

writing



Terms and tools to help you get started, stay on track, and finish strong



Short Essay Guide



- **Argue:** clearly debate (with support) two sides of an argument or topic by taking a clear stand on one side. You need to make sure that you have sources or support, which are clearly identified to make the point you want. This is a short version of the persuasive paper.
- **Trace:** typically related to a map or chronological order of things. Focus on clarity and organization for mapping something out.
- **Explain / Discuss: (EXPOSITORY)** Talk about what you know and explain a topic clearly. Remain on task with what question or topic you are asked to discuss. Use facts to clearly tell the reader what they have asked. Avoid emotion unless it is a personal essay
- **Analyze:** get specific with examples to prove your point; look at something for its message and not its story. Go deep to analyze something
- **Illustrate:** describe a topic, scene, setting etc. Use descriptive words and paint a picture
- **Define:** provide a clearly comprehensible definition for a term and support the definition with specific examples. Often you will be asked to define an abstract term.



Critical Analysis

seven types

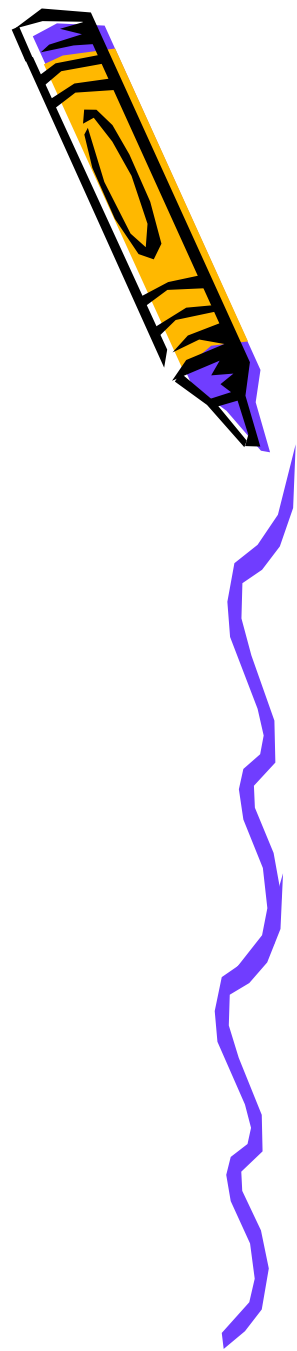


- ***New Criticism:*** looks at the style of the work, the tone, the language, and the organization of a work. It is a very formalistic approach at the study of a work. Critics believe that everything in a work is important for a specific reason.
- ***Marxist:*** Class and structure oriented. Economic forces are dominant in this study. One might consider the social barriers and economic status of characters as a means of understanding behavior. One might look at a historical period and determine why a society was the way it was based on its political structure or financial status among other countries.
- ***Biographical:*** a study between the author's life and the works he writes.
- ***Psychological:*** Why are we like this? Critics might consider one's (the author or character) personal background when creating a psychoanalytical study. What is going on in the character's psyche to make them behave a particular way?
- ***Gender (feminist):*** How would a feminist look at this piece of work? How are women or minorities portrayed in the work and why? What gender roles are demonstrated and is it fair?
- ***Historical:*** a connection between a historical period and a text or novel.
- ***Archetypal:*** a look at character types where the roles are specific and clearly definable. Hero, benevolent guide, mother – figure, trickster, or scapegoat are some of the common threads of character definition.



Major Writing Types

- Narrative /
Descriptive
- Definition
- Compare / Contrast
- Process
- Persuasive
- Personal
- Literary
- Research



Narrative

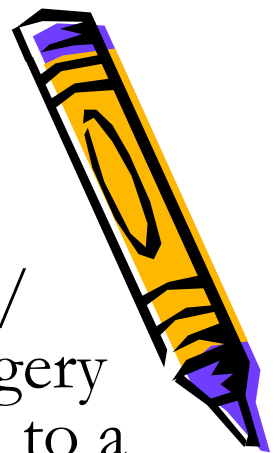


Consists of the basic story elements and a great deal of description regarding the characters and setting

- **Character development** consists of creating and detailing one or more characters.
- The **plot** consists of the characters, conflict, and setting.
- The **conflict** is the struggle which the main character faces.
- The **setting** is where and when the story takes place.
- The **rising action** is the action where the conflict develops and increases.
- The **climax** is the highest point of interest or the turning point of the story.
- The **falling action** is the event immediately following the climax and indicates a decrease in suspense and action.
- The **conclusion** is where loose ends are tied up and the action comes to an end.



