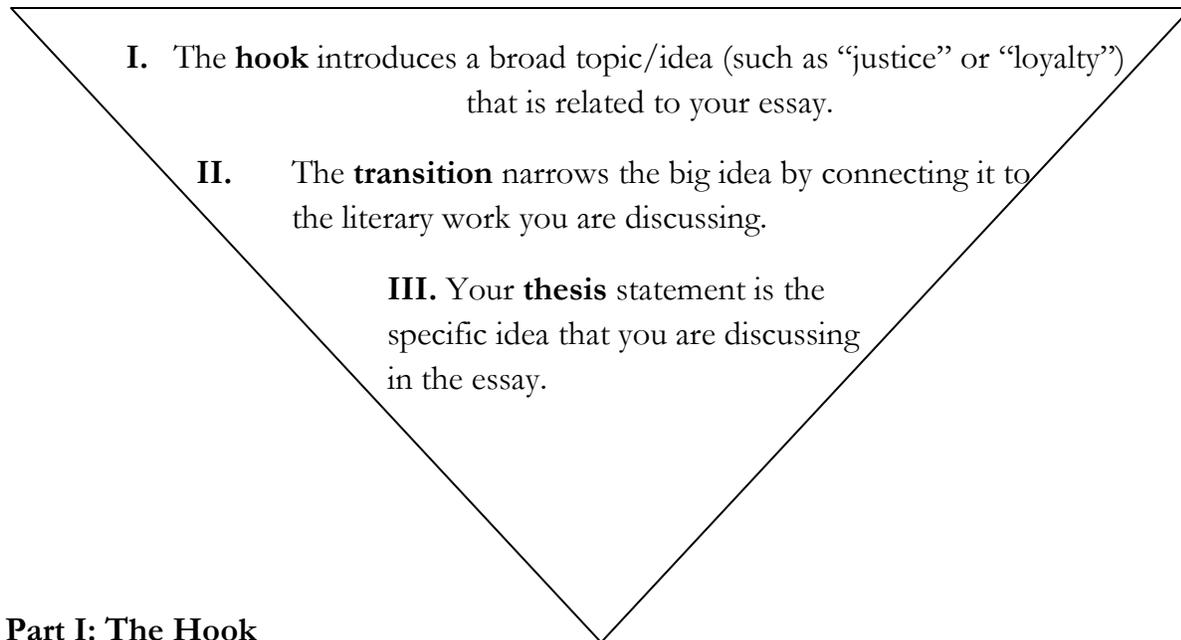


Name: _____

Writing Introductions for Literary Essays

The Elements of an Introduction



Part I: The Hook

The hook gets your reader’s attention by presenting a broad topic or question that relates to your essay. For example, an essay about the guilt of a character in a trial could start with the sentence, “In the American criminal justice system, a jury cannot prove a person guilty unless he or she has been proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.” Introducing this idea prepares the reader to understand the details you will be presenting. Provocative questions, such as “Can someone commit murder and still be a good person?” can also introduce your topic and hook your reader.

Part II: The Transition

The transition connects the big idea you presented in the hook with the literary work you are discussing in your essay. Always give the name and author of literary works in this part of the introduction.

Part III: The Thesis

The introduction ends with your thesis statement. Your thesis statement must:

1. Answer the essay question. (“People have different opinions about...” is a very weak thesis because it does not take a stand on the question that was asked.)
2. Provide a preview of what the essay will discuss. This preview—which often takes the form of a list of the topics you will discuss in each body paragraph—acts as a roadmap so the reader knows where you are going.

(continue to the back for examples and an exercise)

Sample Introduction

In the following sample introduction, the three parts are labeled as follows:

❶ Hook ❷ Transition ❸ Thesis Statement

Essay question: Is our society similar to Panem, the fictional society in *The Hunger Games*?

Introductory paragraph:

❶ Throughout human history, violence—even murder—has always been a problem. ❷ Murder and violence are prominent in *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, where children are forced to fight to the death in an arena for entertainment. ❸ While the cruel world of Panem at first seems very different from our own society, it is actually frighteningly similar: beauty, violence, and sacrifice exist in both societies.

Exercise: Identifying the Parts of an Introductory Paragraph

Directions: Identify the three parts in each of the sample introductions by doing the following:

- Circle the hook (circle all sentences that are part of the hook)
- Put parenthesis around the transition sentence(s)
- Underline the thesis statement.

Essay question #1: Why did Evan Hunter use a third-person point-of-view in the story “On the Sidewalk Bleeding”?

Sample Introduction:

Whenever a person joins a group, he inevitably must sacrifice part of himself in order to conform with the group’s expectations. In Evan Hunter’s “On the Sidewalk Bleeding,” we see the extreme case of a young man who loses his life because of his choice to join a gang. Hunter uses the third-person point-of-view because being able to tell the reader that Andy will die at the beginning of the story allows him to focus the reader’s attention on the protagonist’s inner conflict.

Essay question #2: Is the testimony given by the informants in *Monster* reliable?

Sample Introduction:

Is it right for the U.S. justice system to give criminals reduced sentences in return for evidence against other people? The trial in *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers dramatizes this issue by portraying a trial that relies heavily on the use of testimony of men who are admitted criminals. A close analysis of the inaccuracies, omissions, and deceptions in the testimony of Bobo Evans and Osvaldo Cruz makes it clear that they are not reliable witnesses.