**English 125, College Writing Skills, Monday and Wednesday**

Instructor: Mr. Dominguez

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Office Hours: F 10:00-1:00

Required Texts: Please purchase the following texts at the Reedley College bookstore ASAP. *Handbook Of Literary Terms*, Kennedy (publisher Longman, ISBN 0-205-60356-4); *The Packinghouse Review* Vol 3 Number 5, Garza and Dominguez, ISBN 1-4663-3036-8; *Webster's New World Pocket Dictionary*, Webster (publisher Idg Books, ISBN 0-7645-6147-2); and *Pocket Thesaurus, Merriam Webster* (ISBN 0-87779-524-X). Once the books are in the bookstore, bring the required texts to class every day.

**Changes to the Syllabus/Calendar:**

The instructor reserves the right to make changes as necessary for the benefit of the class, to change policies on the syllabus, or dates on the calendar. Missing class is not an excuse for not being aware of any changes that are made to the calendar or the syllabus.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a verified need for an academic accommodation or materials in alternate media (i.e., Braille, large print, electronic text, etc.) per the Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Course Description:**

In this course, students will develop the process of writing, revising, and finishing essays, which includes the logical development and organization of ideas. Students will avoid common writing errors, develop their writing skills by reading model essays and analyzing rhetorical strategies, develop critical thinking skills by matching the structures of writing to meaning and audience, and by using writing as thinking to explore and express ideas. This course is a companion to ENGL 126 and prepares students for ENGL 1A. Students must successfully complete written course work to receive credit.

**Course Outcomes—Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:**

1. Write an essay of at least 750 words which include an introduction, multiple body paragraphs, and conclusion of some sophistication. This essay will include:

* a clearly defined thesis statement
* unified supporting paragraphs, which begin with topic sentences
* quotations that support the topic sentences and the thesis
* complete sentences which include a variety of sentence types (simple, compound, complex, and compound/complex sentence)
* descriptive vocabulary that exhibits growth and sophisticated word choice
* avoidance of fragments, comma splices, sentence fuses and other basic skills errors, such as capitalization, spelling, homophone issues, verb tense issues, subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, word choice issues, confused syntax, etc.
* use of MLA guidelines to set up essays, correctly use in-text citations for at least one source, and complete a works cited page
* writing that is free from plagiarism
* demonstrated awareness of how to write from the 3rd person point of view for a specific audience

1. Plan and revise independently, employing all stages of the writing process as necessary and appropriate.
2. Complete a multi-paragraph in-class essay with a thesis and support.

**Course Objectives—In the process of completing this course, students will:**

1. Complete a multi-paragraph in-class essay with a thesis and support.
2. Learn about writing papers which include introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions.
3. Learn to write with some sophistication.
4. Practice writing thesis statements.
5. Practice writing topic sentences.
6. Learn about using quotations and in-text citations that support the topic sentences and the thesis.
7. Practice developing supporting material that exhibits critical thinking.
8. Develop an understanding of what a complete sentence is and practice using a variety of sentence types (simple, compound, complex, and compound/complex sentence).
9. Learn about common sentence errors, such as fragments, comma splices, sentence fuses.
10. Develop their usage of descriptive vocabulary that exhibits growth and sophisticated word choice.
11. Learn how to follow MLA guidelines when formatting papers and using quotations and a works cited page.
12. Learn about avoiding plagiarism.
13. Write papers in which they will use 3rd person point of view and practice addressing a specific audience.
14. Practice using all stages of the writing process as necessary and appropriate practice writing in-class essays.

**Course Content:**

1. Using the writing process:
2. prewriting strategies
3. outlining
4. drafting
5. revising
6. editing
7. Writing a well-developed essay:
8. introduction
9. thesis statements
10. body paragraphs
11. topic sentences
12. supporting details
13. transitions
14. concluding paragraphs
15. coherent development
16. focus
17. organization
18. unification
19. Thinking critically:
20. analyze ideas
21. use supporting details to validate a thesis
22. Writing sentences:
23. sentence variety
24. simple sentences
25. compound sentences
26. complex sentences
27. compound complex sentences
28. crafting sentences
29. using parallelism
30. eliminating wordiness
31. avoiding and correcting sentence errors
32. fragments
33. run-ons (comma splices and sentence fuses)
34. punctuation
35. the comma
36. the semicolon
37. the colon
38. the dash
39. Understanding purpose, audience, voice:
40. awareness of audience
41. academic language use
42. third person point of view
43. Using MLA guidelines:
44. avoid plagiarism
45. set-up an essay
46. cite direct quotations
47. write a works cited page

**Semester Grading:**

First essay (in-class):

a. 100 points.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

Second and third essays (out-of-class):

a. 100 points each.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

Fourth essay (in-class):

a. 150 points.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

One final grammar exam:

a. 50 points.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

Semester Grading Scale: A=500-450; B=449-400; C=399-350; D=349-300; F=299-00

**Extra Credit:**

Extra credit will be offered during the semester. When you turn it in, I will put it in my extra credit folder. At the end of the semester, I will calculate final grades; if you have earned a “C” or higher because of how you have done on the required course work, I will then add your extra credit to your final grade. Thus, the extra credit will not raise a final semester grade of an “F” or a “D.” It can, however, raise your final grade from a “C” to a “B” or from a “B” to an “A.”

**Revision Symbols:**

The symbols listed below indicate areas of writing that may need to be improved in your work. These symbols will be used by me to mark your composition:

th = thesis

sm = supportive material

tr = transition

ts = topic sentence

cn = context

dq = direct quotation

mla = citing direct quotations

ct = critical thinking

ct/1 = critical thinking, step 1

ct/2 = critical thinking, step 2

kw(s) = key word(s)

fs = final statement

f = fragment

cs = comma splice

sf = sentence fuse

fd = follow directions

bs = basic skills

? = confusing

= take out

= insert

= good writing

= writing needs to improve

syn = syntax--the words you choose to express a thought and the order you put those words in

to form a sentence.

ALSO, if any words are circled, you have a basic skill error, which may include, but is not limited to, problems with spelling, word choice, verb tense, subject verb agreement, pronoun agreement, the apostrophe, capitalization, and indicating the titles of works.

