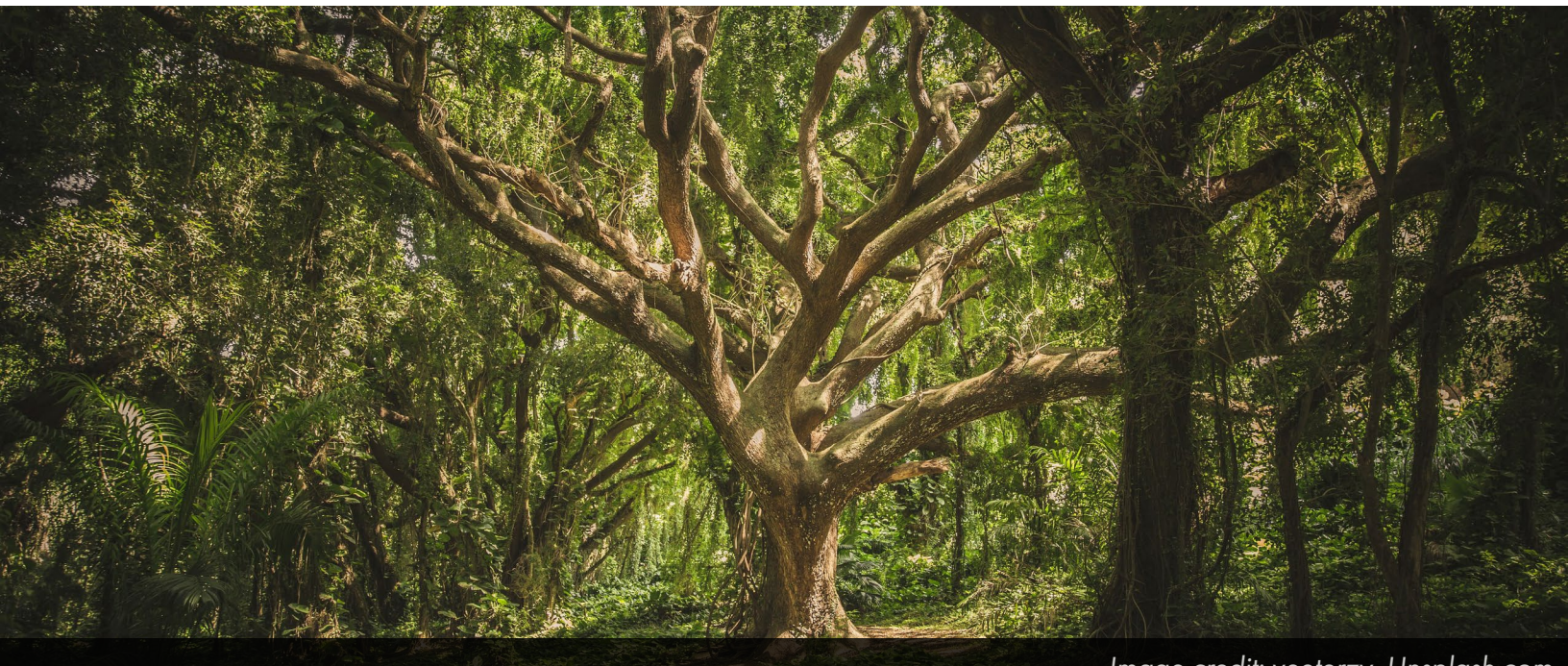


Image credit: veeterzy, Unsplash.com

developing strong claims

After having analyzed evidence, a writer can produce a strong claim about the evidence for his or her readers. In other words, **the point of analysis is to produce strong claims**. But what makes a claim strong? **A strong claim is:**

1. **debatable:** is not a fact but can be right or wrong; potential counterarguments exist.
2. **derived from and supported by analysis of relevant evidence.**
3. **specific**: uses key terms and strong verbs to offer a viewpoint on narrowly defined subjects.
4. **insightful:** offers new, unexpected, or not-obvious ways of seeing or understanding a subject; it goes beyond obvious or common interpretations.

Exercise

1. Which of the two following claims are stronger? Why?

   Claim 1: I don't get why people like this movie; it's bad.

   Claim 2: Although the movie is memorable because of its unique plot, it does not succeed as a horror film because there are too few moments that produce terror in viewers.

2. Of these sentences, which do you think is the strongest claim? Why?

   Claim 1: Crime rates have increased in recent years.
   Claim 2: Violence on television is responsible for increased crime.
   Claim 3: Increased crime rates in recent years are a serious cause for alarm.

   Claim 4: Although many have argued that the argument is oversimplified, new data suggests that violence on television is responsible for increased crime.

3. Of these sentences, which do you think is the strongest claim? Why?

   Claim 1: World War II was an extremely violent war and may have been the most violent war in history.
   Claim 2: It was my study of World War II that led me to reevaluate my conception of violence.
   Claim 3: Despite its violence, World War II was a just war.
   Claim 4: Violence can be justified only by a callous balancing of violence against violence—I can murder you, only if you planned to murder others.

   Claim 5: Violence can be justified.

4. Of these sentences, which is the strongest claim? Why?

   Claim 1: I combated the stereotypes in part by trying to disprove them.
   Claim 2: I was keenly aware of the unflattering mythologies that attach to Asian Americans: the we are indelibly foreign, exotic, math and science geeks, numbers people rather than people, followers and not leaders, physically frail, but devious and sneaky, unknowable and potentially treacherous.
   Claim 3: The irony is that in working so duteously to defy stereotype, I became a slave to it. For to act self-consciously against Asian "tendencies" is not to break loose from the cage of myth and legend; it is to turn the very key that locks you inside.
   Claim 4: There was a time when assimilation did not quite strictly mean whitening.

   Claim 5: To be sure, something is lost in any migration, whether from place to place or from class to class. But something is gained as well.

developing and strengthening analysis

Use the following strategies to identify the parts of the argument in your analysis paragraphs in order to P-A-S each of your sentences in terms of what it's "doing."

Identify the Parts of the Argument

Each of your analysis paragraphs should have the following components:

- A strong **claim** that presents your argument. **(Presentation)**
  - It is specific about **what** the interpretive problem is in the evidence from the exhibit that you are analyzing.
  - It is also specific on **why and how** the evidence demonstrate an interpretive problem.
  - After you finish polishing your analysis, you should **review your claim**.
- Frame and introduce **evidence** from the exhibit with citations. **(Presentation)**
- Analysis, analysis, and more analysis of the evidence from the exhibit (not the secondary source quotes). **(Analysis)**
  - Analyze the **evidence** from the exhibit.
  - **Dissect** the interpretive problem.
  - **Explain how** and why it demonstrates an interpretive problem.
  - Use **key terms**.
  - Include **citations**.
- Quotes from your secondary sources. **(Presentation)**
  - Introduce and frame the **quotes**.
  - Integrate **key terms** from the sources into analysis sentences.
  - **Connect** the quotes to/in the analysis of the exhibit.
  - Include **citations**.
- A concluding sentence to synthesize your argument in the paragraph. (Synthesis)
  - Provide **insight** on the interpretive problem.
  - Connect to your claim and answer the **"So, what?"** question.
  - You might also make a connection to the following paragraph to provide a transition. (But write transition sentences after you've finished polishing your analysis paragraphs since you may change your paragraph order.)

Sample Student Analysis Paragraph from a Formal Draft

While student's analysis on the following page needs development and expansion, she has a good start and is making clear connections between her ideas and that of her secondary sources. **As you read, pay attention to what her writing is "doing."**

Note that none of the sentences in the following sample analysis paragraph start with "This."

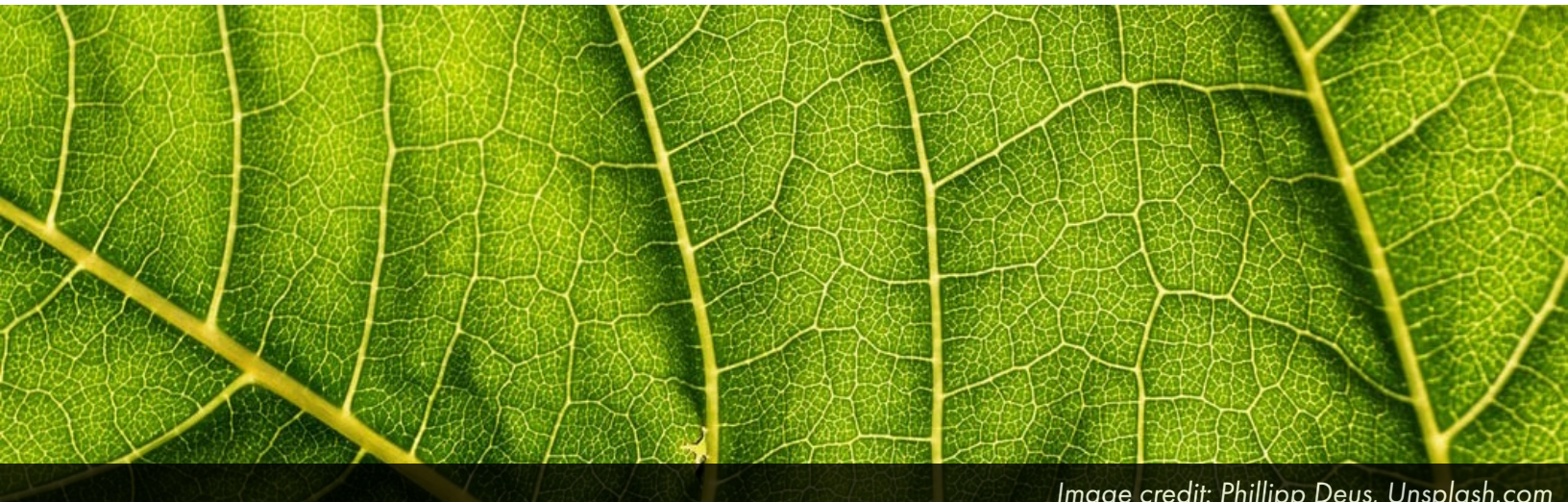


Image credit: Phillipp Deus, Unsplash.com

Sample Analysis Paragraph from a Student Essay

CLAIM: As the first-generation migrant of the Ganguli line, Ashoke's lifestyle and experiences reflect the **THEORETICAL TERM:** multiculturalist ideology affecting his son Gogol as a second-generation immigrant, an ideology that is revealed through **LITERARY TERMS:** narration and the metaphorical symbolism of birth and sight. **FRAME THE EVIDENCE WITH CONTEXT:** In the beginning of *The Namesake*, Ashoke and Ashima are starting their life in America. Through the narration, Ashoke's outlook regarding their new homeland and life is revealed, and it is clear that he accepts his new life and identity as an Indian/American after his involvement in the train accident. **PRESENTING EVIDENCE:** He claims that "Instead of thanking God he thanks Gogol," for saving his life after declaring that "He was born twice in India, and then a third time, in America" (Lahiri 21). **ANALYSIS OF EXHIBIT:** Ashoke's experiences reflect America's transition into an increasingly diverse population, the idea of identity as separate from nation or including other nations becomes popular, integrating cultures from all spheres to form personal identity. **FRAMING/INTRODUCING THE SECONDARY SOURCE QUOTE:** Gerstle explains the American ideologies of the 1970s, stating that **SECONDARY SOURCE QUOTE (HISTORICAL CONTEXT):** "By the 1970s, a new ideology, multiculturalism, had arisen, its architects calling on groups to invest their hopes and dreams in some identity—racial, ethnic, sexual—other than the now discredited nation and its hollow promises of deliverance" (73). **CONNECTING THE SECONDARY SOURCE TO ANALYSIS OF EXHIBIT:** A portion of Ashoke's identity is presented through his denouncement of religion in favor of knowledge as symbolized by the book that saved him. It becomes clear that knowledge is fundamental to Ashoke's character, outlining his identity with respect to the books that he reads along with the experiences that he encounters. By acknowledging his acceptance of being a part of India as well as America altogether presents the ideology of multiculturalism as he uses his interest in books in an attempt to create his idealistic identity from his figurative travel in books to his literal migration to America. **SYNTHESIS:** In combining these identities, it is revealed that Ashoke came to America to be 'born again' as the identity he created himself, giving Ashoke an increasingly multiculturalist identity which follows in naming his son. **TRANSITION:** Additionally, Ashoke's endeavors are allegorical representations of the journey taken by the first-generation immigrants of 1965. **FRAMING/INTRODUCING THE SECONDARY SOURCE QUOTE:** Eric Foner describes immigration after 1965, **SECONDARY SOURCE QUOTE (HISTORICAL CONTEXT):** "the idea of race and national

