

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

- This presentation will cover...
  - \* **Thesis**
  - \* **Topic Sentences**
  - \* **Quotation Integration**
  - \* **Commentary**
  - \* **Organization**

# 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 the 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.

## 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

In your groups... you try!

Essay discussing the man's role as a father.

- These are our topics why:
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## Example #3

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

## Example #3: Higher Level

- *Even though the father is harsh at times in fulfilling his paternal role, he encourages the boy to develop independence as a sustainable means of caring for his 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: 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 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: Main Argument

Even though the father is harsh at times in fulfilling his paternal role, he encourages the boy to develop independence as a sustainable means of caring for his 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 father is **harsh at times** in fulfilling his paternal role, **he encourages the boy to develop independence** as a sustainable means of caring for his **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: **Commentary**

- \* **Alternate between evidence and commentary!**
- \* 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 to insert analysis:**
  - \*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

# Let's Talk: Quotation Integration

## \* Do:

- \* When the boy says, "This is a good place, Papa," his father is cooking dinner for them over a campfire.  
**Integrated!**

## \* Do:

- \* While his father is cooking dinner for them over a campfire, the boy says, "This is a good place, Papa."  
**Integrated!**

## \* Don't:

- \* "This is a good place, Papa." His father is cooking dinner for them over a campfire.  
**Plopped :(**

# Let's Talk: Organization & Style

- \* **Introductions** can be a good place to start to **include the relevant background information**

- \* **Hook >**

- \* **Transition >**

- \* **ID the text >**

- \* **Main Argument (ie: thesis)**

- \* **Conclusions** are a chance to...

- \* Present a **new, relevant idea**

- \* **Restate the thesis** in a new way

- \* Discuss any **additional commentary** you could not find a place for in the essay

# Let's Talk: Organization & Style

- \* When you think about organizing your essay, think about not only explaining your stance, but also putting information into context:
- \* **Think about: *Should this body paragraph:***
  - \* **Explain background info**
  - \* **BUILD a case;** don't use a "listing" style
  - \* **Fully expand on a part of the thesis**
  - \* **Use a counter-argument**