

Essay Do's and Don'ts

**NOT SURE IF FINISHED ESSAY IS
ACCEPTABLE**

OR JUST BAD ENOUGH TO LOOK GOOD

We all make mistakes, and we're all learning. Reflect on your work and use these tips to improve your future essays :)

Once upon a time

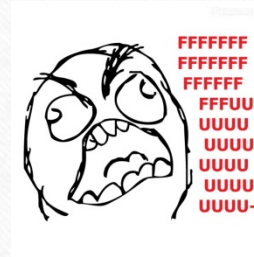
there was no such thing as transitional devices within and between sentences spaces between words and sentences did not exist and punctuation marks were many years in the future it came to pass that some scholar contrived the idea of separating one sentence from another with a blank space it was not too long after this that another scholar hit upon the next logical step of separating the words within the sentence with blank spaces while this did much to end some of the confusion it was still a little difficult to tell where one sentence ended and another began to resolve this the period was invented. Closely on the heels of the period came the capital letter to begin the sentence. We were on our way. At this point in the evolution of the sentence it was up to a fiendishly clever or sadistic scholar to introduce internal punctuation marks; the world, by the way, has not been the same since.

Introductions

Thesis Statements

- Must include the **topic** (empathy/mockingbirds/courage) AND the **three points** (the names of the 3 characters you are analyzing)

- Many people forgot to list the 3 characters!



- Your thesis should also be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph.

- **Strong:**

- Harper Lee illustrates the concept of empathy in her novel by describing the experiences of Jean Louise “Scout” Finch, Atticus Finch, and Miss Maudie Atkinson, and the individual nuances of each person’s empathy.
- The issues within the society of Maycomb represent the deficiency of justice in the economy and the need for courage in the town, which are delivered through the wise words of Atticus Finch, the risk-taking personality of Boo Radley, and the strong morals and beliefs of Link Deas.

Titles

- Titles of books are either underlined or italicized.

To Kill a Mockingbird or *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- Don't use quotation marks. (These are for short stories and poems.)

Body Paragraphs and Content

Quotations

- **Strong:** Quotations support your thesis by **showing** how a character is empathic/courageous/a mockingbird.
 - Mrs. Dubose is a role model for courage to Scout and Jem. After revealing that Mrs. Dubose worked hard to die free from addiction, Atticus tells the children, “She was the bravest person I ever knew” (149).
- **Weak:** Quotations are not related to your topic. Maybe they show plot (i.e. they prove that a particular event *happened*) but they don’t relate to the character’s empathy/courage/mockingbird-likeness.
 - Mrs. Dubose is a role model for courage to Scout and Jem. After Jem damages her garden, she “wants [him] to come every afternoon after school and Saturdays to read to her” (140).

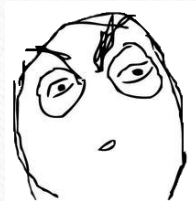
Specific vs. General Evidence

- **Strong:** using specific examples from the text by either paraphrasing or quoting.
 - Boo Radley demonstrates an empathic nature as he cares for the children. He understands that Scout and Jem are innocent but have been made a target of Bob Ewell's hate towards Atticus for embarrassing him during the trial. When Ewell attacks Scout and Jem on their way back from the pageant, Boo Radley steps in to save the defenseless children.
- **Weak:** generalized statements about a character.
 - Boo Radley shows empathy because he cares for the children. He cares about their well-being and he wants to make them happy. He saves them at the end of the book.