origin as the basis for immigration became […] intolerable […] [with rising] emphasis on family reunification and immigration on the basis of certain skills needed in the society" (00:00:45 – 00:01:18). **ANALYSIS/PART TWO OF THE CLAIM:** In *The Namesake*, the theme of sight is symbolic of his to document Ashoke's travels depicts his perspective as a migrant. With his father's blindness as a control, Ashoke thought **PRESENTING EVIDENCE:** "he'd gone blind" after his train accident; left with his injuries, he "began to envision another sort of future […] walking away, as far as he could from the place in which he was born and in which he had nearly died" (Lahiri 18, 20). **ANALYSIS:** After his accident, Ashoke realizes that he cannot extend his knowledge and development by remaining in India like his father, which is symbolic of his multicultural ideology's initial formation. It is when he becomes nearly blind that he realizes that migration is a means to a new beginning, an expansion of identity through multiculturalism, which is the same metaphor for blindness and sight is demonstrated when Gogol is born, when Ashoke is worried that Gogol will not be able to open his eyes (23). **SYNTHESIS:** Sight symbolizes the changing American philosophy during the setting of the novel. Ashoke recognizes the financial benefits of American multiculturalism and wants Gogol to welcome Bengali culture while taking advantage of American ideology, a metaphor for the birth of his multicultural identity. **TRANSITION TO NEXT PARAGRAPH:** However, as Ashoke attempts to endow Gogol with his multicultural ideology, Gogol simultaneously ignores his father's efforts to assume Bengali tradition, amplifying his American individualism.

Image credit: Pavlo Kochan, Unsplash.com

developing and structuring argument

A central goal of academic essays is to engage with and contribute to existing conversations about the selected issue or topic. Furthermore, an academic writer strives to add something new to the ongoing conversation rather than to simply repeat or reiterate perspectives or insights that already exist. While **there's no set "formula"** for incorporating evidence and sources, keeping this goal at the forefront of a writer's mind can provide clear strategies or "paths of analysis" for structuring arguments.

In order to develop complex paths to analysis, each path requires: using sources as described by ExACT source use, analysis of the evidence, and engaging a specific existing argument in order to respond to it, based on the insights gleaned from analyzing specific evidence i.e. synthesis.

In a typical academic essay, a writer might employ multiple paths of analysis. Some possible paths of analysis are:

- Introduce relevant theory ⇨ Use theory to conduct lens analysis of specific aspect of exhibit ⇨ Introduce existing argument about that aspect of exhibit ⇨ Analyze and confirm, contradict, complicate, or extend that existing argument based on the conclusions from your analysis
- Introduce and analyze existing argument about specific aspect of exhibit ⇨ Introduce relevant theory ⇨ Use theory to conduct lens analysis of that specific aspect of exhibit ⇨ Discuss how analysis confirms, contradicts, complicates, or extends existing argument
- Introduce relevant contextual information ⇨ Introduce relevant theory ⇨ Use theory to conduct lens analysis of specific aspect of exhibit ⇨ Introduce existing argument about that aspect of exhibit ⇨ Confirm, contradict, complicate, or extend existing argument
- Describe observation (e.g. pattern or anomaly) in exhibit ⇨ Introduce relevant theory ⇨ Use theory to conduct lens analysis of specific aspect of exhibit ⇨ Introduce existing argument about that aspect of exhibit ⇨ Confirm, contradict, complicate, or extend existing argument

On the following pages, you'll find potential paths that are color-coded in the same way as the highlighting in the Developing and Strengthening argument writing guide.

Forge Your Own Path

While this guide is a useful tool for helping you to think about how you might organize your analysis paragraphs, keep in mind these paths of analysis won't work for every analysis paragraph. Allow your sources to further your conversation, but don't allow them to take it over. It's your essay, so you're the one steering the conversation. Weave sources into your analysis and use key terms and ideas from them to make the connections between their ideas and yours clear.

Image credit: Ray Fragapane, Unsplash.com

Possible Path: Theoretical Source

PRESENT	
CLAIM	Present claim using a KEY TERM that describes the specific aspect of the exhibit you're analyzing and a theoretical term.
RELEVANT THEORY	Introduce the relevant quote from the THEORETICAL LENS SOURCE and then quote and cite the theory to precisely define your terms for analysis.
DESCRIBE AN OBSERVATION	Frame the EXHIBIT evidence quote by describing the pattern or anomaly, which provides context to your reader and allows you to begin to analyze.
EVIDENCE	Introduce the evidence quote from the EXHIBIT and provide a citation.
ANALYZE	
ANALYZE EVIDENCE	Use the theoretical TERM as a LENS to analyze the specific aspect of the EVIDENCE.
PRESENT	
EXISTING ARGUMENT	Introduce the relevant quote from the ARGUMENT source, and then quote and cite the existing argument about that aspect of exhibit.
RESPOND/ANALYZE	
ANALYZE EVIDENCE	Confirm, contradict, complicate, or extend existing argument to further your analysis of the EVIDENCE. Reflect vocabulary from the ARGUMENT source in your analysis.
SYNTHESIZE	
COMPLICATE OR QUALIFY	Combine your ideas with your sources' to expose an insightful similarity or difference or to create a novel concept.
DESCRIBE A CONNECTING OBSERVATION	Frame the EXHIBIT evidence quote by describing the pattern or anomaly, which not only provides context to your reader, but also allows you to further your analysis.
PRESENT	
EVIDENCE	Introduce additional evidence in the form of a quote from the EXHIBIT and provide a citation.
ANALYZE	
ANALYZE EVIDENCE	Use a THEORETICAL and a KEY term to analyze a specific aspect of the exhibt.
SYNTHESIZE	
DRAW CONCLUSIONS	Draw a conclusion based on the incorporation (i.e. synthesis) of all the analysis conducted in the paragraph. Include the same disciplinary term and theoretical term that you included in your CLAIM.

Possible Path: Argument and Theoretical Sources

PRESENT	
CLAIM	Present claim using a key term that describes the specific aspect of the exhibit you're analyzing and a theoretical term.
CONTEXTUAL THEORY	Introduce the quote from the relevant CONTEXTUAL THEORETICAL SOURCE and then quote and cite the theory to contextualize your analysis.
RELEVANT THEORY	Introduce the relevant quote from the THEORETICAL LENS SOURCE and then quote and cite the theory to precisely define your terms for analysis.
DESCRIBE AN OBSERVATION	Frame the EXHIBIT evidence quote by describing the pattern or anomaly, which not only provides context to your reader, but also allows you to begin to analyze.
EVIDENCE	Introduce the quote from the EXHIBIT and provide a citation.
ANALYZE	
ANALYZE EVIDENCE	Use the theoretical TERM as a LENS to analyze the specific aspect of the EXHIBIT evidence.
PRESENT	
EXISTING ARGUMENT	Introduce the quote from the ARGUMENT source, and then quote and cite the existing argument about that aspect of exhibit.
RESPOND/ANALYZE	
ANALYZE EVIDENCE	Confirm, contradict, complicate, or extend existing argument to further your analysis of the EVIDENCE. Reflect vocabulary from the ARGUMENT source in your analysis.
SYNTHESIZE	
COMPLICATE OR QUALIFY	Combine your ideas with your sources to expose an insightful similarity or difference or create a novel concept.
DESCRIBE A CONNECTING OBSERVATION	Frame the EXHIBIT evidence quote by describing the pattern or anomaly, which not only provides context to your reader, but also allows you to further your analysis.
EVIDENCE FROM THE EXHIBIT	Introduce additional evidence in the form of a quote from the exhibit and provide a citation.
ANALYZE	
ANALYZE EVIDENCE	Use a THEORETICAL and a KEY term to analyze a specific aspect of the exhibt.
SYNTHESIZE	
DRAW CONCLUSIONS	Draw a conclusion based on the incorporation (i.e. synthesis) of all the analysis conducted in the paragraph. Include the same KEY term and THEORETICAL term that you included in your CLAIM.

effective paragraphing

An effective paragraph should have:

- ONE clear point i.e. it says one specific thing.
- ONE clear purpose i.e. it does one specific thing.

What paragraphs SAY...

With the exception of paragraphs used to narrate a complex experience or event (which still have clear foci), **most paragraphs make ONE clear point**. That point is **typically made in the topic sentence** of the paragraph. The rest of the paragraph supports and explains that point with evidence and reasons. To summarize, you should be able to state the main point of each paragraph with a single sentence (called the topic sentence); every other sentence in that paragraph should clearly support or develop that main point. **When moving onto a different point, start a new paragraph.**

What paragraphs DO...

Most paragraphs within an essay do one of three things:

1. **Present** examples, facts, or ideas from a source for (later) analysis. This is essentially narration, description, or summary.
2. **Analyze** examples, facts, or ideas to make specific points. In other words, they dissect and interpret relevant evidence, arguments, and theories.
3. **Synthesize** points or ideas from various sources to make new theories, develop previous points, raise new questions, or draw conclusions.

Presentation Paragraphs

Presentation paragraphs give readers information that they, presumably, aren't familiar with. They may describe something that you want to analyze or complicate: an experience, event, object, text, or idea. They may, alternatively, present a source or claim from a source that you want to challenge, explore or apply later in the essay. Presentation paragraphs do not typically include analysis (see below). They help the reader to separate the things that you see as straightforward facts from original claims that you are making through analysis.

Analysis Paragraphs

In analysis paragraphs, you zoom in on smaller features of the object or text to answer some critical question(s). In these paragraphs, you may point out and interpret important aspects of your evidence, "close read" a text, explain your reasoning, make comparisons, or use a theoretical lens to better understand something else. You might see these paragraphs as working through specific facts or ideas you've previously presented in the attempt to find an answer to the central question of your essay (or to demonstrate how you worked through available evidence and theories to develop your own thesis).

Synthesis Paragraphs

You need synthesis paragraphs when you are:

- **Complicating** or **qualifying** your argument (or someone else's) up to that point through the engagement and incorporation of counter-evidence and counterarguments.
- **Combining the ideas of multiple sources** to expose an insightful similarity or difference or create a novel concept.
- **Summarizing your previous complex argument** to transition to a different path of inquiry (often by raising new questions). You often need a synthesis paragraph when transitioning between major sections of an essay. Hence, in this sense, they can also be thought of as transitional paragraphs or mini-conclusions.
- **Drawing a conclusion** based on the incorporation (i.e. synthesis) of all the analysis conducted in the essay.

Using Says/Does Analysis in the Writing Process

Adapted from Dr. Joe Bizup

What is it?

A Says/Does analysis asks you to write a single sentence describing what each paragraph of an essay says and a single sentence describing what it **does**.

Says

For the "says" part, write a single sentence that fully summarizes the "main point" of the paragraph. Ideally, this will be the topic sentence of the paragraph.

Does

For the "does" part, write a single sentence that describes what a paragraph is doing in terms of PAS (presenting/analyzing/synthesizing) and what it is PAS-ing (an exhibit, idea, argument, theory, etc.).

How do you use Says-Does analysis to improve your writing?

This is primarily a paragraphing tool (but it can also help you section an essay).

