

Theme Writing Strategy Steps

Step 1: **T**hink

Step 2: **O**rganize it

Step 3: **W**rite a draft

Step 4: **E**valuate it

Step 5: **R**efine it

Parts of a Theme

- **Title**

- **Introduction**

Introductory Paragraph

- **Body**

Detail Paragraphs

- **Conclusion**

Concluding Paragraph

Introductory Paragraph

Topic Sentence:

- **Names the theme topic**
- **Grabs the reader's attention**
- **Sometimes introduces the Introductory Option**

Detail Sentences:

- **Include a transition in Lead-off Sentences**
- **Provide background information about the topic or details about the Introductory Option**

Thesis Statement:

- **Names the topic**
- **Names the subtopics**
- **Shares the main message of the theme**
- **Leads into the theme in a graceful way**

Detail Paragraph

Topic/Transition Sentence:

- Includes a transition/connection
- Names the topic
- Names the subtopic

Lead-off Detail Sentences:

- Include a transition
- Introduce a new detail

Follow-up Detail Sentences:

- Provide more information about the detail based on research

Concluding Paragraph

Concluding Transition Sentence:

- Includes a transition
- Names the topic
- Names or ties together the subtopics
- Sometimes introduces the Concluding Option

Detail Sentences:

- Summarize the subtopics or provide details about the Concluding Option

Clincher Sentence:

- Names the topic
- Provides the main message of the theme
- Gracefully closes the theme

Note Cards

Front of the Card

2

Mockingbirds - sing songs of 200
other birds

Back of the Card

Pg. 1

Bergin, Michael. "What is a Mockingbird?" *10,000
Birds*. N.p., April 2006. Web. 24 Sept. 2013.
<<http://www.10000birds.com/mockingbirds.htm>>

Ref. 2, pg. 1

References (MLA Style)

Book

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1960. Print.

Online Articles

“Mockingbird.” *Wikipedia*, June 2014. Web. 24 Sept. 2013.
<<http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/mockingbird>>

Zee, Joan. “Northern Mockingbird.” *All about Birds*. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Oct. 2008. Web. 20 Sept. 2013.
<<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/northern-mockingbird>>

References (APA Style)

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Lee, H. (1960). *To kill a mockingbird*.
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Retrieved from [http://www.
wikipedia.org/wiki/mockingbird](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/mockingbird)

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mockingbird*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell
Lab of Ornithology. Retrieved from
[http://www.allaboutbirds.org/
guide/northern-mockingbird](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/northern-mockingbird)

In-Text Citations (MLA Style)

Harper Lee's reference to mockingbirds begins with the startling title of her book, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Of course, the reader is immediately prompted to wonder why anyone would want to kill a mockingbird. Mockingbirds are actually harmless, medium-sized birds about 10 inches long (Alderfer 1). Their 17 species can be found in North and South America ("Mockingbird" 1). They were given their name because they "mock" or imitate other birds' songs. Bergin reported that a single mockingbird can sing the songs of as many as 200 other species of birds and even some insects (1). Usually, they repeat another bird's song two or three times before switching to another bird's song (Bergin 1). They can sing a whole string of other birds' songs, and thus they are known for their continuous singing. Interestingly, Harper Lee refers to mockingbirds at several points in her novel to communicate one of the main messages of her work.

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Citations for Quotations From Expository Work (MLA Style)

Block Quotation (more than 4 lines of expository text):

One of the effects of pesticides is that the numbers of birds are decreasing. One reason for this decrease is that fewer birds are hatching. Phillips reported:

In 1999, data collected by the Birdhouse Network showed an unusually high number of unhatched eggs among cavity-nesting birds. At least one egg failed to hatch in more than 20 percent of nests belonging to 7 of the 10 most common cavity-nesting birds, excluding House Sparrows. (1)

Quotation in text (less than 4 lines of expository words)

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Citations for Quotations From Expository Work (APA Style)

