

# MHS Writing Guide

A Guide to Better Writing

Across the Curriculum

By the Writing Task Force

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Montgomery High School

Santa Rosa, California

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## Philosophy

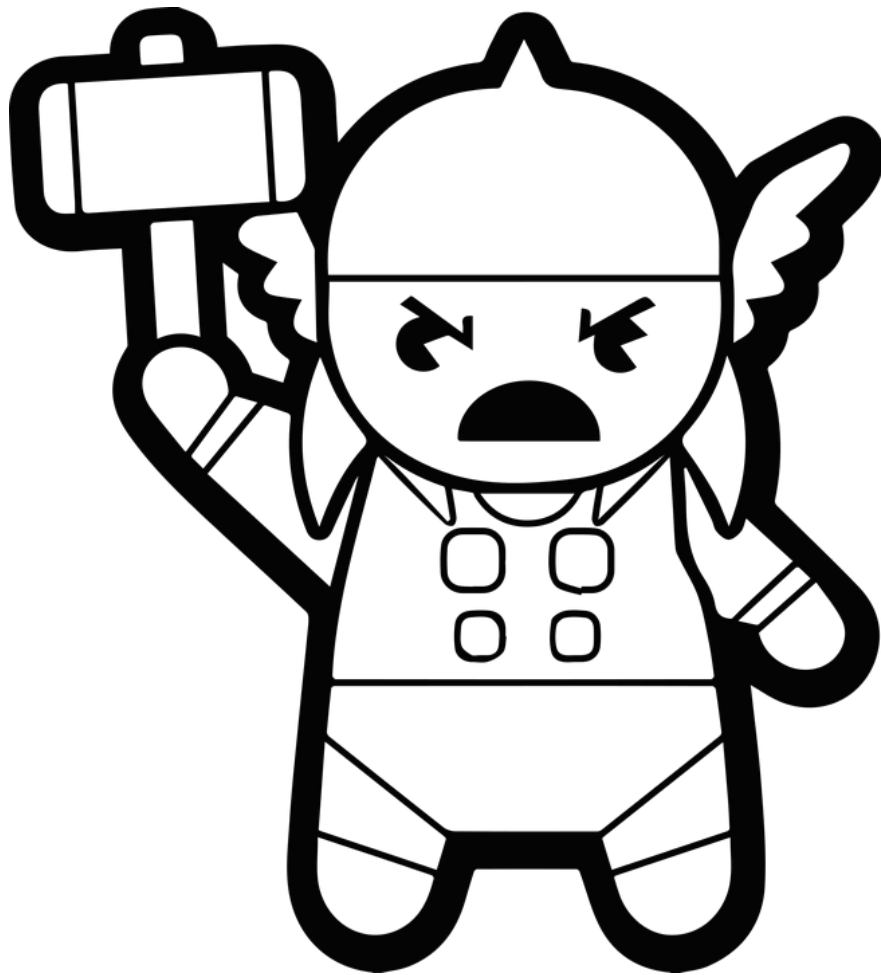
Developing self-expression through creative and analytical writing is an integral part of deepening our capacity for critical thinking. The process of writing involves organizing and communicating concepts effectively and appropriately. We believe that students need to write fluently in a variety of modes and in the languages of various disciplines.

## Expectations

Every freshman student will receive a copy of *The Write Stuff*. It is also posted online at the MHS website. Teachers expect you to keep a copy in your binder for classroom instruction and for reference **for all four years of your high school experience**.

Teachers will frequently ask students to refer to the handbook in class or to complete written assignments correctly.

## SECTION 1: Note-taking and Annotating



## **What Are Cornell Notes?**

The Cornell note form is an excellent strategy for comprehension of new information. These notes are useful to organize ideas into categories and to help students better understand printed text, lectures and media. The note strategy can be used for many different types of classes and purposes. Reviewing the notes helps students study and recall information for tests.

Once students learn this strategy by taking notes from printed text, their note-taking from lectures is improved. Regardless of how the teacher organizes the material, students can provide the organization that makes sense to them. After class, they review the notes to organize the material better. Some students use highlighters at this stage, rather than rewriting everything.

Cornell notes assist in recall of main ideas as well as key details. Reviewing the notes before a test helps students efficiently study the words, ideas or events that might be on a test.

# The Cornell Note-taking System: Advantages and Overview

<b>What are the advantages?</b>	<b>Three Advantages</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is a method for understanding information, not just recording facts.</li> <li>2. It is efficient.</li> <li>3. Each step prepares the way for the next part of the learning process.</li> </ol>
<b>What materials are needed?</b>	<b>Materials:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Loose-leaf paper to be kept in binder</li> <li>2. 2-1/2 inch column drawn at left-hand edge of each page to be used for questions or summary statements.</li> </ol>
<b>How should notes be recorded?</b>	<b>During class, record notes on the right-hand side of the paper:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Record notes in paragraphs, skipping lines to separate information logically.</li> <li>2. Don't force an outlining system, but do use any obvious numbering.</li> <li>3. Strive to get main ideas down. Facts, details, and examples are important, but they are meaningful only with concepts.</li> <li>4. Use abbreviations for extra writing and listening time.</li> <li>5. Use graphic organizers or pictures when they are helpful.</li> </ol>
<b>How should notes be refined?</b>	<b>After class, refine notes:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write questions in the left column about the information on the right.</li> <li>2. Check or correct incomplete items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loose dates, terms, names</li> <li>• notes that are too brief for recall months later</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Read the notes and underline key words and phrases.</li> <li>4. Read underlined words and write in recall cues in the left-hand column (key words and very brief phrases that will trigger ideas/facts on the right).</li> <li>5. Write a reflective paragraph about the notes at the bottom of the page.</li> <li>6. If possible, compare notes with a study buddy.</li> </ol>
<b>What are the ways to recite notes?</b>	<b>Recite notes three ways:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cover up right side of page. Read the questions. Recite information as fully as possible. Uncover the sheet and verify information frequently.</li> <li>2. Reflect on the organization of all the lectures. Overlap notes and read recall cues from the left side. Study the progression of the information. This will stimulate categoric relationships, inferences, personal opinions/experiences. <b>REFLECTION = KEY TO MEMORY!!</b></li> <li>3. Review by reciting, reflecting, and reading insights.</li> </ol>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Cornell Notetaking System helps understanding info – by taking notes in a Column on the right side – in chunks – a lecture, test, or a movie. <b>Record</b> notes the <b>Refine</b> notes with ques., highlight, underline, recall cues, graphics, pix. <b>Recite</b> notes from recall cues – cover up main section – <b>Reflect</b> by studying and or changing cues = the <b>KEY!</b> Last – <b>Review</b> from recall cues or questions</p>