- If two paragraphs "say" the same thing (even if they "do" different things), then one of those paragraphs can usually go.
- If it is hard to determine the "main point" of a paragraph, then your paragraph might be saying too many things and you will need to separate your ideas into multiple paragraphs. Alternatively, the problem may be that you have no explicit topic sentence; thus, you need to write one into the paragraph.
- If a paragraph contains information unrelated to its "main point," then you need to cut extraneous information and refocus the paragraph.
- If two consecutive paragraphs "do" the same thing (with the same source), then you should probably think about condensing and combining them into a single paragraph.
- If it is hard to figure out whether a paragraph is P, A, or S, then you should consider breaking up the content of the paragraph by job/function.
- If it's hard to figure out how the source in the paragraph is being used (as context, exhibit, argument, or theory), then you need to figure it out and make sure your intended use of the source is clear to both you and your reader.
- If you find that you are presenting for more than two paragraphs in a row, then you need to add a paragraph of analysis. If you have more than two analysis paragraphs in a row, then you should think adding a paragraph of synthesis.

When do you use it?

Use the Says/Does analysis on:

- Exploratory drafts to help identify potential ideas that can form the basis of future paragraphs.
- On **ALL** non-exploratory drafts (in your other classes too). For this class it's obvious that you need presentation (of sources), for example, but check your essays for other courses with Says/Does and you may find yourself rather light on presentation. It is **ALWAYS** necessary. This technique can help you make sure you have included all of the elements a reader needs to understand the content of your essay.

You can also use this says/does analysis as a reading strategy, especially to help with understanding of challenging texts.

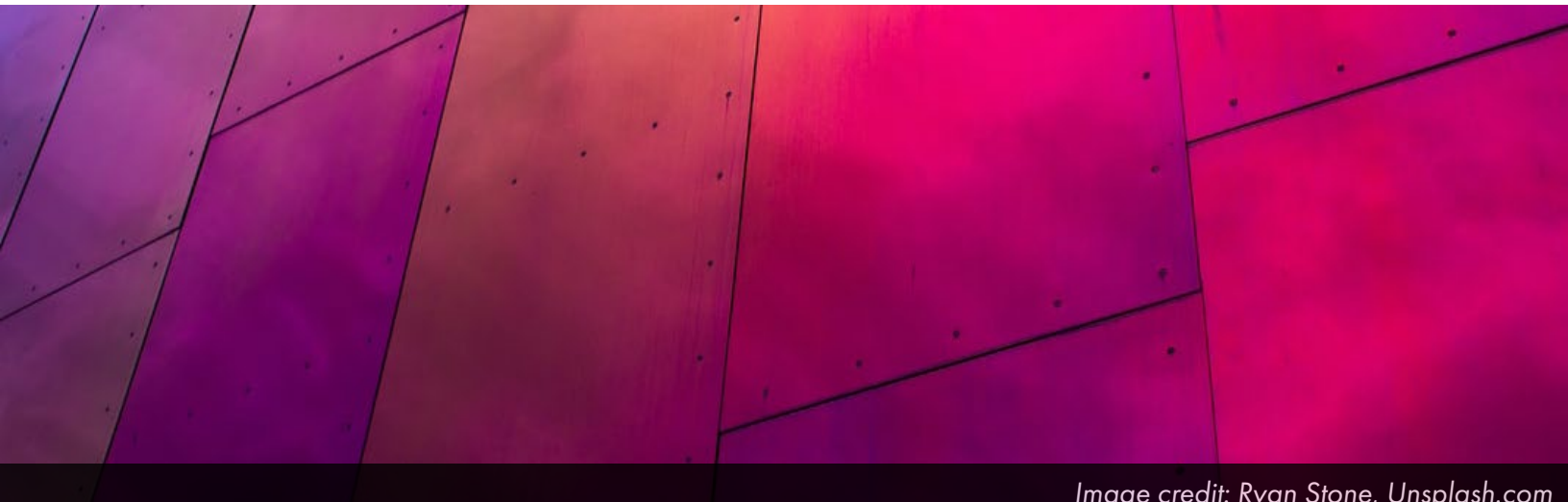


Image credit: Ryan Stone, Unsplash.com

effective thesis statements

What It Is, What It Does

The thesis or main claim is the sophisticated response to the central problem or question the writer addresses in his or her essay.

"[T]he purpose of the thesis is to give order both to the reader and to the writer. It does this by clearly stating the central claim that a piece of writing will try to prove [or the conclusion of the analysis conducted in the essay]. The writer takes care in the thesis statement to articulate a paper's argument as precisely as possible, and this precision clarifies and focuses the direction of the paper. Most of the time, a writer must work with a dynamic thesis statement – one that changes and evolves during the writing process. In other words, a working thesis statement that articulates what a writer is interested in exploring will be enough to guide a writer through a draft of the essay, but the exact words for the thesis statement are not finalized until the paper is nearly complete."

(Moore and Cassel, *Techniques for College Writing: The Thesis Statement and Beyond*)

Features of Effective Thesis Statements

Effective thesis statements are:

- **Debatable** claims with potential counterarguments, but not statements of fact (nor questions).
- **Specific** i.e. focused on narrow, clearly defined subjects, using key terms and strong, precise verbs.
- **Supportable** using available evidence and reasoning.
- **Insightful** i.e. they challenge assumptions and offer new ways of seeing or responding to challenging questions or problems.

Types of Thesis Statements

There are two main types of theses:

- **A call-to-action thesis** makes a recommendation or advocates for a specific course of action, often in response to a controversial social issue or real-life scenario. Call-to-action thesis statements almost always include the words "should," "must," "ought" or "recommend."
- **An analytical thesis** makes a claim about a subject of analysis: a text, an image, or an idea, for example. It reveals and explains a relationship, cause, effect or reason that might seem hidden, counterintuitive or not obvious to a casual reader.

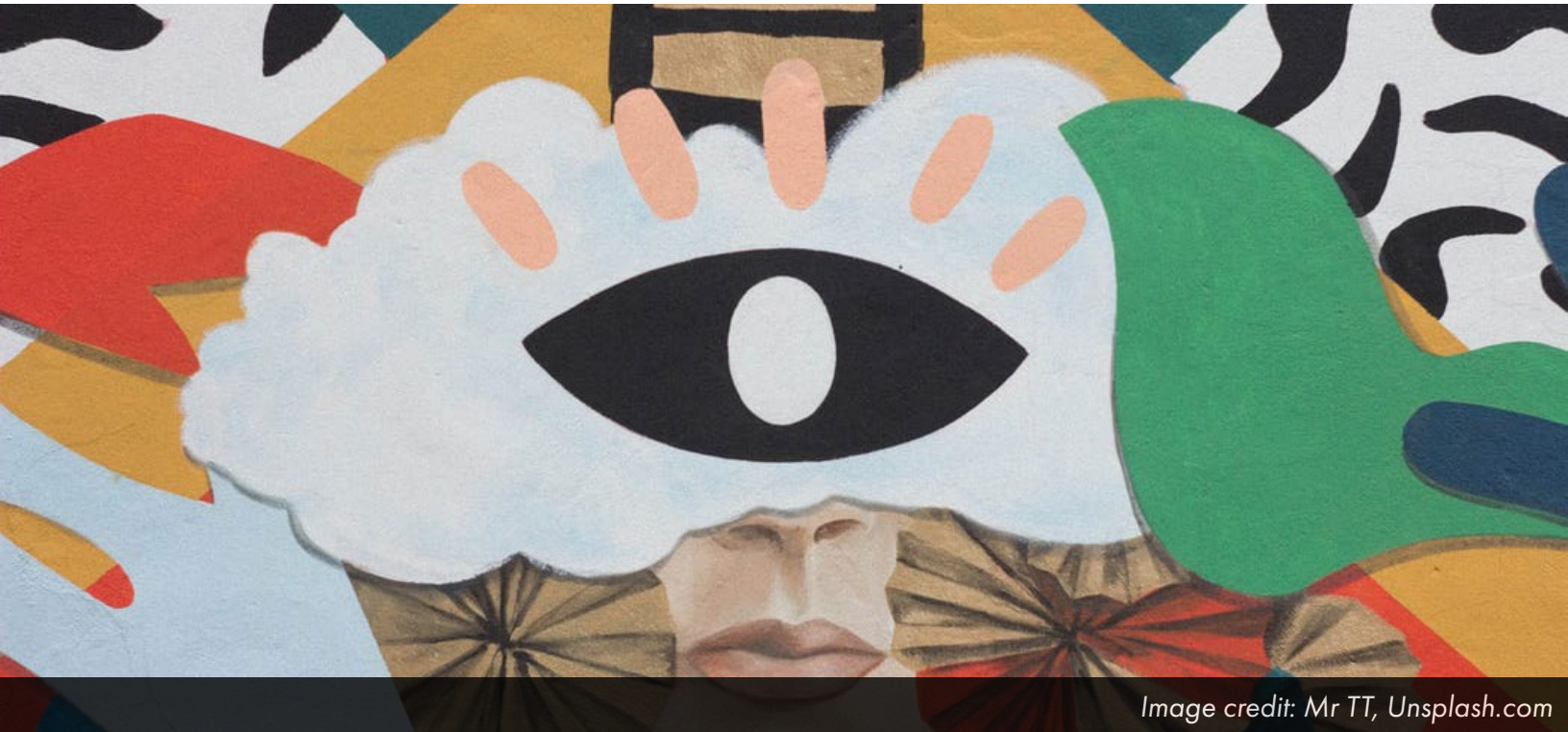


Image credit: Mr TT, Unsplash.com

gordon harvey's "elements of the academic essay"
(with adaptations)

Gordon Harvey's "Elements of the Academic Essay" provide a possible vocabulary for that will help you to identify patterns in your own writing.

1. **Problem:** the specific issue that you believe is unresolved or has not been adequately addressed that you choose to address in your academic essay. This may appear as a gap, tension, pattern, anomaly, contradiction, ambiguity, nuance in or debate about your exhibit or topic. The problem you identify should be genuine: a misapprehension or puzzle that an intelligent reader would really have, a point that such a reader would really overlook. The problem can be transformed into a specific question that can be explored and answered in a meaningful way via analysis of expert opinion and evidence. **It's the debate you want to enter.**

2. **Thesis:** your main insight or idea about an exhibit or topic, and the *main* proposition that your essay demonstrates; it is your response to the problem that you have identified. It should be true but arguable (not a fact and obviously or patently true, but one alternative among several), be limited enough in scope to be argued in a short composition and with available evidence, and get to the heart of the text or topic being analyzed (not be peripheral). It should be stated early in some form and, at some point, recast sharply (not just be implied), and it should govern the whole essay (not disappear in places). **It's your contribution to the debate.**

3. **Motive:** the intellectual context that you establish for your topic and thesis at the start of your essay to suggest why someone, besides your instructor, might want to read an essay on this topic or need to hear your particular thesis argued i.e. why your thesis isn't just obvious to all, or why other people might hold *other* theses (that you think are wrong). Your motive should be aimed at your audience; it won't necessarily be the reason you first got interested in the topic or the personal motivation behind your engagement with the topic. Defining motive should be the main business of your introductory paragraphs; there you should explain why the problem being addressed is significant (to the reader). **It's the specific reason why the debate matters—why readers should care about your thesis.**

4. **Evidence:** the data—facts, examples, or details—that you analyze, refer to, quote, or summarize to support your thesis. There needs to be *enough* evidence to be persuasive; it needs to be the right *kind* of evidence to support the thesis (with no obvious pieces of evidence overlooked); it needs to be sufficiently concrete for the reader to trust it (e.g. in textual analysis, it often helps to find one or two key or representative passages to quote and focus on); and if summarized, it needs to be summarized *accurately* and fairly. **It's the sources that you're analyzing—what you need to define the debate.**

5. **Analysis:** the work of breaking down, interpreting, and commenting upon the data, of saying what can be inferred from the data such that it supports a thesis (is evidence for something). Analysis is what you do with data when you go beyond observing or summarizing it: you show how its parts contribute to a whole or how causes contribute to an effect; you draw out the significance or implication not apparent to a superficial view. Analysis is what makes the writer feel present, as a reasoning individual; therefore, your essay should do more analyzing than summarizing or quoting. **It's the how and why of your argument.**

