

# Shaping the Essay

The Absolute Taco

Intro and Conclusion Meet...Holding Together the MEAT of Your Argument

Move from the **GENERAL** to **SPECIFIC**

**Universal Thematic Claim** (UniT)– (a purposely vague, general, and universal claim). It should:

- Summon the abstract noun most at work in your answer
- Invite explanation
- Make the reader **LEAN IN IN CURIOSITY**

**Explain** what you mean by this universal claim. It should:

- Be more specific
- Explain that abstract noun in more detail
- Provide explanations
- Provide examples (3)

**Linking Statement:**

- Mentions full name of the author or authors
- Mentions the full name of the work (“ ” for short stories and poems, underline/italic names for novels)
- Connects your abstract noun and explanation to the linking statement.

Further explanation

- How does that abstract noun relate to the author and the work. A few words of clarity

**Thesis Claim:**

- Answers the question posed
- Answers the question in full
- Offers a clear opinion
- Offers a clear argument
- Uses precise clear language
- Can be specific to the work (does not have to be univ)
- Takes the answer to an insight (suggesting how – a universal truth about how this abstract noun affects the human condition
- Make sure the claim can be proved in two body para.
- Thesis must be underlined

Intro should be brief but **LOGICALLY**, **COHERENTLY**, and **PRECISELY** lead the reader into the place of your argumen

## Body Paragraph s (2 for an in-class essay)

### **Topic Sentence**

- Begins with a transitional word or phrase (no need in BP1)
- Is a point that supports the thesis (not the thesis itself). Clearly furthers the ideas set forth in the thesis
- Is specific to the work, **never universal** (speak to the novel, story, poem, document)
- Is an argument, never a fact
- Has ONE distinct subject related to the thesis

### **Transition, Lead-In, Quote**

- Set the context for evidence
- Context can be who, what, where, how,
- Context can include persuasion
- Transition seamlessly leads into the evidence
- Transition carries the persuasion of the argument

### **Evidence (2 pieces per paragraph is ideal)**

- Evidence will be in the form of paraphrasing (since you don't have the work)
- Do not cite the work or put quotes around it unless you have the exact quote and the exact page number
- Make sure the evidence supports the

### **Say/Mean/Matter**

- Explain how this piece of evidence proves your topic sentence (think about why you choose it to argue your point)
- Do not summarize, analyze – delve into deeper significance of the scene as evidence of your thesis
- Stick to the subject in your topic sentence
- Go to the matter – the how – Consider the abstract noun you invoke, the insight in your thesis claim, how does this quote support the abstract noun throughout the work?
- **IMPORTANT** – the rhetoric or HOW does the author create meaning. What poetic device or literary element (simile, metaphor, repetition, parallel structure, organization, setting, motif) furthers this idea?

### **Concluding Sentence**

- This is a revisiting or reimagining of the topic sentence (don't repeat – show the learning)
- Restate your point and
- remind the reader of the subject of your paragraph (your topic sentence),
- Echo the thesis (don't repeat)

## Concluding Paragraph – The Absolute Taco

Provides a sense of coherency – a clear, beginning, middle, and end  
Ending the way you started.

### PART 1

RECAP NOT  
REPEAT  
Revisits the major  
points in a fresh way

Move from the **SPECIFIC** to **GENERAL**

**SPECIFIC** - REVISIT the major points of your work, summarizing them using new words and demonstrating the understandings your argument should deliver. Rework the thesis in a new way. **DO NOT REPEAT** rather **REVISIT/REINVENT**

### PART 2

CLOSER –  
**Universalizes**  
the argument  
and moves it  
beyond the  
immediate  
context

**GENERAL** - Move the work beyond the immediate argument and to a sense of reflection on the argument. **Here you revisit your hook and end the way you started.** If you asked a question, answer it; if you used a quote, return to it and shed a light on it.

The Last Sentence – **MAKES THE READER LEAN BACK IN SATISFACTION**  
The last sentence should leave the reader with a sense of completion and a sense that the writer has brought some new understandings to the argument. It should evidence reflection as well.

The last line should be the most powerful. It should draw a deep and insightful conclusion that gives the reader something to think about (Possibilities are to look to the future, pose a compelling question, challenge the reader)