

How To Write A Really Great Essay:

You've Got This.

Stage 1:

The

Introduction

Let's do this.

Step 1: Find Your Thesis.

This, believe it or not, is the easy bit: because **your thesis is your question's fraternal twin**. Your thesis and your given question should by no means be identical, but they should be very closely related.

Let's take a look:

Question: **How** Does Shakespeare's Macbeth **explore the ideas of power and responsibility?**

Thesis: Texts Can **Explore the ideas of power and responsibility** via the **utilisation of dramatic and literary devices**.

See what I mean? Fraternal, not identical. But nevertheless, very much containing the same DNA. Your thesis needs to look that question head on, and tell your marker in the first five seconds what you think and why you think it. It doesn't have to be a sentence jam-packed with 18 letter words, or a quote from a U.S president: all your marker needs to know is that you understand what they've asked.

Your thesis will be the supporting pillar of your essay. It doesn't need any fancy bells or whistles, it just needs to be solid. Make sure you've hit the keywords of the question to ensure this.

If in doubt, just do what I've done. Highlight the directive term (in this case, HOW) and highlight the key words (power and responsibility). Highlight those same words in the same colour if they appear in your thesis. If not, you need a rewrite.

Step 2: Find Your Sub-Thesis.

This, believe it or not, this is also an easy bit. I promise. A Sub thesis is just your thesis, but with the specific details of your text added in.

Thesis: **Texts** Can **Explore the ideas of power and responsibility** via the **utilisation of dramatic and literary devices**.

Sub Thesis: **Shakespeare's Macbeth (c. Jacobean Era)** explores **power and responsibility** as it's tragic hero succumbs to **hamartia: ambition**, and **sacrilegiously scales the Great Chain of Being** in the name of attaining **power**.

Once again, we're not looking for fancy words and showy phrases: we want practicality. This sentence is efficient and makes your point clear. If your thesis is a strong general base, you're subthesis is the beginning of sharpening specificity. Like a Knife. Or a Pyramid. Let's go with Pyramid. Violence is wrong.

This sentence is a hard worker. It's done three things: Told you the text, it's general context, identified the central dramatic device of the play (tragic hero combined with his hamartia) and connected this back to thesis. It may seem overwhelming when it's laid out like that, but just go back and read that sentence. It's not overwhelming. It's nice, and neat, and hits its bases.

Don't tie yourself in knots thinking of a fancy thing to say, hit your marks. In any given subthesis you should have:

- context (When)
- response to directive term (How)
- response to key terms (What)
- text & author (who)

Step 3: Pick your Points

Here, I'll admit, things get a teensy bit harder. But don't freak out. This is still totally doable.

You'll want each of your points to directly relate to the question. If you're preparing an essay to go into an exam with an unseen question, or if this is a hand-in, regardless: you must start with the core of each point. The easiest way to find it is to boil your essay down into **Key Words**.

For Macbeth, it's: power, betrayal, love, paranoia, loyalty

Pick any three of these points and you'll have a great essay.

Now, I know what you may be thinking: but wait! What if I picked power, betrayal, and love and then I get a question all about power? What do I do!

First of all, **don't freak out. Everything's ok.** You are still going to write an amazing essay? You know why? Because:

Power, Betrayal, Love

Can Easily transform into:

Status (a love of power), Betrayal (to gain power), Love (poisoned or manipulated to gain power)

Or say you get an essay question about love

Power (love of control), Betrayal (betraying platonic love for love of power), Romance (betraying/manipulating romantic love for a love of power)

Remember, the key to any question you're ever asked in school is to answer it. Don't get freaked out, just figure out how you can use your pre-prepared points to answer the question. You can do it. I promise.

Step 4: Introduce your Points

What does that look like? Now this part is easy.

All you need to do is flesh out your key points and connect them back to your question. For example:

Specifically, Shakespeare demonstrates how Macbeth's hyper-fixation upon Status within the **hierarchal Jacobean Society** leads to his neglecting his moral responsibility to the Kingdom.

Further, the tragic hero's love of power leads to his betrayal of Duncan, and as a result, the **great chain of being**, undermining his responsibility to both the crown and to God.

Finally, Lady Macbeth weaponises Macbeth's love for her to persuade him to abdicate moral, and political responsibility throughout the text, sacrificing her duties as both an upstanding citizen and wife to gain power.

