

## You Have a Strong Thesis Paragraph—Now What?

Developing topics for supporting paragraphs can be the most challenging part of writing a literary analysis; here are some suggestions:

**Story Arc:** Although you want to avoid “narrating” the novel or tracing the plot line in detail, your essay still must capture the arc of the story. A good way to do this is to 1) use the first supporting paragraph to offer an interpretation of the novel’s *first couple of pages* within the context of your argument—even if it seems to be a stretch 2) later in your essay, devote another supporting paragraph to an interpretation of *the climax* within the context of your argument and 3) use the last supporting paragraph to an interpretation of the story’s *last couple of pages*.

**Narrator:** Write a paragraph that addresses the author’s choice of narrator and how that choice gives support to your argument. In particular, address how the point of view (first person, third person omniscient, third person limited) shapes your novel and contributes to your argument.

**Change:** Every novel will illustrate the force of change in some form or another; in fact, one helpful argument model is the causal argument, which argues for the most powerful cause of the change that occurs throughout the course of a story. Use supporting paragraphs to argue for smaller and less obvious changes or developments in character or theme.

**Conflict:** Every novel will contain a conflict. Use a supporting paragraph to interpret the basic local conflict in a global way. Aim for an interpretation that is not obvious but still works to support your argument.

**Figurative Language:** No literary analysis would be complete without some analysis of the text’s prominent literary devices. You can easily devote a supporting paragraph to a recurring imagery, symbols or metaphors, or significant examples of irony in your novel. Make sure that your interpretations of these literary devices serve to directly support your argument.

**The Author’s Writing Style:** After reading three novels by the same author, you should have a pretty good idea of your author’s unique writing style. For example, is her writing spare, clean, and direct, or is it more developed, formal, and complex? Does his writing contain a fair amount of dialect or idioms? Does she rely on a lot of figurative language? Ideally, you will be able to describe your author’s style with details and then offer a connection between the *way* the story is told and your overall argument.

**Tip:** Before you begin to write your essay, write down the topic of each of your paragraphs on note cards, and then shuffle them around until you come up with the best order for a successful argument.

**Finally:** Do not forget transitions between supporting paragraphs; without them, your essay will seem haphazard and disconnected.