Descriptive

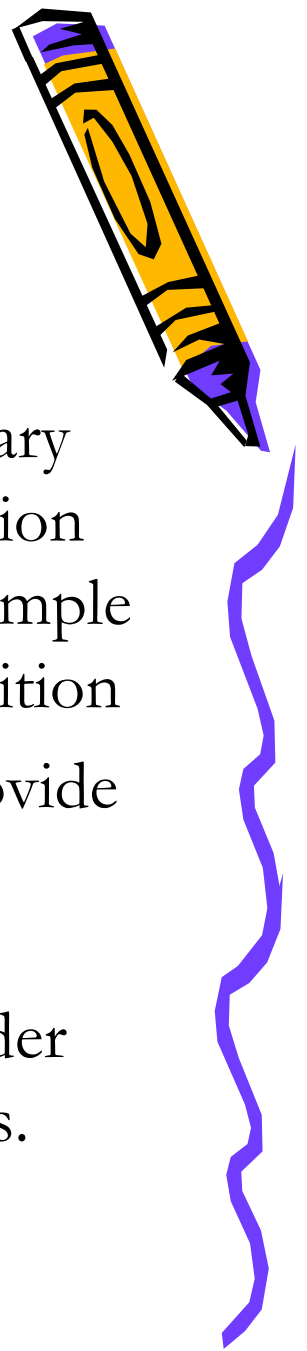


- Pertains to the use of many descriptors (adjectives / adverbs) to explain a variety of objects. Use of imagery techniques are important. The writer **MUST** appeal to a reader's five senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell).
- The goal to descriptive writing is to paint a clear picture for the reader. Using figurative language such as similes, metaphors, and personification are also helpful.
- Descriptive writing is often embedded in other forms of writing such as narratives, personal essays, definition essays, and persuasive essays.
- Some examples of where descriptive writing might be needed are:

- Tourist/vacation brochures
- Toy advertisements / enticements



Definition



- Involves providing your reader with an extended definition of a particular term. The term will be an abstract idea (like friendship) which is difficult to define without using specific examples.
- Begin with a dictionary or denotative definition then move to an example or connotative definition
- You will need to provide several separate but related examples to clearly show the reader what the term means.



Compare / Contrast



Process:

- An expository nonfiction essay which explains how two or more subjects are similar or different:
 - Explores items / topics which are similar enough to make effective comparisons
 - Clearly shows through details and examples how two or more items are similar or different
 - Is logically and effectively organized
 - Closes with a summary of the main points or an evaluation of the subject's overall points of similarity or difference
- **Block pattern:** if you choose you may write the essay in a block paragraph form where you look at all the similarities in one or two paragraphs and all the differences in one or two paragraphs. This requires extensive writing in each paragraph to thoroughly do justice to the topic / item.
 - **Alternating pattern:** if you choose you may tackle each similarity and difference in their own paragraph where you look at similarity and then a difference. Alternating between these details gives you a closer look at each of the similarities and differences.



Process

- writing in a manner which will explain the steps to accomplish something to someone. This may involve simple projects like making a sandwich or more complicated tasks such as explaining the inner workings of a computer.

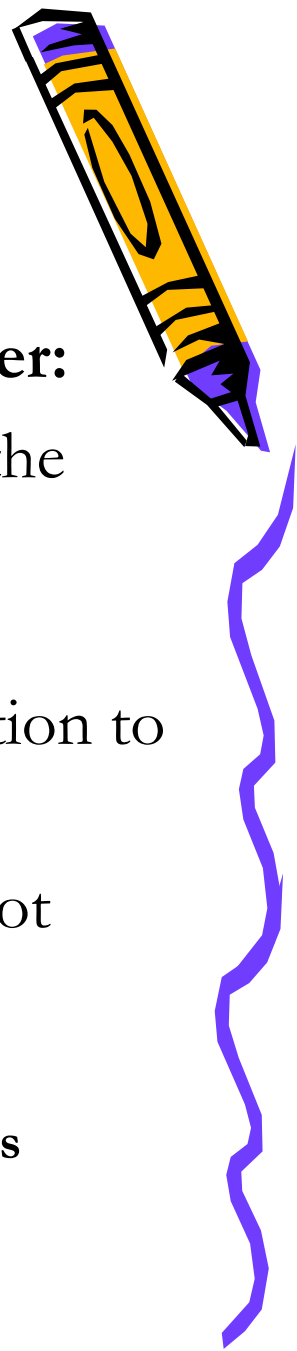


Keys to remember:

