

Interpretation of Fiction: Body Paragraph Worksheet

After completing this worksheet, you will have a stronger awareness of a traditional body paragraph structure.

It is a good idea to always have your thesis in the front of your mind when writing your body paragraphs, so in order to do that you should write your “working thesis” below:

WRITE THESIS HERE:

Now you will write a topic sentence. This is your first sentence, and, like a thesis statement, it poses an argument. If your central argument was something like *“To fully understand the impact of cultural and historical context in Contemporary Realism, readers must be willing to seek out information the author chooses to not provide in the story, thus encouraging readers to educate themselves on different cultures.”*...then your topic sentence might narrow that down to be about one specific text/literary device/idea

Ex. *A common strategy for illustrating a character’s cultural background is through the use of specific language, diction, and dialect that is recognizable outside the story.*

Topic Sentence: _____
_____.

Next, introduce your primary source title and author along with a quick summary. This may take two or three sentences to do effectively.

Ex. *This can be seen in Junot Diaz’s ‘How to Date a Brown Girl (Black Girl, White Girl or Halfie), a short story that explores the ideas of the intermixing and blending of people that are culturally different from one another by way of dating advice from a teenaged-boy narrator named Yunior. Throughout the story, Diaz uses diction to communicate Yunior’s background and Dominican influence, as well as his struggle with his cultural and racial identity. Yunior’s “how-to” guide toggles back and forth between his New Jersey influenced English and broken Spanish, communicating his still distant familial ties to his old country and his desire to assimilate into the culture of his peers.*

Introducing Source: _____
_____.

Now that you have introduced your primary text with a general, overarching summary, it’s time to introduce the quote from that text you will be analyzing (through close reading/unpacking). You will want to set up context for your reader by making clear WHEN and WHERE in the story we are, WHO is talking and WHAT is happening.

Ex. One important moment that illustrates the conflicting feelings Yunior has about his culture and heritage appears after his date informs him that her mother wants to meet him.

Introducing Quote: _____
_____.
_____.

Next, quote and cite the source. Don't forget the point of the quote is that it supports the argument you pose in your topic sentence. To avoid a "dropped quotation", be sure to lead into the quote with an introductory phrase that denotes who is speaking.

Ex. *Yunior says, "Don't panic. Say, Hey, no problem. Run a hand through your hair like the whiteboys do even though the only thing that runs easily through your hair is Africa" (Diaz 256).*

Quotation: _____
_____.
_____.

Next, explain why the quotation is important/significant. Consider beginning this sentence with "This moment illustrates..." or "in this quotation,"

Ex. *This moment perfectly illustrates Yunior's lack of self-esteem and confidence in his surroundings as a minority in his community.*

Explanation: _____
_____.
_____.

Next, elaborate on your last sentence. For the sake of this exercise, begin the sentence with "this quote is significant because..."

Elaboration: _____
_____.
_____.

Next, introduce a second quote for your primary text that supports the same claim. It can be part of the same passage (which won't require additional set up) or from a different part of the story (which will require context/set up)

Introduce Second Quote (if needed): _____
_____.
_____.

Now quote and cite. Come up with a helpful quotation from the source that clearly connects to your topic sentence. To avoid a dropped quotation, be sure to lead into the quote with an introductory phrase.

Ex. *This idea is amplified when he instructs the reader to, "tell her that you love her hair, that you love her skin, her lips, because, in truth, you love them more than you love your own" (Diaz 257).*

Quotation: _____

Next, explain what about this quote deserves a closer look. Consider beginning this sentence with “This moment illustrates...” or “in this quotation,”

Ex. *In this quotation, Yunior suggests that the reader tell the “white girl” or “halfie” that you love her lips and hair, which are both physical characteristics that are commonly referenced in the ‘othering’ of BIPOC.*

Explanation: _____

Then, elaborate on your last sentence. For this exercise, begin the sentence with “This is significant because it illuminates....”

Elaboration: _____

Next, explain how these quotes together illustrate the larger sub-claim of your paragraph.

Ex. *These moments could easily be overlooked, but Yunior’s idealization of dating white girls as being the ultimate departure from his multi-cultural background is important in order to understand his feelings of inadequacy.*

Connection: _____

Finally, write your concluding sentence, which restates your topic sentence’s argument and transitions into your next body paragraph by suggesting its argument.

Ex. *Throughout the story, Diaz depicts Yunior’s struggles to identify as white, Dominican, black or Spanish and this translates into how he perceives the girls of color that he dates. Although the story seems to be completely hinged on a misinformed teenager’s perspective of date, it seems possible that Diaz is commenting on how society’s way of dealing with a multi-cultural population is by placing them into identifiable categories that ultimately breed racial and cultural division.*

Concluding Sentence: _____

*Impressed by how much you just wrote? Great! But there may be more to say, AND THAT’S A GOOD THING! You might also want to explain or connect sources in more than one or two sentences, or, if this is a later paragraph in your paper, only be using one source. It’s all good—just treat this worksheet as a starting block for you to create fuller, clearer paragraphs, and be cautious of repeating the same structure throughout your paper—you don’t want to sound robotic.

No but rly tho. Pls tell me what’s significant about every quote and how they support your main argument in.every.paragraph.