

A. THE TOPIC SENTENCE

You already know that body ¶s can be only about **1 IDEA**, so the topic sentence is your chance to define what that 1 idea will be. Somewhere in your topic sentence you'll need to include the topic string, the word or words that will appear and reappear throughout the ¶. Reiterating these words will guarantee that your ¶ is focusing only on that 1 idea in the topic sentence.

What two components should you have in your topic sentence?

(1) I want to show you an element from the text (2) in order to say something about a theme/idea.

↓
THE HOW

↓
THE WHAT

Remember my example from class:

(1) Abigail's shameless overtures towards John Proctor make her an unpredictable and volatile character whose sole intent is to claim Proctor as her own, no matter the repercussions to the community of Salem.

Underline and label both THE HOW and THE WHAT of my first topic sentence.

Here's another:

(2) Rebecca Nurse's calming presence and reliance on both prayer and medicine to heal Betty make her the moral center of the play.

Underline and label both THE HOW and THE WHAT of my first topic sentence.

What might be the thesis statement uniting these three topic sentences?

How can you use syntax to strengthen your argument? Try a **CONSTRUCTION WITH TENSION**.

A good argument usually offers some kind of **tension** that will be considered in your paper. This **tension** might be presented as

(1) a **progression** (e.g., "while at the start of the novel, X is true, by the end of the novel, Y seems dominant").

(2) a **contrast** (e.g., "Both characters confront the evils of imperialism, but Kurtz is finally destroyed by his own complicity, while Marlow survives. . .").

(3) a **surprise** (e.g., "while the narrator at first appears to be X, close attention to Y suggests an alternative reading. . .").

MORE TOPIC SENTENCE SAMPLES

No:

1. *The Ox-Bow Incident* is an important book.
2. Sparks is an important character.
3. Justice is a major theme in the book.
4. The accused men should not have been hung.
5. If Croft were not the narrator, the story would be different.

Yes:

1. In *The Ox-Bow Incident*, Walter van Tilburg Clark uses the character Sparks to present a model for justice in an unjust society.
2. Shakespeare's utilization of bird imagery creates lucid pictures of man's physical and emotional qualities.
3. When the story opens, the reader encounters the first marriage, Joe and Mrs. Joe, a disconsolate marriage symbolizing the infernal level of comedy where truth and innocence are preyed upon.
4. Through numerous character descriptions, Homer utilizes armor to portray the aresteia of a warrior, a core heroic value that displays the superior prowess and skill of the individual.
5. In Blake's first "Chimney Sweeper," the vacillation between dirty, squalid images and pure, joyous ones parallels God's role of repaying those who labor with a life of bliss only after they have died.
6. Biddy is an ignoble country girl who represents Pip's loving side that cares about other people.
7. Dickens mirrors the moral dilemma of John the Apostle with his character Charles Darnay, illustrating the New Testament's theme of virtue.
8. Donne uses agricultural metaphors to remind us of man's communal nature, metaphors that reveal man's need to belong to a larger group. ***NOTICE THE REPEAT MODIFIER***

B. CHOOSING THE BEST POSSIBLE EVIDENCE.

Now it's a matter of going back to the novel to choose quotations. You want to seek out quotes that have a striking quality in the language so that you actually have something to elaborate. Look for language with

- (1) a particularly striking figure of speech (a metaphor, a simile, personification, a symbol)
- (2) a word with a strong connotation, positive or negative
- (3) a passage with an immediately definable tone (sarcastic, calm, angry, modest, detached or sentimental, sincere, condescending, etc)
- (4) an excessively violent or committed action
- (5) a perfect detail describing the look of a room or a character.

Always ask yourself: Does this quote have something in it that I can sink my teeth into analytically?

This, of course, is a skill we'll develop throughout the year.

C. EMBEDDING QUOTATIONS IN YOUR ESSAY.

Don't just drop a quotation into your essay. Incorporate EACH AND EVERY ONE into one of your own sentences.

Here are 4 ways how:

COLON: For use when what comes before the quotation is a complete thought. The colon stands in for “Here’s the quote to prove it.”

Example: Using the image of a nutshell, Hamlet denies Rosencrantz’s claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression: “I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space” (2.2.36).

COMMA: For use when the quotation serves as the direct object of the sentence.

Example: Using the image of a nutshell, Hamlet denies Rosencrantz’s claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression. He states, “I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space” (2.2.36).

DIRECT: The ideal way! Here you attempt to use the words of the quote grammatically within your own sentence.