**English 125 Essay Rubric—These guidelines will be used to grade your essays:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Content** | **Organization** | **Conventions** |
| **A** | * Strong thesis statement * Strong topic sentences in all body paragraphs * Strong examples/details/reasons that are well-chosen, thoughtful, original and balanced which support the thesis * Overall essay is cohesive * Thoughtfully, thoroughly addresses the essay prompt * Meets or exceeds essay’s requirements | * Strong essay structure with strong introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion * Strong paragraph structure * Strong use of transitions within the paragraphs and between paragraphs * A strong sense of logic in the paragraph’s organization | * Sophisticated, varied sentence structure * Excellent control of sentence structure * Few if any surface errors (spelling, mechanics, punctuation) none of which interfere with understanding * Accurate, concise word choice * MLA formatting followed with very few if any errors * Citations used for all words and ideas not writer’s own * Textual evidence has strong signal phrases and correct parenthetical citations |
| **B** | * Clear thesis statement * Clear topic sentences in all body paragraphs * Clear examples/details/reasons that are mostly well-chosen, original, and balanced which support the thesis * There is basic essay unity * Addresses the essay prompt * Meets most of the essay’s requirements | * Good essay structure, with a clear introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion * Good paragraph structure * Good use of transitions within the paragraphs and between paragraphs * Good sense of logic in organization | * Sentence structure is varied at times * Good control of sentence structure * Minor surface errors that do not interfere with understanding * Few diction and word choice problems * MLA formatting followed with few errors * Citations used for all words and ideas not writer’s own with slight errors * Textual evidence has signal phrases connected to quotations and correct parenthetical citations with slight errors |
| **C** | * An identifiable but weak thesis statement * Adequate topic sentences * Adequate supporting examples/reasons /details which are present, although limited, too general, or unbalanced * Some suggestion of unified content * Adequately addresses the essay prompt * Meets many of the essay’s requirements | * Adequate introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion * Adequate paragraph structure * Some use of transitions within the paragraphs and between paragraphs * A basic sense of organization, perhaps with some discrepancies in logic | * Attempts made at times to vary sentence structure * Adequate control of sentence structure, although there may be errors * Some surface errors that do not interfere with understanding * Some word choice errors that do not hinder understanding * MLA formatting followed adequately * Citations mostly used for all words and ideas not writer’s own. Writer may be a little confused about rules. * Most of the textual evidence have signal phrases connected to quotations and parenthetical citations with errors |
| **D** | * Missing or weak thesis statement * Missing or unclear topic sentences * Supporting examples/details/reasons present, but are weak, poorly developed, disconnected from the thesis, repetitive, or very unbalanced * The content is not unified * Attempts to address the essay prompt, but only answers part of the question or appears to misunderstand the prompt * Does not meet most of the essay’s requirements | * Weak organization (perhaps missing an introduction or conclusion paragraph) * Weakly organized paragraph structure * Few or improperly used transitions * Little sense of organization, with major discrepancies in logic | * Simplistic sentence structure * Limited control over sentence structure * Significant surface errors that may interfere with understanding * Significant word choice errors that may hinder meaning * MLA formatting followed inadequately * Errors in following citation rules * Most of the textual evidence used are missing signal phrases |
| **F** | * Essay is incomplete or doesn’t address the prompt | * No sense of organization * Missing an introduction, body paragraphs, or conclusion * No use of transitions | * Lack of control over sentence structure * Major problems with surface errors that obscure meaning * Numerous and significant word choice errors that obscure meaning * No MLA formatting * Lack of citations or major mistakes * No signal phrases used before or after quotations (or no textual evidence provided) |

**Absences, Being Tardy, Being Dropped from the Course, Adding the Course:**

* **Being dropped from the course:** If you miss the second day of class, you will be automatically dropped from the course. You will be dropped from the course if you are absent five times or more before the official drop deadline (3/9/2012). If you are late, you’ll be considered absent; you are tardy if you come to class after I’ve taken roll.
* **Adding:** To add the class, you must attend every class meeting until you have been officially added to the roster. You must add the class by the end of the second week, or you will not be added.

**Academic Behavior:**

According to the Reedley College *Student Conduct Standards and Procedures*, if a student “Interferes with or disrupts faculty and administrators who are fulfilling their professional responsibilities that student is subject to discipline” (4). Such behavior includes anything that I find disruptive. Cell phones ringing/vibrating during class, texting, being late to class, walking in and out of the classroom during lecture, and leaving class early are considered disruptive. Not bringing your texts to class, not participating constructively, and talking while I’m presenting lecture are also considered disruptive. Students who are disruptive will be suspended by me for 1-2 class meetings. If that student continues to be disruptive, he/she will be referred to the dean of students who reserves the right to suspend the student for 10 additional class meetings. Consider yourselves warned.

**Completing Assignments and Missing Deadlines:**

All assignments must be completed on the given due dates. If you miss a deadline, you will receive a zero on the assignment. If you are unable to complete an assignment due to an emergency, I may consider a make-up assignment if you are able to present appropriate documentation. Emergencies may or may not include sickness, injury, bereavement of an immediate family member, or a court appearance. Missing class is never an excuse for missing an assignment.

**Plagiarism:**

If you are caught plagiarizing any work, you may receive an automatic “F” on the assignment, in the class, or dropped from the course, with the appropriate grade, and referred to campus administration.

**Course Outline (subject to change):**

## January

## Monday the 9th: how to write complete sentences and avoid fragments. Homework: read the essays “How I Learned to Read and Write” and “The Fight with Covey” by Frederick Douglass. You will find both essays in this syllabus.

## Wednesday the 11th: How to join independent clauses and avoid comma splices and sentence fuses.

* Monday the 16th: no class (MLK).
* Wednesday the 18th: how to write a variety of sentences.
* Monday the 23rd: how to use the comma.
* Wednesday the 25th: how to write an essay.
* Monday the 30th: in-class essay **#**1. Homework, read all poetry in *The Packinghouse Review.*

February

* Wednesday the 1st: how to write essay 2 (on poetry). 1W1.
* Monday the 6th: how to write essay 2 (on poetry).
* Wednesday 8th: how to write essay 2 (on poetry).
* Monday the 13th: how to write essay 2 (on poetry).
* Wednesday the 15th: how to write essay 2 (on poetry).
* Monday the 20th: no class (Washington)
* Wednesday the 22nd: how to write essay 2 (on poetry).
* Monday the 27th: how to write essay 2 (on poetry).
* Wednesday 29th: how to write essay 2 (on poetry). Essay 2 assigned. ALSO—Homework: read “Dragon Spine Girl” by Raina J. León and “The Poet’s Eulogy by Maceo Montoya.”

March

* Monday the 5th: essay 2 due. How to write essay 3 (on nonfiction). 1W1.
* Wednesday the 7th: how to write essay 3 (on nonfiction).
* Monday the 12th: how to write essay 3 (on nonfiction).
* Wednesday the 14th: how to write essay 3 (on nonfiction).
* Monday the 19th: how to write essay 3 (on nonfiction).
* Wednesday the 21st: how to write essay 3 (on nonfiction).
* Monday the 26th: how to write essay 3 (on nonfiction). Essay 3 assigned (out-of-class).
* Wednesday the 28th: essay 3 due. Homework: read all fiction in *The Packinghouse Review.*

April

* Monday the 2nd: no class (spring recess)
* Wednesday the 4th: no class (spring recess)
* Monday the 9th: how to write essay 4 (on fiction).
* Wednesday the 11th: how to write essay 4 (on fiction). 1W1.
* Monday the 16th: how to write essay 4 (on fiction).
* Wednesday the 18th: how to write essay 4 (on fiction).
* Monday the 23rd: how to write essay 4 (on fiction).
* Wednesday the 25th: how to write essay 4 (on fiction).
* Monday the 30th: essay 4 first draft (in-class).