# Cornell Notes (Intro)

Name	Date
Topic	Class/ Subject

Here, in the Connections Column, you might write one or more of the following:

- Categories
  - Causes of WW II
  - Parts of a Cell
- Questions
  - What caused WW II?
  - What are the parts of a cell?
- Vocabulary words
  - Holocaust
  - synthesis
- Review/test alerts!
  - WW II causes and names of allies will definitely be on exam!
  - Parts of a Cell
- Connections
  - check the Owens poem for his comments on war
  - similar to process westudied in last unit
- Reminders
  - Be sure to check the meaning of variant.

Sample Question and Notes  
What should I write down when I take notes?

**Note:** Leave space in the Connections Column so you can add notes and test review questions later on when studying

How can I take notes faster?

Write down only important information. Look for:

- bold, underlined, or italicized words
- information in boxes or with an icon/symbol
- headers/subheaders on the page
- information the book or teacher repeats
- words, ideas, or events that might be on a test
- quotes, examples, or details you might be able to use later in a paper or presentation
- abbreviate familiar words/use symbols (+, -->, #)
- take notes in bullets and indents; not formal outlines
- cut unnecessary words
- use telegraphic sentences: "America enters war 12/44"

Down here write one of the following; summary of what you read/lecture; the five most important points of the article/chapter/lecture; questions you still need to answer.

# Cornell Notes

[illegible]



## Writing and Drawing in the Margins

*AVID Teacher Reference*

*This table provides six strategies that help readers understand texts. While making connections, clarifying information or doing some other work defined on this page, write down your thoughts in the margins of the text, on sticky notes, or in your Cornell notes.*

<p><b>Visualize</b></p> <p>Visualize what the author is saying and draw an illustration in the margin. Visualizing what authors say will help you clarify complex concepts and ideas.</p> <p>When visualizing ask,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does this look like?</li> <li>• How can I draw this concept/ idea?</li> <li>• What visual and/ or symbol best represents this idea?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Summarize</b></p> <p>Briefly summarize paragraphs or sections of a text. Summarizing is a good way to keep track of essential information while condensing lengthier passages.</p> <p>Summaries will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• state what the paragraph is about</li> <li>• describe what the author is <i>doing</i></li> <li>• account for key terms and/or ideas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Clarify</b></p> <p>Clarify complex ideas presented in the text. Readers clarify ideas through a process of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Pausing to clarify ideas will increase your understanding of the ideas in the text.</p> <p>In order to clarify information you might...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• define key terms.</li> <li>• reread sections of the text.</li> <li>• analyze or connect ideas in the text.</li> <li>• paraphrase or summarize ideas.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Connect</b></p> <p>Make connections within the text, to your own life, and to the world. Making connections will improve your comprehension of the text.</p> <p>While reading you might ask,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does this relate to me?</li> <li>• How does this idea relate to other ideas in the text?</li> <li>• How does this relate to the world?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Respond</b></p> <p>Respond to ideas in the text as you read. Your responses can be personal or analytical in nature. Thoughtful responses will increase engagement and comprehension.</p> <p>Readers will often respond to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interesting ideas.</li> <li>• emotional arguments.</li> <li>• provocative statement.</li> <li>• author's claims.</li> <li>• facts, data, and other support.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Question both the ideas in the text and your own understanding of the text. Asking good questions while reading will help you become a more critical reader.</p> <p>While reading you might ask...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the author saying here?</li> <li>• What is the author doing?</li> <li>• What do I understand so far?</li> <li>• What is the purpose of this section?</li> <li>• What do I agree/disagree with?</li> </ul>

## Color-marking Prose and Poetry

### Color-mark poetic/literary Devices, Images, and Motifs

**Image:** word(s) appealing to at least one of our senses; an image deals with reader response. Of our five senses, the visual is the strongest.

**Image Pattern:** the repetition of three images, not necessarily in uninterrupted succession.

**Motif:** a repeated pattern of any type within a work. Note that an image pattern is a motif but a motif is not necessarily an image.

1. Mark with a different color each type of image/image pattern/motif/device that is predominant in the passage/poem. Carefully examine what is “going on” within/prior to/following the passage.
2. Based on your color-marking, ask these questions:
  - Is one color predominant? Why?
  - Is there some logical progression of imagery (motifs), from one type to another? Is the progression logical? Why/why not?
  - How do the images/motifs reinforce and/or illustrate the content of the passage? Imagery reinforces content by giving it emphasis, by making it fresh, and/or by adding irony.
  - Is a specific tone or mood created?
3. Based on your analysis, CODE each color marked with inferences you draw about the use of that particular image/image pattern/motif. This is the most important part of the process – where you, as a reader, write notes/explanations for yourself in preparation for discussion or writing.
4. Create a key wherein you identify what each color represents.

