

## 5 paragraph essay: contents, guidelines, pointers

### Introduction

Name the author and title of the “story” or novel. Give a very general outline or synopsis of the plot: save the specifics for your body paragraphs. All of the comments and statements so far should lead up to the most important item: your thesis statement with the three main points to be discussed in the body of the essay. Do not just throw it in at the end; build up to it just as an author builds up to a climax. The thesis statement is the climax of your intro. It provides a road map that you will follow closely in the rest of your essay. The clearer the thesis, the better the essay.

### Body Paragraphs

Each of the three body paragraphs focuses on a point of your thesis statement. Begin with a topic sentence that links to the thesis and lays out the content of the paragraph. This is where you get highly specific, supporting every statement that you make. No detail should assume that your reader is familiar with the content of the story. The key to a strong essay is: clear topic sentence, relevant general statements, and detailed examples. Carefully select a quote to use in each body paragraph, framing and excerpting the quote properly. Have you explained and supported each point?

### Conclusion

Review and reword your thesis in a very general way, touching on the points you’ve made. In a Universal Statement, tie your ideas together. What was the author’s theme or purpose? Was the author’s style effective? What did you take away from the story? Remember: this is the last thing your reader sees: make a lasting impression!

### Do

- always begin with a topic sentence
- use transition words and phrases
- keep quotations short & relevant
- use synonyms (and thesaurus)
- explain thoroughly
- pretend your reader has not read the story: you must make it clear

### Do not

- use “I” or “you”; “I think” or “in my opinion (avoid 1st & 2nd person)
- retell the story
- use vague pronouns
- be conversational or use slang
- switch tenses (e.g. from past to present)
- use contractions (e.g. don’t, can’t)