Block Quotation (more than 40 words of expository text):

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Citations for Quotations From Narrative Work (MLA Style)

Block Quotation (more than 4 lines a character says):

Atticus warns his children that killing mockingbirds is a sin. When Scout asks their neighbor, Miss Maudie, why killing mockingbirds is a sin, Miss Maudie tells Scout the following:

“Your father’s right,” she said. “Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat up people’s gardens, they don’t nest in corncribs, they don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.” (Lee 119)

Quotation in text (less than 4 lines):

Later in the novel, Atticus asks Scout whether she understands why they have made the decision not to put Boo Radley on trial. Scout says, “Yes, sir, I understand.... It’d be sort of like shootin’ a mockingbird, wouldn’t it?” (Lee 370)

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Quotation in text (less than 40 words):

Later in the novel, Atticus asks Scout whether she understands why they have made the decision not to put Boo Radley on trial. Scout says, “Yes, sir, I understand.... It’d be sort of like shootin’ a mockingbird, wouldn’t it?” (Lee, 1960, p. 370)

Example Signal Words

Report
Conclude
State
Reply
Say
Tell
Ask
Warn
Implore
Beg
Hold
Summarize
Explain
Teach
Plead
Wish
Cry
Agree
Grumble

Example Use of Signal Words

Within text:

Frederick reported that, “...”

The researchers concluded that, “...”

They determined that, “....”

With dialogue:

When Atticus found out, he said, “.....”

Then Jem replied, “...”

Maybelle explained, “...”

Example

Introductory Paragraph

Do No Harm

Harper Lee's reference to mockingbirds begins with the startling title of her book, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee 1960). Of course, the reader is prompted to wonder why anyone would want to kill a mockingbird. Mockingbirds are actually harmless, medium-sized birds about 10 inches long (Alderfer 1). Their 17 species can be found in North and South America (Mockingbird 1). They were given their name because they "mock" or imitate other birds' songs. A single mockingbird can sing the songs of as many as 200 other species of birds and even some insects (Bergin 1). Usually, they repeat another bird's song two or three times before switching to another bird's song (Bergin 1). They can sing a whole string of other birds' songs, and thus they are known for their continuous singing. Interestingly, Harper Lee refers to mockingbirds at several points in her novel about prejudice to communicate one of the main messages of the novel.

Example

Detail Paragraph

At the end of the novel, Harper Lee refers once more to the metaphor of the mockingbird. At this point in the novel, Scout and Jem are walking home from the Halloween party together. The night is dark, and they do not have a flashlight. Scout still has on her Halloween costume, and she and Jem cannot see much. Nevertheless, the children hear someone following them. After a few minutes of being followed, they are attacked by someone. Jem is knocked unconscious and his arm is broken. Scout is thrown to the ground in her costume. Suddenly, someone else comes along and saves them by killing the attacker. Scout does not know what happened because she was blinded by her costume, but the sheriff and Atticus reason through what happened. They conclude that Boo Radley, their reclusive neighbor, came out of his house to save the children. They decide not to arrest him and put him on trial for murder although they predict that he would be acquitted for saving the children. Atticus asks Scout whether she understands why they have made that decision. Scout says, "Yes, sir, I understand.... It'd be sort of like shootin' a mockingbird, wouldn't it?" (Lee 370).

Example

Concluding Paragraph

In the end then, through the use of the mockingbird metaphor, Harper Lee teaches the lesson that people should not harm innocent creatures who do no harm themselves. Mockingbirds are innocent creatures who only make our lives more beautiful by singing lovely songs. They should not be harmed. People like Tom Robinson, the crippled man in the novel who is innocent of the crime with which he is charged, should not be found guilty and sentenced to death. Likewise, people like Boo Radley, the reclusive man who saved the children from vengeful Bob Ewell who was trying to kill them, should not be put on public trial for murder and paraded around for all the world to see. In the most general sense, Harper Lee used the metaphor of the mockingbird to teach the concept of “Do no harm” but takes it a step further to be “Do no harm to those who do no harm.” The metaphor pushes people to carefully consider the possible innocent nature of those around them who might be criticized or punished.