May

* Wednesday the 2nd: essay 4 final revision (in-class).
* Monday the 7th: study for final.
* Wednesday the 9th: study for final.
* Monday the 14th: final grammar exam, regular time and place.

**Lecture NotesHow to Write Complete Sentences**

**I. Understanding Complete Sentences**

A. A complete sentence is a group of words that contains a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. The grammatical term for a complete sentence is “independent clause.”

1. A subject is what the sentence is about.

a. example: Jackson Pollock defined modern American painting. 2. A verb is the action of the sentence.

a. example: Pollock painted in a style inspired by the American Indians.

3. The subject and verb must form a complete thought. To help yourself understand the concept of a complete and logical thought, read the word groups below. Which one(s) contains a complete thought?

a. After the dog ate his food.

b. Because the dog ate his food too fast.

c. Unless the dog is able eat his food slowly.

d. After the dog ate his food, he went outside and played in the leaves.

4. Example “D” is a complete thought. It contains a subject, which is “he”; it contains a verb, which is “went”; and it contains a complete thought: what happened?—the dog went outside and played in the leaves. To recognize whether or not a group of words contains a subject, a verb, and especially a complete thought, you must be a good reader, which is one reason reading is so very important to a young writer.

# II. Avoiding Fragments

A. If a group of words does not contain a subject, a verb, or a complete thought, it is an incomplete sentence. An incomplete sentence is also known as a “fragment.”

B. Occasionally, incomplete sentences begin with one of the following types of words: *after, although, because, before, if, unless, until,* and *when*. These words are called dependent words because the sentence

that they begin will require extra information to be complete. You can begin a sentence with any word that you want as long as you have a subject, a verb, and a complete thought.

C. As writers, you have three ways to correct a fragment:

1. Combine word groups:

a. During the winter months. I mulch the garden with compost.

i. During the winter months, I mulch the garden with compost.

2. Remove dependent words:

a. When I mulch the garden.

i. I mulch the garden.

3. Revise the fragment:

a. When I mulch the garden.

i. When I mulch the garden, my tomato plants produce more fruit

during the summer.

D. Other than the desire to learn and a command of basic writing skills, the most important quality

that a young writer must possess is the ability to write a good sentence. Once you can write one

good sentence, you can write a second and a third until you have a paragraph, which turns into an

essay, a short story, or even a novel. Writing good sentences will give the young writer the ability

to fly “beyond the sill of the world.”

**How to Avoid Comma Splices and Sentence Fuses**

**I. Comma Splices**

A. Definition: if two independent clauses are joined with a comma that is not followed by a coordinating conjunction, the sentence is called a “comma splice.” You may place a comma between independent clauses as long as the comma is followed by a coordinating conjunction. There are seven coordinating

conjunctions in the English Language: “and,” “or,” “nor,” “but,” for,” “so,” and “yet.”

**II. Sentence Fuses**

A. Definition: if two independent clauses are joined with neither punctuation nor a coordinating conjunction, the sentence is called a “sentence fuse.”

**III. Examples of Comma Splices and Sentence Fuses**

A. Identify which are comma splices and which are sentence fuses. Explain why each example

represents a particular type of sentence error.

1. Today I cut the lawn, (CS) it was very green.

2. Today I cut the lawn, and it was very green, my father was pleased.

3. I’m going to help my father build a fence (SF) the old one is infested with termites.

4. I’m going to help my father build a fence, for the old one is infested with termites (SF) the posts are

rotten.

**IV. How to Join Together Independent Clauses Correctly and Thus Avoid Comma Splices and Sentence Fuses**

A. Join together independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction. There are seven coordinating conjunctions in the English Language: “and,” “or,” “nor,” “but,” for,” “so,” and “yet.”

1. Last night, I sprayed the grape vines with soap, and my wife pruned the fig trees.

B. Join together independent clauses with a semicolon if the independent clauses are closely related.

1. My wife and I love working in the yard every evening; the work releases day’s stress.

C. Join together independent clauses with a colon if the second independent clause summarizes or explains the first independent clause.

1. During the summer months, the dogs dig holes under the Sequoias and fall asleep: the cold dirt soothes their panting heart throughout the afternoon.

D. Join together independent clauses with a dash to add emphasis to the second independent clause.

1. The blackberry vines are bursting with blossoms—the fruit will be sweet and plentiful.

E. Join together independent clauses with a period.

1. The plum trees need to be pruned. The nectarine trees are already budding.

**V. Test**

A. How many independent clauses do you see in the sentence below? Are they joined together correctly?

1. Today I cut the lawn, and it was very green, so my father was pleased.

**How to Use the Comma**

**I. The Rules**

A. Use the comma after a subordinate phrase or clause that is followed by an (IC). A subordinate clause contains a subject and a verb. A subordinate phrase contains one or neither. Subordinate word groups tell who, where, why, how, or under what conditions the main part of the sentence took place. Subordinate words groups *can’t* stand alone as an (IC).

1. After I got home from school, I took a very long nap.

2. After school, I took a very long nap.

B. Use the comma with a (CC) to join (ICs).

1. I drove home after school, and I took a nap.

2. After school, I drove home and took a nap, for I was exhausted.

C. Use the comma to join items in a series. A series includes at least three items. Place the comma before each item to prevent confusion.

1. After school, I drove home, took a nap, and ate dinner.

D. Use commas to set off parenthetical information. Parenthetical information appears in the middle of a sentence. The information is parenthetical if it can be removed without changing the meaning the sentence.

1. I took a nap, because I was exhausted, after school.

E. Use the comma to set off nonessential information that begins with the word “which,” “such as,” or “who.”

1. My truck is white, which is a very easy color to maintain.

F. Use commas to set off nouns of direct address. A noun of direct address is usually some one or some thing that is being spoken to.

1. Andy, what did you do after school, for the house was a mess?

G. Use the comma to separate sharply contrasting elements. Sharply contrasting elements are often defined by words such as “not” and “unlike.”

1. I want to go home and study, not sleep.

H. Use commas after or around transitional phrases including, but not limited to, “unfortunately,” “thus,” “still,” “in addition,” “however,” and “instead.”