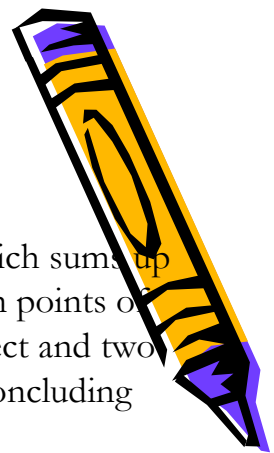
- You are explaining the exact steps to do something
- You must pay attention to the details
- Use easy language not jargon

Possible Examples

- Baking a cake
- Brushing your teeth
- Driving a car



Persuasive



- States an opinion and uses facts, examples, and reasons to convince readers to accept that opinion and / or take a specific action. There are several types of papers which require a persuasive nature: the editorial, the research paper, and the literary analysis.
- To build your argument successfully you need to follow this pattern:
 - Introduction: Grab your audience's attention with a statement that is clear, logical or emotional and logical. Introduce the topic clearly in a thesis statement which provides your reader with your position and the direction of the essay.
 - Body paragraphs: At least three paragraphs which provide three clear examples regarding your topic. Each paragraph must include at least two examples and / or expert opinions regarding your topic



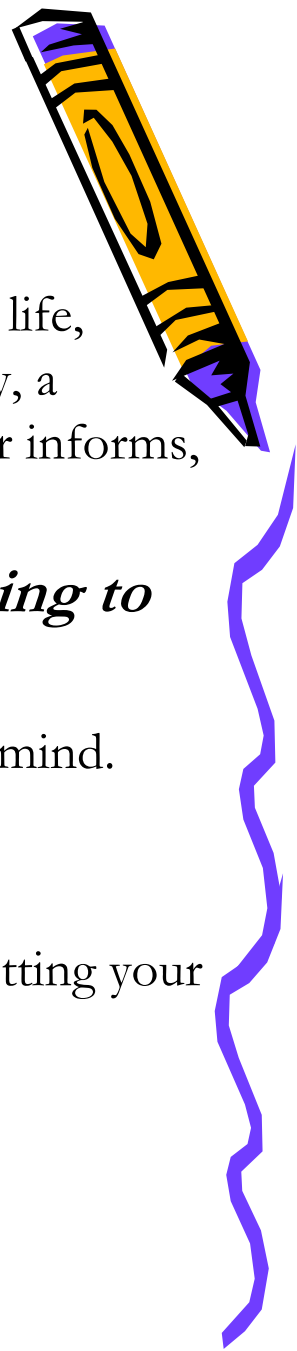
- Conclusion: One paragraph which sums up the issue and reiterates the main points of your essay; this needs to be direct and two the point but also logical and concluding

Persuasive Appeals: Good persuasive writing uses a balance of the heart, mind, and spirit -- emotion and logic

- Emotional appeals target the reader's feelings: anger, sympathy, empathy, jealousy,
- Use of anecdotes (brief stories) is often a strong appeal to the emotions
- Vivid details of situations that relate to your issue and position
- Logical Appeals target the reader's intellect and are based on sound reasons supported by evidence – facts, figures, statistics, and numbers are the supports you want in the section
- Ethical appeals target the character of an individual; words like right, wrong, truth, justice, fairness, honesty, respect, responsibility, freedom, and equality are signals of an ethical appeal



Personal Essay



A personal essay shares the details of a specific event or time in your life, emphasizing what you have learned from the experience. In this way, a personal essay is part recollection and part reflection. It entertains or informs, plus it gets your readers thinking.

An effective personal essay leaves readers with something to talk about.

Choose a subject . . . Review journal entries or list ideas that come to mind.
ANY important part of your life has personal-essay potential.

- ***Gather detail . . .*** Write freely about your subject for 10 minutes letting your ideas take you where they will.

makes me feel . . . causes me to . . . concerns me because . . .



Personal Essay cont. . .



