# Text Response Essay Writing

**TEXT RESPONSE ESSAY WRITING**

**When writing an analytical or expository essay on a text (e.g. novels, plays, poetry and film) you are aiming to show that you:**

• can analyse and understand the topic;
• can answer the question, i.e. discuss the topic;
• do know the plot and characters;
• do know the themes, messages, issues well;
• understand the topic in relation to the text, the characters, themes;
• can draw upon appropriate evidence from the text and use brief quotations which can support your argument.

**Throughout your essay you are showing that you can:**

• write a sustained interpretation (an argument that develops);
• develop a point of view (has something to say about the text);
• support that view through close textual references and analysis (quotes and examples from the text are included to prove points you're making).

**Your essay should show that you have developed a clear understanding of:**

• 'tag' words that frame the topic: Discuss, Do you agree? How? Why? Do…? Does…?
• planning and structuring an essay;
• how to incorporate quotations into you essay; how to modify quotations;
• writing strong introductions that engage with the topic;
• using topic sentences that relate to the topic;
• explaining and justifying each argument;
• using specific evidence and explaining (qualifying) the evidence;
• linking evidence to the topic and to the next paragraph;
• reaching strong and firm conclusions;
• developing vocabulary (metalanguage) with which to discuss the text;
• planning by composing at least five main arguments relevant to the topic that will serve as the topic sentences for each paragraph of the essay.

**ESSAY STRUCTURE**



**Introduction (first paragraph)**

1. Hook/Lead-in sentence – introduce the text (basics: author, title, text type)
2. Background information – brief outline of story/characters/context
3. Position on the topic – clear response to the topic *(sometimes as simple as putting topic into your own words, but if you disagree with the topic, make that clear),* often with brief outline of key ideas.

**Body paragraphs (middle paragraphs)**

* Each body paragraph sticks to one main point,
* backs up the main point with
	+ discussion, detail, and
	+ evidence from the novel (quotes and references).
* TEEL is the acronym used to remind students of what to include in your body paragraphs.

## TEEL stands for the following:

Main idea

Topic sentences – the sentence which states the main point of that paragraph

Elaboration – discussing and explaining your main point in more detail

Supporting sentences

Evidence – using quotes and incidents from the novel to prove your main point

### Linking sentences – links the idea of one paragraph to the previous paragraph, or rounds off what the paragraph is saying (sometimes a rewording of the topic sentence).

**Conclusion (last paragraph)**

* briefly recap your main ideas.
* remind the reader of your opinion on the topic
* state clearly the conclusions you have come to about the topic.
* consider broadening out your discussion of the text to the implications it has for the real world, for all of us, for readers (eg key messages).
* It can be powerful to weave in a relevant and powerful quote.

**Analytical essays require formal writing**

* Don’t write conversational sentences beginnings like “Well, …”
* Don’t use abbreviations like “it’s” “there’s” √ Write out the full text: “It is” “There is”
* Don’t use “I” like “I think…” √ It’s easy to get rid of “I’ when editing: “I think Slim is the hero of this novel.”

Be prepared to make a stand on the topic. Decide your opinion and state it clearly in the introduction, then follow it up with evidence in your body paragraphs. Clearly restate your opinion in the conclusion. Imagine you are a barrister in a courtroom, and you have to prove, with evidence from the text.

**Other important advice**

* Stick to the topic carefully.
* Avoid repeating the same words and expressions throughout a paragraph, or through the essay.
* Avoid just summarizing the plot.
* Don’t make a point in a paragraph without backing it up with some explanation or evidence.
* When you name the text, underline it (or use *italics* if typing).
* You may need to take the time to give a definition of key words in your first or second paragraphs. Eg. Topic four: give us the definition of villain that you will be using to apply to Tybalt and others.
* Avoid opting for simplistic responses: teachers are looking for complex understandings of characters/themes/issues etc. Show that you have thought about the topic and formed an opinion.

**TEEL paragraphs**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| T  | topic sentence | Tells the reader what the paragraph will focus on. Try to keep away from putting examples in this sentence. |
| E  | evidence | Supporting Sentences | Example from the text that support what point you are making in your topic sentence. |
| E  | explanation | Explain what the examples SHOW the reader. What is REVEALED about the character in the text? |
| L  | link back to the topic | I like to think of this as the ROUNDING OFF sentence. Sum up your main idea. |

**Another take on conclusions**

* Generalisation (message, what do we learn)
* Connection (text-to-text, text-to-world, text-to-self)
* Tie Back (to text – ie characters, themes, events, etc)

**(Generalisation)** War forces all of us to change in one way or another. It is up to us how we react. **(Connection)** Tomorrow, When the War Began forces us to look at ourselves and question how we might react. **(Tie Back)** Will we be more like Chris – slow to learn, followers more than leaders? Or will we be more like Ellie – questioning, daring, and shouldering more of the responsibility than others?

**Active verbs for writing about texts…**

Note of Caution: Only use the verbs you’re familiar with unless you take the time to examine the definition in the dictionary. This is **not** a list of synonyms. Each word has specific uses that are unique to its meaning.