1. I want to go home and take a nap; instead, I’m going to study.

2. I went to school and still worked-out.

I. Use a comma after a fragment introducing a short direct quotation.

1. Luis Rodriguez said, “reading saved my life.”

**How to Write a Variety of Sentences**

**Introduction**: To know how to write a variety sentences, you must understand three basic syntactical units: the subordinate phrase, the subordinate clause, and the independent clause. Once you understand these sentence parts, you can learn how to write the different types of sentences: simple, complex, compound, and complex compound. *By understanding how to write these types of sentences, you will become a better writer, for the sentence is the most important organizational unit that a writer uses. In other words, you will be able to articulate sophisticated ideas clearly so that your reader will understand your thoughts.*

I. There are three syntactical units: the subordinate phrase, the subordinate clause, and the independent clause.

A. **The subordinate phrase** is a group of words that cannot stand alone as a sentence; thus, it is a fragment. Subordinate phrases do not contain both a subject and verb. Subordinate phrases tell who, where, how, why, when, or under what conditions the main part of the sentence took place. The main part of the sentence is the part of the sentence that can stand alone as a complete sentence. Subordinate phrases can be at the beginning of a sentence or at the end of a sentence.

1. While at the library, I was able to study for my final exam.

2. I washed my car after work.

B. **The subordinate clause** is also a group of words that cannot stand alone as a sentence; thus, it is a fragment. Subordinate clauses do contain both a subject and verb. Subordinate clauses also tell who, where, how, why, when, or under what conditions the main part of the sentence took place. Remember, the main part of the sentence is the part of the sentence that can stand alone as a complete sentence. Like subordinate phrases, subordinate clauses can be at the beginning of a sentence or at the end of a sentence.

1. Because I woke up early, I enjoyed a healthy breakfast before my round of golf.

2. This winter, I’m going to enjoy freshly squeezed orange juice unless the frost ruins the fruit trees in my backyard.

C. **The independent clause** is a group of words that contains a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. It can stand alone as a complete sentence.

1. I love a good cup of coffee.

2. The Dallas Cowboys are the greatest football team ever.

II. There are four types of sentences: simple, complex, compound, and complex compound. These four types of sentences are written by combing together the different types of syntactical units.

A. **The simple sentence** contains one independent clause and no subordinate word groups.

1. The Los Angeles Dodgers are the greatest baseball team ever.

2. I drive a 1966 Chevy pickup truck.

B. **The complex sentence** contains at least one subordinate phrase or subordinate clause plus exactly one independent clause.

1*. I worked at Red Carpet Carwash* while in college.

2. After I picked tomatoes and jalapenos in the garden, *I made fresh salsa.*

C. **The compound sentence** contains at least two independent clauses and no subordinate word groups.

1. *One of my favorite poetry books is The Sky by Christopher Buckley*, and *one of my favorite novels is Hunger by Knut Hamsun*.

2. *I was starving at work*, but *my wallet was empty.*

D. **The complex compound sentence** contains at least one subordinate phrase or subordinate clause plus at least two independent clauses.

1. After I worked out, *I took a shower*, and *then, we ate dinner.*

2. While my brother and I were playing golf, *it started raining*, but *we didn’t care and finished our round.*

**Conclusion:** By mastering these types of sentences, a person can control the rhythm of his writing. If a person writes a poem that contains mostly one or two sentence types, the rhythm becomes monotonous. A conscientious writer, however, uses all of sentence structures to prevent monotony and, most importantly, to organize and present his ideas as clearly as possible. This scrupulous attention to the writing process shows respect for the reader.

**How to Write a Simple Summary—for Essay 1**

1. Select a focal point for your essay. Focus your essay on a theme that you believe best reflects the reading material. A theme is a main idea that runs throughout the reading, such as family.
2. Write a thesis. Make your thesis one well-written sentence. Make your thesis the first sentence of your essay.
3. To write your thesis, follow these simple steps:
   * Read the essay topic carefully.
   * Identify key words in the essay topic.
   * Identify what the topic specifically requires.
   * Use those key words to address the topic and write your thesis.
   * Do not simply rewrite the topic.
   * Here is a sample thesis: The most important theme in *Zorba the Greek* by Nikos Kazantzakis is family.
4. After you have written your thesis, you are ready to write the rest of the introduction. Select three passages from the reading that support your thesis. Write three sentences that describe your supportive material. In other words, write one sentence for each of these passages, which you will carefully develop in the body of the essay.
5. Now you are ready to write the body of the essay. The body will contain three paragraphs. Each paragraph will focus on *one* of the passages that you described in the introduction. Each of these three paragraphs must follow these simple steps:
   * Begin the paragraph with a topic sentence that contains your key words. If you were focusing on the theme of family, your topic sentence would include the words “theme” and “family,” and it would mention which passage the paragraph is going to describe to support the thesis. Here is a sample topic sentence: One example of the theme, which is family, is when Zorba dances on the beach with his best friend.
   * CAREFULLY describe ONE passage from the reading to support your thesis. First summarize the paragraph (at least 4 sentences), then write a clearly defined transitional sentence, then analyze one specific part of the passage (at least 5 sentences). When you write these paragraphs, make sure you describe the passage with the book closed. Describe it from memory so that you do not copy the author’s words. You must use your own diction and syntax or you are guilty of plagiarism. Remember, keep the book closed. Do not use direct quotations—use only your words.
6. After you have written the introduction and the three supporting paragraphs, you are ready to write the conclusion. To write the conclusion, follow these steps:
   * Restate the thesis word for word. Make the thesis the first sentence in your conclusion.
   * Write three sentences that review your supportive material. DO NOT copy the sentences from the introduction; show me a variety of diction and syntax.
   * Write a final statement. The final statement tells the reader why the subject of your essay is important. To write a good final statement, you have to sit and think.
7. Show me good basic writing skills, good sentences, good reading comprehension, and the ability to follow directions.
8. Make sure you avoid rookie errors, such as misspelling the author’s name, referring to the author by his/her first name, using first or second person (this means stay in third person at all times), using clichés, making formatting errors, not knowing when the punctuation marks belong inside quotation marks verses outside quotation marks, not following directions.

# How to Write a Successful Thesis Sentence—for essays 2-4

**I. The Steps:**

1. Read the essay topic carefully.
2. Identify **key words** in the essay topic.
3. Identify what the topic specifically requires.
4. Use those key words to address what the essay topic specifically requires and write your **thesis** sentence.
5. Make your thesis sentence the first sentence in your introduction.
6. Do not simply rewrite the topic.

How to Write Paragraphs in an Essay

**I. How to Write an Introductory Paragraph**

1. Make your thesis the first sentence of your introduction. Your thesis must be expressed in *one* well-written sentence.
2. Carefully list your **supportive material** in a series of well-written sentences. Write one sentence for each paragraph in the body of the essay. Each of these sentences must focus precisely on the part of the direct quotation that you are going to examine in the body of the essay. That part of the quotation must be in quotation marks and should be in the form of a word or a phrase. In other words, words, be very focused.