Example Theme

Do No Harm (MLA)

Harper Lee's reference to mockingbirds begins with the startling title of her book, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee 1960). Of course, the reader is prompted to wonder why anyone would want to kill a mockingbird. Mockingbirds are actually harmless, medium-sized birds about 10 inches long (Alderfer 1). Their 17 species can be found in North and South America (Mockingbird 1). They were given their name because they "mock" or imitate other birds' songs. A single mockingbird can sing the songs of as many as 200 other species of birds and even some insects (Bergin 1). Usually, they repeat another bird's song two or three times before switching to another bird's song (Bergin 1). They can sing a whole string of other birds' songs, and thus they are known for their continuous singing. Interestingly, Harper Lee refers to mockingbirds at several points in her novel about prejudice to communicate one of the main messages of the novel.

By way of background, Lee's novel is set in a fictional town in Alabama. Two children, Scout and Jem, and their father, Atticus, are at the heart of the novel. About a third of the way through the novel, the children receive air rifles as their Christmas gifts from their father. Atticus refuses to teach them how to shoot the rifles. Instead, he tells them to shoot at tin cans or blue jays in the backyard. He warns them that killing mockingbirds is a sin. When Scout asks their neighbor, Miss Maudie, why killing mockingbirds is a sin, Miss Maudie tells Scout the following:

“Your father’s right,” she said. “Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat up people’s gardens, don’t nest in corncribs, they don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird” (Lee 119).

Throughout the remainder of the novel, Harper Lee uses mockingbirds to set the tone or mood for a scene. At one point, she uses their singing to lighten the mood in a tense situation. To set the stage, Scout and Jem are walking together toward their school on a dark Halloween night. They are excited about Halloween and the Halloween party planned at their school. Jem starts teasing Scout by talking about haints and other scary things associated with Halloween. Then Jem draws Scout’s attention to the scary house of their reclusive neighbor, Boo Radley. Scout gets a little scared, but as they walk past it, they hear the songs of a mockingbird. Scout describes the singing as follows:

High above us in the darkness a solitary mocker poured out his repertoire in blissful unawareness of whose tree he sat in, plunging from the shrill kee, kee of the sunflower bird to the irascible qua-ack of the bluejay, to the sad lament of Poor Will, Poor Will, Poor Will (Lee 342).

Thus, the dark mood of the evening has been broken, and the children happily proceed to their party.

At the end of the novel, Harper Lee refers once more to the metaphor of the mockingbird. At this point in the novel, Scout and Jem are walking home from the Halloween party together. The night is dark, and they do not have a flashlight. Scout still has her Halloween costume on, and she and Jem cannot see much. Nevertheless, the children hear someone following them. After a few minutes of being followed, they are attacked by someone. Jem

is knocked unconscious and his arm is broken. Scout is thrown to the ground in her costume. Suddenly, someone else comes along and saves them by killing the attacker. Scout does not know what happened because she was blinded by her costume, but the sheriff and Atticus reason through what happened. They conclude that Boo Radley, their reclusive neighbor, came out of his house to save the children. They decide not to arrest him and put him on trial for murder although they predict that he would be acquitted for saving the children. Atticus asks Scout whether she understands why they have made that decision. Scout says, "Yes, sir, I understand.... It'd be sort of like shootin' a mockingbird, wouldn't it?" (Lee 370)

In the end then, through the use of the mockingbird metaphor, Harper Lee teaches the lesson that people should not harm innocent creatures who do no harm themselves. Mockingbirds are innocent creatures who only make our lives more beautiful by singing lovely songs. They should not be harmed. People like Tom Robinson, the crippled man in the novel who is innocent of the crime with which he is charged, should not be found guilty and sentenced to death. Likewise, people like Boo Radley, the reclusive man who saved the children from vengeful Bob Ewell who was trying to kill them, should not be put on public trial for murder and paraded around for all the world to see. In the most general sense, Harper Lee used the metaphor of the mockingbird to teach the concept of "Do no harm" but takes it a step further to be "Do no harm to those who do no harm." The metaphor pushes people to carefully consider the possible innocent nature of those around them who might be criticized or punished.

