



BEYOND THE FIVE- PARAGRAPH ESSAY: WRITING IN THE HUMANITIES

Academic Skills – 2018

Common writing assignments

- Article summaries or precis
- Article, book or film reviews
- Argumentative essays and research papers
- Annotated bibliographies
- Passage analysis or primary source analysis



University Expectations

IN GENERAL:

- You are **Analyzing and Synthesizing** knowledge, not just reporting it
- Focus is on **HOW** and **WHY**, not just WHAT and WHEN

Common Expectations

Writing is assessed for

- Use of sources
- Analysis and argument
- Organization
- Clarity of ideas and writing

Beyond the 5-paragraph essay

- Pros: clear structure, simple thesis
- Sample 5-paragraph essay
 - Introduction & thesis: Changes in women's fashion in the 1920s signaled women's growing social, economic, and political power.
 - Argument 1: growing social power signaled by fashion changes
 - Argument 2: growing economic power signaled by fashion changes
 - Argument 3: growing political power signaled by fashion changes
 - Conclusion



Beyond the 5-paragraph essay

- Cons: poor fit for university writing, can lead to superficial analysis, lengthy paragraphs
 - Five paragraphs spread out over 8 pages?
 - Rarely addresses key questions like how or why or considers significance of argument
 - May assume part of argument as given without developing it with evidence

Step One: Better thesis statements

- Forget the ‘rule of 3’
 - Instead: use “how” and “why” questions to strengthen analysis
- Start with a focused topic
 - A topic that is too general cannot be analyzed with depth
- Present an informed argument or position
 - The thesis is not just your opinion; you need to have support of appropriate evidence
- Your thesis should be a clear declaration of the direction and purpose of your essay.
- Your thesis is the centre around which the entire essay is organised.

Narrow the topic: Example I

Topic: To what extent have changes in women's fashion signaled changes in women's power or equality?

Narrowed Question: During the 1920s, fashion promoted a "new woman." To what extent did this new woman reflect a change in gender roles for middle-class U.S. women?

- Who was the "new woman" of 1920s fashion?
- How did the "new woman" depart from previous feminine ideals?
- Did the new woman represent all women or only certain groups of women?
- Did women's actual economic or political roles change during this period?

A Thesis is NOT:

- A question: Did changes in fashion signal real changes in women's economic and political power?
- A Statement: This paper will examine whether the image of the new woman was linked to real changes in women's economic and political power.
- A basic fact: During the 1920s, the image of the new woman became popular.

Thesis Example I

During the 1920s, the fashion of the new woman challenged traditional ideals by promoting increased female athleticism, sexuality, and independence; however, while these changes seemed to make women more liberated, in reality, they were accompanied by little real change in most women's political or economic power.

This thesis is intended to be used as a sample only. Submitting work that includes this thesis statement, in whole or parts, is an act of academic dishonesty.

Narrow the Topic: Example II

What role do **lies** and **lying** play in Alice Munro's "Free Radicals"?

- Where in the text do characters tell lies? (plot)
- What language is used to lie or to tell the lies? (diction, imagery, symbolism, denotation, connotation)
- Who tells these lies? Who tells the truth? (diction, characterization, point of view)
- Why do they tell them? What do they hope to gain? (characterization, plot)
- What happens as a result of lies? (plot, characterization)
- As a reader, do I understand or identify with the characters' who lie?

I won't be able to focus on all of these questions in my paper. Indeed, I could use these same questions to write several different papers!

A Thesis is NOT:

- A summary: Nita tells many lies in Munro's "Free Radicals."
- A fan-letter: Munro uses powerful images to brilliantly illuminate the differences between lies and truth.
- A list: In "Free Radicals," Nita lies to herself, her friends, and the intruder.

Thesis Example II

“Free Radicals” juxtaposes Nita, a seemingly innocent widow who tells many lies, with the intruder, a mass murder who generally tells the truth. Significantly, Munro depicts Nita’s lies as very human and justifiable ways to cope with painful realities while she depicts the intruder’s truthful acknowledgement of his violence as abnormal.

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Thesis Example III

Question: Compare the representation of **love** in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*. How do these representations shape the **tone or genre** of the plays?