## SECTION 2: Improving Vocabulary



## Using Context Clues to Learn New Words

The best way to figure out the meaning of a word is from its context. The **context** is the other words and sentences around the new word. You might not be able to guess the exact meaning of a word, but you may be close enough to understand the general meaning of the sentence. These same techniques can be used to determine which meaning to apply to a word when the word has many possible meanings. Good reading comprehension requires that you practice this every time you read.

### Types of Context Clues: definition, synonym, antonym, examples, substitution

**1. Definition/Synonym:** Sometimes the author may have provided a **definition** or a **synonym** right there next to or near a term that you can use to unlock its meaning.

Example: "Don't think of words as separate items, or *entities*."

**2. Antonym:** Another kind of context clue is a word or words of opposite meaning (**antonym**) set somewhere near an unfamiliar. If you find a word or words of opposite meaning, you can unlock the meaning of the unfamiliar word.

Example: "I was not exactly *enamored* of the travel plans my agent made for me; my lack of enthusiasm was triggered by the eight-hour layover required between flights."

**3. Examples:** You can also look to see whether the sentence provides **examples** of other things in the same category, so that you can at least guess at what type of thing the word might represent.

Example: "My grandmother used to love serving old-fashioned German fare: *spaetzel*, red cabbage, mashed potatoes, and *weinerschnitzel*."

**4. Substitution:** At times, rereading a sentence that contains an unfamiliar term and **substituting** a word or phrase for it that makes sense can help you to unlock the meaning of the unfamiliar word.

Example: "When we stayed at the military base, each Saturday we went to the *commissary* to buy the food and supplies we would need for the next week."

## Academic Vocabulary

The following graphic shows three sets of common academic terms, organized according to the level of questioning/thinking each requires. In formulating ideas for academic writing, it is always best to ask yourself questions using Level 2 and Level 3 terms.

### LEVELS OF QUESTIONING & THINKING

<b>Level 3</b>  <b>OUTPUT</b>  <b>“in your head”</b>	Apply Criticize Evaluate Generalize Hypothesize	Idealize Imagine Judge Predict/Forecast Speculate
<b>Level 2</b>  <b>PROCESS</b>  <b>“between the lines”</b>	Analyze Classify Categorize Compare Contrast Discuss Distinguish Explain	Illustrate Infer Interpret Prove Reason Relate Sequence/Trace Synthesize
<b>Level 1</b>  <b>INPUT</b>  <b>“on the page”</b>	Count Define Describe Enumerate/List Identify Match Name	Observe Outline Recite Scan Select Summarize State

# Webb's Depth of Knowledge

## DOK Level 1

(Recall)

**Verbs:** arrange, calculate, define, draw, identify, list, label, illustrate, match, memorize, recognize, tell, ...

**Focus:** on specific facts, definitions, details, or procedures

**Note:** there's one correct answer, and a combination of Level 1s does not make it a Level 2

## DOK Level 2

(Skill / Concept)

**Verbs:** categorize, cause/effect, classify, compare, distinguish, estimate, graph, interpret, modify, predict, relate, show, summarize, ...

**Focus:** on applying skills and concepts explaining how or why

**Note:** there's one correct answer

## DOK Level 3

(Strategic Thinking)

**Verbs:** assess, cite evidence, compare, conclude, construct, critique, develop logical argument, differentiate, formulate, hypothesize, investigate, revise, ...

**Focus:** on reasoning and planning in order to respond complex and abstract thinking required defending reasoning or conclusions

**Note:** multiple answers or approaches

## DOK Level 4

(Extended Thinking)

**Verbs:** apply concepts, analyze, connect, create, critique, design, prove, ...

**Focus:** on complex reasoning, planning, and thinking make real-world applications in new situations

**Note:** has multiple answers or approaches often requires extended periods of time with multiple steps

## Common Academic Vocabulary Terms Defined

**Analyze:** Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.

**Apply:** To put to use as relevant, suitable, or pertinent.

**Classify / Categorize:** To arrange or organize by type or label.

**Compare:** Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences.

**Complete:** Provide all parts or elements to create a whole.

**Contrast:** Examine two or more things to show their differences.

**Criticize:** Make judgments; evaluate comparative worth. Criticism usually involves analysis.

**Define:** Give the meaning, usually specific to the course or subject. Determine the precise limits of the term to be defined. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually short.

**Describe:** Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities and parts.

**Discuss:** Consider and debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Give as much information as you can using details and reasons.

**Distinguish:** To set something apart as being different. (This may involve contrasting two or more things and/or sorting and classifying.)

**Enumerate:** List several ideas, aspects, events, things, qualities, reasons, etc.

**Evaluate:** To analyze for the purpose of reaching a judgment about quality, significance, or value.

**Explain:** Make an idea clear. Show logically how a concept is developed. Give the reasons for an event.

**Generalize:** To state a general truth based on a few specific details.

**Hypothesize:** To form a proposition as an explanation for the occurrence of some phenomenon.

**Identify:** To recognize or establish as being a particular person or thing or as a member of a particular group.

**Illustrate:** Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.

**Imagine:** To form mental images of things not present to the senses; to think or assume that something is true.

**Infer:** To make a judgment based on evidence available.

**Interpret:** Comment upon, give examples, describe relationships. Explain the meaning. Describe, then evaluate.

**Judge:** To make a careful guess or estimate; to analyze or think critically about something and form an opinion about it.

**Observe:** To watch, see, perceive, or notice; to obey, comply with, or conform to.

**Outline:** Describe main ideas, characteristics, or events. (Does not necessarily mean write a roman numeral/letter outline.)

