

## Research Paper structure

## I. Introduction/Opening

- A. Lead toward your thesis. Ways of doing this include but are not limited to the following:
  1. Establish the broad topic and move toward your narrow topic
  2. Introduce and Summarize the work you are critiquing
  3. Focus on one quintessential scene from the work that represents your thesis
  4. Ask the questions that lead to your thesis as the answer
- B. End the introduction with a **THESIS STATEMENT** in which you do the following:
  1. State specific topic
  2. Indicate position/ claim (assertion)
  3. Indicate breakdown of topic into sub-points

## II. Background Section: This is a paragraph that provides information your reader will need in order to follow the path of your argument. Its content depends on what you included in your introduction and what you intend to show in the body of the paper. Options may include

- A. Summary of the work of literature
- B. Literary history in which the piece is situated
- C. Biographical information about the author

## III. Body: State the case; offer up evidence

- A. Present a clear plan of attack/strategy
  1. Divide into discernable sub-topics
  2. Identify a critical perspective:
    - a. Formalist
    - b. "New Criticism"
    - c. Structuralism
    - d. Deconstructionist
    - e. Reader-response
    - f. Sociological
    - g. Historicism
    - h. Psychological
    - i. Mythological
    - j. Feminist or Gender
    - k. Poststructuralist cultural
    - l. Marxist
    - m. Post-Colonial
  3. Use a logical pattern of organization based on your critical perspective:
    - a. Chronological or Sequential
    - b. Least important to most important
    - c. Cause and Effect
    - d. Macro level consideration to Micro level considerations
    - e. Literary devices: Setting, theme, characterization, symbol, style
- B. Organize each paragraph around ONE key point
- C. Build each paragraph
  1. General statement: topic sentence
  2. Explanation
  3. Evidence
  4. Analysis (repeat 3 and 4 as needed)
  5. Synthesis
- D. Signpost your argument: remind and/or project
- E. Show continuity of argument: transitions and comparisons or contrasts

## IV. Conclusion

- A. Place your main point in perspective: make it "succinct, bold [yet] complete enough to gather in all the major points of the essay" (Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*).
- B. Provide a future projection or final thought.
- C. Give your ending emotional appeal.