Example: When Hamlet tells Rosencrantz that he “could be bounded in a nutshell and count [him]self a king of infinite space,” he implies that thwarted ambition did not cause his depression (2.2.36).

INTERRUPTION: Dividing a quote provides variety to your sentences and calls particular attention to the second half of the quote.

Example: “There is nothing either good or bad,” Hamlet argues, “but thinking makes it so.”

NO BLOCK QUOTES, YOU COWARD. WHO ARE YOU HIDING FROM?

D: WHAT, THEN, DO YOU DO AFTER YOU BRING IN THE QUOTE? THIS IS WHAT’S CALLED YOUR ANALYTICAL VOICE. AND IT NEEDS REFINING.

“He raised his face to the paling day. Are you there? he whispered. Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart? Damn you eternally have you a soul? Oh God, he whispered. Oh God.”

This is your starting point. You begin by feeling somehow—that’s the language students always use—that this quotation is the perfect quotation for their essay because it just seems like a good quotation. Well guess what? It is! And so you start to write. And it probably reads a little something like this nonsense:

Throughout the novel the man is always questioning the existence of God, he even at one point gets mad at him: “He raised his face to the paling day. Are you there? he whispered. Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart? Damn you eternally have you a soul? Oh God, he whispered. Oh God.” The man clearly does not even know whether or not God is actually there and wants to go so far as to even choke Him. He’s clearly—indubitably—frustrated through such questioning of God.

Your once handsome teacher loses yet another follicle from what are now but the historic remains of a once thriving colony of hair. My example says nothing beyond merely restating what is already in the quote. And what’s worse is that I’ve done almost no associating whatsoever. Go through. What do you find?

Throughout the novel the man is always questioning the existence of God, he even at one point gets **mad** at him: “He raised his face to the paling day. Are you there? he whispered. Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart? Damn you eternally have you a soul? Oh God, he whispered. Oh God.” The man clearly does not even know whether or not God is actually there and wants to go so far as to even choke Him. He’s clearly—indubitably—**frustrated** through such questioning of God.

Mad and frustrated. Good work, Copernicus.

What if you were to break apart the quote and conduct an association exercise? Would you find that some of the quote is not needed in your paragraph?

Write your association(s) below each.

He raised his face to the paling day.

Are you there? he whispered.

Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart?

Damn you eternally have you a soul?

Oh God, he whispered.

Oh God.

Organize using the following chart. Notice I'm more specific about what it is exactly I'm calling attention to in that part of the quote.

Detail	Association
Series of questions	
Repetition of "Oh God"	
Action of "whispering"	
"Throttling"	
"Damn you eternally"	
Acceptance of death: "at the last"	
Anything else I'm missing?	

Your sentences should be a combination of detail and association with context and signal phrases, everything blended together in one, perfect, homogenous bisque of intellect. Take it part by part.

The goal should be to vary the positions of detail and association in your sentences. Evidence can be used as the subject of the sentence, the object, or as a modifier.

Here's my example:

Let's start with the repeated questions:

In a state of despair, the man poses a series of questions—"Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart?"—questions escalating from genuine concern about impending mortality to (empty) threats of violence to callous accusation and judgment.

Underline the associations.

Next, the curse:

This threat of physical violence swells, turning spiritual, the man cursing God to Hell and emphasizing that he is even willing to blaspheme and provoke God, the source of his faith.

But we're not done yet. We've the whisper and the repetition of Oh God:

But it's in the final "whisper" that the man's despair is most palpable; the simple repetition of "Oh God... Oh God" conveys both ominous resignation and calm acquiescence at once, leaving us to wonder if the man will soon take fate into his own hands or leave them in those of his Creator.

Let's put them together to see what we have.

In a state of despair, the man poses a series of questions—"Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart?"—questions escalating from genuine concern about impending mortality to (empty) threats of violence to callous accusation and judgment. This threat of physical violence swells, turning spiritual, the man cursing God to Hell and emphasizing that he is even willing to blaspheme and provoke God, the source of his faith. But it's in the final "whisper" that the man's despair is most palpable; the simple repetition of "Oh God... Oh God" conveys both ominous resignation and calm acquiescence at once, leaving us to wonder if the man will soon take fate into his own hands or leave them in those of his Creator.