**Predict / Forecast:** Make a calculation or prediction about the future based on available information.

**Prove:** Support with facts/evidence (especially facts presented in class or in the test, or with respect to a literary work, with examples from the text).

**Reason:** To think or argue in a logical manner; to form conclusions, judgments, or inferences from facts or premises.

**Recite:** To repeat something from memory.

**Relate:** Show the connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.

**Sequence / Trace:** Show the order of events or progress of a subject or event.

**Scan:** To glance or read quickly with a specific purpose.

**Speculate:** To engage in thought or reflection; to guess.

**State:** Explain precisely.

**Summarize:** Give a brief, condensed account. Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.

**Synthesize:** To put multiple pieces together to form a complete or larger picture.

## SECTION 3: The Importance of Intellectual Honesty



# What Is Intellectual Honesty and Why Is It Important?

The “Academic Honesty Agreement” adopted by Santa Rosa City Schools defines plagiarism and other dishonest practices such as cheating and “collusion,” or collaboration on work that is not authorized by an instructor. The most significant benefit of being honest is the development of personal integrity. Additionally, when students take shortcuts with their learning, they do not learn what they need for future work. Struggling with information and mastering it will help students the most in the long run.

MHS staff will support students in learning how to proceed in ethical ways in terms of their education. Teachers introduce strategies such as effective note-taking, paraphrasing, and Modern Language Association (MLA) citation form. These strategies help students put the language of others in their own words and correctly give credit to sources used for information.

MHS staff feels strongly about the importance of intellectual honesty and enforced and upholds the Santa Rosa City Schools “Academic Honesty Agreement.”

## **Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is cheating. Plagiarism is copying the work of others and turning it in as your own.

Whether you copy from a published essay, an encyclopedia article or a paper from a classmate, you are plagiarizing. If you do so, you run a terrible risk. You could be punished, suspended or even expelled. Universities and colleges frequently expel students on the first offense. At MHS, students are expected to understand the rules and consequences for cheating.

To avoid plagiarism, follow these general guidelines:

- Unless explicitly permitted by the assignment, you may not use the ideas of any other person or source and claim those ideas as their own.
- Use Cornell notes (Section 1) to put language in your own words.
- Cite every piece of information that is not with you common knowledge. This may include research, analysis, arguments and speculations as well as facts, details, figures and statistics.
- Use quotation marks every time you use the author's words.
- At the beginning of the first sentence in which you quote, paraphrase or summarize, make it clear that what comes next is someone else's idea (e.g., "According to Smith...").
- At the end of the last sentence containing quoted, paraphrased or summarized materials, insert a parenthetical citation to show where the material came from.

More support on how to cite sources correctly can be found in "Section 5: MLA Format" of this handbook.

# ACADEMIC HONESTY AGREEMENT

The Santa Rosa City School District's Board Policy 5132.2: Academic Honesty describes cheating and collusion as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work by using dishonest means. Cheating and collusion include by are not limited to:

1. Copying, in part or whole, from another's examination, paper (including homework assignments), mathematical calculation(s), research or creative project, etc.
2. Submitting as one's own work an examination, paper, mathematical calculation(s), research or creative project, or the like which has been purchased, borrowed, or stolen.
3. Intentional falsification or invention of data or a source in an academic exercise.
4. Using notes, or materials not specifically authorized by the instructor during an examination.
5. Any collaboration between a student and another person at times or in ways which are not permitted by the instructor.

*The follow descriptions [from the University of Texas and the University of Exeter] further refine cheating/collusion:*

- Using unauthorized books, notes, electronic aids or other materials in an examination.
- Obtaining an examination paper ahead of its authorized release.
- Either aiding or obtaining aid, from another person, where such aid is not explicitly permitted in the assignment.
- Acting dishonestly in any way, whether before, during or after an examination or other assessment so as to obtain or offer to others an unfair advantage in that examination or assessment.
- Allowing someone else to write your papers.
- Allowing someone else to modify your essays in any substantive way.

The Santa Rosa City School District's Board Policy 5132.2: Academic Honesty describes plagiarism as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work by representing the work of another as one's own (including text found on the internet) without necessary and appropriate acknowledgement. Specifically, plagiarism is:

1. The act of incorporating the ideas, words of sentence, paragraphs, or parts thereof without appropriate acknowledgement and representing the product as one's own work.
2. The act of representing another's intellectual or creative work such as musical composition, computer program, photograph, painting, drawing, sculpture, research, etc., as one's own work.

*The follow descriptions [from the University of Texas and the University of Exeter] further refine acts of plagiarism:*

- Failing to acknowledge the sources of any information in your paper which is not either common knowledge or personal knowledge.
- Failing to acknowledge direct quotation either by using quotation marks when quoting short passages or indentation when quoting longer passages.
- Too closely paraphrasing the original words of your source.
- Borrowing the ideas, examples or structure of your source without acknowledging it.
- Taking, buying or receiving a paper written by someone else and presenting it as your own.
- Using one paper for two different courses, or re-using a paper previously submitted for credit, without prior approval of both instructors.
- Direct copying of the text from a book, article, fellow student's essay, handout, web page or other source without proper acknowledgement.
- Claiming individual ideas derived from a book, article, etc., as one's own and incorporating them into one's work without acknowledging the source of these ideas.
- Overly depending on the work of one or more others without proper acknowledgement of the source, by constructing an essay, project, etc., by extracting large sections of text from another source, and merely linking these together with a few of your own sentences.