- ***Focus your efforts . . .*** Study your free write and look for parts you want to explore further. Also begin looking for a main idea that can serve as your focus.
- ***Connecting your ideas . . .*** Write your first draft freely, letting your true personality come through in your writing. (Write what you are feeling and thinking.)
 - Your opening should pull readers into your essay.
 - The middle should discuss the experience.
 - The closing should reflect upon its significance.
- ***Review the draft and make revisions. . .*** Proofread for organization, development of the ideas (detail), grammar (did you use a variety of sentence structure, correct punctuation), and spelling



Personal Essay cont. . .



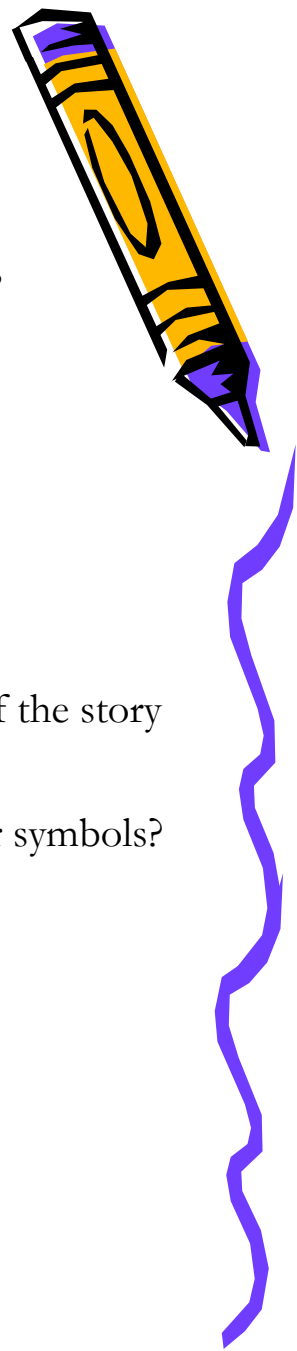
Examples might be:

- Reflect on an important aspect of your life (your hero, a disability, a fear, a point of intense happiness, an occasion which changed you for good or bad)
- Reflect on an important event in your life (first book, first time you caught the baseball, first time you landed the back handspring, first touchdown, first tackle)
- Reflect on an experience (a journey, something that took a great deal of time and energy, the passing of a loved one, the passing of something important from one person to you, a success in sports, volunteering, job promotion, failure to accomplish a task, graduation, or perhaps the birth of a child, sibling, niece or nephew)
- Reflect on one's emotion (not necessarily one moment but an overall picture of the emotion and how you use it in your life: empathy, sympathy, anger, sadness, compassion etc.)
- Reflect on a passion (writing, art, volunteering, singing, playing an instrument)



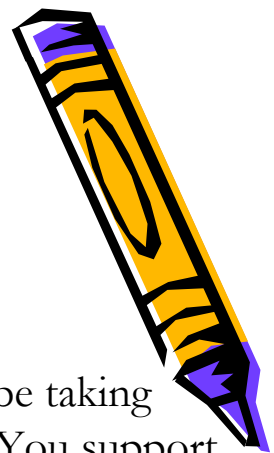
Literary Analysis

- An examination or interpretation of an important feature in a novel, short story, poem, play, or essay.
- Ideas you might consider while reading:
 - Scrutinize the forces affecting the main character
 - Focus on the imagery in a poem
 - Evaluate the strength of the main point or theme of the story
 - Examine how the protagonist changes from the beginning to the end of the story
 - Interpret the importance of the setting
 - Estimate the number and consistency of any recurring themes, ideas, or symbols?
- Questions you might consider include:
 - What the writer intended the reader to understand?
 - What is symbolic about an item?
 - What is the story's conflict and how is it resolved; is this significant?
 - What is the conflict of the story and how does it affect the protagonist?
 - What is significant about this work?



