

The Introduction

The introduction to your literary analysis essay should try to arouse interest in your reader. You want to include background information (context relevant to your thesis and necessary for the reader to understand the position you are taking).

In addition, you need to include the title of the work of literature and name of the author.

The following are satisfactory introductory paragraphs which include appropriate thesis statements:

A. It is a paradox that a man shows love toward his wife while at the same time supposedly plotting her death. It is just such a man – a Renaissance duke -- that Robert Browning portrays in his poem “My Last Duchess.” Through what he says about himself, through his actions, and through his interpretation of earlier incidents, the Duke reveals the arrogance, jealousy, and materialism that are his most conspicuous traits.

B. The first paragraph of Alberto Alvaro Rios’s short story “The Secret Lion” presents a twelve-year-old boy’s view of growing up -- everything changes. As the narrator tells us, when the magician pulls a tablecloth out from under a pile of dishes, children are amazed at the “stay-the-same part,” while adults focus only on the tablecloth itself (42). Adults have the benefit of experience and know the trick will work as long as the technique is correct. When we “grow up” we gain this experience and knowledge, but we lose our innocence and sense of wonder. In other words, the price we pay for growing up is a permanent sense of loss. This tradeoff is central to “The Secret Lion.” The key symbols in the story reinforce its main theme: change is inevitable and always accompanied by a sense of loss.

C. The setting of John Updike’s story “A & P” is crucial to our understanding of Sammy’s decision to quit his job. Even though Sammy knows that his quitting will make life more difficult for him, he instinctively insists upon rejecting what the A & P represents in the story. When he rings up a “No Sale” and “saunter[s]” out of the store, Sammy leaves behind not only a job but the rigid state of mind associated with the A & P. Although Sammy is the central character in the story and we learn much about him, Updike seems to invest as much effort in describing the setting as he does Sammy. The title, after all, is not “Youthful Rebellion” or “Sammy Quits” but “A & P.” In fact, the setting is the antagonist of the story and plays a role that is as important as Sammy’s.

Strategies for Writing a Conclusion

Conclusions are often the most difficult part of an essay to write, and many writers feel that they have nothing left to say after having written the paper. A writer needs to keep in mind that the conclusion is often what a reader remembers best. Your conclusion should be the best part of your paper.

A conclusion should

- stress the importance of the thesis statement,
- give the essay a sense of completeness, and
- leave a final impression on the reader.

Suggestions

- **Answer the question "So What?"**

Show your readers why this paper was important. Show them that your paper was meaningful and useful.

- **Synthesize, don't summarize**
 - Don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. They have read it. Show them how the points you made and the support and examples you used were not random, but fit together.
- **Redirect your readers**
 - Give your reader something to think about, perhaps a way to use your paper in the "real" world. If your introduction went from general to specific, make your conclusion go from specific to general. Think globally.
- **Create a new meaning**
 - You don't have to give new information to create a new meaning. By demonstrating how your ideas work together, you can create a new picture. Often the sum of the paper is worth more than its parts.