

Essay Outline

STEPS:

1. Create a thesis statement.

- Look at the prompt, and create a thesis statement. Remember that you are formulating a “theory” about the novel that you will have to “prove” with reasons and examples in your body paragraphs.
- Think about the literary elements you need to consider. Make sure you answer the “So what?” question—What is the insight you gain from this text? What truths can you reveal about this passage to your reader?
- When you have developed a workable thesis, you may begin your outline.

2. Prepare a detailed outline with quotations from the book to support your argument. You may not include outside sources.

Your outline should be typed and in MLA style, and follow this format:

Introduction

I. Background information

What context do you need to explain to your reader so that the rest of your essay will make sense? This does not need to be in paragraph form. You can use a few words or phrases.

II. Thesis Statement

The “theory” about the novel that you will have to “prove” with reasons and examples in your body paragraphs.

Body Paragraphs

Each body paragraph should follow the format below. The number of body paragraphs depends on your thesis and your reasons.

I. Topic Sentence

This should be a full sentence, not a single word or phrase; it should support your thesis, and it should be the focus of this entire paragraph. The topic sentence is **not** an example.

A. Examples

Each example should have the following:

- i. Context** for the quote (Who says it? What is happening? What is it about?)
- ii. Quote**

iii. Commentary (What does the quote mean? How does it relate to your topic sentence/thesis?)

Conclusion

- The purpose of the conclusion is to bring the essay to a satisfactory ending.
- You don't want to introduce new ideas in the conclusion, but you can extend the thinking into the realm of personal reflection (your thinking about the "so what?" question).
- You can summarize the main points of the essay, also, but sometimes summary conclusions sound stilted and voiceless.
- A good conclusion needs a good transition sentence.