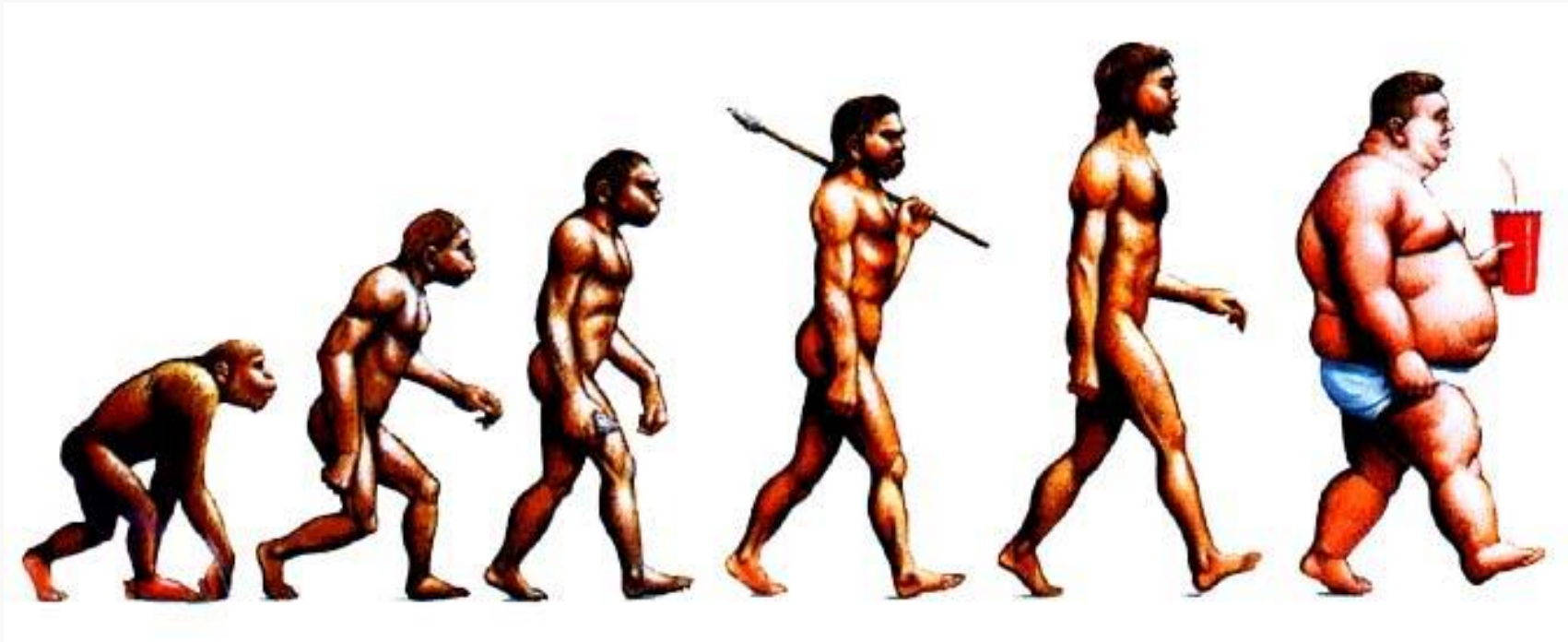
“Both *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are comedies that involve romantic love that is based on an illusion (**how texts are similar**). But the two Shakespearean comedies differ in their portrayal of that illusion, especially in relation to Malvolio's and Bottom's reactions to failed love (**how texts are different**). As a result of these differences in character, *Twelfth Night* takes on a more serious tone, with a tinge of tragedy, while *A Midsummer Night's Dream* does not, maintaining a comic tone throughout (**significance of major difference**).

This thesis is intended to be used as a sample only. Submitting work that includes this thesis statement, in whole or parts, is an act of academic dishonesty.

Let's try it

1. Narrowing the topic
 2. Asking a thesis question
 3. Developing a tentative thesis
- What is the artistic merit of national literary competitions or awards?

A Thesis EVOLVES



Step two: Organizing your ideas

Blocking your arguments

- Use your thesis as a guide: what structure does it suggest? What ideas do you need to express to support your argument?
- Organize your evidence and ideas into categories - consider how these categories inform your thesis.
- Tools:
 - Mind maps/concept maps
 - Lists or Tables
 - Free writing