Introductory Paragraph

Topic Sentence:

- Names the items to be compared

Detail Sentences:

- Define the items
- Provide background information about the items

Thesis Statement:

- Names the items
- Names the dimensions for comparison (the ways the items will be compared)
- Shares the main message of the theme

Example

Introductory Paragraph

Humans have a relative called the gorilla. Whether they can be called “close relatives” is an interesting question. Gorillas look so much like humans that explorers thought that gorillas were a tribe of hairy people. They were given their name “gorilla” by an explorer because the word “gorilla” means “hairy people” (“Gorilla” 2). Like chimpanzees and orangutans, gorillas are anthropoids which means “resembling man” (“Webster’s” 38). Their physical appearance, their social life, and their daily activities make gorillas so similar to humans that they might be considered close relatives.

Detail Paragraph

Topic/Transition Sentence:

- Includes a transition
- Names the items to be compared
- Names the dimension for comparison (one way they are being compared)

Lead-off Detail Sentences:

- Introduce one of the similarities

Follow-up Detail Sentences:

- Provide details about the similarity
- Cover both items

Detail Sentences in Detail Paragraphs

Topic/Transition Sentence: One way soccer and football are alike relates to the place both sports are played.

Lead-off Sentence: Most importantly, both sports involve the use of a large grassy field.

Follow-up Sentence 1: The fields for both sports are about 100 yards long.

Follow-up Sentence 2: The soccer field is a bit longer and wider than a football field.

OR

Follow-up Sentence 1: Although both fields are about 100 yards long, a soccer field is a little longer and wider than a football field.

OR

Follow-up Sentence 1: The fields for both sports are huge; soccer fields are sometimes a bit longer (110-120 yards) than football fields (usually 100 yards).

Example Paragraph A

Topic/Transition Sentence: Has a transition and names the topic and subtopic

L1: Statement about the first similarity (or difference) related to the subtopic.

F1: How Item #1 shows that.

F2: How Item #2 shows that.

L2: Statement about the second similarity (or difference) related to the subtopic.

F1: How Item #1 shows that.

F2: How Item #2 shows that.

L3: Statement about the third similarity (or difference) related to the subtopic.

F1: How Item #1 shows that.

F2: How Item #2 shows that.

Example Paragraph B

Topic/Transition Sentence: Has a transition and names the topic and subtopic (dimension)

L1: Statement about the first area of similarities (or differences) related to Item #1 and the subtopic.

F1: Follow-up statement about that first area related to Item #1.

L2: Statement about the second area of similarities (or differences) related to Item #1 and the subtopic.

F1: Follow-up statement about that second area related to Item #1.

L3: Statement about the third area of similarities (or differences) related to Item #1 and the subtopic.

F1: Follow-up statement about that third area related to Item #1.

L4: Statement about the first area of similarities (or differences) related to Item #2 and the subtopic.

F1: Follow-up statement about that first area related to Item #2.

L5: Statement about the second area of similarities (or differences) related to Item #2 and the subtopic.

F1: Follow-up statement about that second area related to Item #2.

L6: Statement about the third area of similarities (or differences) related to Item #2 and the subtopic.

F1: Follow-up statement about that third area related to Item #2.