Side-by-side

<p>Throughout the novel the man is always questioning the existence of God, he even at one point gets mad at him: "He raised his face to the paling day. Are you there? he whispered. Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart? Damn you eternally have you a soul? Oh God, he whispered. Oh God." The man clearly does not even know whether or not God is actually there and wants to go so far as to even choke Him. He's clearly—indubitably—frustrated through such questioning of God.</p>	<p>In a state of despair, the man poses a series of questions—"Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart?"—questions escalating from genuine concern about impending mortality to (empty) threats of violence to callous accusation and judgment. This threat of physical violence swells, turning spiritual, the man cursing God to Hell and emphasizing that he is even willing to blaspheme and provoke God, the source of his faith. But it's in the final "whisper" that the man's despair is most palpable; the simple repetition of "Oh God... Oh God" conveys both ominous resignation and calm acquiescence at once, leaving us to wonder if the man will soon take fate into his own hands or leave them in those of his Creator.</p>
--	--

REVISE MINE:

Pro tip: A few ways to change a fact into an insight:

1) Make the fact into the subject of a new sentence that has an action to perform.

For example, if you said, "Wilson then 'wipes his hands on a piece of waste'" you'd be stating a fact. Make the fact the subject rather than the object, as in:

That Wilson wipes "his hands on a piece of waste" underscores the futility of his efforts and functions, through the selection of the word "waste," metaphorically to illuminate a life of despair.

2) Make the fact an appositive either before or after the insight, as in:

These spoiled aspirations shroud Wilson, who wipes "his hands on a piece of waste."

3) Do both, as in:

In fact, these spoiled aspirations shroud Wilson, who wipes "his hands on a piece of waste," a gesture that both underscores the futility of his efforts and functions, through the selection of the word "waste," metaphorically to illuminate a life of despair.

Nice!

Here is a list of verbs you might consider using when you want to move from observation to interpretation:

Advocates
Alludes to
Articulates
Asserts
Balances
Builds
Bolsters
Catalogs
Categorizes
Characterizes
Clarifies
Classifies
Collates
Compares
Concludes
Confirms
Continues
Contrasts
Conveys
Correlates to
Creates
Critiques
Debates
Defends
Depicts

Details
Develops
Differentiates
Elevates
Elicits
Emphasizes
Employs
Establishes
Expands
Expresses
Facilitates
Frames
Gathers
Generates
Guides
Highlights
Identifies
Illustrates
Implements
Implies
Informs
Integrates
Moves
Perpetuates
Persuades

Portrays
Presents
Promotes
Propels
Proposes
Provoke
Raises
Recalls
Reduces
Relates
Reinforces
Represents
Responds
Reveals
Revitalizes
Shows
States
Strengthens
Substantiates
Suggests
Supports
Underlines
Validates
Verifies

E. WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN INTRODUCING AN EXAMPLE

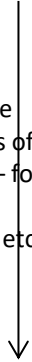
“Surely this is best evidenced by...”

SURELY



Excessive modification makes you sound more unsure of yourself. Aim to eliminate instances of surely, constantly, undoubtedly, indubitably – for the love of all things that are good, eliminate indubitably – definitely, absolutely, certainly, etc

THIS



Ah, the naked *this*. A student classic. If you must use *this* before or after you introduce an example, an association noun must follow. This indignity, this sarcasm, this hopelessness, this redefined love, etc.

Or don't use *this* at all. Vary your writing with “Such hopelessness evades...” or “Hopelessness forces the man...” or “Never before does the man struggle with hopelessness as when he...”

IS EVIDENCED BY BEST



Nobody says this. Stop writing it. You're making me angry. I have children. I can't afford a heart attack.

You're lying.

I know, I know. You don't like being told you can't use to be verbs. And while that's not completely true, there is some value in practicing eliminating as many as you can. But there's a greater issue at stake here: There's no need to use the awkward construction *evidenced by*. Why are you doing that? Where did you read that? Who taught you that? Nobody. When introducing an example, just go to the main subject followed by a *for instance* type construction. The man, for instance, ...

Maybe use *when* to place us in a moment. “When he offers his son grape flavor, the man extends...”

Or *such*. “Such insolence occurs when...”

Or a participial phrase: “The teacher, failing to understand where he went wrong, pores over the excruciating errata of his untutored youth: “.....”

F. ELIMINATE DEAD SENTENCES

Make every sentence—indeed, every word—in your essay contribute to your argument. Don't write dead (or empty, or pointless) sentences.

“In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe focuses his story upon his protagonist, Okonkwo.”

“Throughout the novel the reader understands the relationship between the two main characters.”

“Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* uses two characters that have different faults so that the reader can apply a moral magnifying glass on to compare see the greater significance between the character's flaws to learn from these characters... The lieutenant and the priest in *The Power and the Glory* portray different flaws that can be morally compared. These flaws can grant us greater insight on how religion affects us as human beings.”

“Okonkwo's downward view of his father and decision to live more a more masculine life force him to live an inherently selfish lifestyle in which he fails to worry about hurting others so long as he attains more power and masculinity. The narrator explains Okonkwo's tenacious attitude, saying, “And he did pounce on people quite often. [...] He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had had no patience with his father” (4). His impatience shows the dearth of care he puts towards his fellow tribesmen. The virtue of patience directly correlates with other people.”

G. USING LOGIC GLUE

Throughout the priest's journey, his duty is the driving force behind his decisions to keep fleeing instead of taking the easy way out by crossing the border or giving himself up. **During his conversation with Mr. Tench**, he has an opportunity to get on the boat and easily get out of Mexico, but he changes his mind because a child claims that “his mother [is] sick” and needs help (18). **Later on**, he explains that he decides to help the child because he is “summoned” (41). The term “summoned” demands that there must be a subject that is summoning him. **In this case**, that subject is not the child or the mother needing help, but his priestly duty. As a person being hunted down by the police and in grave danger of being executed, his most important objective should be to escape and stay alive. **However**, as a priest, his duty is to help people in every capacities to the best of his ability. He cannot put his interest first and flight to safety, but his duty demands that he risks his life to save other people, whether it be physically, emotionally, or spiritually. **Actually**, this is not the first time he does this. According to the narrator, “he has tried to escape several times [before], but he has always been prevented” by this duty. There are times when he wants to give up and surrender himself, too, but this duty stops him again. **In fact**, he says that “[he would] rather be caught,” but he does not do so because “[it is his] duty not to be caught” (42). It tears him apart emotionally to keep having to live in fear like this and see hostages get killed because of him, but his devotion to his duty trumps any humanly emotion that he has. **Strangely though**, he does not seem upset about any of the sacrifices he has to make for his duty. **Indeed**, he claims that “[he is] meant to miss [the boat],” showcasing his complete devotion to his duty. To him, his **duty** and devotion is similar to a “birthmark,” **permanent and perpetual** (42).

This duty not only causes him to live his life in fear instead of taking the easy way out, it also makes him suffer physically and almost get caught by the lieutenant. After years of wandering from towns to towns, having no home, the whiskey priest finally comes back to his parish, completely exhausted after having no sleep for days. **However**, instead of getting his much desired sleep, the priest's first act when arriving is to grant the townspeople's request to hear their confession. **At first**, he asks them to “let [him] sleep first,” but having heard that “it is five years since [they] have seen a priest” and have a chance to confess, he chooses to

endure his bodily breakdown to fulfill his duty of absolving sins (46, 45). **In fact**, his physical exhaustion is not a minor one, but so severe that “his lips and tongue [stumble] over the absolution, [failing] to finish” (47). **Of course**, he is angry about them demanding to hold a confession right away, but he recognizes that their spiritual needs are more important than his physical suffering, so he chooses to endure suffering to be their “servant” (47). **Then**, later on when he celebrates Mass, he refuses to cut short his Mass even though “the police are on their way” (73). He tries to celebrate Mass quicker, rushing through some of the rituals, but he will not stop until he is finished fulfilling his duty of performing Mass for them. He knows that these people have not had Mass in years, so he will not deny them the chance to celebrate their faith just so he can hide his identity. **Here**, in order to serve his people to the best of his ability, he accepts the risk that if caught, he will be executed. He does not let fear and **suffering** stop him from making sacrifices and fulfilling his duty to his people.