***I have read and understood the above descriptions and illustrations of cheating, collusion and/or plagiarism and I agree to not engage in any of these acts as a student enrolled in the Santa Rosa City Schools District.***

STUDENT NAME (Please Print)

STUDENT SIGNATURE

STUDENT NUMBER

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

DATE

## SECTION 4: Writing Essays



## Essay Terminology

1. **MLA:** Modern Language Association. The organization responsible for governing a specific set of formatting and citation rules in regards to academic writing in certain disciplines.
2. **Outline:** Organization of evidence.
3. **Thesis:** Sentence with a subject and argumentative opinion, which states the purpose of the essay. The thesis appears somewhere in the introductory paragraph, often at the end.
4. **Topic Sentence/Main Idea:** Assertion that supports the thesis.
5. **Analysis:** Commentary/opinion/explanation about something. Not evidence at all. Usually interpretation and elaboration of key idea. Not plot.
6. **Evidence:** Support for ideas (references to text or life experience, depending on the assignment).
7. **Introduction:** First paragraph in the essay. Includes author, title, genre, necessary background information, and thesis.
8. **Body:** All paragraphs that offer evidence and explanation to support the thesis.
9. **Conclusion:** The last paragraphs of the essay. Provides insight and closure. Should not include new ideas not developed in the essay.
10. **Editing/Revising:** The process of employing a critical eye and objective viewpoint and making necessary changes to content and organization.
11. **Proofreading:** The process of identifying and correcting errors of spelling, grammar, and mechanics.

## Sample Outline (MLA form)

**THESIS STATEMENT:** Despite its gothic elements, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is primarily a Romantic novel.

**I.** The Gothic elements in the story serve primarily to establish setting and plot.

**A.** A key idea that illustrates **Idea I** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea A** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea A** above

**B.** Another key idea that illustrates **Idea I** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea B** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea B** above

**C.** Another key idea that illustrates **Idea I** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea C** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea C** above

**II.** The story incorporates the idea of the “quest,” an important Romantic theme.

**A.** A key idea that illustrates **Idea II** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea A** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea A** above

**B.** Another key idea that illustrates **Idea II** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea B** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea B** above

**C.** Another key idea that illustrates **Idea II** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea C** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea C** above

**III.** Shelley often illustrates the Romantics’ belief in the life-giving power of nature.

**A.** A key idea that illustrates **Idea III** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea A** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea A** above

**B.** Another key idea that illustrates **Idea III** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea B** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea B** above

**C.** Another key idea that illustrates **Idea III** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea C** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea C** above

**IV.** The creature is born with all the positive qualities the Romantics believed man to naturally possess.

**A.** A key idea that illustrates **Idea IV** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea A** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea A** above

**B.** Another key idea that illustrates **Idea IV** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea B** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea B** above

**C.** Another key idea that illustrates **Idea IV** above

1. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea C** above
2. Evidence/analysis that supports **Idea C** above

**Conclusion (Restatement of Thesis + New Understanding):** The Gothic elements play only a supporting role in this novel, while the Romantic elements develop important themes and ideas that comprise the heart and soul of the narrative.

## Thesis Statements

A thesis statement in an essay is a sentence that explicitly identifies the purpose of the paper or previews its main ideas. Everything in the essay should support the thesis.

**A thesis statement has the following characteristics:**

1. **A thesis statement is an assertion, not a fact or an observation.**
  - Fact or observation: *Things Fall Apart* is about colonialism.
  - **Thesis: *Things Fall Apart* exposes the negative effects of colonialism.**
2. **A thesis takes a stand rather than announces a subject.**
  - Announcement: The thesis of this paper is the difficulty of solving our environmental problems.
  - **Thesis: Solving environmental problems is more difficult than many environmentalists believe.**
3. **A thesis statement is narrow, rather than broad. If the thesis statement is sufficiently narrow, it can be fully supported.**
  - Broad: The American steel industry has many problems.
  - **Narrow: The primary problem with the American steel industry is the lack of funds to renovate outdated plans and equipment.**
4. **A thesis statement is specific rather than vague or general.**
  - Vague: Hemingway's war stories are very good.
  - **Specific: Hemingway's stories help create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentence, and strong Anglo-Saxon words.**
5. **A thesis statement has one main point rather than several main points. More than one point may be too difficult for the reader to understand and the writer to support.**
  - More than one main point: Stephen Hawking's physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world-renowned physicist, and his book is the subject of a movie.
  - **One main point: Stephen Hawking's physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world-renowned physicist.**

Note: A thesis can be revised multiple times during the writing process. Writers often discover what their real purpose and point is while in the process of putting their thoughts into words and then reading what they have written.

## How to Create a Thesis Statement in Three Easy Steps

1. Start with a simple or obvious statement that interests you and deals with something in the text for which you can get examples.
2. Draw inferences and ask yourself questions like who and how this happens/exists. Challenge yourself to see something new/original/unique.
3. Add these new ideas to the original statement. Polish the statement continuously by eliminating linking verbs, working on structure, elevating vocabulary, adding appropriate adjectives and adverbs, using strong/articulate language that will force deep critical interpretation, etc. You **must** find a way to include a character's name, the author's name, **or** the title of the work. (Not all three; one will do.)

### Example:

**The obvious/simple:** Love of the homeland is really important. Odysseus mentions wanting to return home to Ithaca more than he mentions wanting to see Penelope.

**Inferences:** Odysseus does not seem to value Penelope as much as he should. Calypso acknowledges that Penelope is not as pretty as she is and Odysseus does not defend his wife. It is true that Penelope would change over the years; maybe she will not love him as much as she did when he left for the war; maybe this is his real fear.

**Final statement:** Odysseus' love of the homeland, stronger than his love of his wife, symbolizes the universal human attachment to the unchanging land over another human who has the potential to change or die.