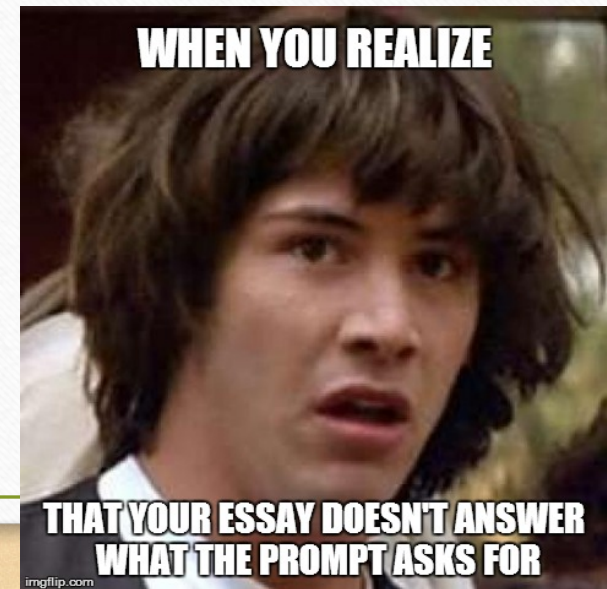
Topic Sentences

- Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that relates back to your thesis (i.e. introduce the character you're focusing on in the paragraph, and how they show empathy/show courage/are like a mockingbird).
- **Strong:** Tom Robinson is a character who never hurts anyone else but is instead harmed by the town's cruel prejudice.
- **Weak:** Tom Robinson is a poor black man who is accused of raping a white woman.

Ms. Lowe:



WTF???



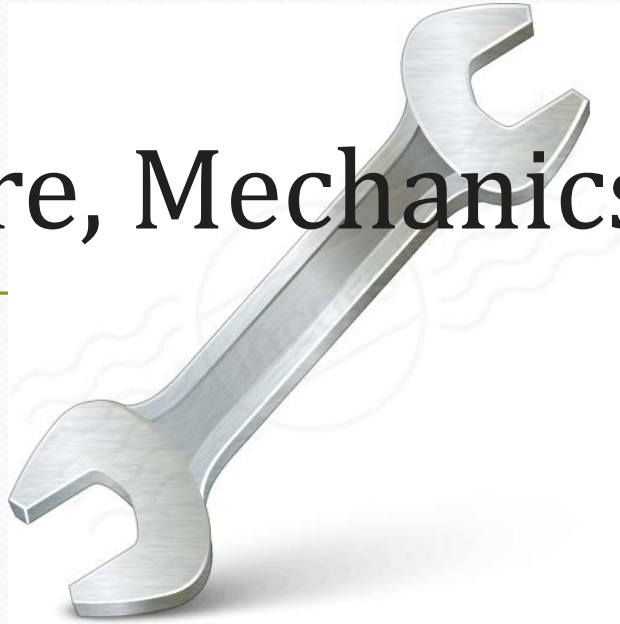
Conclusions

General Tips for Conclusions

- Restate your thesis. This also means mentioning the 3 characters you analyzed again. Yes, you do need to write out their names.
- Sum up what you've written but don't go into any new analysis.
- Leave the reader with a final thought. Something to ponder...
(Hint: go back to the "so what?" of your paper)
 - Harper Lee has captured this timeless lesson, and illustrated it beautifully through the songs of Mayella Ewell, Boo Radley, and Tom Robinson.
 - Their bravery isn't romanticized by Harper Lee, rather demonstrated in a realistic way, which is why these three characters are so fondly remembered as heroes.