6. **Key Terms:** the recurring terms or basic oppositions that an argument rests upon, usually literal but sometimes a ruling metaphor. These terms usually imply certain assumptions—unstated beliefs about life, history, literature, reasoning, etc. that the essayist doesn't argue for but simply assumes to be true. An essay's key terms should be clear in their meaning and appear

throughout (not be abandoned half-way); they should be appropriate for the subject at hand (not unfair or too simple—a false or constraining opposition); and they should not be inert clichés or abstractions (e.g. "the evils of society"). The attendant assumptions should bear logical inspection, and if arguable, they should be explicitly acknowledged. **It's the vocabulary your audience needs to enter this debate.**

7. **Structure:** the sequence of main sections or sub-topics, and the turning points between them. The sections should follow a logical order, and the links in that order should be apparent to the reader (see "stitching"). But it should also be a progressive order—there should have a direction of development or complication, not be simply a list or a series of restatements of the thesis ("Macbeth is ambitious: he's ambitious here; and he's ambitious here; and he's ambitions here, too; thus, Macbeth is ambitious"). The order should also be supple enough to allow the writer to explore the topic, not just hammer home a thesis. (If the essay is complex or long, its structure may be briefly announced or hinted at after the thesis, in a roadmap or plan sentence.) **It's the organization of your overall essay and your individual paragraphs.**

8. **Coherence:** words that tie together the parts of an argument, most commonly (a) by using transition (linking or turning) words as signposts to indicate how a new section, paragraph, or sentence follows from the one immediately previous; but also (b) by recollection of an earlier idea or part of the essay, referring back to it either by explicit statement or by echoing key words or resonant phrases quoted or stated earlier. The repeating of key or thesis concepts is especially helpful at points of transition from one section to another, to show how the new section fits in. **It's how you tie together the pieces and show the relevance of all of them.**

9. **Sources:** persons or documents, referred to, summarized, or quoted, that help a writer demonstrate the truth of his or her argument. They are typically sources of (a) factual information or data, (b) opinions or interpretation on your topic, (c) comparable versions of the thing you are

Image credit: Ricardo Gomez Angel, Unsplash.com

discussing, or (d) applicable general concepts. Your sources need to be efficiently integrated and fairly acknowledged by citation. **Secondary sources are texts that are most central to the debate you're entering (not evidence to "back you up").**

10. **Reflecting and Synthesis:** when you pause in your demonstration to reflect on it, to raise or respond to a complication about it—as when you (1) consider a counter-argument—a possible objection, alternative, or problem that a skeptical or resistant reader might raise; (2) *define your terms or assumptions* (what do I mean by this term? or, what am I assuming here?); (3) handle a newly emergent concern (but if this is so, then how can X be?); (4) draw out an *implication* (so what? what might be the wider significance of the argument I have made? what might it lead to if I'm right? or, what does my argument about a single aspect of this suggest about the whole thing? or about the way people live and think?), and (5) consider a possible *explanation* for the phenomenon that has been demonstrated (why might this be so? what might cause or have caused it?); (6) offer a *qualification* or limitation to the case you have made (what you're not saying). The first of these reflections can come anywhere in an essay; the second usually comes early; the last four often come late (they're common moves of conclusion). **It's you reviewing points you've covered to help your reader make connections.**

11. **Orienting/Contextualization:** bits of information, explanation, and summary that orient the reader who isn't expert in the subject, enabling such a reader to follow the argument. The orienting question is, what does my reader need here? The answer can take many forms: necessary information about the text, author, or event (e.g. given in your introduction); a summary of a text or passage about to be analyzed; pieces of information given along the way about passages, people, or events mentioned (including announcing or "set-up" phrases for quotations and sources). The trick is to orient briefly and gracefully. **It's you providing your reader with directions or points on a map introducing any terms or sources that a reader may not know.**

12. **Stance:** the implied relationship of you, the writer, to your readers and subject: how and where you implicitly position yourself as an analyst. Stance is defined by such features as style and tone (e.g. familiar or formal); the presence or absence of specialized language and knowledge; the amount of time spent orienting a general, non-expert reader; the use of scholarly conventions of form and style. Your stance should be established within the first few paragraphs of your essay, and it should remain consistent. **It's where you stand on the intellectual problem (like a thesis but requires your reader to read your entire essay).**

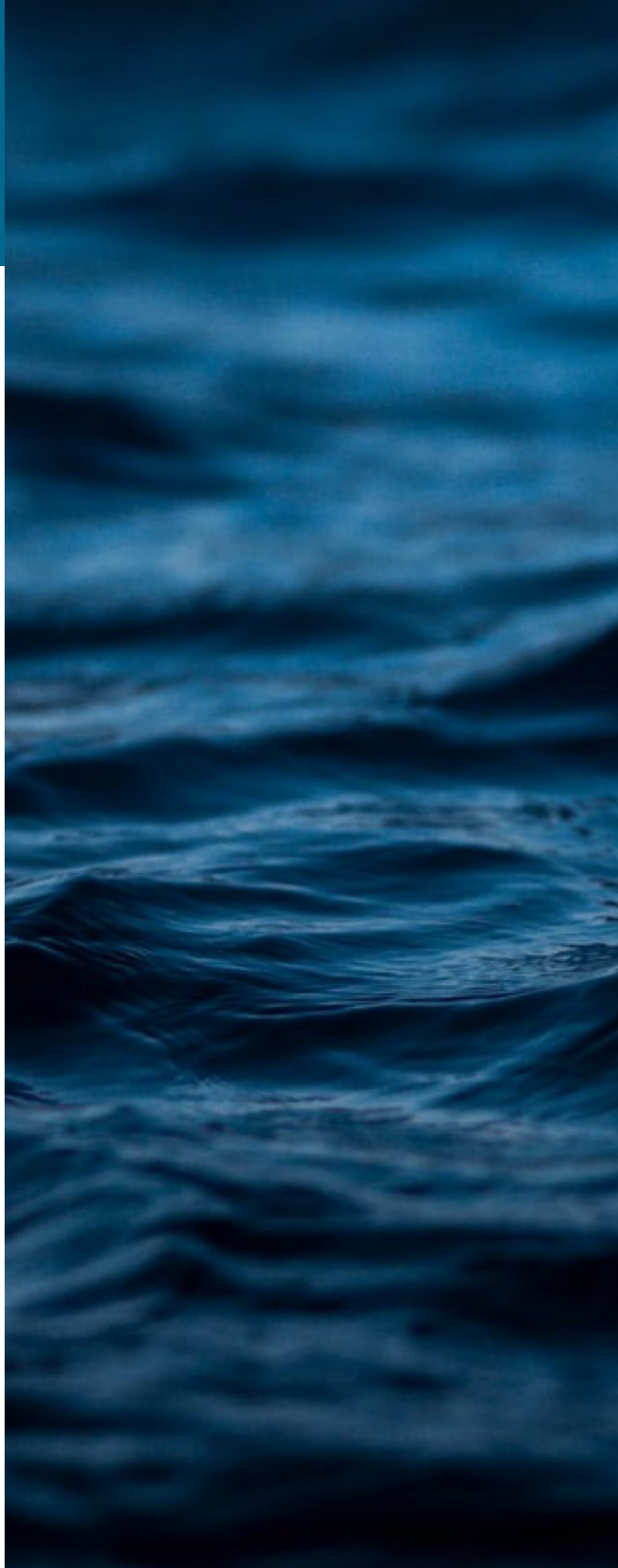
13. **Style:** the choices you make of words and sentence structure. Your style should be exact and clear (should bring out main idea and action of each sentence, not bury it) and plain without being flat (should be graceful and a little interesting, not stuffy). **It's your unique way of writing for the specific audience.**

14. **Title:** It should both interest and inform. To inform your title should give the subject and focus of the essay. To interest, your title might include a linguistic twist, paradox, sound pattern, or striking phrase taken from one of your sources (the aptness of which phrase the reader comes gradually to see). You can combine the interesting and informing functions in a single title or split them into title and subtitle. The interesting element shouldn't be too cute; the informing element shouldn't go so far as to state a thesis. Effective titles often hint at the problem or thesis of the essay. Don't underline your own title, except where it contains the title of another text. **It tells your reader why they should read your essay and what you're arguing about in it.**

elements of an annotated bibliography

Like a Works Cited page, an annotated bibliography is a list of citations for books, articles, documents, and videos; however, it also provides a brief analytical summary of a source and information on how it will be useful to a writer in terms of research and writing. Each entry in an annotated bibliography should include the following elements:

- A complete **MLA citation** for the source.
- The **purpose** and **main argument** of the text
- The ethos/credibility of the **publication** and the **author**.
- An **analytical summary** of the text's content
- The **audience** for which the source was intended
- **Evaluation** of its reasoning, conclusions, or reliability
- **How you will use the source to analyze a specific aspect of your exhibit**, including its **relevance** and **usefulness** to your research topic
- **Connections to related sources** in your bibliography that allow you to compare sources or establish connections and conversations between them, such as similar or opposing views



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What Each Element of the Annotated Bibliography is "Doing"

The following identifies the discrete components of the sample annotation to help you understand the basics on what each sentence the sample annotated bibliography is "doing." Although by no means a formula that will work for every annotated bibliography entry, it at least provides a guide for the required components.

1. **MLA Citation:** Journal Article (Periodical) **Author Last Name, First Name:** Nisetich, Rebecca. **Article Title in Quotes:** "Reading Race in Nella Larsen's *Passing* and the Rhinelander Case" **Journal Title in Italic:** *African American Review*, **Volume, date of publication:** vol. 46, no. 2/3, Summer/Fall 2013, **Article pages:** pp. 345-361. **Link to the article:** https://www.jstor.org/stable/23784063.
2. **Purpose**
   The first sentence explains the purpose or motive of the article: Nisetich's literary criticism article "Reading Race in Nella Larsen's *Passing* and the Rhinelander Case" discusses Nella Larsen's 1929 novel *Passing* in conversation with the Rhinelander Case, which was briefly referenced in the novel, in order to explore the complex ways in which race was defined in the United States in the 1920s, when the "pure" whites were anxious about the weakening boundaries around race and class.
3. **Evaluation of its reasoning, conclusions, or reliability**
   The student explains the credibility of the article, publisher, and author: The article appeared in the peer reviewed journal African American Review that is published by Johns Hopkins University Press. The journal is the official publication of the Modern Language Association's Division on Black American Literature and Culture, and its audience are writers and scholars in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Author Rebecca Nisetich, who is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Honors Program at the University of Maine, ...
4. **Main Argument**
   The student quotes and cites the author's main argument: ... argues that "what seems like a casual reference to a contemporary event actually underscores a central theme of the novel: the Rhinelander case and *Passing* both illustrate the problematic ways Americans sought to categorize racially ambiguous individuals in the 1920s. But while the Rhinelander verdict denies the existence of a middle ground between racial absolutes, the novel affirms it" (345).
5. **Analytical summary**
   The student provides an analytical summary that doesn't just say what the author says but how she makes her argument and quotes the author: Providing extensive historical context on the Rhinelander case, Nisetich correlates Alice Jones [Rhinelander] with the *Passing* character Clare Kendry Bellew, who also did not comply with the racial conventions of the United States that defined race based on the "one drop rule." Using the 1925 Rhinelander Case in conversation with Clare's character, Nisetich discusses the binary notions of race and asserts that "passing" is an inaccurate description of Alice Jones or Clare if they personally identified themselves as white; she thereby contrasts how society defines the women with how they identify themselves and challenges the binary racial construct. The author further contrasts Clare with the Passing character Irene, who identifies as Black according to racial lines drawn by *Plessy v. Ferguson* and states that through the characters, "Larsen depicts the artificiality of racial categorizations through Clare and Irene's passing, but it remains difficult to discuss the act of passing itself without reinscribing 'race' as a social fact" (350).
6. **Relevance to the student's topic**
   How the student will use the article to analyze a specific aspect of evidence from the exhibit (needs to be more specific): Nisetich's article for the juxtaposition Irene and society's racial identifiers with the personal identifiers employed by Clare in the novel *Passing*.
7. **Connections to other sources**
   The student identifies how she will use this source in conversation with a specific aspect of another secondary source: This source will be utilized in conversation with the "one drop rule" discussed in "'*Plessy v. Ferguson*': Who Was Plessy?" by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., to further the conversation on legal definitions of race in the 1920s.

functions of sources
ExACT source use

The distinction between "primary" sources (the actual 'thing' being studied) and "secondary" sources (texts that *discuss* the actual 'thing' being studied), as useful as it may be in some fields, does not help us very much as writers. The key thing for us is not what our sources *are* (inherently), but **what we are doing with them in our writing**, which is especially important because **our uses of even a single source can change over the course of an essay**! In other words, we need a vocabulary that allows us to categorize and discuss our sources not in terms of essence, but in terms of *function*.

