*Interpretive Essays:*

*A Response to Literature*

**

*Mrs. Wilson*

*Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Period\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Academic Vocabulary for Writing*

***Writing Process***

*Audience and Purpose – the first step in writing is to determine to* whom you are writing and what you are trying to accomplish. Strong writers adapt writing to suit their audience and achieve their goals

Pre-writing – includes brainstorming and research. Some common prewriting activities include journaling, graphic organizers, and outlining.

Drafting – the first version of your essay. This is the time to get all of your ideas down without too much self-censoring.

Revising – this is the process of reviewing your essay and making improvements. This step includes adding material to improve clarity and the depth of your arguments, deleting and substituting material to streamline your points and improve wording, and checking to ensure you have adequately proven your thesis.

Proofreading/Editing – your final revision focusing on grammar and usage. Making sure everything is perfect.

Final Draft – your final effort. It is well-reasoned, detailed, complete, and free from errors.

Publication – presenting your writing to your audience.

***Elements of an Essay***

Essay – An analytic or interpretive composition on a single subject. It generally presents the views of the author.

Introductory Paragraph – provides an introduction to the topic and states the thesis. It provides the foundation and focus for the rest of your paper

TAG – title, author, genre. A method of introducing the work discussed within an essay which provides all necessary information to orient your reader

Thesis – a statement in your introductory paragraph that lays out your central argument. It states the author’s position on a topic.

Body Paragraph – these paragraphs make up the bulk of your paper. This is where you develop your argument and provide support for your thesis.

Topic Sentence – the first sentence of a body paragraph, it states the main idea for the paragraph. Each topic sentence should offer support tor the thesis.

SOS – a method of introducing quotes within an essay that identifies the speaker and occasion of the quote as well as providing a detailed discussion of the significance of the quote.

Concrete Details – specific facts, quotes and examples from the text offered in support of your topic sentence.

Commentary – The author’s analysis or interpretation. It is a thorough discussion of the significance of the concrete details presented in the body paragraphs.

Transitions – words, phrases, and sentences used to move your reader smoothly from one point to another.

Concluding Paragraph – The final paragraph in an essay. It provides a summary of the main points presented within the essay. It also offers the author’s final commentary.

**Types of Critical Writing**

*Analytical – this type of writing asks the author to break a topic or issue into its component parts and explain what those parts mean both on their own and as they relate back to the topic as a whole. Types of analytical writing include compare/contrast papers, social issue essays, cause and effect essays, and interpretive essays.*

*Interpretive – An essay in which the author provides her explanation of the meaning of a topic. The author’s position is supported by factual information.*

*Persuasive – an essay in which the author presents an argument in support of a particular position.*

**The Introduction**

The introductory paragraph provides background information on your topic and narrows the topic down to your specific focus. It provides all of the necessary information to provide a foundation for your argument. The final sentence(s) of your intro should present your thesis.

***Structure of an Introduction:***

**Introductions start out providing broad information relating to your topic. Sometimes called a hook or an attention-getter, this statement engages your reader and immediately connects them to the topic. Avoid vague generalities and clichéd openings.**

***As you develop your introduction, you should introduce the work you are discussing using TAG. Always provide the full title and the author’s complete name. Give more specific information about the aspect of the text that your argument will focus on to provide context for your reader.***

**Finish your introduction with a very focused and specific thesis statement that lays out the argument/interpretation you will be proving throughout the body of your paper. Make sure your thesis addresses all aspects of the prompt.**

The Thesis

A thesis statement in an essay is a sentence (sometimes two or three)< usually in the introductory paragraph, that embodies the main idea, purpose, or central point of the essay. It is the opinion or feeling that the rest of the essay will prove. The idea is to make your point and then prove it with specifics. A good thesis pulls together your knowledge, observations, analysis, and available information. It serves as a promise to the reader, and as a program, by hinting at the overall plan of the paper.