### **Other excellent thesis statements:**

**9<sup>th</sup> grade:** Because the characters' lives are filled with insecurity and loneliness, they need dreams to make their lives worth living. (*Of Mice and Men*)

**10<sup>th</sup> grade:** Fear overpowers the boys' ability to make logical decisions, which causes them to lose sight of their humanity. (*Lord of the Flies*)

**11<sup>th</sup> grade:** The color grey represents a world of hopeless chaos, a sorrowful land in which all dreams have died. (*The Great Gatsby*)

**12<sup>th</sup> grade:** Dependent on men and trapped inside the constraints of society, Ophelia can only expose her true self through insanity, which leads to freedom and inner peace before her death. (*Hamlet*)

## How to Handle Quotations

**The best way to use quotes in an essay is to work the quotation into your own sentence, as part of it. The sentence must make perfect grammatical sense with the quotation embedded in it. For this reason, it is wise to choose small chunks of quotes.**

- \* Lady Macbeth scorns her husband's kind nature, which is "too full of the milk of human kindness" (1.4.54-5).
- \* Calling himself a "Black Dog," Makhaya expresses his bitterness over the racial injustice that has blighted his earlier life.

Longer quotations demand more careful integration, because you must write your own sentence around the structure of the quotation so that the total sentence, including the quotation, makes perfect grammatical and syntactical sense. In such a case, it may be necessary to break the quote into more than one part.

- \* Hamlet ranks his mother below "a beast that wants discourse of reason," as such a creature "would have mourned longer" for its lost love (1.2.154-155).

**Another alternative is to state in your own words the point you want to support with the quotation, use a colon (:) to indicate that the sentence being introduced amplifies the idea expressed, then add the quotation.**

- \* Percy B. Shelley writes his bold view in *Poets*: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (794).
- \* Macbeth's ambition overcomes his ethics: "Stars, hide your fires; / Let not light see my black and deep desires" (1.4.50-51).

**Sometimes the quotation does not agree with the pronouns in your sentence or uses a pronoun without its antecedent. In this case, make minor modifications to the words of a quotation and place any changes inside square brackets. Do not overuse this option. Too many brackets can be very distracting to your reader.**

- \* When Claudius requests that Hamlet stay in Denmark instead of return to school in Wittenberg, Hamlet refuses until his mother asks that he "let not [his] mother lose her prayers" and that he "go not to Wittenberg" (1.2.122-123).

**Sometimes you do not want to include the whole sentence of a quote and want to cut out unnecessary or irrelevant words. Use three ellipses (...) to indicate that words have been omitted in the middle of a sentence and four ellipses (....) to indicate that the omission spans the end of a sentence and includes a period. Or, you may break the quote up, using only the pieces you need.**

- \* Matenge undermines the villagers' efforts toward development by treating them not as human beings, but as "things he kicked about...to break, banish, and destroy for his entertainment" (74).

# REVISION

## Content/Form Checklist

### Introduction

- Introduce author and title (use appropriate MLA format on title)
- Refer to the work by its appropriate genre (fiction, nonfiction, play, poem, short story, etc.)
- State a focused and clearly-worded thesis (topic and opinion)

### Body Paragraphs

- Include the number of paragraphs appropriate to the topic and thesis, but always plan to write at least three body paragraphs unless otherwise instructed
- Clearly state a topic and opinion in each topic sentence
- Make sure topic sentences clearly support the thesis
- Include at least two key ideas with thorough analysis and explanation in each paragraph
- Provide adequate textual support in the form of quotes or paraphrased material for each key idea
- Cite direct quotations correctly per MLA format
- Weave direct quotations into analysis/explanation
- Provide approximately twice as much analysis/explanation as quotes/paraphrased material

### Conclusion

- Give the essay a sense of completeness
- Avoid repetition
- Do not include new facts or ideas not developed in the essay
- Answer the question: So what?

### Important Conventions for Writing about Literature

- In all discussion of literature, use literary present tense
- Use third person voice; never use first or second person voice except in a quote
- Use elevated diction
- Do not use contractions or other informal language
- Avoid passive voice; use active verbs

# TRANSITIONS

## Linking Sentences:

Transitions are words and phrases that help bring coherence to a paper by signaling relationships between and among sentences. By acting as signposts from one idea to the next, transitions such as *after all*, *for example*, *indeed*, *so*, and *therefore* help the readers follow the progression of a paragraph. Choose the best transition word or phrase given your purpose.

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Transitional Words / Phrases</u>
To add an idea	in addition, furthermore, moreover, also, likewise, again, second, third, next, finally, equally, as well as, at the same time, still
To show time/sequence	meanwhile, first, second, then, next, later, finally, afterward, soon, as soon as, until, when, last, at length, during, before, eventually, simultaneously, ultimately, in the future, now
To show location	adjacent to, at the other side, behind, close to, here, inside, next to, outside, nearby, there, beyond
To contrast/contradict	however, nevertheless, though, in contrast, but, of course, on the contrary, still, doubtless, no doubt, as opposed to, although, despite, in spite of, interestingly, instead, at the same time, on the other hand, whereas
To show a comparison	just as, in the same way, likewise, similarly, more than, less than, in like manner
To show cause/result	therefore, accordingly, consequently, as a result, finally, thus, since, because, owing to, evidently, hence, for this reason, assumably, in effect, inevitably, predictably, due to
To explain	for instance, for example, specifically, such as, regardless, unfortunately, yet, overall, incidentally, presumably, that is, in this way, in retrospect, in particular, in other words, in many ways, in [his/her/my] case, in either case
To emphasize	actually, in fact, of course, indeed, certainly, chiefly, even more important, definitely, emphatically, unquestionably, surely, unequivocally, sadly, clearly, assuredly
To summarize/generalize	in conclusion, in short, to summarize, on the whole, in brief, overall, that is, in other words, essentially
To state a purpose	for this reason, to this end, in view of, for this purpose
To make a concession	even so, it is true, notwithstanding, still, the fact remains, so, yet, whether, no doubt, nobody denies, anyway, admittedly

## TRANSITIONS (CONTINUED)

### Linking Paragraphs

To connect ideas between paragraphs, repeat key words and phrases from a prior paragraph.