Here, then, is a new vocabulary for discussing sources according to what we are *doing* with them in our essays. An easy way to remember these terms is through the acronym **"ExACT."** As a writer, you are striving for "exact" or intentional and precise use of the sources you engage.

Exhibit

Argument

Contextual

Theoretical

Image credit: Jason Leung, Unsplash.com

Source type	What it is	How to use it	What it does
Exhibit	The specific 'thing' you are analyzing and making an argument about at a particular moment in your essay. A single essay may have various exhibits but often has a central exhibit.	For direct analysis (or "close reading") in order to make an argument about it. It is akin to a primary source.	• Focuses project by isolating relevant cases of broad phenomena • Lends specificity to the argument • Provides a touchstone to enter a debate or conversation • Makes analysis and close reading possible • Provides concrete evidence for interpretation • Narrows research
Argument	A source that makes a direct or explicit argument about a 'thing' you are making an argument about.	To obtain specific arguments about your exhibit source. It is similar to a secondary source.	• Establishes existing arguments or claims • Recreates a conversation or debate so you can enter it • Provides supporting reasons and evidence • Provides counterarguments to be addressed • Enhances your credibility as an academic
Contextual	A source that provides crucial contextual or background information about the 'thing' you are making an argument about (or about an argument or theoretical source you are using in your essay).	To get contextual information that helps you better understand and potentially analyze an exhibit source (or argument source or theoretical source).	• Provides context or background information • Provides supporting evidence • Enriches understanding of the exhibit source • Reveals the significance and relevance of writing about the exhibit source
Theoretical	A source that doesn't explicitly address the specific 'thing' you're making an argument about, but offers a lens, theory, viewpoint, principle, or concept that can be used to think insightfully about the specific 'thing' you're making an argument about.	To obtain a theory that can help you analyze exhibit sources.	• Shapes or structures analysis • Facilitates 'new' applications of 'old' ideas • Allows for interdisciplinary analysis i.e. The productive application of ideas or concepts from other disciplines • Provides a language or vocabulary that enriches your analysis and argument • Demonstrates your mastery of the debate or conversation

identifying intellectual or interpretive problems

As we've learned and practiced, essays are intelligent, thoughtful responses to a specific problem or question. In particular, academic essays try to address and explore **interpretive** or **intellectual** problems i.e. problems with how we understand the world. So, how do academics find problems?

There are five ways that academics identify intellectual or interpretive problems. **Note we first begin with thoughtful observation about an exhibit (the "thing" you're analyzing) and/or the conversations surrounding it.**

Each of these types of problems can be transformed into specific **questions** based on the details of your observation. For example, if you observe that there is significant pattern within your exhibit, you might ask questions, such as:

What is the purpose or function of this pattern? How does it impact meaning? How it important to the exhibit?

1. Observe that your exhibit is a **significant example of a larger pattern or trend**.
2. Observe that your exhibit is a **significant anomaly or deviation** from a larger pattern or trend.
3. Observe that there are **significant patterns or significant anomalies** within your exhibit.
4. Observe that there is an **existing or ongoing debate** about your exhibit.
5. Observe that **prevailing viewpoints** about your exhibit **seem to overlook significant aspects** of your exhibit.

Image credit: Matt Walsh, Unsplash.com

lens analysis

Lens analysis requires you to distill a concept, theory, method or claim from a text (i.e. the "lens") and then use it to interpret, analyze, or explore something else e.g. a first-hand experience, visual text, physical object or space, historical or current event or figure, a cultural phenomenon, an idea or even another text (i.e. the "exhibit").

A writer employing lens analysis seeks to assert something new and unexpected about the exhibit; he or she strives to go beyond the expected or the obvious, exploiting the lens to acquire novel insights. Furthermore, there is a reciprocal aspect in that the exploration of the exhibit should cause the writer to reflect, elaborate, or comment on the selected concept or claim. Using a concept developed by someone else to conduct an analysis or interpretation of one's own is a fundamental move in academia, one that you will no doubt be required to perform time and time again in college.

Note: The first part of the process (**ICE**) is also known as a "quote sandwich," which makes sense if you think about it. ☺

How to Perform Lens Analysis

1. **Introduce** selected quotation from lens text i.e. provide the source for the quote as well as its context.
2. **Cite** the quotation i.e. use a signal phrase and partial quotation to present the author's ideas clearly to your reader. Make sure to provide the required citation (MLA for this class).
3. **Explain** what the quotation means in terms of your argument i.e. ensure that the meaning of the quotation is clear to your reader in connection to your argument.
4. **Apply** the quotation to a specific aspect of the exhibit i.e. use the idea expressed in the quotation to develop an insightful interpretation about an aspect of the exhibit.
5. **Reflect** on the particular lens idea more deeply i.e. complicate it, extend its scope, or raise a new question that you will address next in your analysis, if applicable.

Image credit: Agence Olloweb, Unsplash.com

model sentences for engaging multiple sources in conversation

This brainstorming exercise generates sentences that put authors in conversation with one another. It can also help you insert yourself in the intellectual discussion by finding intersections, nuances, complications, and complexities in your sources. You can and should tweak the grammar and the smoothness of the sentences; the templates are meant to *generate* ideas for your paper, so keep writing to try to explain the implications of these connections.

1. Like [AUTHOR 1], [AUTHOR 2] seems to want [PARAPHRASE OF IDEA]. But it may be more complicated than that, for [YOUR OWN IDEA].
2. [AUTHOR 1] expresses ambivalence when s/he says [QUOTATION] (citation, page number).
3. Like [AUTHOR 1], [AUTHOR 2] seems to want [PARAPHRASE OF IDEA]. [EXHIBIT] reveals a similar concern because [ANALYSIS OF EXHIBIT] (citation, page number).
4. [AUTHOR 1] and [AUTHOR 2] both provide an analysis of [PARAPHRASE OF IDEA], but they do not address [YOUR OWN IDEA].
5. The analysis of [PARAPHRASE OF IDEA] that arises from [AUTHOR 1's] question, [QUOTATION OF QUESTION FROM AUTHOR 1], is compelling because [EXTENSION OF AUTHOR 1's IDEA TO YOUR OWN IDEA ABOUT YOUR EXHIBIT] (citation, page number).
6. [AUTHOR 1] oversimplifies the situation when s/he argues, [QUOTATION OF AUTHOR 1] (citation, page number). It may be more productive to consider [YOUR OWN IDEA].
7. [AUTHOR 1] complicates his/her analysis by bringing up the point that [QUOTATION OF AUTHOR 1] (citation, page number). This idea is relevant for considering [YOUR EXHIBIT] because [EXTENSION OF AUTHOR 1's IDEA TO YOUR IDEA].
8. The idea of [SHORT PARAPHRASE OF CRITICAL VOCABULARY FROM AUTHOR 1] that [AUTHOR 1] presents resembles [AUTHOR 2's] idea of [SHORT PARAPHRASE OF CRITICAL VOCABULARY OR IDEA FROM AUTHOR 2]. The differences are instructive, for [EXTENSION OF YOUR OWN IDEA].
9. [AUTHOR 1] argues that [QUOTATION] (citation, page number). Here, [AUTHOR 1] joins a number of other thinkers in seeing the issue of [IDEA] as [PARAPHRASE OF ARGUMENT ABOUT IDEA].
10. [AUTHOR 1] claims that [QUOTATION] (citation, page number). Writing about [AUTHOR 2's EXHIBIT], [AUTHOR 2] takes [AUTHOR 1's] idea a step further. S/he argues [QUOTATION] (citation, page number).
11. There are other ways to consider the implications of [AUTHOR 1's IDEA]. Indeed, [YOUR OWN IDEA].
12. [AUTHOR 1] has written of [PARAPHRASE OR QUOTATION] (citation, page number). [AUTHOR 2] makes a similar point, claiming that [QUOTATION] (citation, page number).
13. In light of [AUTHOR 1's] explanation of [PARAPHRASE OR QUOTATION OF AUTHOR 1's ARGUMENT], it is possible to consider [EXTENSION OF IDEA TO YOUR OWN EXHIBIT].
14. [AUTHOR 1's] question exposes an ambiguity in [PARAPHRASE OF IDEA]. [EXPLAIN AMBIGUITY and IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUR CLAIM].
15. [AUTHOR 1's] vocabulary of [FRAGMENTARY QUOTATION OF AUTHOR 1's CRITICAL VOCABULARY] opens up the possibility of seeing [YOUR EXHIBIT] as [EXTENSION OF AUTHOR 1's CRITICAL VOCABULARY TO YOUR EXHIBIT].
16. [AUTHOR 1] defines a vocabulary of [FRAGMENTARY QUOTATION OF AUTHOR 1's CRITICAL VOCABULARY] and [SECOND FRAGMENTARY QUOTATION OF AUTHOR 1's CRITICAL VOCABULARY]. Such terms are useful for describing [YOUR EXHIBIT]. [WHY?]
17. [AUTHOR 1] argues for [QUOTATION] (citation, page number). [AUTHOR 2] is less interested in assessing [PARAPHRASE OF AUTHOR 1's CONCERN], choosing instead to focus on [PARAPHRASE OR QUOTATION OF AUTHOR 2's ARGUMENT] (citation, page number). Nonetheless, both authors bring key analytical vocabulary to bear on [YOUR EXHIBIT].
18. [AUTHOR 1's] [PARAPHRASE OR QUOTATION OF AUTHOR 1's ARGUMENT] requires the conviction that [PARAPHRASE OR QUOTATION] (citation, page number). [PERSON IN YOUR EXHIBIT] shares the conviction, arguing that [QUOTATION] (citation, page number).

19. [AUTHOR 1] also takes up the question of [PARAPHRASE OR FRAGMENTARY QUOTATION OF IDEA], and s/he does so in a more [ADJECTIVE TO DESCRIBE TONE OF AUTHOR 1's ARGUMENT] manner than [AUTHOR 2]. [AUTHOR 1] is more aware of [IDEA], and the questions which are implicit in [AUTHOR 2's] work are explored [ADVERB] and expounded at some length in [AUTHOR 2].
20. [AUTHOR 1's] essay is notable for its criticism of [PARAPHRASE OR QUOTATION] (citation, page number). This criticism is based in a belief in [PARAPHRASE OR QUOTATION] (citation, page number). Both the criticism and the belief are relevant for considering [YOUR EXHIBIT] because [EXTENSION OF AUTHOR 1's IDEA TO YOUR OWN EXHIBIT].
21. There may be no easy answer to [AUTHOR 1's] question. In this particular situation, it seems as though [EXTENSION OF AUTHOR 1's IDEA TO YOUR EXHIBIT].
22. In contrast to [AUTHOR 1's] claim that [QUOTATION OR PARAPHRASE], [AUTHOR 2] proposes [QUOTATION OR PARAPHRASE] (citation, page number; citation, page number). These ideas intersect at [YOUR EXHIBIT] because [EXTENSION TO YOUR IDEA].
23. After reading [AUTHOR 1] and [AUTHOR 2], it is no longer possible to see [YOUR EXHIBIT] as a black-and-white issue. [AUTHOR 1] proposes the challenging question, [QUOTATION] (citation, page number). In a similar vein, [AUTHOR 2] insists that [QUOTATION]. These concerns are instructive to considering [YOUR EXHIBIT] because [EXTENSION OF QUOTATION TO YOUR IDEA].
24. Whereas [AUTHOR 1] insists [QUOTATION], [AUTHOR 2] sees the situation differently (citation, page number). [AUTHOR 2] argues [QUOTATION] (citation, page number). These analyses are relevant for considering [YOUR EXHIBIT] because [EXTENSION OF QUOTATION TO YOUR IDEA].
25. If [AUTHOR 1] is right, [PARAPHRASE OR QUOTATION] is a troubling development. One sees it in [YOUR EXHIBIT] when [EXAMPLE FROM YOUR EXHIBIT].