# Guidelines for Writing a Thesis

A thesis:

* Makes a statement rather than asks a question
* Presents an opinion that can be argued either way
* Expresses a position which can be elaborated or explained
* Does not make a formal statement of intent (I will discuss…, the purpose of this essay is to…, etc.)
* Should be clear not vague or easily misunderstood
* Should make it clear what the writer is writing about and what his or her position is.
* Suggests how your paper will be organized (provides a roadmap)

### A thesis is not:

### a statement of fact

### a question

### vague, combative, or confrontational

### Some Myths about Thesis Statements

* *Every paper requires one*. Assignments that ask you to write personal responses or to explore a subject don't want you to seem to pre-judge the issues.
* *A thesis statement must come at the end of the first paragraph.* This is a natural position for a statement of focus, but it's not the only one. Some theses can be stated in the opening sentences of an essay; others need a paragraph or two of introduction; others can't be fully formulated until the end.
* *A thesis statement must be one sentence in length, no matter how many clauses it contains*. Clear writing is more important than rules like these. Use two or three sentences if you need them. A complex argument may require a whole tightly-knit paragraph to make its initial statement of position.
* *You can't start writing an essay until you have a perfect thesis statement*. It may be advisable to draft a hypothesis or tentative thesis statement near the start of a big project, but changing and refining a thesis is a main task of thinking your way through your ideas as you write a paper.

### *A thesis statement must give three points of support*. It should indicate that the essay will explain and give evidence for its assertion, but points don't need to come in any specific number.

### *\*Adapted from material by Dr. Margaret Proctor*

### Some Examples

### *The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.*

### No kidding! This takes no position at all. What reasons were the same? Which ones were different? What do you think were the most important factors?

### *While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions.*

### Much better. You have an arguable position here, but couldn’t your thesis be even stronger? What moral reasons? What institutions?

### *While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own rights to property and self-government.*

### Now you have a strong thesis.

* ***Many elementary schools are going to a year-round schedule.***

This is not a thesis but a statement of fact.

### *Year-round schools can help reduce overcrowding in classrooms and will benefit student, parents, and school staff in general.*

### Great, now prove your point.

### *Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn is a great American novel.*

### Outside of a few high school students, no one will disagree. Take a stronger stand

* ***In Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore.***

Better, but it could be stronger. What is the significance of this comparison?

### *Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave "civilized" society and go back to nature.*

### *\*Adapted from the UNC writing center*

**The Body Paragraphs**

This is where you develop all of your evidence in support of your thesis. Each paragraph should focus on one point which is clearly laid out in the first sentence of the paragraph. The rest of the paragraph works to develop this topic sentence by explaining your reasoning in detail and supporting it with relevant examples from the text.

***Structure of a Body Paragraph:***

Additional Supporting Detail

Concluding sentence connects back to the thesis and transitions to the next topic

Supporting Detail

Offers concrete examples from the text properly framed using SOS

Gives detailed commentary explaining how the example offers proof in support of the topic sentence.

Topic Sentence

Provides direct support for your thesis. This statement should be interpretive (no summary or obvious truths). Be clear and very specific.

**Academic Vocabulary for Literary Analysis**

Focuses

Balances

Relates

Expresses

Insinuates

Demonstrates

Emphasizes

Elucidates

Compares

Suggests

Creates

Illustrates

Exemplifies

Parallels

Juxtaposes

Implies

Alludes to

Observes

Identifies

Organizes

Reinforces

Defines

Clarifies

Contrasts

Argues

Mirrors

Echoes

Develops

Connotes

**Concluding Paragraph**

Your final paragraph should summarize all of the points you have discussed in the body of your paper and should show how those points have worked together to prove the thesis. It should also touch on the broader implications for your topic.

***Structure of a Concluding Paragraph***

Editors Checklist

* Do sentences begin with capitals? Are proper nouns and I capitalized?
* Do sentences have correct ending punctuation?
* Any run-ons or fragments?
* Are paragraphs indented?
* Are commas used correctly – for compound sentences, items in a list, etc
* Are quotation marks used correctly?
* Have I avoided contractions and used apostrophes for the possessive?
* Is spelling correct?
* Have I eliminated unnecessary words and sentences?
* Have I used common homonyms correctly (there, their, they’re, to, too, two, its, it’s)?
* Are verb tenses correct? Do all my subjects and verbs agree?
* Do pronouns agree with the nouns they replace?
* Is other punctuation correct (colons, semi-colons, underlining, parentheses, dashes)?

MLA Manuscript Format

* Margins 1”
* Font pt. 12
* Double space

Last name and page #

Name

Teachers Name

Class and Period

Date Due

Paper Title

Start of your essay. Don’t forget to indent the first line of every paragraph. No extra spaces between the paragraphs.