**II. How to Write a Paragraph in the Body of the Essay**

1. Write a **topic sentence** to establish the paragraph’s focal point. Use all your key words in the topic sentence. Make sure your topic is a clear reflection of the supportive material listed in your introduction by addressing the specific part of the direct quotation that you are going to examine in the critical thinking. Put that specific part of the direct quotation in quotation marks.
2. Establish the **context** of your supportive material. Your context must include at least four well-written sentences. The context describes what was taking place in the original text before the direct quotation. Use your own diction and syntax!
3. Support your topic sentence with a **direct quotation**.
4. Explain the significance of your direct quotation with **CRITICAL THINKING**. Your critical thinking must contain at least five well-written sentences. Do not begin a paragraph with a direct quotation. Do not end a paragraph with a direct quotation. To write your critical thinking, follow these three steps:
   1. Begin the critical thinking with a sentence that reinforces the key words—use the actual key words. (For the rest of the critical thinking, feel free to use synonyms).
   2. Carefully analyze the most important part of the direct quotation by explaining how it supports your thesis. Place that important part in quotation marks.
   3. IF you need to push your critical thinking in order to support your thesis, repeat step two.

## **III. How to Write a Concluding Paragraph**

1. Restate your thesis. Copy and paste it. Make it the first sentence in your introduction.
2. Restate your supportive material. Write one sentence per paragraph in the body of the essay. Do not copy and paste; rather, show a variety of sentence structure.
3. Make a **final statement**. Use the literary devices to craft the final statement. The final statement is pure critical thinking. It must reach beyond the thesis and explain why your essay is important. Consider using concrete images from the appropriate reading to allegorically represent your point.

**MLA Format Checklist for Essay 4**

**Thanks to Reedley College English Instructor Carey Karle for This List**

All essays must be formatted according to Modern Language Association guidelines. Any paper that is not correctly formatted as noted may receive no higher than 79% on their essay.

* Font set for TIMES NEW ROMAN 12
* Line spacing set for DOUBLE
  + Entire essay is DOUBLE line spaced only—no more and no less ANYWHERE
  + In the PARAGRAPH menu, set the SPACING **BEFORE** and **AFTER** for ZERO
* Margins are set for one inch (1”) top and bottom, left and right.
* Page numbers have been INSERTED (not typed) into the upper right hand corner beginning with page one.
* Student’s last name appears before the page number—AND there is a space between the name and page number
* On page one ONLY, in the top left hand corner of the page, double line spaced, the following appears
  + Student’s Name
  + Instructor Dominguez
  + Course
  + Due Date for Essay
* Next, the essay has an appropriate title, which is centered—USING the computer’s function to center (not tabbed or spaced into the center)
* The first line of each paragraph is indented using the tab function AND the tab is set for 0.5” (one half inch)
* The work(s) cited page/annotated bibliography is the last page of the essay—INSERT NEW PAGE
  + Works Cited utilizes a hanging indent as needed
  + Works Cited entries are alphabetized by the author’s last name
  + Works Cited entries are formatted correctly

**How to Use MLA Author Named in a Signal Phrase to Cite Prose**

## **I. Quotations, Signal Phrases, and Page Numbers**

## Limit your quotation to four lines.

## Introduce a quotation using a signal phrase. There are a variety of possible signal phrases. Following are several key words: stated, said, says, believed, expressed. The signal phrase should also contain either the name of the author or the name of the speaker.

## Follow the quotation with the appropriate page number inside a set of parentheses. Finish the citation with a period.

## Here is an example of a direct quotation cited according to the MLA guidelines:

Esquivel writes about the theme of love by carefully describing a dinner that took place on the ranch. To prepare the dinner, Tita plucked rose petals off their stems to make a sauce. When she plucked them, she scratched herself on the thorns. Drops of blood dripped into the sauce as she thought about Pedro—the man she loved. After she made the sauce, she prepared the quail. Tita was sweating while cooking the quail; as she prepared the quail, she was still thinking about Pedro. When she presented the dinner to her guests, Tita’s blood and sweat magically affected the food. **Esquivel said,** “**I**t was as if a strange alchemical process had dissolved her entire being in the rose petal sauce, in the tender flesh of the quails, in the wine, in every one of the meals **aromas” (52).** **THEN THE CRITICAL THINKING BEGINS HERE FOLLOWED BY THE TRANSITION.**

E. There are several important MLA rules to learn from the example:

1. The quotation is introduced with a comma because the signal phrase is not a complete sentence and because there is an end stop before the quotation.
2. The first letter of the quotation should be capitalized according to the way it appears in the text.
3. Do not begin a quotation with an ellipsis mark; rather, when appropriate, begin a quotation with a lower case letter. You may, however, end a quotation with an ellipsis mark if you end the quotation in the middle of a sentence.
4. The page number is placed outside the quotation marks. Include only the page number inside the parenthesis. Close the sentence with a period outside the parentheses. Please note: there is no punctuation included inside the last set of quotation marks, such as a period or a comma. If the quotation includes an exclamation mark or a question mark, then include either of those forms of punctuation; otherwise, simply use a period after the page number, outside the parentheses.

F. Other MLA formatting issues may come up in class. If so, we will address them during lecture. If you have any questions about citing direct quotations, be sure to ask. These rules (A-E), however, will serve as the backbone.

# How to Use MLA Author Named in a Signal Phrase to Cite Poetry

## **I. Lesson One**

## Limit your direct quotation to three lines or fewer of actual poetry, not how it looks on your screen

## but how it looks in the original text.

## Introduce a quotation using a signal phrase. There are a variety of possible signal phrases. Following are several key words: stated, said, says, believed, expressed. The signal phrase should also contain either the name of the author or the name of the speaker.

## Use the “/” mark to indicate line breaks.

## Follow the quotation with the appropriate page number inside a set of parentheses. Finish the citation with a period.

## Here is an example of a direct quotation cited according to the MLA guidelines:

“Pig” uses the concrete images of a Mack truck and sausage to create a theme of toil. As the poem opens, Abraham Tovar is pulling into the parking lot of a sausage factory. He sees the workers swatting at flies, and he sees how the workers wear their work in the form of blood and fat clinging to their skin. Above the workers is the sun. The heat melts the frozen meat products, making the men even more aware of their surroundings as they sink their hands into the cartons of meat to make sausage. The poet shows the toil of the day when he says, “Mack trucks came in with unprocessed pork/ and took out chorizo, linguica, hot links, and sausage/” (11). **And continue on here with your critical thinking…**

1. There are several important MLA rules to learn from the example:
2. The quotation is introduced with a comma because the signal phrase is not a complete sentence and because there is an end stop before the quotation.
3. The first letter of the quotation should be capitalized according to the way it appears in the text.
4. Do not begin a quotation with an ellipsis mark; rather, when appropriate, begin a quotation with a lower case letter. You may, however, end a quotation with an ellipsis mark if you end the quotation in the middle of a sentence.
5. The page number is placed outside the quotation marks. Include only the page number inside the parenthesis. Close the sentence with a period outside the parentheses. Please note: there is no punctuation included inside the last set of quotation marks, such as a period or a comma. If the quotation includes an exclamation mark or a question mark, then include either of those forms of punctuation; otherwise, simply use a period after the page number, outside the parentheses.