To him, **this suffering** for duty is not a burden,

H. MAINTAINING THE TOPIC

The whisky priest can show **courage** through his **sacrifice**, too. The dynamic between the whisky priest and Padre José reveals how **courage** is related to **sacrifice**. When Coral Fellows Lavery 3 ventures into the family barn to make sure the unnamed priest is truly gone, she discovers chalk drawings of “a lot of little crosses” (54). Coral reasons that “[h]e must have lain down among the bananas and tried to relieve his **fear** by writing something, and this was all he could think of” (54). The father’s first instinct in his **fear** is to turn to his faith to regain his **courage**. Even though he is a bad priest by his own admission, his steady trust in God is a redeeming factor. Padre José is a different story. His **fear** is his “drug” (49). He has lived so long in **fear** that he cannot break its hold over him. After he wanders into the cemetery and comes across the funeral of the small child. As the family presses him to say a prayer for her, he makes excuses and continues to back away. Then, unexpectedly, “[a]n enormous temptation came to [him] to take the risk and say a prayer over the grave. He felt the wild attraction of doing one’s duty” (49). Padre José is a pitiful figure because he is so afraid of doing the right thing, but he does sometimes feel the call of his duty and suppresses it. “Can’t you see?” he says, “I am a **coward**” (49). There is a sort of **bravery** in his honesty about his own **cowardice**, but only to a point. He recognizes his own faults, but indescribably makes no attempt to repair them. The differences between the two priests are clear. In moments of trial, the whisky priest entrusts himself to God and is **encouraged** by his faith. Padre José’s faith causes him **fear**. In spite of his flaws, the whisky priest continues to trust God while José sees him as a dangerous acquaintance.

Association Words (from Michael Degen)

Unfriendliness

Sharp, severe, cutting, hateful, unsocial, spiteful, harsh, boorish, pitiless, disparaging, derisive, scornful, satiric, sarcastic, insolent, insulting, impudent, belittling, contemptuous, accusing, reproving, scolding, suspicious, rude, hypocritical, caustic, threatening, envious, malicious, vicious, surreptitious, sardonic, aggressive.

Comedy

Facetious, comic, ironic, satiric, amused, mocking, playful, humorous, hilarious, uproarious.

Animation

Lively, eager, excited, earnest, energetic, vigorous, hearty, ardent, passionate, rapturous, ecstatic, feverish, inspired, exalted, breathless, hasty, brisk, crisp, hopeful, euphoric, exuberant.

Apathy

Inert, sluggish, languid, dispassionate, dull, colorless, indifferent, stoical, resigned, defeated, helpless, hopeless, dry, monotonous, vacant, feeble, dreaming, bored, blasé, sophisticated, complacent, passive, lethargic, banal.

Self-importance

Kubus English 1, Body Paragraphing: A Primer

This is a keeper. Hold on to this one.

Impressive, profound, proud, dignified, lofty, imperious, confident, egotistical, peremptory, bombastic, sententious, arrogant, pompous, stiff, boastful, exultant, insolent, domineering, flippant, saucy, positive, resolute, haughty, condescending, challenging, bold, defiant, contemptuous, assured, knowing, impious, superior, obnoxious, audacious, presumptuous, convincing, petulant, dominating, hypnotic, patronizing, authoritative, chauvinistic.

Submission and timidity to forcefulness

Meek, shy, humble, docile, agreeable, ashamed, modest, timid, unpretentious, respectful, pitiful, devout, reverent, servile, obsequious, grovelling, contrite, obedient, willing, sycophantic, fawning, ingratiating, deprecatory, submissive, frightened, surprised, horrified, aghast, astonished, alarmed, fearful, terrified, trembling, wondering, awed, astounded, shocked, uncomprehending, explosive, impotent, cautious.

Confusion

Confused, baffled, concerned, bewildered, disbelief, perturbed, embarrassed, overwhelmed, lonely, depressed.

Pleasure

Peaceful, satisfied, contented, happy, cheerful, pleasant, bright, sprightly, joyful, playful, jubilant, elated, enraptured, dreamy, frivolous, mystical.

Pain

Worried, uneasy, troubled, disappointed, regretful, vexed, annoyed, bored, disgusted, miserable, cheerless, mournful, sorrowful, sad, dismal, melancholy, plaintive, fretful, querulous, irritable, sore, sour, sulky, sullen, bitter, crushed, pathetic, tragic, disheartened, frightened, bleak, discouraged, weary.

Passion

Nervous, hysterical, impulsive, impetuous, reckless, desperate, frantic, wild, fierce, furious, savage, enraged, angry, hungry, greedy, jealous, insane, obsessive, outraged, revengeful, passionate, wrathful, childish, evil, sultry, seductive.

Self-control

Calm, quiet, solemn, serious, serene, simple, mild, gentle, temperate, imperturbable, nonchalant, cool, wary, cautious, confident, laconic, stern, remote.

Friendliness

Cordial, sociable, gracious, kindly, sympathetic, compassionate, forgiving, pitying, indulgent, tolerant, comforting, soothing, tender, loving, caressing, solicitous, accommodating, approving, helpful, obliging, courteous, polite, confiding, zealous, friendly, benevolent, giddy, amiable.