


# Writing Comparative Essays

English 345 Essay Workshop



# General Strengths

- ▶ Clear sense of why writers have selected two specific films for comparison; analyzing films together allows writer/readers to recognize something about each they may not have previously considered.
  - ▶ Writers offering discernible analytical claims that connects the two films.
  - ▶ Writers providing support for analysis.
  - ▶ Screenshots used analytically rather than decoratively.
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# Main Argument

## Problem

1. One thesis presented in introduction, another—sometimes an undercutting of the introductory argument—explored in the body and conclusion of the essay

## Solutions

1. Think about the argument you're trying to make in the paper. What do you want the audience to believe or think as a result of reading your paper?
2. Examine the first and final paragraphs of your essay. Are your main arguments the same or have you changed, supplemented or refined your original idea

Problem

Solutions

# Development

- ▶ Weak connections between arguments made in paragraphs and the thesis. Frequently, writers will make perceptive points about the text or do in-depth analysis of lines, passages, or scene. However, this analysis is not tied back to the main argument and reads more like a separate passage of interesting formal analysis rather than part of a larger argument.
- ▶ Try a descriptive outline:
  1. Number your paragraphs; then,
  2. On a separate sheet of paper, write your thesis at the top of the page, note the paragraph numbers and write a sentence or two about what you wanted to communicate in that paragraph (in other words, why that paragraph needs to be in the paper). Then, write a sentence that explains the connection between that paragraph and the thesis.
  3. Compare the numbered paragraphs with your descriptive outline, examining the paragraphs to see if you have expressed the connection that you wanted to make.

Problem

Solution

# Support

1. Writer discusses elements of the film, but doesn't effectively connect supporting details to the main argument or the claim made in the paragraph.
  2. Writers rely on narrative support.
1. In each paragraph, highlight sentences in which you discuss the film. In the margin, write a sentence that explains why these details are necessary to your argument.
  2. Consider how film visuals and sound function in the scene(s) you analyze. How do they underscore the themes you discuss?

Problems

Solutions

# Paragraphs

1. Paragraphs contain many good points that need to be developed in separate paragraphs.
2. Paragraphs “bury” their claim.

1. Highlight the key point you want to make in the paragraph. Then, read each sentence in light of that argument, making sure that the sentences connect to the main point.
2. Highlight your key point; consider whether it needs to be moved to the beginning of the paragraph.

Problem

Solutions

# Prose

- ▶ After revising content, read your paper aloud to yourself or a friend. Do your sentences make sense to you?