Image credit: Jon Tyson, Unsplash.com

model student introductions

Seeing Love through *Her*

A naïve girl accidentally meets a boy her age. They quickly fall in love and their desire for each other grows stronger and stronger. A vicious rivalry between their families threatens their relationship, but nothing can stop their love. So, they choose death together rather than a life apart. As you might have guessed, this is the story of Romeo and Juliet, which "has been referred to as the greatest love story of all time, or perhaps the most tragic" (Kelvin). It is still popular even now; many movies, books, and dramas have been and continue to be based on it.

However, the recent movie Her portrays a "love story" that is quite different. Directed by Spike Jonze, the film is known for its sympathetic portrayal of a romantic relationship between a human man Theodore and a seemingly sentient computer operating system named Samantha. One reviewer writes: "Spike Jonze's sci-fi love story rethinks romance" (Gilchrist). Another critic describes it as "an odd, sad love story, combined with a meditation on technology as an accelerator of social loneliness" (Lacey). Even another critic explains it as "a love story [as well as] a profoundly metaphysical meditation on what it means to be human" (Burr). According to box office records, the movie was commercially successful worldwide and has received highly favorable reviews. Furthermore, it was nominated for Best Picture in the Academy Awards. **This film is no doubt popular yet is very different from conventional love stories.** Why is its unconventional love story so popular with modern audiences? How does this film reveal the different ways that love stories can be told?

Omar Little: Robber, Murderer, Contemporary Byronic Hero

In an interview during the 2008 Presidential campaign, Barack Obama was asked to name his favorite character from his favorite television show HBO's *The Wire*. Obama responded, "I gotta say Omar's a great character. That's not an endorsement... That is not an endorsement. He is not my favorite person. But he's a fascinating character." Obama continues, "He's this gay gangster who only robs drug dealers, and then gives back. You know, he's sort of a Robin Hood. And he's the toughest, baddest guy on this show, but he's gay, you know. And it's really interesting. It's a fascinating character" (Coolican). While Obama seems to be very familiar with the show and its characters, it is impossible to ignore the hesitancy he shows in speaking positively about someone who breaks the law and violates many of the moral rules of our society. **A candidate for President cannot publicly support the actions of Omar Little, the armed robber who targets Baltimore drug gangs on The Wire. However, he still admits a sense of admiration and personal affection for the character despite the illegality of Omar's occupation.**

This reaction is common amongst viewers of the show. In a recent online competition, the character of Omar Little defeated thirty-one other characters from the show to be overwhelmingly named the greatest character on *The Wire*. **However, it is unlikely that this plurality of the audience would condone violent behavior in general.** So why does Omar demand such respect and admiration despite consistently performing actions, such as armed robbery and murder, which are considered immoral by society? How can viewers who would likely disapprove of the crimes Omar commits approve of the character himself?

Breaking Barriers: An Examination of Gender in *Breaking Bad*

The critically acclaimed television series *Breaking Bad* tells the story of Walter White, an under-appreciated high school chemistry teacher who, when diagnosed with cancer and having lost his job and livelihood, transforms himself into a crystal meth producer. Throughout the series, viewers consistently rooted for Walt. Even creator Vince Gilligan "marveled at the fact that, 56 episodes into *Breaking Bad*, fans were still rooting for the meth-cooking drug lord" (Doucleff). **In contrast, Anna Gunn, the actress who plays Walt's wife, Skyler, received a lot of hate mail from viewers (Gunn).** As she notes in her article "I Have Character Issues," "thousands of people have 'liked' the Facebook page 'I Hate Skyler White'" (Gunn). One commenter wrote, "I have never hated a TV-show character as much as I hate her" while another wrote, "could somebody tell me where I can find Anna Gunn so I can kill her?" (Gunn). It seems that there is such a consensus of passionate hate towards the character of Skyler White that the viewers project their contempt onto Gunn herself.

Jen Chaney, writer for *Esquire Magazine*, comments on Gunn's article and analyzes this hatred. She posits that when Skyler first discovered that her husband was a drug manufacturer and asked him to stop, viewers disliked Skyler because she "committed the cardinal sin of the stereotypical awful wife: She was a nag" (Chaney). Yet ultimately, Chaney continues, Skyler gave in to her husband's scheming and helped protect him. She became a character who is as "fascinating and unpredictable as the depraved, egocentric soul who helped to turn her from mere nag into Ms. Heisenberg [Walter's nickname]" (Chaney). In other words, Skyler begins as a stereotypical nag-like wife and becomes Walt's equal, a non-stereotypical wife or woman. **However, viewers posted antagonistic comments, similar to those mentioned above, both when Skyler fit into female stereotypes and when she did not.** Thus, what is it about the character of Skyler White that agitates viewers so much while they root so adamantly for her husband Walter? Furthermore, what might these reactions reveal about current expectations about acceptable male and female behavior?

Frozen: Still Frozen in Time with Gender Stereotypes

Toward the end of 2013, Walt Disney released its animated musical film *Frozen*, which has since then taken over the world in a frenzy. It is the highest grossing animated film of all time, grossing over 1.2 billion US dollars at the box office. Moreover, it has won two Oscars—Best Original Song and Best Animated Feature Film—along with a number of other awards (Box Office Mojo). In fact, *Frozen* was so phenomenal that it was not only a success in the United States but also internationally, becoming the United Kingdom's bestselling DVD of the decade (Official Charts).

Frozen, Disney's 53rd animated feature film, tells the tale of two sisters, Elsa and Anna. In the movie, Princess Anna becomes engaged to Prince Hans despite the objection of her older sister Queen Elsa. This sets off a series of catastrophe, ending with Elsa trapping the kingdom of Arendelle in eternal winter and fleeing the kingdom. So, the fearless younger sister (along with the help of Olaf, a snowman, and Kristoff, an ice harvester) leaves on a journey to find her estranged older sister.

However, maybe due to its overwhelming popularity, *Frozen* seems to have avoided harsh criticism. Instead, it is mostly praised by both fans and critics alike due to its perceived feminist ideals and is considered "the first feminist fairy-tale" and "the most progressive Disney movie ever" (Luttrell 2014). Many argue that Elsa sets a new role model for girls (Feder 2014). According to one critic, "Anna and Elsa have strong and confident personalities and don't get saved by any men" (Strong 2015). The overwhelming opinion regarding Frozen is that it is a feminist movie that "slams the door on the concepts of 'perfect princess,' superficial romance, [and] needing a prince" (Feder 2014). Nevertheless, a closer analysis of beauty portrayals and gender representation causes one to ask: To what extent is this movie a representation of feminist ideals? What gendered messages does the movie actually send? To what extent do Elsa and Anna, the female protagonists of this film, serve to both maintain and disrupt gender roles?

organizing and developing argument

In the Grading Rubric for Essays 2 and 3, two of the criteria for grading are 1) Organization and Flow of Essay, and 2) Development of Argument and Through-Line of Thinking. So, what's the difference?

Organization and Flow

Simply put, when your essay is organized, the structure of your essay and paragraphs is doing what is expected (PAS outline). Your introduction makes your aims clear, your analysis acknowledges different perspectives, and your discrete paragraphs are organized (PAS on a paragraph level). Your essay and discrete paragraphs have a logical structure. Each paragraph and sentence is doing what it's expected to do to make the essay flow for your reader.

Development of Argument and Through-Line of Thinking

However, well-crafted arguments are more than just a logical structure. When your argument and through-line of thinking are developed, your analysis **builds in complexity**, meaning with each subsequent analysis paragraph, you are strengthening the impact of your argument. Each paragraph and sentence is saying something more impactful than the one before to extend your argument *beyond* what is expected.

Check the Organization and Flow: What Are Your Analysis Paragraphs Are Doing?

Strong writers think about their own choices and why they make them to make their analysis clear to their readers.

Move from one paragraph to the next: What is each paragraph **doing**? How are your analysis paragraphs organized in relevance to each other? Is what you're analyzing in your first analysis paragraph closely related to what you're arguing in the second, or is it more closely related to what you're arguing in the third? Is your first analysis paragraph about the end of the film, or does it start at the beginning? Does your essay "bounce around" from point to point, or does it move smoothly from one point to the next? *How does the organization of your essay help or hinder the flow of your essay and clarity of your overall argument?* **Reorder your analysis paragraph structure as necessary.**

Move from sentence to the next: How do you move from one point to the next in your discrete paragraphs? What connections are you making? How and why are you making those connections? *How does the organization of your paragraph help or hinder the flow of the argument in that specific paragraph?* **Revise the structure of your discrete paragraphs as necessary.**

Check the Development of Your Argument: What Are Your Analysis Paragraphs Saying?

Now that you have thought about what your analysis paragraphs are doing, think about what they're saying.

Think about titles for your analysis paragraphs: You are required to include a PAS outline in your essay drafts and should have titles before each of your paragraphs (Summary; Introduction; Analysis Paragraph 1, 2, 3; and Conclusion) to remind yourself of what each paragraph is doing. Now, let's go beyond the expected Analysis Paragraph 1, 2, or 3. **Think about what your analysis paragraphs are saying and compose titles that express that.**

Transition from one idea to the next: Transitions are words or phrases that demonstrate the connections between ideas *on both the paragraph and sentence level*. We've discussed many times that we wait until the end of our essay writing process to craft introductions and conclusions, but we also wait to address any transitions, which is because we may need to reorganize our essay on both the paragraph and the sentence level.

Now that you've done that work on reorganizing, think about how you can make connections between ideas on both the paragraph and sentence level. **Revise to include transitions on a paragraph and sentence level.**

NB: Transitions are not words that we carelessly throw into our essays to make them sound more "academic." Beware of filler words and phrases, such as hence, thusly, and in conclusion, that don't serve to make clear connections between ideas.

Review and Revise the Beginning and the Ending

Review your introduction and conclusion: Think about how you should revise them. How does your introduction build a bridge from the outer world to your essay to orient your reader? Does it clearly present your specific argument about the exhibit? Does your conclusion synthesize your argument in a way that reflects the complexity of your argument about the exhibit to answer the "So, what?" question? How does it build a bridge from your essay to the outside world? **Revise your introduction and conclusion with these questions in mind.**

Review your title: Your essay should have a two-line title; the first line hooks your reader and the second expresses your argument. You should include the film title in italics in one of those lines. Does the first line of the title make you want to read the essay? How does the second line reflect your argument? **Revise your title to make it interesting and to make it specific to your argument about the exhibit.**

Review and Revise from Beginning to End

Read your entire essay again—from beginning to end: What did you notice about its organization and flow now that you have revised it? How is your argument developing now that you've made the revisions? What other revisions do you need to make? **Pose these questions and revise your essay to build impact for your readers.**

Image credit: Erol Ahmed, Unsplash.com

proofreading and editing—the final step

After you have completed revising your essay in an imagined conversation with your readers, you need to **proofread and edit** it for errors. Proofreading and editing require that you focus on details. Errors not only interfere with the clarity of your ideas, they also interfere with your credibility as an academic writer, so it's essential to proofread and edit as a final step before submitting an assignment.

SLOWLY Read Your Essay ALOUD

Proofreading requires you to both **look and listen** for errors. As you read your essay aloud, you hear your writing like your audience will. Speedreading your essay will not help you to ensure clarity or find errors, so read aloud **slowly**.

