

LESSON ON WRITING ACADEMIC PAPERS

Approaching an essay question

by [R BEHARI](#) - 14 Aug 2017 @ 10:00

The first thing to do when studying English is **read your prescribed texts**. This may seem obvious but lots of students try to get away with just reading notes or watching movie versions. **Read the text!**

Use a highlighter as a bookmark. When something seems important during your reading, highlight it. I highlight entire pages, entire paragraphs, sometimes just one word on an entire page.

Look up words you don't understand. Work with your text so that you get the most out of it.

When you look at your assignment topic for the first time, don't feel scared or overwhelmed.

The lecturers do not want you to fail – they want you to do well but they need to teach you to think critically. Always have the outcomes of the unit in your mind and try to fulfil them while answering your essay question. Thinking about this will narrow your focus and help.

So, you get your essay topic. This is what you do:

Read the question carefully and **break down what the question wants you to do**.

Write down the question and start interrogating it. What does it want you to do? Agree or disagree? In this case there will be a statement that you need to analyse and decide, "Yes, I agree", or "No, I don't agree". Do you need to think creatively and come up with new ideas?

First write out the question. **It helps to look at things in your own handwriting.**

Writing an essay is about working with yourself and your own brain. **You get to decide what goes on the paper based on the question.** Do not let yourself down but not reading and preparing and researching.

Writing an essay give you a chance to communicate your thoughts, and express your thoughts and personality. It showcases your observation skills. Everyone is different so books mean different things to each of us and we all see things that happen in books differently, or we learn from books and grow and our opinions sometimes are challenged by what we learn. This adds to your knowledge and in your essay, you get to show off your knowledge.

Critical Thinking

by [R BEHARI](#) - 14 Aug 2017 @ 9:58

Hi all,

Studying the humanities is supposed to help develop your critical thinking skills. I can see with many of you that this is not happening. I would like to spend some time looking at what critical thinking is, why it is important in a subject like English, and why the skill will make you a better essay writer.

Do not associate the word "critical" with something negative. It does not have a negative meaning in this instance. Critical thinking means to analyse and evaluate information to come to your own judgement or conclusion. It is a problem-solving skill.

When you are given an essay topic, you need to actively think about the question, engage with it and come up with an answer that is informed, well thought out and carefully constructed. You need to learn to think for yourself and back up your answers with intelligent information.

Critical reading refers to the process of making judgements and filtering material in effective, useful ways. When writing an essay, you must not simply relay facts. You must interrogate all the information or offer an interpretation. For your essay, you should not simply make an informed summary of a topic by means of primary and secondary sources. Instead, spend time investigating and evaluating sources with the intent to offer interpretations of the texts, and not unconscious regurgitations of those sources.

Here are a few links to read:

<http://philosophy.hku.hk/think/critical/ct.php>

<http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/our-concept-and-definition-of-critical-thinking/411>

Watch these videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0yEAE5owWw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dItUGF8GdTw>

Essay structure

by **R BEHARI** - 14 Aug 2017 @ 10:32

Paragraphs give structure to a piece of writing. They are a way to organize your thoughts, and to give clarity to your ideas. Paragraphs tell readers where one area of discussion begins and ends.

In an essay, there are usually **three different types of paragraphs**:

1. The **introduction** sets up the essay topic. It contains the thesis statement and background information.

2. Then **body paragraphs** build the content of your essay. Your argument is usually explained in these. There can be many body paragraphs.
3. Lastly, the **conclusion** sums up the points.

For instance, let's say I was writing an essay on women in *Nervous Conditions*. In my introduction, I would explain what the who wrote the book, when it was published and what it is about. I will discuss who the women I will be examining are. Here, I would also define all concepts and provide background information on the topic. This could include keywords like feminism or patriarchy. I would end with a thesis statement that would explain what I will discuss in the rest of my essay, as seen above.

Grammar videos

by **R BEHARI** - 14 Aug 2017 @ 9:54

Here are some videos that will help you with proper grammar usage:

Apostrophes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LwamFnWGVA>

Commas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXQq4Ug1RIM>

Semicolon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=th-zyfvwDdl>

Using quotes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dW43ok4ur_E

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsDw5-l6hTg>

The thesis statement

by **R BEHARI** - 14 Aug 2017 @ 10:01

All writing, no matter what form it takes, has a primary topic. In a well-developed academic essay, this primary topic is usually expressed in a thesis statement. Typically, the thesis statement is the last sentence in your introductory paragraph.

The thesis statement should dictate what you discuss in your essay. Here is a thesis statement on another controversial subject, the death penalty:

- I do believe abolishment of the death penalty is the morally correct path because many innocent people have been executed in the past, life without parole is a better alternative and capital punishment does not deter crime.

The statement tells the reader what issues will be discussed in the essay. For instance, the first body paragraph will deal with innocent people being executed, the second will deal with the better alternative and the final body paragraph will look at the lack of decrease in crime levels.

A good thesis statement creates a stronger essay. Here are some videos to watch which will expand on this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCzuAMVmlZ8>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sx42_C10zw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-jHFyF1u_Y