The Outline is an important tool

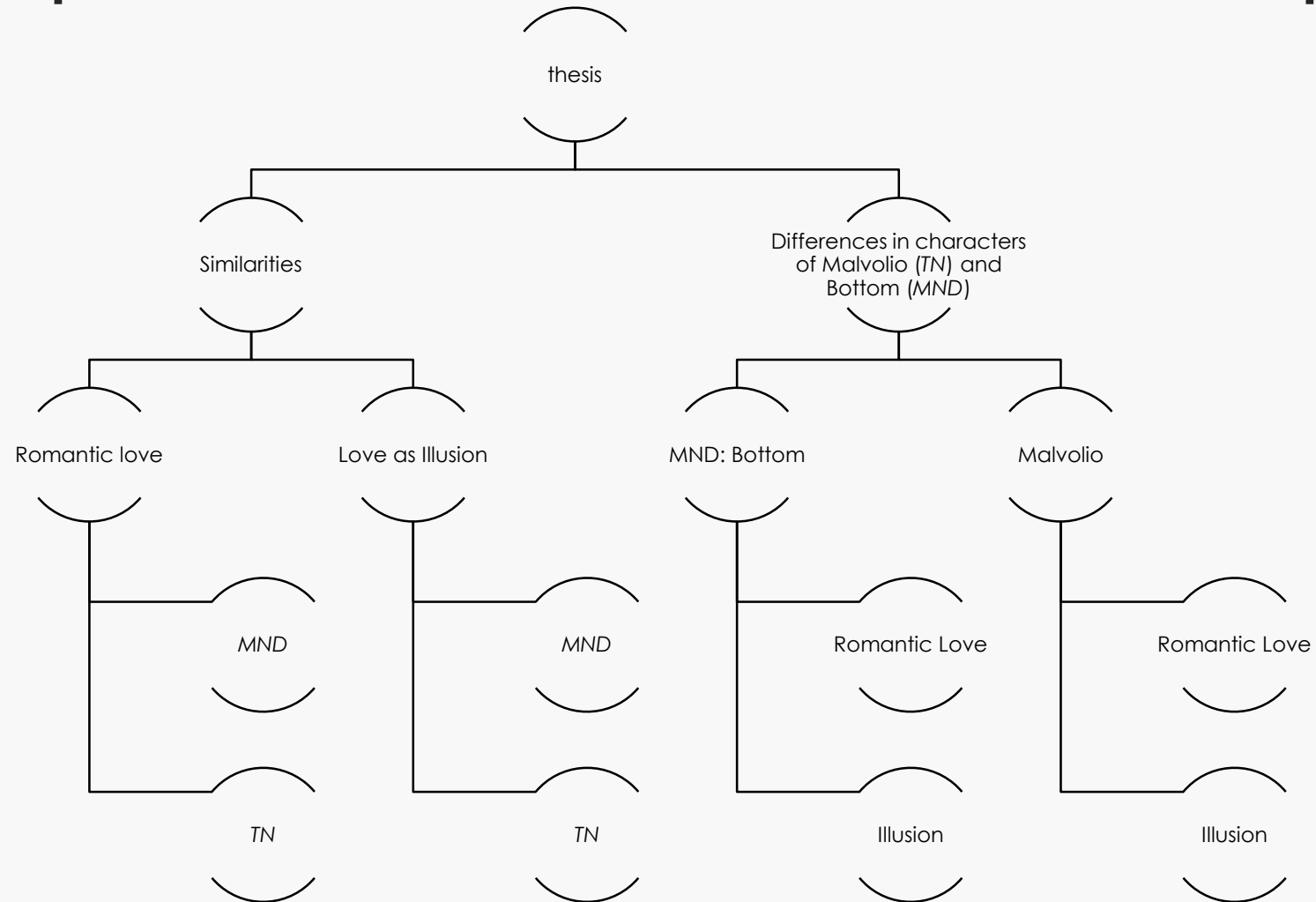
- This is the map / skeleton of your essay
- It allows **you** to see a lot of information and organize ideas clearly



Example: Use the thesis

- During the 1920s, the fashion of the new woman challenged traditional ideals by promoting increased female athleticism, sexuality, and independence; however, while these changes seemed to make women more liberated, in reality, they were accompanied by little real change in most women's political or economic power.
1. Before the 1920s, the ideal American woman was seen as domestic and pure and this was reflected in the restrictive, feminine clothing of the era.
 2. During the 1920s, this image changed as the physically fit, overtly sexual, and masculine-dressed flapper became the new ideal.
 3. This new ideal seemed to make women more liberated.
 4. In reality, it had little impact on women's everyday lives.
 5. *This outline is intended to be used as a sample only. Submitting work that includes this thesis statement or outline, in whole or parts, is an act of academic dishonesty.*

Example: Create a mind map



For Example: Alternating Organizational Pattern

I. Introduction

II. Similarities

A. Romantic love

1. *MND* 2. *TN*

B. Love as Illusion

1. *MND* 2. *TN*

III. Differences in characters of Malvolio (*TN*) and Bottom (*MND*)

a. *MND*: Bottom

1. Romantic Love 2. Illusion

b. Malvolio

1. Romantic Love 2. Illusion

IV. Comedic tone of *MND* versus comic/tinged with tragic tone of *TN*

V. Conclusion

This thesis is intended to be used as a sample only. Submitting work that includes this thesis statement, in whole or parts, is an act of academic dishonesty.