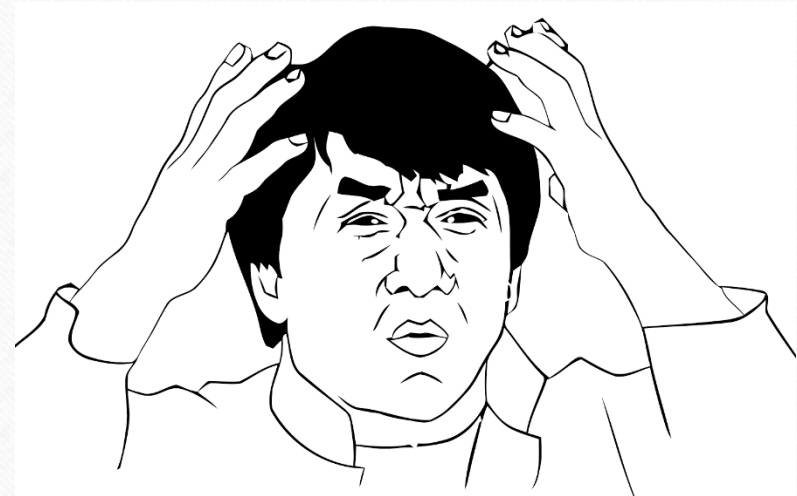


Structure, Mechanics, and Style



Structure: 5 Paragraphs

- 5-Paragraph essay = 5 paragraphs in your essay. No more, no fewer.
- Some essays were one long chunk of text. Don't make your reader decipher your writing!
- On the flip side, you don't need to start a new line after every point.



Transitions

- Each paragraph should flow from one to the next. Each sentence should connect from one to the next as well.
- See your essay package for a list of transition words.
- Examples:
 - First, second, third, lastly, finally...
 - For example, for instance, in this case...
 - Also, furthermore, moreover, similarly, in addition...
 - In contrast, however, yet, in spite of, while...
 - As a result, thus, consequently, therefore, evidently...
 - In general, overall, in conclusion, in summary, ultimately...

Colloquialisms

- Avoid slang and other casual, conversational language. This includes contractions (can't, don't, wouldn't, etc.). Use sophisticated language.

Weak:	Strong:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• gonna, wanna, gotta• kid, guy, dude• sort of, kind of• hating on a person• shady, sketchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• going to, want to, have to• child, person, man, individual• somewhat, rather• discriminate against a person• questionable, suspicious

Academic Tone/Style

- In addition to avoiding colloquialisms, refrain from writing about writing an essay. See below for common phrases to avoid:

Avoid:

- I am going to analyze...
- This essay is going to talk about...
- My first/second/third point is...
- An example of this is...
- On page 43... / In chapter 21...
- This quote shows...
- The book says...

Homophones & Commonly Confused Words

- its/it's
- there/their/they're
- whether/weather
- except/accept
- throughout/threw out
- courageous/courages
- would have/would of
- trial/trail

Please Proofread!

- **For clarity** – many people had very, VERY long sentences or very wordy and awkward phrasing. Clear, straightforward sentences are better.

“Jem, Tm and Boo”

“Tom Robison”

“Autumn agin”

“the nearby knothole tee”

- **For errors** – grammatical errors, spelling errors, punctuation, capitalization, missing words, phrases you forgot to delete, etc.

“how to kill a mockingbird”

“Jam was innocent”