**All other MLA rules,**

**which were reviewed on the previous PAGE, apply**.

**How to Create a Works Cited Page**

**I. Formatting**

* Begin your works cited page on a separate page at the end of your research paper.
* It should have the same one-inch margins and last name, page number header as the rest of your paper.
* Label the page Works Cited (do not italicize the words works cited or put them in quotation marks) and center the words Works Cited at the top of the page.
* Double space all citations, but do not skip spaces between entries.
* Indent the second and subsequent lines of citations five spaces so that you create a hanging indent.
* Entries are listed alphabetically by the author’s name (or, when appropriate, editor names). Author names are written last name first; middle names or middle initials follow the first name.

**II. How to Cite Sources**

* Basic Format for a Book: first, give author’s name. A single author's name appears in last name, first name format. The basic form for a book citation is:

Last name, First name. Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.

Medium of Publication.

* An Article in a scholarly journal: author(s). "Title of Article." *Title of Journal* Volume. Issue (Year): pages. Medium of publication:

Bagchi, Alaknanda. "Conflicting Nationalisms: The Voice of the Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's

Bashai Tudu." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* V15.N1 (1996): 41-50. Print.

Works Cited

The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. 26 Aug. 2005. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue University. 23 April 2006. Web.

Sample Works Cited

Barile, Stephen. “Trip to Endora.” *The Packinghouse Review* V2. N2 (2010): 66. Print.

Bolling, Bonnie. “Late Rain Domestic.” *The Packinghouse Review* V2. N2 (2010): 68. Print.

Campos, David. “The Center of a Perfect Mango.” *The Packinghouse Review* V2. N2 (2010): 76. Print.

**Practice Paragraphs**

**Fragments**

**Attending UCLA**

Next year, I want to attend UCLA. Because it will help prepare me for a life’s work in medicine. Since my childhood. I have always wanted to be a doctor. If I major in biology. I will learn a great deal about the human body and how it works. I took several science classes at Long Beach City College. For example, I took physics, chemistry, and environmental science. Since I did exceptionally well in these courses. I am certain that I will continue to do well at UCLA because I am confident, put school first, and work hard. Because I want to spend my life as a doctor. I have volunteered my time at a hospital. At the hospital, which was in an economically disadvantaged area. I learned that a doctor must above all else be compassionate and listen to his patients. I want to learn how to serve my patients well. While attending the UCLA School of Medicine.

**First Job at Bulldog Stadium**

When I was thirteen years old. I started my first job selling snacks in the stands at Bulldog Stadium. The reason I worked at Bulldog Stadium was because I wanted to see the games for free. I quickly learned, however, that if I was going to make any money. I couldn’t stand around and do nothing. At first, I sold only hotdogs. I’d run up and down the stands. Until my legs burned. Of course, stuffing cash into my pockets kept my legs moving. Because I wanted to make more money. I started selling hotdogs and Pepsis simultaneously. I carried a box full of hotdogs. On top of that a tray full of Pepsis. If someone yelled, “Hotdog,” I’d ask them if they wanted a soda too, and they always did. I had a friend with whom I worked, and he was lazy. Every time I saw him. He was leaning against the rail and eating the food that he was trying to sell. After the games, we’d walk home together. He liked complaining about not making very much money. Once, while he was whining. I told him he should sell hotdogs instead of eating them. He looked at me. With a blank face and said, “Are you calling me fat?” That night, I sat on my porch step before going inside the house. I was thirteen years old, and I had sixty dollars. In the palm of my hand.My legs burned, and I had blisters on my toes, but I didn’t care. As I put my money in my wallet.

**Fragments, Comma Splices, and Sentence Fuses**

**My Study**

My favorite room in the house is my study. Because it is where I sit at my desk to write. Over the past several months. I have worked to create an environment that encourages those passions. For example, one wall is lined with bookshelves that stretch from the floor to the ceiling, needless to say, they are stocked with books. I have poetry books, I have fiction books I also have reference books, such as the dictionary, the thesaurus, and books about rocks, bugs, and stars. Some of the shelves are not full I left them empty to display my wife’s ceramic pots. Some of them are made with coils, some are thrown, and others are sculpted, thus, the pots, the shelves, and the books create an environment that encourages literature and art. Which is just one reason I love my study. On another wall of my office, I have a twenty gallon fish tank. I love tropical fish, such as tiger barbs, catfish, mollies, and red-tailed sharks I like fish tanks because they are very soothing. In addition to the shelves, the books, the pots, and the aquarium, I have several photographs in my office. My favorite photograph is black and white, it is a snapshot of my grandfather. In this photograph. He is playing his trumpet at the Rainbow Ballroom. Behind him, the other musicians dressed in their best black suits with sweat dripping down their faces. At their fingertips are the congas, the tumbas, the quintos, the bass, the trombones, and the saxophones, and their eyes are alive, there is salsa in the air, and the people are dancing. This is how I like to think of my office, it is not a study, it is a night club where the happy ones are singing, laughing, and drinking. Because they know that the music will not stop.

**UC Irvine**

When I was attending the University of California at Irvine, my roommates and I were college poor. Sometimes, we lived off of the kindness of our neighbors, next door, lived four girls who knew how to cook. Because they felt sorry for us. They brought us beans, Spanish rice, and enchiladas that we devoured in minutes. After they became sick of our begging, we were on our own. At the grocery store, my roommates and I bought fruits and vegetables that were discounted because they were old, we also bought cheap cans of jalapenos that were dented. We didn’t drive trucks that were so low they scraped against speed bumps as the mufflers purred and the rims spun, we had cinder blocks, milk crates, and 2 x 4s that we used to build book shelves in the evening, as our stomachs settled in for the night, we’d sit in our apartment and drink beer so old that it had lost its fizz, one by one, each of us would take a book from the shelf, open it, and share what we had learned in class. My two roommates were engineers. Who dreamed of building bridges in Peru and Mexico, and I was a comparative literature major who wanted to become a published poet. We talked about timber, steel, and soil we talked about concrete imagery, alliteration, and the sublime, these were the things that were shaping our future. After we graduated with our degrees tucked in our back pockets. We went off in pursuit of our dreams now, when we get together, we sink into the couch and talk about work, but before long, we are lost in conversations about life in general. They are the same conversations that we had as twenty-one year old students. Who were inspired by ideas that cost less than a can of beer.

