

Essay Structure

A good essay is an argument – something that you are going to set about to prove. Your job is to convince your reader that your position is correct. In order to prove that, a good essay needs a good plan. Having a clear outline will make the writing of the essay much easier, and will end up with a stronger argument (and a better mark!) The first step is to brainstorm and come up with ideas for a topic, and to start formulating a position to explain/prove.

Think of each paragraph as a separate topic/unit, but they must support/prove the thesis/topic. Each paragraph should also have an introduction, explanation, and a conclusion of some kind.

Most of your essay will be an expression of your own ideas, with details and explanation provided in your own words. However, in order to really explain/prove your position, you need to find evidence in the book, quote that, and explain how it proves your point. Direct references are specific quotations from the novel, and should be used to help you explain or illustrate an idea within your essay. Direct references should be short and focused.

Direct references should always be followed by a clear citation of your source. Ex:
(Steinbeck, 67)

Short references can be worked into your own writing:

E.g.: A lonely character is Cooks, a “proud, aloof man” (Steinbeck, 67).

E.g.: George and Lennie are determined to work at the ranch and “roll up a stake” (Steinbeck, 50).

In a 4 or 5 paragraph essay, your essay will consist of:

Paragraph 1:

- Attention grabber
- General support for argument

- Thesis (clear statement of your position), includes mention of paragraph topics/evidence you'll use to explain

Paragraph 2:

- First piece of evidence/proof introduction
- Evidence explanation/quotes/references
- Evidence conclusion

Paragraph 3:

- Second piece of evidence/proof introduction
- Evidence explanation/quotes/references
- Evidence conclusion

Paragraph 4:

- Third piece of evidence/proof introduction
- Evidence explanation/quotes/references
- Evidence conclusion

Paragraph 5:

- Show how paragraphs/evidence work together to prove your point
- Explain/illustrate how your point is proven
- Leave some sort of message/idea/attention getter

Use transitions/word bridges to connect your ideas throughout the essay. Use words like:

- For one thing
- On the other hand
- In addition
- Furthermore
- Then again
- Finally
- But most of all

In general, marks for essays will consist of: content (did you understand/represent the story well), spelling/grammar, and format (did you follow this template?)

Of Mice and Men: Persuasive Paper

Write a four paragraph persuasive paper. At the end of the novel, George shoots Lennie in the back of the head. George feels he has no alternative. If he doesn't kill him, Carlson or Curley might. And if they don't kill him, he definitely will go to jail for killing Curley's wife.

In this paper, write whether or not George should have killed Lennie. Remember, you need to provide reasons and evidence. In the second body paragraph, write whether or not mercy killing or capital punishment is good. Again, make sure you provide reason. Why should mercy killing be allowed? Why is it good? How does the novel make this clear? OR Why is mercy killing bad? And why shouldn't it be allowed? And how does the novel make this clear?

Paragraph 1 (Introduction):

Attention getter – get the reader's attention.

- rhetorical question
- relevant quote from an outside source
- relevant quote from the story
- fact or statistic
- description of initial response to the work
- shocking or amusing generalization.

Whichever method you decide to use, make sure the attention-getter is relevant to the topic of your paper. The attention-getter should clearly relate to the topic of your paper.

Necessary information

- author's full name – John Steinbeck
- Title of story – Of Mice and Men
- Brief plot summary

Thesis:

Your thesis should consist of a topic and limiting ideas. It should never be a question. The thesis for a persuasive paper should make it clear which side of the controversy you are on.

Paragraph 2 – body

- Topic sentence: a topic sentence has a topic and a focus, or a limiting idea. Your topic is the killing of Lennie. And your limiting idea is whether it was right or wrong.
- Support: the rest of the paragraph should support your stance.

Paragraph 3 – body

- Topic sentence: Your topic should be mercy killing or capital punishment. Your limiting idea is whether it is right or wrong.
- Support: the rest of the paragraph should support your stance using reasons, examples, and so forth.

Paragraph 4 – conclusion

- Restate, or reword, your thesis.
- Tie it all together. This is not a summery. You may need to in two sentences remind your reader how you have shown that they should agree with you.
- Clincher: try to end your paper with a short sentence that reinforces your argument. This is like the attention-getter. And it can relate back to your attention-getter.