Example: In fact, human offspring remain *dependent on their parents* longer than the young of any other species. Children are *dependent on their parents* not only for their physical survival, but also for their initiation into the uniquely human knowledge that is collectively called “culture.”

### Using Parallel Structure

When stating ideas of similar importance, use the same grammatical structure for each.

Example: Kennedy made an effort to assure non-Catholics that he would respect the separation of church and state and most of them did not seem to hold his religion against him in deciding how to vote. Since his election, *the church to which a candidate belongs* has become less important than presidential politics. *The region from which a candidate comes*, however, remains an important factor.

## Suggested Sentence Openings

Consider using the following grammatical constructions to vary your sentence beginnings. They can be used for any type of writing.

Two adjectives	Tall, handsome lifeguards flirt...
An appositive	Sam, the tall, handsome lifeguard, flirts...
A parallel structure	Tall and handsome, Sam sits and watches...
A prepositional phrase	On the high tower, the tall, handsome lifeguard lounges...
An infinitive	To sit all day on the high tower is the job of the lifeguard.
A gerund	Sitting all day on the high tower, watching the pretty girls, is the lifeguard's duty.
A perfect infinitive	To have sat in the burning sun all day was a challenge for the guard.
A perfect (past) participle	Having sat all day in the tower, the lifeguard left to buy a cold drink.
A present participle	Smiling at the happy crowds, the lifeguard keeps watch.
A perfect gerund	Having sat there all day was a challenge for the lifeguard.
A predicate adjective	The guard was tall and handsome.
A predicate noun	A tall, strong man was the guard.
Complex parallel structure	A tall man and a handsome one, my father loved the ocean.
An adverbial clause	Sam, who had the build of a wrestler, worked as a lifeguard every summer.
A noun clause	That he could swim to Catalina has never been proven.
An exclamation	Wow! He certainly seems powerful.

## GUIDE FOR ON DEMAND WRITING

### Preparing for Essay Examinations

Nothing can take the place of knowing the subject well. You can best prepare for an essay examination throughout the unit by taking careful notes of discussions, texts, and other assigned reading. You may want to annotate as you read, outline the text, list or summarize its main points, and/or define key terms.

### Analyzing Essay Examination Questions

Before you begin writing, read the question over carefully several times and analyze what it asks you to do. Most essay examination questions contain two kinds of terms: **strategy terms** that describe your task in writing the essay and **content terms** that define the scope and limits of the topic. For example, study the wording of the following essay question:

Example: Discuss the function of the river in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.  
 “Discuss” is the strategy; the content focus is on “the function of the river.”

### Some Common Strategy Terms

- **Analyze or discuss:** Divide an event, idea, or theory into its component elements and examine each one in turn.
- **Compare and/or contrast:** Demonstrate similarities or dissimilarities between two or more events, topics, or characters.
- **Define:** Identify and state the essential traits or characteristics of something.
- **Evaluate:** Carefully appraise the problem, citing advantages and limitations. Emphasize the appraisal of authorities and your personal evaluation.
- **Interpret:** Translate, give examples of, or comment on a subject, giving your judgment about it.
- **Infer:** Draw conclusions about a situation or character based on information that you have. Support your inferences with examples from the text.
- **Justify or prove:** Establish that something is true by giving clear logical reasons and factual (or textual) evidence. Prove or give reasons for decisions or conclusions.

### Thinking Through Your Answer and Taking Notes

1. Think for a few minutes and then make a quick outline. Decide which major points you need to make and the order in which to present them. Then write down support or evidence for each point. Generally, each major point will be a separate paragraph. This is a critical first step.
2. Write a clear, succinct thesis that satisfies the strategy term of the exam question. (Hint: Restate the question as your thesis; use the same words.)
  - Example exam question: Some people think that Mount Everest has become dangerously over commercialized because of guided expeditions. Using the history and events from *Into Thin Air* as evidence, discuss whether or not Mt. Everest should be guided.
  - Example thesis: Based on tragic events from *Into Thin Air*, Mt. Everest has become over commercialized and should not be guided.

### Drafting Your Answer

1. Due to time constraints, on demand writing is usually not as in-depth as take-home essays. Introductions and conclusions are generally shorter (3-5 sentences).
2. After writing a paragraph, go back and read what you have written before going on to a new point. This may remind you of other ideas while you still have time to include them; it should also help you establish a clear connection with whatever follows.
3. Write as neatly as possible, preferably using black ink.

### Revising and Editing Your Answer

Leave enough time (five to ten minutes) to read through your essay answer carefully and consider:

- Is the thesis stated clearly?
- Does it directly answer the question?
- Are all the major points covered?
- Is each sentence complete? Is it legible?
- Are spelling, punctuation, and syntax correct?