**Commas**

**The Citrus Trees**

# Last night because the season’s first frost was going to settle in the valley I went outside and took a close look at my young citrus trees. I have a lemon, an orange and a lime. The trees which I purchased at Home Depot, are only two to three feet high. The foliage was tipped with the soft and delicate shoots of new growth, and I knew that the freeze might kill the young leaves. In my shed I discovered three unused plastic tarps. The tarps which I bought to cover the tile floor while painting the kitchen had eyelets so that the plastic sheets could be secured to the ground. In the garage I dug through my tool box, and found the metal pins that I normally use for the tent. I grabbed the hammer and marched outside. By then the grass was already showing the night’s early frost. I started sneezing and my cheeks, and nose burned. I unrolled the tarps, draped them over the redwood stakes supporting the trees, pulled out the edges of the plastic, and pinned them down. The citrus trees stood under a tent and I hoped that in the morning the leaves would still be bright and green not black, withered, and curled.

**Readings**

**How I learned to Read and Write**

**by Frederick Douglass**

I lived in Master Hugh Auld’s family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her, that she did not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tenderhearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities.

Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practice her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the inch, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the ell.

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge.

I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, but I am a slave for life! Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being a slave for life began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled "The Columbian Orator." Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter, I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master.

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved.

The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity.

I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear any one speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could hear something about the abolitionists. It was some time before I found what the word meant. It was always used in such connections as to make it an interesting word to me. If a slave ran away and succeeded in getting clear, or if a slave killed his master, set fire to a barn, or did any thing very wrong in the mind of a slaveholder, it was spoken of as the fruit of abolition. Hearing the word in this connection very often, I set about learning what it meant. The dictionary afforded me little or no help. I found it was "the act of abolishing;" but then I did not know what was to be abolished. Here I was perplexed. I did not dare to ask any one about its meaning, for I was satisfied that it was something they wanted me to know very little about. After a patient waiting, I got one of our city papers, containing an account of the number of petitions from the north, praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and of the slave trade between the States. From this time I understood the words abolition and abolitionist, and always drew near when that word was spoken, expecting to hear something of importance to myself and fellow-slaves. The light broke in upon me by degrees.

I went one day down on the wharf of Mr. Waters; and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went, unasked, and helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked me if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, "Are ye a slave for life?" I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the north; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

The idea as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by being in Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard, and frequently seeing the ship carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use, write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus—"L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus—"S." A piece for the larboard side forward, would be marked thus—"L. F." When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked thus—"S. F." For larboard aft, it would be marked thus—"L. A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus—"S. A." I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately commenced copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named.

After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I don't believe you. Let me see you try it." I would then make the letters which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time, my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write. I then commenced and continued copying the Italics in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all without looking on the book.

By this time, my little Master Thomas had gone to school, and learned how to write, and had written over a number of copy-books. These had been brought home, and shown to some of our near neighbors, and then laid aside. My mistress used to go to class meeting at the Wilk Street meetinghouse every Monday afternoon, and leave me to take care of the house. When left thus, I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written. I continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas. Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write.

**The Fight with Covey**

**by Frederick Douglass**

I have already intimated that my condition was much worse, during the first six months of my stay at Mr. Covey's, than in the last six. The circumstances leading to the change in Mr. Covey's course toward me form an epoch in my humble history. You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man.

On one of the hottest days of the month of August, 1833, Bill Smith, William Hughes, a slave named Eli, and myself, were engaged in fanning wheat. Hughes was clearing the fanned wheat from before the fan. Eli was turning, Smith was feeding, and I was carrying wheat to the fan. The work was simple, requiring strength rather than intellect; yet, to one entirely unused to such work, it came very hard. About three o'clock of that day, I broke down; my strength failed me; I was seized with a violent aching of the head, attended with extreme dizziness; I trembled in every limb. Finding what was coming, I nerved myself up, feeling it would never do to stop work. I stood as long as I could stagger to the hopper with grain. When I could stand no longer, I fell, and felt as if held down by an immense weight. The fan of course stopped; every one had his own work to do; and no one could do the work of the other, and have his own go on at the same time.

Mr. Covey was at the house, about one hundred yards from the treading-yard where we were fanning. On hearing the fan stop, he left immediately, and came to the spot where we were. He hastily inquired what the matter was. Bill answered that I was sick, and there was no one to bring wheat to the fan. I had by this time crawled away under the side of the post and rail-fence by which the yard was enclosed, hoping to find relief by getting out of the sun. He then asked where I was. He was told by one of the hands. He came to the spot, and, after looking at me awhile, asked me what was the matter. I told him as well as I could, for I scarce had strength to speak. He then gave me a savage kick in the side, and told me to get up. I tried to do so, but fell back in the attempt. He gave me another kick, and again told me to rise. I again tried, and succeeded in gaining my feet; but, stooping to get the tub with which I was feeding the fan, I again staggered and fell. While down in this situation, Mr. Covey took up the hickory slat with which Hughes had been striking off the half-bushel measure, and with it gave me a heavy blow upon the head, making a large wound, and the blood ran freely; and with this again told me to get up. I made no effort to comply, having now made up my mind to let him do his worst. In a short time after receiving this blow, my head grew better. Mr. Covey had now left me to my fate.

At this moment I resolved, for the first time, to go to my master, enter a complaint, and ask his protection. In order to do this, I must that afternoon walk seven miles; and this, under the circumstances, was truly a severe undertaking. I was exceedingly feeble; made so as much by the kicks and blows which I received, as by the severe fit of sickness to which I had been subjected. I, however, watched my chance, while Covey was looking in an opposite direction, and started for St. Michael's. I succeeded in getting a considerable distance on my way to the woods, when Covey discovered me, and called after me to come back, threatening what he would do if I did not come. I disregarded both his calls and his threats, and made my way to the woods as fast as my feeble state would allow; and thinking I might be overhauled by him if I kept the road, I walked through the woods, keeping far enough from the road to avoid detection, and near enough to prevent losing my way. I had not gone far before my little strength again failed me. I could go no farther. I fell down, and lay for a considerable time. The blood was yet oozing from the wound on my head. For a time I thought I should bleed to death; and think now that I should have done so, but that the blood so matted my hair as to stop the wound.