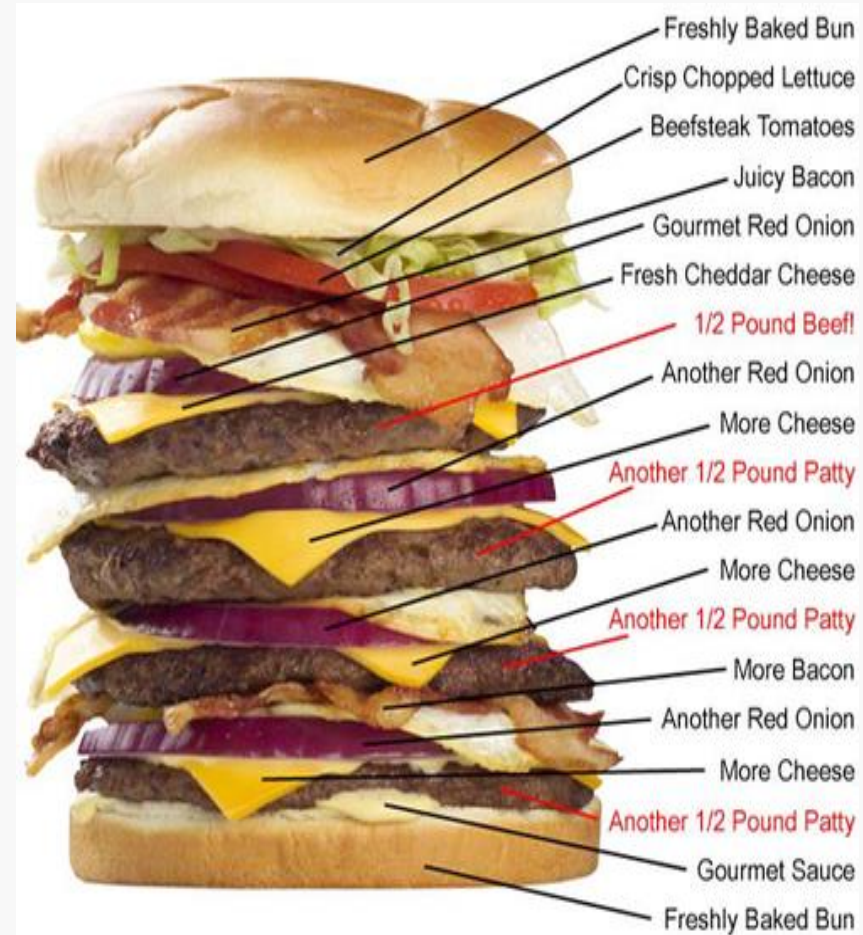
Body Paragraphs: Basics

- *Each paragraph has a purpose* that is related to the thesis or main idea of the entire paper
 - What is the main idea of this paragraph?
 - Why is this idea important?
 - Why is this paragraph placed here?

Paragraph 101

- Topic Sentence
- Evidence
- Elaboration / Analysis
- Conclusion

*ALL points must support
your topic sentence*



Step three: Writing about Evidence

- Secondary sources
 - Scholarly: Academic articles and monographs
 - Popular: Magazine, newspaper, blogs
- Primary sources
 - Works of literature and classical texts
 - Philosophical treatises
 - Original historical artifacts/documents (photographs, personal letters, news articles)
- Summary
 - Arguments and ideas by others (philosophical, literary, historical, artistic)
 - Important details and facts (character and setting, historical context, premise for argument)
- Quotations
 - How particular language demonstrates your supporting idea/argument (from one word to a few sentences)
 - Well-worded arguments that punctuate your supporting idea

Effectively Integrating Evidence

- Paraphrase: Use to integrate specific argument/evidence/data into essay

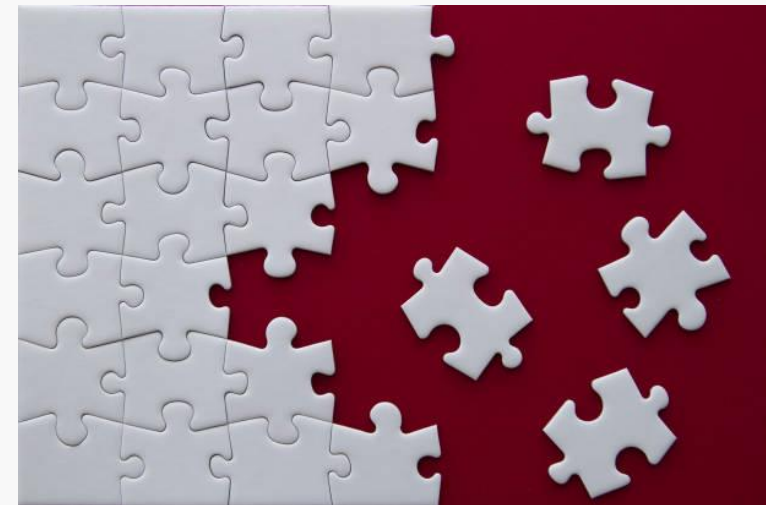
For thirty years, international conservation agencies like the World Conservation Union and World Parks Congress have made recommendations to governments about the use of protected lands (Colchester, 28).