1. Make sure that you have met the **requirements of the assignment**.
2. Read your entire essay and individual paragraphs **backwards and forwards**, reading first from beginning to end and a second time from end to beginning.
3. Read each **individual sentence**.
4. **Edit** to correct any errors.

Sentence Structure, Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization

- Is your **sentence structure** clear to make sense to your reader? Are there run-ons or fragments?
- Have you started any sentences with **"This"**? Revise for clarity—what "this" do you mean?
- Have you used correct **grammar**? While Word and Grammarly will help to identify *some* grammatical errors, **you're ultimately responsible** for ensuring correct grammar.
- Have you used correct **punctuation**? Be especially mindful of punctuation in citations.
- Have you **capitalized** proper nouns, such as names, the film title, article titles, and book titles?
- Have you checked for **spelling** errors? Note that spell checkers don't find every error. A word may be spelled correctly, but it may not be the word you intend to use.

MLA Formatting and Citation

Correct and appropriate citation are requirements of any writing assignment. For English, we use MLA; however, each discipline requires a specific citation style. For correct MLA citation and formatting, you should reference the Purdue OWL **MLA Sample Paper**.

- Is your entire essay **formatted according to MLA**? Is it **double-spaced**? Does the **first page** have the correct heading? Does the **header** on each page contain your last name and page number?
- Have you provided **in-text citations** when paraphrasing or quoting and **correctly and ethically quoted sources**? Go back and review your sources to make sure they are correct.
- Have you **formatted titles** correctly—quotation marks versus italic—according to MLA?
- Have you provided **full and correct citations** on your Works Cited page **for all sources**?
- Are your sources on your Works Cited page listed in **alphabetical order by last name**?
- Is your Works Cited page **formatted correctly**? Are the **second lines indented**? Are each of the **individual citation entries** formatted correctly?

Know Thyself

Each of us has our own set of common errors, which means you'll need to look for patterns in the specific types of errors that you make. As you practice proofreading and editing, you'll learn what those specific errors are. **Like anything else, you'll get better with practice.**

radical revision

by N. B. Wallack, Columbia University, and C. Moore, New York University

Many writers tend to understand revision as simply a matter of making surface changes to existing text—substituting words or phrases rather than reconsidering their drafts holistically. Radical revision is an approach to drafting that presumes the first draft even the most well-crafted one a writer can make to be in need of deep reconsideration and restructuring. That is to say, revision is a process by which a writer can generate missing thinking on the page, rewrite (from scratch) parts that are not yet doing the work the writer needs them to do, and sacrifice anything in the draft that does not sustain its conceptual or formal coherence. While some writers love revision and find it to be the most satisfying part of the composing process, many others find it very challenging and even upsetting; after all, it is hard to let go of writing, and it is hard to re-approach our own work coolly and ruthlessly.

Note what your readers have given you as feedback on your draft, and consider what concerns you may have about it yourself, then try a few of these approaches for prose or essays:

1. Go to a place in your draft where you need to say more. Write to explain. Exhaust yourself.
2. Go to a place in the draft where you seem to be getting at your idea. Write to explain what that idea might be.
3. Write an impossible, or surprising, but connected story that comes to mind as you read your draft. You don't know how it fits, but write about it anyway.
4. Find a place in a published text that helps you think about your idea. Copy the passage out and explain how it connects. Find a place for it in your draft.
5. Use a passage from another text to resist or doubt something you are writing about. Write to explain the counterargument.
6. Write a summary of one of the texts you are working with. Find a place for it in your draft.
7. Write a paragraph in which you incorporate two texts. Put these texts in conversation with one another. (How do they extend, confirm, complicate, contradict, correct, or debate one another?)
8. Find a key image or key language in your draft. Write to explain what this image or language might mean.
9. Rewrite completely the beginning of your draft to articulate specifically the problem your essay is exploring, or to change its focus, tone, or contract.
10. Rewrite completely the ending of your draft to account for how your thinking has changed from the beginning and middle of your essay.
11. Find an arbitrary (six to eight) number of claims, concepts, or questions in your draft that are most important to what you have written now. Write a six- to eight-line poem that demonstrates how these claims are related to one another.
12. Highlight the most important ideas in the middle and ending of your essay. Write a brand-new beginning that articulates this problem.
13. Print out your draft and cut it up into sections (a section can be as small as a sentence) that contain some discrete piece of thinking. Ask a friend to reassemble the parts in a new order that makes sense, and to tape it to blank sheets of paper, leaving blank space between ideas that are not explicitly connected. If you like this new order, consider what you might need to write in the blank spaces to make transitions or to flesh out ideas. Throw away pieces that repeat one another in essence, or in fact.

the rhetorical situation and appeals

While rhetoric is the art of using language effectively to communicate and/or persuade, **the rhetorical situation refers to the specific circumstances that bring the text into existence**. In other words, whenever we produce or encounter a "text," we face a rhetorical situation. We must consider the author, the audience, the purpose, the topic, and the context.

By carefully considering the rhetorical situation for texts, we develop into not only more astute readers of texts but also more effective authors of texts.

The Five Aspects of the Rhetorical Situation

1. The **author** is influenced by his or her culture, personal characteristics, and interests, which all affect what he or she writes about and how he or she writes it. Other factors that can influence the author include age, experiences, gender, location, nationality, political beliefs, self-identity, social identity, community, education.
2. Every text is constructed for an intended or target **audience**, even though in reality, many others who are not in the target audience will most likely read and encounter the text. Hence, many of the factors that influence the author will also affect the audience.
3. Although all text is created generally to communicate, every text is produced with a specific **purpose** e.g. to persuade, educate, inform, entertain, shock, or call to action. The *genre* of the text gives insight into its purpose. For example, a novel's primary purpose may be to entertain; a journalistic article may be created primarily to inform and educate; a print advertisement may primarily aim to persuade and prompt action.
4. The **topic** is simply what a text is about—the matter or issue the text is engaging. The nature and scope of the topic must be appropriate to the rhetorical situation in which an author is writing.
5. The **context** (or setting) is the "situation" that generates the need for writing, like a current event, for example. Every text is influenced by and engages various contexts: historical, geographic, national, social, economic, cultural, and so on. Essentially, the author is responding to and engaging with relevant contexts via the text with the intention of impacting his or her audience in a particular way. Additionally, context often provides us with the ability to apply ideas explored in a text.

Rhetorical Appeals: Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle

Aristotle taught that a speaker's ability to persuade an audience is based on how well the speaker appeals to that audience in three different areas: logos, ethos, and pathos. Considered together, these appeals form what later rhetoricians have called the rhetorical triangle.

Logos, ethos, and pathos are important components of all writing, whether we are aware of them or not, and by learning to recognize them in the writing of others and in our own, we can create texts that appeal to readers on many different levels.

- **Logos** appeals to reason. Logos can also be thought of as the **text of the argument**, as well as how well a writer has argued his/her point.
- **Ethos** appeals to the writer's character. Ethos can also be thought of as the **role of the author** in the argument, and how credible his/her argument is.
- **Pathos** appeals to the emotions and the sympathetic imagination, as well as to beliefs and values. Pathos can also be thought of as the **role of the audience** in the argument.

sandwiching quotes

Quoting and paraphrasing sources helps to support your argument, so when you're selecting quotes, make sure that you'll be able to connect them to your main idea. Your quotes may be evidence or may be secondary sources, the latter of which is used for you to engage in conversation—not to "back you up." You may use more that one source in your paragraph but remember that you'll only make one claim per paragraph.

The Toothpick: Your Claim

- Each analysis paragraph should have a claim. Like a toothpick, your claim holds it all together.

Top Bread Slice: Framing and Introduction

- **Frame** the quote to provide context about the quote to make connections between the quote and your argument.
- **Introduce** the quote to tell your reader who is speaking. Avoid using "quotes" and "says," and instead use verbs like asserts, argues, notes, observes, suggests, points out, or proposes. By stating the author's position, you're providing a preview to your analysis.

Inside Fixings: The Quote

- Insert the quote or paraphrase of your secondary source or evidence. Make sure to include citations.

The Meat (or Tofu): Analyze and Explain

- **Make connections.** Analyze the quote and explain what it means. Here is where you provide applicable examples to help your audience understand your analysis.

Bottom Slice: Conclusions

- **Draw conclusions.** Show your reader **how it applies** to your claim to wrap up this portion of your argument. If you're analyzing more than one source, you'll conclude your analysis of each quote and will also have a concluding sentence at the end of your paragraph.

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section titles and signposts

When writing an essay of significant length, it can be helpful to clarify your argument using sections. The simplest way to do this is to use **section titles**, which can take the form of sentences, phrases, or even questions. Consider, for example, how writers use section titles in articles. Each title indicates the specific argument the writer offers in that section. Titles quickly **orient your reader** the argument or content that will be discussed in a given section. **They not only help your reader but can also help you as a writer organize your material.**

To section your essay, identify those moments when you shift between ideas that are contained in your thesis. Alternatively, you might section your essay where you shift from closely analyzing one piece of evidence to another. Even further, you might section your essay whenever you shift from working closely with one of your theoretical sources to another.

Signposts are an additional tool at your disposal. They are sentences, questions, or even short paragraphs that state what you are doing or what you have done. Clarifying the purpose of your paragraph—presenting, analyzing or synthesizing—is an effective way to being creating a signpost. Of course, you don't always have to explain why you are doing what you are doing; however, signposts can help orient your reader by signaling changes in the direction of your argument. They often occur at the ends or beginnings of essay sections.

A signpost might signal the material to come and remind the reader of what has already been said. Here's one example from Columbia University student Jebediah Micka's essay in *The Morningside Review*, "Said's Post-September 11th Media Presence":

> "With a solid understanding of Said's historical perspective on the bipolar constructs of East and West we can now investigate this question using his own voice" (Micka 4).

And in "Getting Back to the Right Nature" by Donald Waller, we see a signpost that summarizes what he did in the previous section of his essay:

> "Rather than posing a serious threat to responsible environmentalism, I have argued, as a biologist, that wilderness defined as large, connected and relatively intact ecosystems should form the backbone of any ecologically informed program to conserve our natural heritage" (Waller 562).

Yet again in "Getting Back to the Right Nature," Waller signposts what he is going to do in the following section:

> "I begin by questioning an initial premise of Cronon's: that by idolizing wilderness and working for its protection we tend to diminish our concern for, and protection of, nearer and more mundane environments such as our cities and farms" (Waller 542).

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socratic questioning technique

The Greek philosopher Socrates believed that thoughtful questioning enabled his students to engage in the logical examination of their ideas to determine their validity. His method of questioning is also useful to generate ideas.

