

Let's Talk: **Essay Basics 1.1**

Critical Analysis Paper

- **Main Arguments**
- **Topic Sentences**
- **Commentary**
- ***Organization & Style* See 1.2**
- ***MLA Format & Quotation Integration* See 1.2**

This is the Thesis

Driving Question?

How can we craft a clear, focused and sophisticated thesis that outlines a cohesive and compelling argument in response to a prompt we have written?

Let's Talk: **Main Argument**

- A strong thesis...
- **ANSWERS** the prompts
- Tells **HOW** it will answer the prompt
- Is one **CONCISE** thought
- Is **DEBATABLE**

Essay discussing a man's role as a father.

- These are our topics why:
 - The man keeps the boys safe
 - The man teaches the boy to be independent
 - The man is harsh on the boy in order to teach him

Example #1

- The father has a tough role to fulfill in protecting the boy from threats to his physical safety, but also to his mental and emotional health.

Example #1: **Not a thesis**

- *The father has a tough role to fulfill in protecting the boy from threats to his physical safety, but also to his mental and emotional health.*
- **This is not a solid thesis:**
 - **The argument is not clear**
 - **No stance is taken**
 - **It is not debatable**

Example #2

- The father fulfills his role as a father because he cares for the boy physically, but also by teaching him to take care of himself mentally and emotionally.

Example #2: Lower Level

- *The father fulfills his role as a father **because** he cares for the boy **physically**, but also by teaching him to take care of himself **mentally** and **emotionally**.*
- This is **not a bad thesis**; however, it is **not a strong thesis** either:
 - **Simple structure:**
“This” **because** of “That”
 - **Three point thesis / a listing thesis**
 - **Diction is low level; a bit confusing**

To Make a Thesis Stronger

- Use **Qualifiers** like “although...”, “when...”, “since...” and “if..., then...”
- *Qualifiers help eliminate reliance on the word “because” and result in a more mature sounding argument.*
- Also, try to move away from a listing / three point thesis

Example #3

- While the man can be harsh, he is ultimately seen as a good father by caring for the boy's physical and emotional health and wellness.

Example #3: Middle Level

- *While the man can be harsh, he is ultimately seen as a good father by caring for the boy's physical and emotional health and wellness.*
- This is **not a bad thesis**; however, it is **not a strong thesis** either:
 - **Stronger structure**
 - **Passive Voice**
 - *Seen “by” who?*
 - **Diction is still a bit wordy and unclear** (and abuses the word “ultimately”)

Example #4

- Even though the man is harsh at times in fulfilling his paternal role, he encourages the boy to develop independence as a means of caring for the boy's physical and emotional health.

Example #4: Higher Level

- Even though the man is harsh at times in fulfilling his paternal role, he encourages the boy to develop independence as a means of caring for the boy's physical and emotional health.
- This is considered to be a **strong thesis**:
 - **The point is clear and debatable**
 - **Establishes an argument without “because”**
 - **Is not a three point thesis / a listing thesis**
 - **Uses high level diction.**

Let's Talk: Main Argument

Even though the man is harsh at times in fulfilling his paternal role, he encourages the boy to develop independence as a means of caring for the boy's physical and emotional health.

- **ANSWERS** the prompts
- **Tells HOW** it will answer the prompt
- **Is one CONCISE** thought
- **Is DEBATABLE**

Let's Talk: Main Argument

Even though the man is **harsh at times** in fulfilling his paternal role, **he encourages the boy to develop independence** as a means of caring for the boy's **physical** and **emotional** health.

NOTICE THAT...

The whole essay should NOT be spent **making an argument**.
MOST of the essay is spent on presenting the facts.

- A) **Cares for physical health.**
- B) **Cares for emotional health.**
- C) **The man is harsh at times.**

Let's Talk: Topic Sentences

- **Topic Sentences** should introduce an argument, **NOT** a fact or a piece of data.
- Just like a thesis, a **topic sentence** should be clear, direct, and **DEBATABLE**.
- If I am writing a body paragraph...
 - **Weak TS:**
“The man teaches the boy how to shoot a gun.”
 - **“Okay” TS:**
“The man teaches the boy many valuable lessons.”
 - **Stronger TS:** “The man is too harsh in forcing the boy to make difficult decisions that he is not ready for yet.”

Let's Talk: **Commentary**

- **Commentary refers to context, summary and analysis provided around the actual evidence**
- DO go back and forth between lines of examples and analysis
- **Keep asking yourself: “Why is this important?”** after every example when doing analysis
- Three ways (amongst others) to insert commentary:
 - 1) **Golden Lines style**
 - Quotation > Summary > Context > Analysis
 - 2) **“Quotation Sandwich” style**
 - Context > Quotation > Analysis
 - 3) **“Say Mean Matter” style (for “follow-up” evidence)**
 - Quotation > Summary > Analysis

The Handmaid's Tale

Essay Worktime

- **Step 1**: Choose which prompt you want to respond to
- **Step 2**: Conceptualize your main argument and construct a draft thesis
- **Step 3**: Find at least six pieces of evidence total that will help you make your argument
- **By Mon/Tues**: *Have an outline that you can bring to class and workshop; you will get a Habits of Mind grade for bringing an outline!*