You'll see, you can even slip a few sneaky links back to **context** in there if can. This really elevates your points and means you don't have to add on an extra clunky sentence about context. If you read back, we've integrated context in our subthesis, and in our point introduction, and as a treat for our hard work, that means you can skip giving context its own sentence.

That being said, if you don't feel up to it or just don't want to integrate context into these sentences, that's all right. Just makes sure to pop a dedicated sentence to context in your introduction after your subthesis.

It could like this:

The Play unfolds in the context of the 11th century, and thereby within a society founded upon patriarchal, monarchal, and deeply religious beliefs which dictated the actions of all those within it.

Step 5: Link Back to Your Thesis

What does that look like? Now this part is even easier.

Remember how your thesis is your Question's Fraternal Twin. Your link Back is your thesis's identical twin with a moustache on.

Let's take a look:

Thesis: Texts Can Explore the ideas of [power and responsibility](#) via the utilisation of [dramatic and literary devices](#).

Link Back to Thesis: As Such, the concepts of [power and responsibility](#) are explored in Macbeth via the utilisation of a myriad of [dramatic and literary devices](#).

See? Pretty much the exact same sentence except the structure is re-organised and a couple synonyms are thrown in there. Simple as that.

Now, if you put all of our hard work together... Congratulations! You have an introduction! And it only took you six sentences.

Introduction:

Texts Can Explore the ideas of power and responsibility via the utilisation of dramatic and literary devices. Shakespeare's Macbeth (c. Jacobean Era) explores power and responsibility as its tragic hero succumbs to hamartia: ambition, and sacrilegiously scales the Great Chain of Being in the name of attaining power. Specifically, Shakespeare demonstrates how Macbeth's hyper-fixation upon Status within the hierarchal Jacobean Society leads to his neglecting his moral responsibility to the Kingdom. Further, the tragic hero's love of power leads to his betrayal of Duncan, and as a result, the great chain of being, undermining his responsibility to both the crown and to God. Finally, Lady Macbeth weaponises Macbeth's love for her to persuade him to abdicate moral, and political responsibility throughout the text, sacrificing her duties as both an upstanding citizen and wife to gain power. As Such, the concepts of power and responsibility are explored in Macbeth via the utilisation of a myriad of dramatic and literary devices.

Stage 2:

The Body

Paragraphs

Let's do this.

Step 1: Create your Paragraph's Thesis

In exciting news, every single one of your body paragraphs will follow the same structure - so once you learn this, it's just rinse and repeat!

In even better news, you've essentially already completed the first step: come up with the thesis for your paragraph.

The paragraph thesis is essentially the child of your overarching thesis (the first sentence of your introduction) and the sentence you used to introduce the point in the introduction.

Let's take a look:

Thesis: Texts Can Explore the ideas of power and responsibility via the utilisation of dramatic and literary devices.

Sentence Used to Introduce the Point: Shakespeare demonstrates how Macbeth's hyper-fixation upon Status within the hierarchical Jacobean Society leads to his neglecting his moral responsibility to the Kingdom.

Mesh them together, and you get:

Paragraph Thesis: Shakespeare's Macbeth demonstrates how it's tragic hero's obsession with attaining power leads to the neglect of his moral responsibility to the kingdom.

It's that easy. All your paragraph thesis needs to do is introduce your point, and link back to thesis. If you've introduced your point well in the introduction, all you'll need to do is sub in some synonyms and you'll be ready to go!

Step 2: The Sentences.

Once you get this down, you are set for essay-writing life. Remember how I said that once you know how to write a body paragraph, the formula works for ever? Same thing with The Sentences - once you know this formula, you're in on the secret. You can write an essay.

There should be around 4-5 of these sentences in your essay - that's your choice. Each sentence must contain the following

- a quote
- a technique from this quote
- analysis of this technique
- link back to your point
- context

But let me be clear: that's the minimum. You If you can, 2 techniques per quote really wow's your marker, and if you can get three - that's impressive. Further, you don't need to just have 1 quote.

Let's take a look. Here are a couple of different ways your sentence could look:

At the outset of the text, Shakespeare is quick to introduce how the feudal hierarchy of the Jacobean Era is paradoxically "foul and fair" through Macbeth's alliterative double entendre at the text's outset, as it maintains the facade of order, yet allows for "valuing ambition" for power to fester within Macbeth, forsaking his responsibility of loyalty to the king.