Example Detail

Paragraph A

As mentioned, gorillas are similar to humans physically. Both gorillas and humans can stand upright and walk on two feet. Gorillas mainly do this when they are carrying something or using a tool. Humans walk on two feet whenever they move around. Additionally, gorillas are about the same height as humans when standing. The average height of male gorillas is five feet six inches (“All about gorillas” 2); however, male gorillas have been known to stand as much as six feet four inches tall (“What is...” 1). In the U.S., the average height of a human male is five feet ten inches (“Template...” 2). Also, gorillas and humans have fingerprints that are unique. All gorillas and humans can be identified solely by their fingerprints. Interestingly, gorilla DNA is very similar to human DNA. From ninety-five to ninety-nine percent of their DNA matches human DNA (“DNA” 1).

Example Detail Paragraph B

Probably because of their close relationships with their black nannies, both Scout and Lily are curious about the black culture. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Calpurnia takes Scout and Jem to church with her, which is quite a revelation to them. Scout is curious about the absence of hymnals and how the offering is collected. Later, Scout wants to visit Calpurnia's home, but her aunt will not allow her to go. She is very disappointed. During the trial, Scout sits in the courtroom balcony with the black people. She accepts them, and they accept her. Similarly, in *The Secret Life of Bees*, Lily is curious about Rosaleen's life. She visits Rosaleen's home and notices many details about Rosaleen's daily activities. After running away, she moves in with a black family of sisters, and she fully participates in their business and home life. She even participates in their invented religious activities. She meets, becomes friends with, and falls for a black teen-aged boy. They become inseparable.

Concluding Paragraph

Concluding Transition Sentence:

- Includes a transition
- Names the items that have been compared
- Mentions comparing in some way

Detail Sentences:

- Cover a Concluding Option
OR
- Summarize the dimensions

Clincher Sentence:

- Names the items
- Mentions that they are similar
- Provides the main message of the theme

Example

Concluding Paragraph

In sum, gorillas are similar to humans with regard to how they look, how they relate to each other, and the activities in which they engage. Mainly because they can walk upright and are similar in size to humans, they have an overall similar appearance, and their DNA is almost a complete match to human DNA. Like humans, gorillas relate to each other within families and have definite roles in these families. Also similar to humans, gorillas engage in daily activities including obtaining food, communicating with each other, and manipulating tools. All of these traits make them close relatives to humans in the animal family, but probably not kissing cousins!

Introductory Paragraph

Topic Sentence:

- Names the items to be contrasted

Detail Sentences:

- Define the items
- Provide background information about the items
- Can include an Introductory Option

Thesis Statement:

- Names the items
- Names the dimensions of the contrast (the ways the items will be contrasted)
- Shares the main message of the theme

Example

Introductory Paragraph

Our Distant Cousins

Humans have a distant relative called the gorilla. Indeed, gorillas look so much like humans that explorers thought that gorillas were a tribe of hairy because the word “gorilla” means “tribe of hairy people” (“Gorilla” 2). Like chimpanzees and orangutans, gorillas are anthropoids which means “resembling humans” (“Webster’s” 38). Nevertheless, people. They were given their name “gorilla” by an explorer gorillas are very different from humans because of some aspects of their appearance, their intelligence, and their eating habits.

Detail Paragraphs

Topic/Transition Sentence:

- Includes a transition
- Names the items to be contrasted
- Names the dimension for the contrast (the way the items are being contrasted)

Lead-off Detail Sentences:

- Introduces one of the differences

Follow-up Detail Sentences:

- Provide details about the difference
- Cover both items

Detail Sentences in Detail Paragraphs

Topic Transition Sentence: One way skiing and football are different relates to the place that people engage in the sports.

Lead-off Sentence: Most importantly, the angles associated with the locations are physically distinct.

Follow-up Sentence 1: Skiing takes place on a steep mountainside.

Follow-up Sentence 2: Football takes place on a very flat field.

OR

Follow-up Sentence 1: While skiing takes place on a steep mountainside, football takes place on a very flat field.

