

# Introductory and Concluding Sections Writing Guides

## Introductory Section

### **Paragraph 1: Make your audience care about the topic**

Four to Five sentences about the broad area of study under consideration—do two or more of the following:

1. Discuss the topic in broad terms
2. Discuss why the topic matters in American history—race, gender, the land, and technology do matter.
3. Discuss how the topic/phenomenon/idea has changed through the period of American Literature that you are going to cover in your paper.
4. Discuss how the topic/phenomenon/idea affects America now
5. Discuss how the topic/phenomenon/idea will affect America in the future

**MAKE YOUR READER CARE ABOUT THE TOPIC—WHY DOES THIS MATTER?  
WHY SHOULD THEY BOTHER TO READ THIS—YOU MUST HOOK THEM!**

### **Paragraph 2: Enumerate the texts in question, (Thesis)**

- Lead with something like “Many texts from American literature” or “Many American texts” or “Several important selections from American literature” or “American literature demonstrates” or “The history of American literature shows that” or etc, etc, etc
- Next, you are going to have to give one or two sentences (or combinations of dependent and independent clauses—look up these terms if you forgot them) about each of the texts that you will use—be sure to include the full title and the author’s full name. These sentences should offer brief commentary on how these texts connect to the topic/phenomenon/idea that you will discuss in your paper.
- This will be a difficult paragraph to write because it will try to come out as just a laundry-list of texts. Use complex and compound sentences (look these terms up—you learned them in middle school) as well as sentence transitions to smooth this section out as much as possible. This is a hard section to do with smoothness and style, but I will be looking to see who writes well in this section.
- You can either end this paragraph with your thesis or you can split this paragraph at some logical point in history (beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Post-WWII? Great Depression? Passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment? Death of Booker T. Washington? End of the Harlem Renaissance? Collapse of the Soviet Union? Assassination of Kennedy? Just be sure that you have some logical reason why you are breaking this paragraph in two).

### **Paragraph 3: Continued Enumeration, Yoking together, Thesis**

- If you continue to enumerate in this section, your topic sentence will have to somehow transition and indicate why you are doing one more paragraph.
- In this paragraph, you can also offer some preliminary analysis of how the texts that will go into this paper interact.
- Finally, lay in your thesis. One sentence. Be specific! Some of these theses are really vague or are so true that they hardly need to be argued. “Technology is important in science fiction.” “African-Americans have had to deal with bad stuff.” “Women have identities.” And “America has stopped being a nation of farmers.”—are not good theses. These things are obvious. Choose something specific and debatable. Remember: you are making an argument. We don’t need to argue that *The Crucible* is about how the Salem Witch Trials hurt people.

## **Concluding Section**

### **Paragraphs 1 and 2: Compare and Contrast/ Identify Connections/Trace a Process**

- Write a pair of six to ten sentence paragraphs articulating some larger connection.
- Give your audience the bigger picture.
- Demonstrate to your audience how these texts work together; cite them by title.
- You can group them topically, but it will be far, far better to demonstrate a process—don't worry if that process does not run along an neat, linear trajectory. History doesn't work this way; why would literature?

### **Paragraph 3: Restate topics of body/text sections and restate thesis**

- This paragraph can be shorter—five to eight sentences.
- Wrap it up by giving an even bigger global sense of the topic.
- Restate your thesis but don't you dare use the exact same sentence—so tacky.