This concept is further developed as Macbeth confides to the audience "If chance may have me, king, chance may crown me," via an aside, demonstrating how his responsibility of displaying loyalty to the king as a respected general in the great chain of being, is quickly corrupted by the lust for power this system allows to fester.

Just looking at those colours, you can see that every part of your sentence has to work to deserve a place in your essay. Lots of people think English is about frilly words and sounding clever, but in reality: your goal is to effectively and efficiently answer the question. To do this, you have to make sure your sentences are doing the work. Use this colour code on your writing. If you're not seeing a rainbow, or worse, no colour at all: you need a rewrite. You know what your sentence has to do, don't let it be a slacker. Whip it into shape, and make sure it deserves a place in your paragraph.

Step 3: Repeat The Sentences x 4

Seriously, it's that simple.

Just a few tips for your sentences:

- Make sure your quotes are presented chronologically. Sentence 1's quotes should happen before Sentence 2's quotes do in the text. This means you're showing how the concept as developed through the text, and you aren't confusing yourself or your marker. It's a super easy way to show you know what you're doing and are keeping things nice and tidy.
- Link between them, with words like "this is developed by" or "This concept is continued in" if you like. Your sentences are stronger together, and it makes for a nicer read if everything flows
- That being said, you don't have to link your sentences outright for flow, you can also start them with words like: similarly, conversely, as such, this is illuminated by, this is highlighted by, this is subverted by etc. to show that your essay follows a logical train of thought
- Make sure they don't get too long. You have to be efficient. Your marker doesn't want to lose track of your idea, but if you can't make it concise, it's going to be difficult for them to read, and difficult for you to get the marks you deserve.

Step 4: Link Back to your Paragraph Thesis

This step is simple, but if you don't do it correctly: it's a bigger deal than you think. Your linking back sentences can make or break your essay because:

1. If you don't have them, you risk the marker thinking your points don't link back to your overarching thesis (therefore, you haven't asked the question, which is your sole responsibility)

If you don't have them, that's immediately a red flag for structure, which is a part of the marking criteria

So in other words, just like all the other steps, don't skip this. It may feel repetitive, but your essay needs it. I'm sure bridge builders thought putting up support beams was repetitive for the harbour bridge, but it's not safe to use without them. Your linking sentences are just like that. They are the support beams of your essay.

In good news: they're super easy to do. All you need to do is produce a fraternal twin to your Paragraph Thesis, and add "as such" or "therefore" or "considering this, it's evident" to it

Let's take a look:

Paragraph Thesis: Shakespeare's [Macbeth demonstrates](#) how its tragic hero's obsession with [attaining power](#) leads to the neglect of his moral [responsibility to the kingdom](#).

Linking Back Sentence: As such, it's evident "[Macbeth](#)" [demonstrates](#) that it's tragic hero neglects his [responsibility to the kingdom](#) due to his insatiable desire to [attain power](#).

Step 5: Rinse and Repeat to Produce Your 2 Other Body Paragraphs.

It's that simple.

A few tips for your paragraphs:

- try and pick different aspects of context to focus on in each paragraph (i.e. great chain of being for para 1, feudal system for para 2, and patriarchy within marriage in para 3 etc.), not that overlap isn't allowed, but it's good to show your marker you have expansive knowledge and can see the text in different lights
- Just like how the evidence in your paragraph (your quotes) should be chronological, your paragraphs should be chronological (or as much as you can manage). Ideally, your first paragraph should tackle the first third of the book, the 2nd in the 2nd third, and the third - you guessed it, the third. That's not to say you can't overlap, or use quotes from different sections if needed, but try and keep your argument as chronological as you can for clarity's sake.

Stage 3: The Conclusion

Final Stretch. You've got this.

Step 1: This will take you 2 minutes

Honestly, this is the easiest part of the entire essay.

Here's what you have to do:

1. Say "In Conclusion"
2. Restate your thesis
3. Restate your Subthesis
4. Restate your point introduction, if at all possible summarised to one sentence
5. Link Back to your thesis.

That's it.

You're done.

Just apply all the skills we've gone over in the previous sections, try and sub in a few synonyms so your marker doesn't notice you've copy pasted your thesis, sub thesis and point intros, and that's your essay done.

Congratulations!

You did it. You wrote a great Essay.