OR

Follow-up Sentence 1: Skiing takes place on a steep mountainside; football takes place on a very flat field.

Example

Detail Paragraph

With regard to their appearance, gorillas would never truly be mistaken for humans because they look so different. First, both male and female gorillas are typically heavier than their human counterparts. Male gorillas weigh about 400 pounds, and female gorillas weigh about 200 pounds (“All about gorillas” 2). Second, most of gorillas’ bodies are covered by fur. Only the palms of their hands, soles of their feet, noses, lips, and ears do not have fur. Most humans have hair on just a few spots like their heads. Third, the muscles in gorillas’ arms are larger than the muscles in their legs. This is the opposite of human arms and legs. Also, gorillas’ legs are shorter than their arms. Again, this is the opposite of humans. Finally, gorillas mostly walk around on all fours. They only walk on their feet when carrying something or when defending something. In contrast, humans mainly walk on their feet.

Concluding Paragraph

Concluding Transition Sentence:

- Includes a transition
- Names the items that have been contrasted
- Mentions “contrasting” in some way

Detail Sentences:

- Cover a Concluding Option OR
- Summarize the differences

Clincher Sentence:

- Names the items
- Mentions that they are different
- Provides the main message of the theme

Example

Concluding Paragraph

To conclude, gorillas have some characteristics that are distinctly different from human characteristics, including how they look, how intelligent they are, and what they eat. Although they can walk upright in certain situations, their hairy appearance and the fact that they walk mainly on all fours make gorillas look quite different from humans. Despite the fact that a few gorillas have learned some sign language, gorillas do not seem to be as intelligent as humans. Furthermore, they focus their time and activities on eating plants and sleeping. Thus, although they are related to humans, all of these traits make gorillas distant cousins to humans in the animal family.

Introductory Paragraph

Topic Sentence:

- Names the target event

Detail Sentences:

- Define the target event
- Provide background information about the target event
- Cover an Introductory Option

Thesis Statement:

- Names the target event
- Names the causes of the event
- Shares the main message of the theme

Example

Introductory Paragraph

Who's the Culprit?

The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare (1992) is a classic play in which the main characters, Romeo and Juliet, fall in love. The play takes place during Elizabethan times in Verona, Italy. Romeo and Juliet are the children of two families, the Montagues and Capulets, who are feuding with each other. The feud is violent; any time a member of one of the families dies in a fight with a member from the other family, his relatives seek revenge. Unfortunately, this scenario leads to the tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Four characters woven throughout this scenario create the circumstances which cause Romeo and Juliet's tragic deaths: Juliet's mother and father, Tybalt, and Friar Lawrence.

Detail Paragraphs

Topic/Transition Sentence:

- Includes a transition
- Names the target event
- Names a major cause for the target event

Lead-off Detail Sentences:

- Introduce one of the details

Follow-up Detail Sentences:

- Provide information about the detail

Example

Detail Paragraph

Another character who adds to the deadly circumstances surrounding Romeo and Juliet is Tybalt, the nephew of Lady Capulet. As a member of the extended family, he considers himself a protector of the family. He indicates in Act 1 that he hates peace and he especially hates Romeo's family by stating to Benvolio Montague (Romeo's cousin), "What, drawn and talk of peace? I hate the word as I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee" (Act 1, Scene 1, Line 71). Later, when Tybalt notices the masked Romeo at the Capulet party, he is incensed that Romeo would attend the party disguised and uninvited. He indicates that he wants to kill Romeo by stating, "By my stock and honor of my kin, to strike him dead I hold it not a sin" (Act 1, Scene 5, Lines 66-67). Still later in the play, Tybalt duels with Mercutio, Romeo's close friend. When Tybalt stabs Mercutio, Romeo engages Tybalt in a duel and kills him. As a result, Romeo is banished from Verona, and he can no longer see his beloved Juliet.