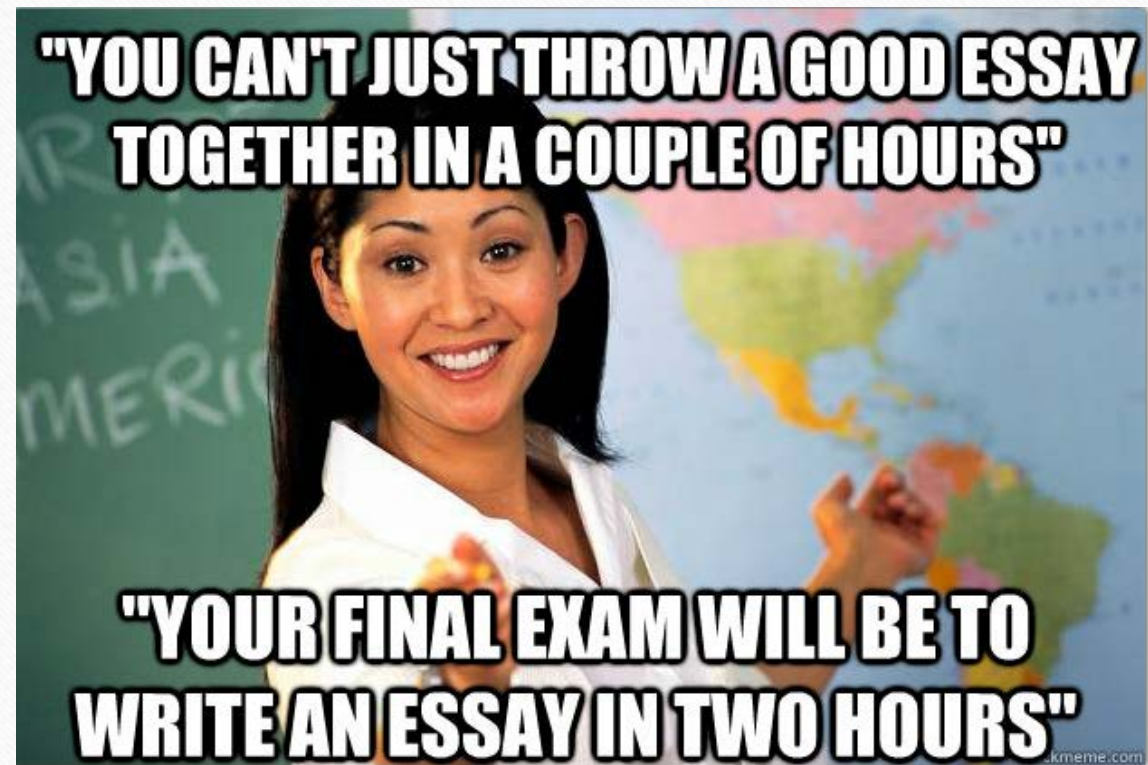
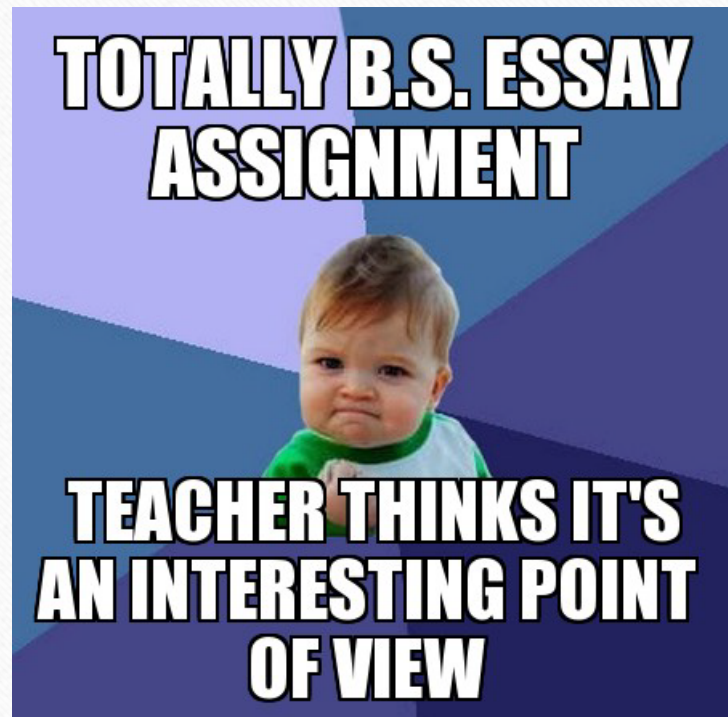
“the Boo just walked away”

“to act in a prober way”

“Miss Maudie’s house fir”

“Boo Radly” / “Boo Radely”

The Paradox



Reflecting on your work...

- Reflect on the comments I have made and the checklist attached.
- In the blank space at the bottom of the mark sheet, write down 2-3 goals you want to work on for your next essay.
- Be specific about what you want to improve on.

To Kill a Mockingbird
Final Essay - Marked on a 6-point scale

Introduction		
Body Paragraph #1		
Body Paragraph #2		
Body Paragraph #3		
Conclusion		
Total:	/30	

See back for more specific feedback.

Don't forget about word crimes...

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gv0H-vPoDc>