After lying there about three quarters of an hour, I nerved myself up again, and started on my way, through bogs and briers, barefooted and bareheaded, tearing my feet sometimes at nearly every step; and after a journey of about seven miles, occupying some five hours to perform it, I arrived at master's store. I then presented an appearance enough to affect any but a heart of iron. From the crown of my head to my feet, I was covered with blood. My hair was all clotted with dust and blood; my shirt was stiff with blood. I suppose I looked like a man who had escaped a den of wild beasts, and barely escaped them. In this state I appeared before my master, humbly entreating him to interpose his authority for my protection. I told him all the circumstances as well as I could, and it seemed, as I spoke, at times to affect him. He would then walk the floor, and seek to justify Covey by saying he expected I deserved it. He asked me what I wanted. I told him, to let me get a new home; that as sure as I lived with Mr. Covey again, I should live with but to die with him; that Covey would surely kill me; he was in a fair way for it. Master Thomas ridiculed the idea that there was any danger of Mr. Covey's killing me, and said that he knew Mr. Covey; that he was a good man, and that he could not think of taking me from him; that, should he do so, he would lose the whole year's wages; that I belonged to Mr. Covey for one year, and that I must go back to him, come what might; and that I must not trouble him with any more stories, or that he would himself GET HOLD OF ME. After threatening me thus, he gave me a very large dose of salts, telling me that I might remain in St. Michael's that night, (it being quite late,) but that I must be off back to Mr. Covey's early in the morning; and that if I did not, he would get hold of me, which meant that he would whip me. I remained all night, and, according to his orders, I started off to Covey's in the morning, (Saturday morning,) wearied in body and broken in spirit. I got no supper that night, or breakfast that morning.

I reached Covey's about nine o'clock; and just as I was getting over the fence that divided Mrs. Kemp's fields from ours, out ran Covey with his cowskin, to give me another whipping. Before he could reach me, I succeeded in getting to the cornfield; and as the corn was very high, it afforded me the means of hiding. He seemed very angry, and searched for me a long time. My behavior was altogether unaccountable. He finally gave up the chase, thinking, I suppose, that I must come home for something to eat; he would give himself no further trouble in looking for me. I spent that day mostly in the woods, having the alternative before me,—to go home and be whipped to death, or stay in the woods and be starved to death.

That night, I fell in with Sandy Jenkins, a slave with whom I was somewhat acquainted. Sandy had a free wife who lived about four miles from Mr. Covey's; and it being Saturday, he was on his way to see her. I told him my circumstances, and he very kindly invited me to go home with him. I went home with him, and talked this whole matter over, and got his advice as to what course it was best for me to pursue. I found Sandy an old adviser. He told me, with great solemnity, I must go back to Covey; but that before I went, I must go with him into another part of the woods, where there was a certain root, which, if I would take some of it with me, carrying it always on my right side, would render it impossible for Mr. Covey, or any other white man, to whip me. He said he had carried it for years; and since he had done so, he had never received a blow, and never expected to while he carried it. I at first rejected the idea, that the simple carrying of a root in my pocket would have any such effect as he had said, and was not disposed to take it; but Sandy impressed the necessity with much earnestness, telling me it could do no harm, if it did no good. To please him, I at length took the root, and, according to his direction, carried it upon my right side.

This was Sunday morning. I immediately started for home; and upon entering the yard gate, out came Mr. Covey on his way to meeting. He spoke to me very kindly, bade me drive the pigs from a lot near by, and passed on towards the church. Now, this singular conduct of Mr. Covey really made me begin to think that there was something in the ROOT which Sandy had given me; and had it been on any other day than Sunday, I could have attributed the conduct to no other cause than the influence of that root; and as it was, I was half inclined to think the root to be something more than I at first had taken it to be.

All went well till Monday morning. On this morning, the virtue of the ROOT was fully tested. Long before daylight, I was called to go and rub, curry, and feed, the horses. I obeyed, and was glad to obey. But whilst thus engaged, whilst in the act of throwing down some blades from the loft, Mr. Covey entered the stable with a long rope; and just as I was half out of the loft, he caught hold of my legs, and was about tying me. As soon as I found what he was up to, I gave a sudden spring, and as I did so, he holding to my legs, I was brought sprawling on the stable floor. Mr. Covey seemed now to think he had me, and could do what he pleased; but at this moment—from whence came the spirit I don't know—I resolved to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the throat; and as I did so, I rose. He held on to me, and I to him. My resistance was so entirely unexpected that Covey seemed taken all aback. He trembled like a leaf. This gave me assurance, and I held him uneasy, causing the blood to run where I touched him with the ends of my fingers. Mr. Covey soon called out to Hughes for help. Hughes came, and, while Covey held me, attempted to tie my right hand. While he was in the act of doing so, I watched my chance, and gave him a heavy kick close under the ribs. This kick fairly sickened Hughes, so that he left me in the hands of Mr. Covey. This kick had the effect of not only weakening Hughes, but Covey also. When he saw Hughes bending over with pain, his courage quailed. He asked me if I meant to persist in my resistance. I told him I did, come what might; that he had used me like a brute for six months, and that I was determined to be used so no longer. With that, he strove to drag me to a stick that was lying just out of the stable door. He meant to knock me down. But just as he was leaning over to get the stick, I seized him with both hands by his collar, and brought him by a sudden snatch to the ground. By this time, Bill came. Covey called upon him for assistance. Bill wanted to know what he could do. Covey said, "Take hold of him, take hold of him!" Bill said his master hired him out to work, and not to help to whip me; so he left Covey and myself to fight our own battle out. We were at it for nearly two hours. Covey at length let me go, puffing and blowing at a great rate, saying that if I had not resisted, he would not have whipped me half so much. The truth was, that he had not whipped me at all. I considered him as getting entirely the worst end of the bargain; for he had drawn no blood from me, but I had from him.

The whole six months afterwards, that I spent with Mr. Covey, he never laid the weight of his finger upon me in anger. He would occasionally say, he didn't want to get hold of me again. "No," thought I, "you need not; for you will come off worse than you did before."

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free. The gratification afforded by the triumph was a full compensation for whatever else might follow, even death itself. He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced, who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery. I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.

From this time I was never again what might be called fairly whipped, though I remained a slave four years afterwards. I had several fights, but was never whipped.

It was for a long time a matter of surprise to me why Mr. Covey did not immediately have me taken by the constable to the whipping-post, and there regularly whipped for the crime of raising my hand against a white man in defense of myself. And the only explanation I can now think of does not entirely satisfy me; but such as it is, I will give it. Mr. Covey enjoyed the most unbounded reputation for being a first-rate overseer and negro-breaker. It was of considerable importance to him. That reputation was at stake; and had he sent me—a boy about sixteen years old—to the public whipping-post, his reputation would have been lost; so, to save his reputation, he suffered me to go unpunished.

**How to Format an in-class Essay According to the MLA Guidelines**

**(an example will discussed in class and added to your syllabus)**