## Section 5: MLA Format



## Guidelines for Student Work

1. Daily work will be done in blue or black ink. No pencil.
2. Formal papers and projects will be word-processed or neatly written in black ink.
3. Work will be turned in on clean, 8-1/2 x 11 paper unless otherwise indicated. Papers should not be crumpled, stained, tattered, or torn.
4. Do not write on the back side of the paper unless instructed to do so.
5. Use Modern Language Association (MLA) format and citation guidelines for formal papers and projects. Some guidelines include:
  - \* Clear, 12-point font
  - \* Double-spacing throughout (no extra spaces between paragraphs)
  - \* One inch margin on all sides
  - \* Works Cited page and in-text citations where appropriate
  - \* Formal heading (double-spaced):

### Left Margin

Student's first and last name

Instructor title and name

Course title

Date (3 May 2019)

### Right Margin

Last name 1 (see instr. below)

### Instructions for Right Margin Header in *Google Docs*:

- \* Click "Insert," then hover over "Header and Page number." Hover over "Page number" and then select the top left option (with two pages numbered 1 and 2).
- \* Move the cursor in front of the page number.
- \* Using the same font as the document, type your last name, then hit the space key **once**.

# Instructions for In-Text MLA Citations

## CITING NOVELS

In-text citations for novels appear as follows (all examples taken from *Jane Eyre*):

**EXAMPLE:** When Mrs. Reed dies, Jane realizes that Mrs. Reed had always hated her while alive, and that “dying, she must hate [Jane] still” (276).

**NOTE:** the only thing inside the parentheses is the page number itself, and the punctuation goes *after* the parentheses – not inside the quote. This is true for both commas and periods. The only time to include punctuation inside the quote is when the quote is a question or an exclamation, per this example:

**EXAMPLE:** When the magistrate orders that the gypsy be sent away at once, Colonel Dent exclaims, “No – stop!” (218). **NOTE:** in this example, there is still need for punctuation after the parentheses to provide an end mark to your sentence.

**EXCEPTION / EXAMPLE:** If you must quote text that spans five or more lines in an essay (not recommended), it should be separated from the essay paragraph and indented, per this example:

Rochester explains his bitterness to Jane as follows:

Suppose you were no longer a girl well reared and disciplined, but a wild boy  
indulged from childhood upwards; imagine yourself in a remote foreign land;  
conceive that you there commit a capital error, no matter of what nature or from  
what motives, but one whose consequences must follow you through life and  
taint all your existence. (249)

**NOTE:** Do not use quotation marks when the quote is indented; the indentation already signifies that the text is a quote. Also, with indented quotes, all punctuation (including periods and commas) go *before* the parentheses instead of after the parentheses. The next line of the essay will begin on the next line, at the left-hand margin (unless it is a new paragraph).

## CITING SHAKESPEARE PLAYS (All examples are from *Hamlet*)

For in-text citations with respect to plays, Shakespeare plays in particular, the following rules apply:

1) Instead of page numbers inside the parentheses, provide the act number, scene number and line number(s) for each quote. **EXAMPLE:** Act 1, scene 3, lines 80 through 82 should be cited as (1.3.80-82). The punctuation rules are the same as for novels (above).

2) If quoting verse (as opposed to prose), indicate where lines end by inserting a slash (/) where a line ends (after appropriate punctuation), and initial capping the next word to indicate the beginning of the next line. Leave a space on each side of the slash.

**EXAMPLE:** The ghost tells Hamlet that his death was not an accident, but rather was “Murder most foul, as in the best it is, / But this most foul, strange and unnatural” (1.5.27-30).

3) As with citing a novel, if you must quote text that spans five or more lines in an essay (not recommended), it must be separated and indented from the paragraph, as follows:

**EXAMPLE:**

When Hamlet realizes that his uncle is his father’s murderer, the ghost confirms,

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
  
With witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts –  
  
Oh wicked wit and gifts that have the power  
  
So to seduce – won to his shameful lust  
  
The will of my most seeming virtuous queen. (1.5.42-46)

**NOTE:** The indented section is double-spaced. There is no need for slash marks to show the line endings; simply type the text in verse form. When indenting, do not use quotation marks. In the case of indented quotes, periods and commas go *before* the parentheses. There is no punctuation after the parentheses.

4) When quoting more than one character speaking within the same quote, the manner of identifying the speakers depends on whether the quote is short (inside the text of your paragraph) or longer (indented per rule #3 above).

**EXAMPLE 1: Quoting a short bit of text within your paragraph/sentence:**

The ghost tells Hamlet that “The serpent that did sting thy father’s life / Now wears his crown,” and Hamlet replies, “Oh my prophetic soul! My uncle?” (1.5.38-41).

**EXAMPLE 2: When quote is five or more lines:**

The ghost confirms that Claudius is responsible for his death:

GHOST: The serpent that did sting thy father’s life  
  
Now wears his crown.  
  
HAMLET: Oh my prophetic soul!  
  
My uncle?  
  
GHOST: Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast. (1.5.38-42)

In this example, the text of the paragraph continues on the next line at the left margin, unless it is the beginning of the next paragraph.

## Sample Works Cited

### Works Cited

- Bagchi, Alaknanda. "Conflicting Nationalism: The Voice of the Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's Bashai Tudu." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 15. No. 1, 1996, pp. 41-50.
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- Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard, Vintage-Random House, 1988.
- Henley, Patricia. *The Hummingbird House*. MacMurray, 1999.
- . *The Lemur House*. MacMurray, 2001.
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### **MLA Works Cited Format Links:**

[SRJC Online Writing Lab](#)

[Purdue OWL \(Online Writing Lab\)](#)

[Easybib Chrome Extension](#)

# Fin



## The Writing Task Force:

*Monica Ashcraft, Susan Farkas, Erin Geary, Grant Gibbs, Jon Gonzales, Simone Harris, Donna Holmes, Andrea Kenney, Alan Kiel, Dallas Pardoe, Kristin Reed, and Paul Tuyl*