



WRITING A LITERARY ESSAY

BY SOPHIE ROSEN

STEP ONE: CHOOSE A TOPIC SENTENCE

- Find out if your teacher has assigned a topic or if you may choose your own.
- **Think about choices.**
 - Think about what you already know about the choices.
 - Is there any topic for which you already have a great deal of evidence in your memory?
 - Is there any topic for which you have great enthusiasm?
 - Is there any topic for which it will be easy to find evidence?

STEP TWO: DIVIDE YOUR TOPIC INTO SUBTOPICS

- Did your teacher already give you three subtopics?
- If not, think of three ways to address the topic in your essay.
- For example,...
 - Explain what the topic means.
 - Explain how it is shown in your novel.
 - Explain how it relates to real life

STEP THREE: COLLECT EVIDENCE

- Write down your ideas using your general knowledge and memory of the novel or poem.
 - Look back at the literature and find quotations and page numbers to support your ideas.
 - Look at secondary sources if you would like to investigate further. But make sure to provide citations for those sources, so you be credited for your extra research. Write the citations in a special section at the end of your essay.
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STEP FOUR: ORGANIZE YOUR NOTES

- Divide all our notes into three sections, one for each subtopic.
 - Place the notes for each section in a logical order, so they will make sense and not confuse your readers.
 - Number those notes so you remember the order; eg. A1, A2, A3, A4, B1, B2, B3, B4, C1, C2, C3, C4...
 - Go back and check that you have accurately copied any quotations and page numbers.
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STEP FIVE: WRITE EACH PARAGRAPH

- For each subtopic, write a paragraph.
 - Indent and start with a topic sentence.
 - Write in clear, straightforward sentences.
 - Avoid contractions.
 - Avoid 'you' and 'your'; write in the third person.
 - Use plural form to avoid awkward pronouns.
 - Smoothly insert quotations, using ellipses as needed, and page numbers.
 - Smoothly insert transition words.
 - Conclude with an emotive sentence.

STEP SIX: ADD AN INTRODUCTION

Write 5 sentences:

- Start with an attention-getting sentence.
 - Write the topic sentence of your first paragraph.
 - Write the topic sentence of your second paragraph.
 - Write the topic sentence of your third paragraph.
 - Write the main idea for the whole essay including the title and author of your novel or poem.
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STEP SEVEN: ADD A CONCLUSION

Write 5 sentences:

- Write the main idea for the whole essay including the title and author of your novel or poem.
 - Write the topic sentence of your third paragraph.
 - Write the topic sentence of your second paragraph.
 - Write the topic sentence of your first paragraph.
 - End with an emotive and memorable sentence.
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STEP EIGHT: EDIT

No matter how good a writer you are, your first draft is not your best work.

So, go back and revise:

- Use some parallel structure.
- Use repetition of some words or phrases.
- Use some alliteration, consonance or assonance.
- Check that your writing has a logical flow.

STEP NINE: PROOFREAD

Every respectful writer proofreads!

Go back and check your...

- sentence structure,
- spelling,
- punctuation.

Ask someone who is critical to read your work and make suggestions.



STEP TEN: POLISH YOUR WORK

Make your essay look beautiful!

- Do it very neatly by hand or on a computer.
- Double-space.
- Use blue or black ink.
- Use your teacher's preferred font in size 12.
- Make sure your full name and number is in the top right hand corner of each page.