Concluding Paragraph

Concluding Transition Sentence:

- Includes a Concluding Transition
- Names the target event
- Mentions causes in some way

Detail Sentences:

- Cover a Concluding Option
OR
- Summarize the causes

Clincher Sentence:

- Names the target event
- Mentions that it was caused
- Provides the main message of the theme

Example

Concluding Paragraph

To conclude, the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, although by their own hands, were also caused by the actions of several of the people in their lives. Juliet's parents, by insisting that she marry a man that she did not know or love and rejecting Romeo because he is a Montague, created a situation where Juliet would become secretive and resistant. The situation also pushed Romeo to arrange an immediate and secretive wedding. Tybalt, by threatening bodily harm on the Montagues and by inciting duels, made the situation even more dire, which resulted in Romeo being banished and distant from Juliet. Juliet became even more isolated and emotional and was willing to acquiesce to Friar Lawrence's plan. Friar Lawrence did not analyze the possible wrong turns that his plan might take, and he did not act prudently. As a result of all these people's emotionally based actions, two young people suffered needless pain and death.

Introductory Paragraph

Topic Sentence:

- Names the target cause

Detail Sentences:

- Define the target cause
- Provide background information about the target cause
- Can cover an Introductory Option

Thesis Statement:

- Names the target cause
- Names the major groups of effects
- Shares the main message of the theme

Example

Introductory Paragraph

What Harm Can One Lie Do?

In *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1960), one of the characters, Mayella Ewell, tells a “whopper” of a lie to the sheriff. Mayella, a white girl, lives with her father, Bob Ewell, and her siblings in a dilapidated cabin behind the garbage dump in Maycomb, Alabama. The Ewell family is very poor; Bob Ewell is unemployed and known to be a heavy drinker. Nineteen-year-old Mayella takes care of her younger brothers and sisters because their mother is dead. When the sheriff, Mr. Heck Tate, is called to their home by Bob Ewell, he finds that Mayella has been beaten. He later testifies that “...she was pretty bruised up when I got there, and she had a black eye comin’ ” (Lee 225). He further testifies that when he asked her who beat her up, she told him that Tom Robinson, a black man, attacked her and raped her. This lie sets in motion events that have serious consequences for other characters in the novel, including Tom Robinson, Atticus Finch, Bob Ewell, and their families.

Detail Paragraphs

Topic/Transition Sentence:

- Includes a transition
- Names the target cause
- Names one major group of effects

Lead-off Detail Sentences:

- Introduce one effect related to the group of effects

Follow-up Detail Sentences:

- Provide details about the effect

Example

Detail Paragraph

Tom Robinson is, of course, the character who is most severely affected by this lie because he is innocent. Predictably, after Mayella tells the sheriff that Tom attacked her, the sheriff arrests Tom and charges him with raping Mayella. Tom is put in jail and then placed on trial. Unfortunately, an all-white jury finds him guilty of the crime, a capital offense. He is sentenced to death. While he awaits his appeal, Tom is sent to the Enfield Prison Farm. This prison is located 70 miles from his home, and he continues to be isolated from his family. This set of circumstances causes Tom to lose hope. One of his friends claims that the last thing he said to his attorney before going to the prison farm was, "Goodbye Mr. Finch, there ain't nothin' you can do now, so there ain't no use tryin' " (Lee 314). Unfortunately, soon after arriving at the prison, Tom tries to escape by running across the exercise field and scaling the fence. He is shot and killed by the guards.