Type of Question	Example
Clarification	• What do you mean by...? • Could you put that another way? • What do you think is the main issue? • Could you give us an example? • Could you expand upon that point further?
Further inquiry about an initial question or issue	• Why is this question important? (So what?) • Is this question easy or difficult to answer? • Why do you think that? • Does this question lead to other important issues and questions?
Assumptions	• Why would someone make this assumption? • What is _____ assuming here? • What could we assume instead? • You seem to be assuming _____. • Do I understand you correctly?
Reason and evidence	• What would be an example? • Why do you think this is true? • What other information do we need? • Could you explain your reason to us? • By what reasoning did you come to that conclusion? • Is there reason to doubt that evidence?
Origin or source	• Is this your idea or did you hear if from elsewhere? • Have you always felt this way? • Has your opinion been influenced by something or someone? • Where did you get that idea? • What caused you to think or feel that way?
Implications and consequences	• What effect would that have? • Is that certain or probable? • What is an alternative? • What are you implying by that? • If that happened, what else would happen as a result? Why?
Viewpoint	• How would other groups of people respond this question? Why? • How could you answer the objection that _____ would make? • What might someone who believed _____ think? • What is an alternative? • How are _____'s and _____'s ideas alike? Different?

strong research questions

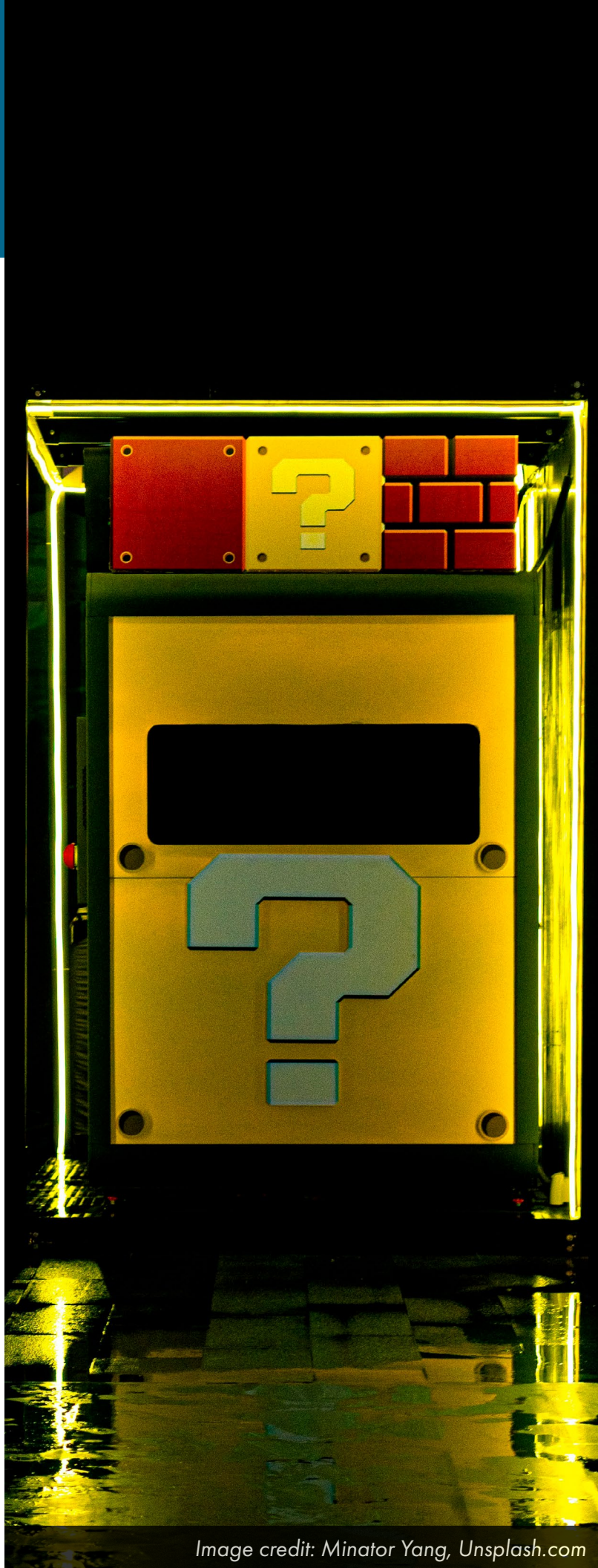
As we've learned in this course, academic essays are motivated by the desire to explore (and possibly solve) intellectual and interpretive problems. Intellectual and interpretive problems can be expressed as clear questions. In a research essay, it is important to develop a strong question since it helps to narrow your focus and guide your research and analysis.

A strong research question:

- Addresses a specific **observation**
- Connects to a specific **conversation**
- Uses specific **key terms**
- Requires **analysis** of the exhibit
- Is **open-ended** i.e. there is a range of possible answers.
- Is **answerable in terms of analysis of evidence from the exhibit**

What should you do if your research question does not meet each criterion? Try the following suggestions.

- If the question **does not address a specific observation**, review and closely analyze the exhibit to observe interesting patterns or anomalies you want to explore and better understand.
- If the question **does not connect to a specific conversation**, research reviews (credible and scholarly), opinion articles and user opinions and ratings about the exhibit.
- If the question does not **use specific key terms**, name the specific pattern or anomaly you're analyzing and identify the central concept that is related to your observation; this concept typically recurs in articles you find about the film.
- If the question **does not require analysis of the exhibit**, revise the question so that it is about the meaning, importance, or function of a specific aspect of your exhibit.
- If the question **is not open-ended**, revise the question so that it is not a yes/no question or cannot simply be answered by stating a fact.
- If the question **is not answerable in terms of analysis of evidence from the exhibit**, revise the question so that it is based on observations, not on assumptions or personal feelings.



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theme to thesis

Identifying Themes and Literary Terms

First, we'll start by looking at the paragraphs from the Reading Response. With that exercise, you should have noticed a theme (or themes) and literary terms that may apply.

Take a moment to identify the theme(s) and the literary term(s) you think apply to your poem. Write them down and explain how they help you to interpret the specific quotes you have chosen.

Posing an Interpretive Question to Develop a Thesis

1. Read the paragraph you were asked to write for the Reading Response (how/why those quotes are important to understanding the poem's meaning) and make any revisions based on the theme(s) and literary terms you identified. Now, you can use those thoughts to develop your thesis by asking yourself thoughtful questions.
2. What's the most intriguing question you can ask about the poem right now?
3. Check that question—is it about the whole world, the world outside the poem, or a question about how the text makes meaning? If it's the former, transform it into an interpretive question about the poem; if it's the latter, revise it to make it more specific and concrete.
4. Return to your poem: jot down a list of all the aspects of the poem that seem related to your question. Take in as many of the aspects of the poem as you can: tone, diction, rhyme, imagery, line length, etc. Identify at least 3 specific moments by line number.
5. With that stuff in mind, try writing a first thesis, a claim, in response to your question.
6. Look at #3 and list the pieces of evidence—elements of form, scenes, etc.—that seem to fully support that claim.
7. Ask yourself whether any of those pieces of evidence can be read in another way, an interesting way that feels true but that's in tension with your first claim. If so, write that and skip to #9.
8. Ask yourself whether there are other pieces of evidence, in #3 or that come to mind now as you think of your poem, that would support a claim in tension with the one you wrote in #4. If so, describe them and write the new claim, and skip to #9. If not, got to #8.
9. Ask yourself the following series of questions about the claim in #4:
    a. Is it true? Is it really true, without a doubt? If not, write your doubts.
    b. How do you feel when you read/ write the claim? (In other words, does the claim matter? Why?) If you're excited about it, write why. If you feel nothing, write why.
    c. Can you flip it? In other words, is the (or an) opposite also true? Try flipping the claims of your term around and write them down.
10. Given what you've shown yourself in #6-8, write a new sentence that accommodates this more complicated truth. This can be a declarative or interrogative sentence, i.e., a claim or a question.
11. You've just articulated either a better interpretive question or a better thesis statement. Decide which it is, and if it's an interpretive question, go to #2 and begin again. If it's a thesis, return to #4 and begin again.

Keep in mind that as you continue to revise your essay, you will continue to return to your question. The question never stops mattering.

transition words and phrases

Transition Words & Use	Examples
Adding Information	
and	We have seen the movie twice, **and** now we want to see it again.
not only...but also	Not only did my brother break his leg, **but** he **also** bruised his rib.
also	My friend speaks Korean and English. She **also** speaks Chinese.
moreover (more formal)	Cheating is dishonest. **Moreover,** it hinders learning.
furthermore (more formal)	Students should be on time. Furthermore, they must be prepared.
in addition (more formal)	You must complete this essay by 5 p.m. **In addition,** you must do the exercises on page 47.
Giving Examples	
for example	I have been to many countries. **For example,** I have been to Russia, Canada, Mexico, and Spain.
for instance	He often eats strange foods. **For instance,** he once ate cow brains.
specifically	I like to travel. **Specifically,** I enjoy places with old cathedrals.
in particular	I love fruit. **In particular,** I like bananas, pineapple, and berries.
The first (second, another, etc.) example/reason is...	My friend hates skiing for several reasons. **The first reason is** that she dislikes being cold. **Another reason is** that she often falls.
Showing a Contrast	
but	Susan earned an A on his essay, **but** Bill got a B.
however	We wanted to leave at 8:00. **However,** Mike arrived too late.
on the other hand	He hates dusting. **On the other hand,** he doesn't mind cooking.
otherwise	Students should attend class. **Otherwise,** they may lose their status.
instead	I am not going out tonight. **Instead,** I'll stay home and watch a video.
in contrast (more formal)	English majors usually enjoy writing. **In contrast,** math majors often don't.
Showing a Concession	
yet	He knows that he should do his homework, **yet** he never does it.
nevertheless (more formal)	I need to wear reading glasses. **Nevertheless,** I hate how I look in them.
even so	I know you don't like to study. **Even so,** you must pass your exam.
however	There are many benefits to exercising. **However,** you must take some precautions to avoid injury.
although	**Although** the book is difficult to read, it is very interesting.
even though	**Even though** the book is difficult to read, it is very interesting.
despite	**Despite** Kate's skill at tennis, she lost the match.
Showing a Similarity	
likewise (more formal)	Math was hard for me in high school. **Likewise,** it is hard in college.
similarly (more formal)	Houseplants require much care and attention. **Similarly,** outdoor plants must be cared for properly.
in the same way	Rock climbing takes much practice and skill. **In the same way,** learning to write well requires a great deal of practice.

Transition Words & Use	Examples
Showing a Result	
so	Janet passed her exam, **so** she is very happy.
as a result	Tim was late. **As a result,** we could not go to the concert.
therefore	James is not feeling well. **Therefore,** he will not be here today.
thus, (more formal)	The committee voted against the proposal. **Thus,** we must consider another idea.
as a consequence,	I forgot that the cake was in the oven. **As a consequence,** it burned.
consequently, (more formal)	Tina lost her keys. **Consequently,** she could not drive home.
Establishing Time Relation or Sequence	
first,	**First,** I think that she is studying hard.
second,	**Second,** I believe that she is a bright student.
finally,	**Finally,** I know that she has great potential.
in summary,	**In summary,** we should offer her some financial help.
Meanwhile,	Jeff was working hard to clean the house. **Meanwhile,** his brother was watching television.
Showing a Condition	
or	I must study hard, **or** I will fail my exam.
whether...or	**Whether** you are coming **or** not, I am still going to Amy's party.
if...(then)	**If** you want to get good grades, **then** you must do your homework.
Explaining or Emphasizing	
in fact,	The bookstore sells cards. **In fact,** they have the best cards around.
in other words,	He was late to class again. **In other words,** he didn't wake up on time.
namely (more formal),	The plan needed only two things to succeed—**namely,** time and money.
Giving an Alternative	
or	We can go to the beach, **or** we can go to the mountains.
either...or	You can **either** ride the bus **or** walk to my apartment.
neither...nor (more formal)	I like **neither** that person **nor** his brother.

Punctuation Rules

Coordinating Conjunctions (and, but, or, yet, so): Put a comma before these conjunctions. (Don't use them at the beginning of a sentence in more formal writing.)
Example: The movie has already started, **but** my friend has not arrived yet.

Correlative Conjunctions (These have two parts: either...or)

- Put a comma before the second part if it connects 2 clauses (complete sentences).
  Example: Eric is **not only** an outstanding teacher, **but** he is **also** a gourmet cook.
- You don't need a comma if it only connects words or phrases.
  Example: Eric is **not only** an outstanding teacher **but also** a gourmet cook.

Transitional Words and Phrases

- Put a comma after these if they are at the beginning of a sentence.
  Example: I like to travel. **Specifically,** I enjoy places with old cathedrals.
- Use a semicolon to connect the two sentences.
  Example: I like to travel**; specifically,** I enjoy places with old cathedrals.
- Use a comma before and after the transitional word/phrase in the middle of a clause.
  Example: I like to travel, **and, specifically,** I enjoy places with old cathedrals.

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your feedback is always welcome

I hope that these writing guides were helpful to the development of your academic writing. If you found any of these writing guides particularly useful or if you would like for writing guides to be developed on additional topics and writing strategies, I would love to know.

—Professor Rachael Benavidez

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