Effectively Integrating Evidence

- Summary: Use to integrate source's overall or more general argument/evidence into essay

Despite changes in legislation, Colchester argues that indigenous peoples have little participation in conservation efforts (Colchester, 24).



Do Not Drop in a Quote



Feminist historians have revisited and deconstructed ideas about female dependence on the male breadwinner. “The many and varied ways in which soldiers’ and seamen’s wives contributed to their household coffers is representative of the strategies pursued by their civilian sisters. Equally, the fact that these women’s economic role was often ignored was also a common characteristic of eighteenth-century English society.”¹⁵

Instead, integrate the quote and explain its importance to your argument.

Feminist historians have revisited and deconstructed ideas about female dependence on the male breadwinner. Hurl-Eamon, for example, argues that “[t]he many and varied ways in which soldiers’ and seamen’s wives contributed to their household coffers is representative of the strategies pursued by their civilian sisters.”¹⁵ Her analysis shows that...

15. Jennine Hurl-Eamon, “The fiction of female dependence and the makeshift economy of soldiers, sailors, and their wives in eighteenth-century London,” *Labor History*, 49, no. 4 (2008): 483.

Signal Phrases

acknowledges adds admits
agrees argues asserts
claims
comments confirms contends
compares denies disputes
declares emphasizes
endorses grants illustrates implies
notes observes
points out reasons refutes
rejects reports responds
thinks suggests
writes

Make the Author's Intention Clear

Original Source: “We cannot conclude that one event causes another just because the second follows the first. Nor can statistical correlation prove causation. But no one who has studied the data doubts that smoking is a causal factor in lung cancer.”

Inaccurate use of source: Jones claims that “we cannot conclude that one event causes another just because the second follows the first.” No wonder responsible researchers distrust statistical evidence of health risks such as smoking and lung cancer.

Make sure that you use quotations accurately and fairly!

Show your analysis!

- How does evidence support thesis? What are the key ideas which address your argument? What examples or details are necessary to clearly illustrate your point?
 - Ask yourself “So What?” for each paragraph. What is the point of this paragraph and what am I trying to do with this paragraph.
- How does evidence work together to build argument? What are the connections between sources?
 - Are you merely cataloguing information (*Joyce uses a metaphor*) or are you moving your thesis forward (*Joyce’s use of metaphor reinforces...*) ?

Resources: Transitions

- **Common Transitional Words and Phrases**
- **Adding Ideas:** further, furthermore, in addition, equally important, likewise, more, moreover, similarly
- **Emphasizing Ideas:** in fact, in particular, it is true, most important,
- **Illustrating Ideas:** for example, for instance, in particular, specifically
- **Comparing Ideas:** in the same way, likewise, similarly
- **Contrasting Ideas:** conversely, despite, however, in contrast, in spite of, nevertheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary
- **Showing Cause and Effect:** accordingly, as a result, consequently, therefore, thus

Step four: Revision matters

- Writing is thinking
- Revising is refining
 - Strengthen your argument
 - Connect your ideas
 - Explain your evidence
 - Clarify your writing

Editing is a process

1. Substance – Is the main point of your paper clear? Do you **use evidence and examples to develop and explain?**
2. Structure – Is your paper **well organized?** Are connections made clear?
3. Style – Do you **write in a simple and clear way?** Is your tone formal? Do you pay attention to common grammatical or structural errors you make (verb tense, punctuation, spelling)?
4. Format – details are important – **follow the guidelines.**

Revise for common writing errors

- Clarity is key. Be direct and specific in your language. Avoid jargon.
- Avoid second-person voice (you); first-person voice (I/we) is usually not necessary.
- Use complete words rather than contractions (don't, can't, it's)
- Commonly confused words (e.g., effect/affect, compliment/complement, there/their/they're)
- Simplify verb tense and be consistent (usually simple present tense or past tense)
- Consistency and clarity in pronouns (e.g., this, they, them, it)
- Ensure all evidence (paraphrased or directly quoted) includes a citation; all cited sources should be in a final list of references as well

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