**Literary Analysis Outline Suggestions: The examples are from another novel, but they should still help you understand the idea!**

I. **INTRODUCTION**: the first paragraph in your essay. It begins creatively in order to catch your reader’s interest, provides essential background about the literary work, and prepares the reader for your thesis/argument. The introduction paragraph must include the *author and title* of the work as well as an explanation of the *theme* to be discussed. **Depending on your topic…**Other essential background **MAY** include *setting, an introduction of main characters, etc.* **The *thesis* goes in this paragraph last sentence at the end.**

***Options for Creative Opening/Hook***: the beginning sentences of the introduction that catch the reader’s interest. Ways of beginning creatively include the following:

1) **A startling fact or bit of information**

**Example:** Nearly two hundred citizens were arrested as witches during the Salem witch scare of 1692. Eventually nineteen were hanged, and another was pressed to death (Marks 65).

2) **A snatch of dialogue between two characters**

**Example:   
“**It is another thing. You [Frederic Henry] cannot know about it unless you have it.”

“ Well,” I said. “If I ever get it I will tell you [priest].” (Hemingway 72).

With these words, the priest in Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* sends the hero, Frederic, in search of the ambiguous “it” in his life.

3) **A meaningful quotation (from the book you are analyzing or another source)**

**Example:** “To be, or not to be, that is the question” {3.1.57}. This familiar statement expresses the young prince’s moral dilemma in William Shakespeare’s tragedy Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

4) **A universal idea**

 **Example:** The terrifying scenes a soldier experiences on the front probably follow him throughout his life—if he manages to survive the war.

5) **A rich, vivid description of the setting**

**Example:** Sleepy Maycomb, like other Southern towns, suffers considerably during the Great Depression. Poverty reaches from the privileged families, like the Finches, to the Negroes and “white trash” Ewells, who live on the outskirts of town. Harper Lee paints a vivid picture of life in this humid Alabama town where tempers and bigotry explode into conflict.

**II. Body Paragraphs**

**A) *Body*:** the support paragraphs of your essay. These paragraphs contain supporting examples: (quoted textual example/paraphrase if necessary) and analysis/explanation (commentary) for your claims. Each paragraph in the body includes (1) a claim, (2) textual evidence (a.k.a. quotes from your reading) and interpretation (a.k.a. explanation, commentary, analysis), and (3) a concluding sentence. In its simplest form, each body paragraph is organized as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. claim  2. lead-in to textual evidence 1  3. textual evidence 1  4. commentary  5. transition and lead-in to textual evidence 2  6. textual evidence 2 | 7. commentary  8. transition and lead-in to textual evidence 3  9. commentary  9. concluding sentence |

***\*\*Note: You can choose to organize your pieces of evidence in whichever order best suits your ideas (For example, primary, primary, secondary or primary, secondary, primary)***

1) **Claim**: the first sentence of a body or support paragraph. It identifies one aspect of the major thesis and states a primary reason why the thesis is true.

**Example:** When he first appears in the novel, Sidney Carton is a loveless outcast who sees little worth in himself or in others.

2) **Textual Evidence**: a specific example from the work used to provide evidence for your claim. Textual evidence can be a combination of paraphrase and direct quotation from the work.

**Example:** When Carlton and Darnay first meet at the tavern, Carlton tells him, “I care for no man on this earth, and no man cares for me” (Dickens 105).

3) **Commentary**: your explanation and interpretation of the textual evidence.

Commentary tells the reader what the author of the text means or how the textual evidence proves the claim. Commentary may include interpretation, analysis, argument, insight, and/or reflection. (*Helpful hint: In your body paragraph, you should have twice as much commentary as textual evidence. In other words, for every sentence of textual evidence, you should have at least two sentences of commentary.)*

**Example:** Carton makes this statement as if he were excusing his rude behavior to Darnay. Carton, however, is only pretending to be polite, perhaps to amuse himself. With this seemingly off-the-cuff remark, Carton reveals a deeper cynicism and his emotional isolation.

4) **Transitions**: words or phrases that connect or “hook” one idea to the next, both between and within paragraphs. Transition devices include using connecting words as well as repeating key words or using synonyms.

**Examples:** Finally, in the climax… Another example: … Later in the story… In contrast to this behavior… Not only…but also… Furthermore…

5) **Lead-In**: phrase or sentence that prepares the reader for textual evidence by introducing the speaker, setting, and/or situation. Remember we suggest you use VARIED lead-ins! Remember earlier in the semester we learned about BLENDED and SENTENCE lead-ins? That way you are not using SOMEBODY SAYS lead-ins all the time!

**Example:** Later, however, when the confident Sidney Carton returns alone to his home, his alienation and unhappiness become apparent: “Climbing into a high chamber in a well of houses, he threw himself down in his clothes on a neglected bed, and its pillow was wet with wasted tears” (Dickens 211).

**6) Clincher/Concluding Sentence:** last sentence of the body paragraph. It concludes the paragraph by tying the textual evidence and commentary back to the thesis.

**Example:** Thus, before Carton experiences love, he is able to convince himself that the world has no meaning.

**III. CONCLUSION**: last paragraph in your essay. This paragraph should begin by echoing your thesis without repeating the words exactly. Then, the conclusion should broaden from the thesis statements to answer the “so what?” question your reader may have after reading your essay. The conclusion should do **one or more** of the following:

1) Reflect on how your essay topic relates to the story as a whole

2) Evaluate how successful the author is in achieving his or her goal or message

3) Connect back to your creative opening

\*\*Your conclusion can be 3-4 sentences. Be concise, clear, and focused.