Concluding Paragraph

Concluding Transition Sentence:

- Includes a transition
- Names the target cause
- Mentions effects in some way

Detail Sentences:

- Cover a Concluding Option
OR
- Each summarizes one group of effects

Clincher Sentence:

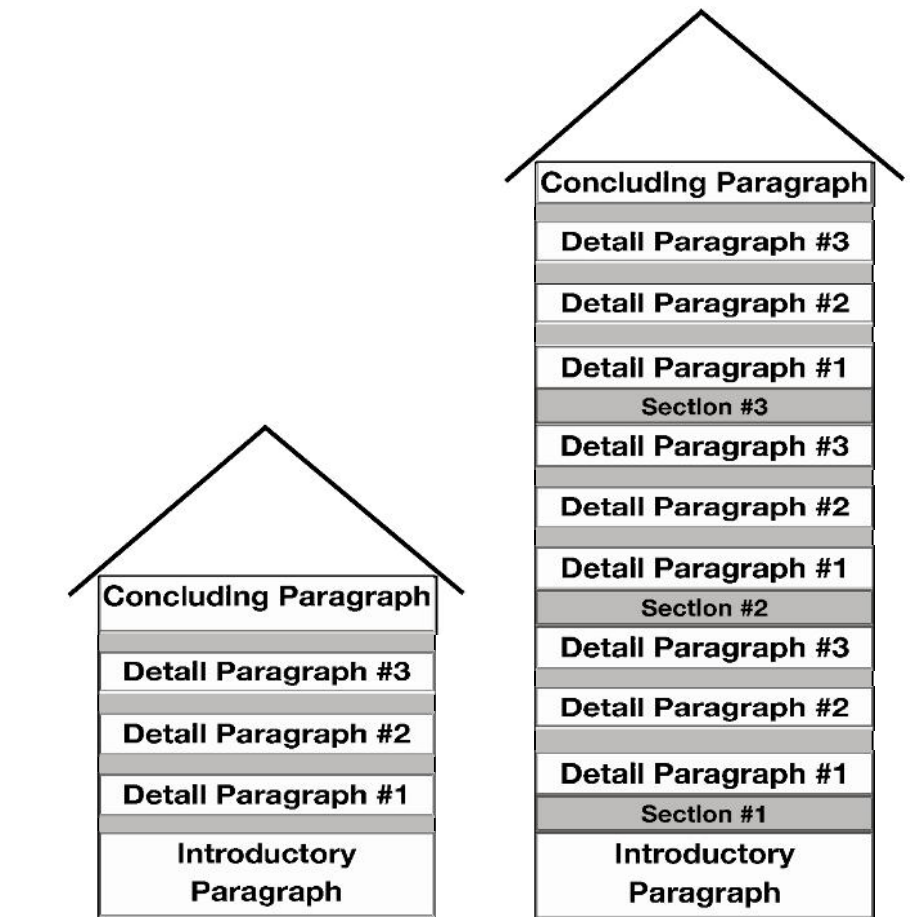
- Names the target cause
- Mentions effects in some way
- Provides the main message of the theme

Example

Concluding Paragraph

To conclude, Mayella's lie seriously affects many of the people in Maycomb, Alabama. Even though the lie was probably designed originally by her and her father to cover up his attack on her, Mayella perpetuated the lie by testifying in court against Tom. Tom, an innocent man who had generously helped Mayella numerous times around her home, is dead. Tom's children are fatherless. Atticus and his children have endured ridicule and attack. The children's lives were put in danger. Bob is dead, and his children are fatherless. Thus, the ripples that have extended outward from this lie have touched numerous folks, probably not even in Mayella's mind or realm of experience at the time she told it. Certainly, lies can be deadly, and cover ups should be avoided.

Building Taller Towers



Thesis Statement

- **Names the topic**
- **Names the sections**
- **Mentions the main message of the theme**

Topic/Transition Sentences

- **Includes a transition**
- **Names the topic**
- **Names the section**
- **Names the subtopic**

Headings

- **Make headings for sections**
- **Make headings for subtopics if one subtopic has two or more paragraphs**

Examples:

Topic: The Causes of the Civil War

Centered headings for sections:

Differences in Geography

Differences in Economies

Differences in Social Life

Flush-left headings for subtopics:

Differences in Geography (section)

Geography in the West

Geography in the East

Geography in the South