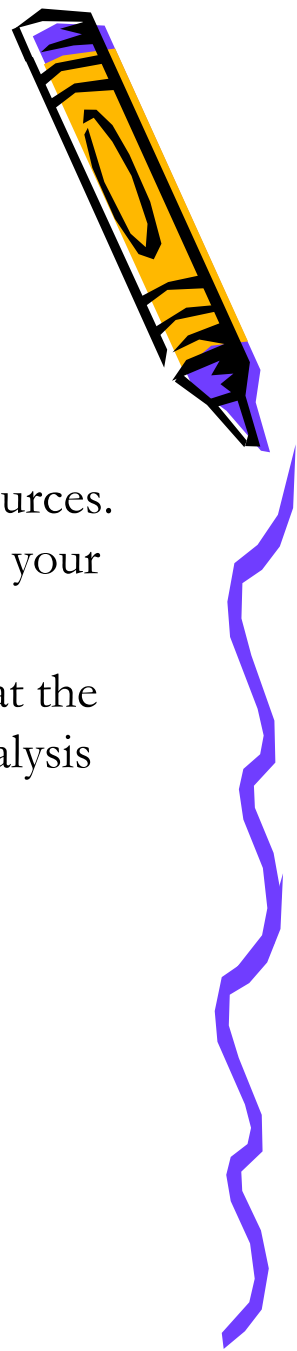
Research: What a Research paper is

- *An academic piece of writing that requires analytical thinking*
 - familiarizing yourself with a subject through research and
 - comparing other people's thoughts on the topic with your own. You will be taking your place at a table of experts and explaining your own views in writing. You support your views with evidence you have gathered. Then in conclusion, you summarize your position.
- *A paper that begins with questions*
 - How did this problem / war / disease / tradition start? What mistakes have been made?
 - You may think you have too many questions, which might be true, but all inquiry begins with questions. Eventually, you will reduce your questions to one central question, inferred from the sources you find. Asking questions will take up much of your time at the beginning, but is the best way to arrive at one critical question that is interesting and rich enough to write about.



Research: What a Research paper is

cont. . .



- *A paper that combines synthesis and analysis*
 - Through synthesis, you pull together information from various sources. With analysis, you make the information meaningful by providing your own interpretation.
 - One word of caution: don't give too much attention to synthesis at the expense of analysis. Having plenty of sources is fine, but your analysis is the heart of the research paper.

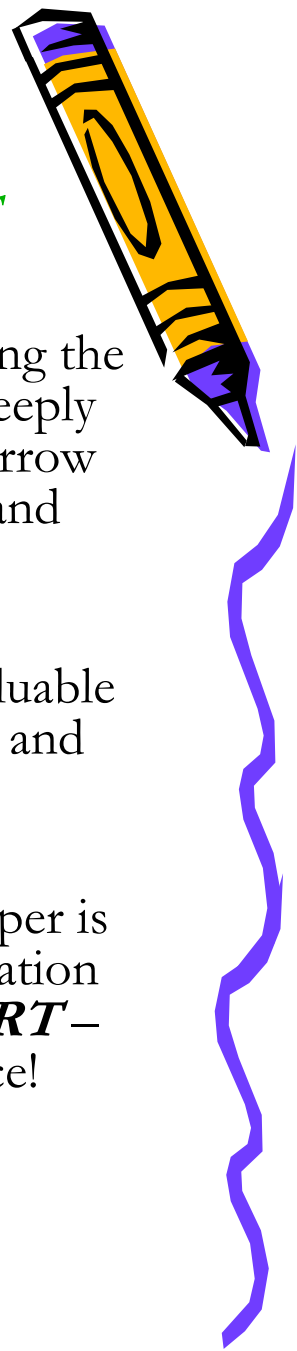


Research cont. . . What a Research paper is NOT

- A collection of all the sources you can find on a topic. Research is not evaluated on how many sources; but whether the writer's ideas are supported by other sources.
- A review of all the information in a field describing what has been said, and by whom
- Do not just review the material – evaluate and analyze the information (learn something)
- A personal essay like an editorial or newspaper column Editorial's rely ENTIRELY on personal knowledge and opinion, **but** the writer of the research paper is saying, "This is what the evidence indicated, as provided by other people, presented with my interpretation."



Research cont. . . What a Research paper is NOT



- A five-paragraph essay with quoted examples from one text Quoting the narrator from *To Kill a Mockingbird* to show that she thinks more deeply about things than other children her age is not enough; it is too narrow and limited for a research paper – go find sources to support you and the novel ‘s quote”
- A collection of memories taken from several books Although a valuable source of information, memories are subjective (very opinionated) and can’t be relied on exclusively to address larger topics
- Only what secondary sources say about your topic!!! A research paper is not a collection of what the experts say, with your humble presentation of their ideas – one after the other – without comment! **BE SMART**– incorporate your opinion about the topic with the expert’s evidence!

