

T-DUB WORKSHOP: FOCUS ON INTRODUCTIONS

It's a fact – it may be unfair, but it is still a fact nonetheless: the AP reader who picks up your free response essay knows within five seconds whether or not your essay will pass.

Seriously!

He or she will know JUST by reading your first few sentences whether or not you actually know your stuff or if you spent the entire year of AP Lit converting oxygen into carbon dioxide and doing little else.

So how do you write the intro? And more importantly, how do you write an intro that will get you a 9 on the essay?

In order to answer these questions, we need to go in-depth . . .

Part One: Read the Prompt

Now I know that sounds like an easy thing to do, but trust me: most of the kids who don't pass the AP English Literature exam don't fully address ALL parts of the prompt.

Let's look at the Question 1 prompt from the 2003 exam:

The following poem is taken from "Modern Love," a poetic sequence by the English writer George Meredith. Read the poem carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the poet conveys a view of "modern love."

Upon seeing this, your first question should be: what is this prompt asking me to do? And – no surprise – the answer will ALWAYS be at least two-fold:

1. You need to figure out the poet's view of "modern love"; and,
2. You need to show HOW he conveys this view to the reader (through literary devices, diction, tone, structure, point of view, etc).

Important Note: The introduction you write should be original. That means, do not copy the prompt they provide!

That bears repeating in capital letters:

DO NOT COPY THE PROMPT.

Hmmm . . . maybe once more for good measure. Here it is in bold letters, size 18 font, with a fancy Microsoft Word shadow effect:

DO NOT COPY THE PROMPT.

Hopefully you understand what I'm trying to say here.

Now that you know what the prompt is asking you to do, you need to read the poem with your objectives in mind.

The best way to tackle this is to:

- actively read the poem – that means, mark the poem up! Make notes! Circle key words and phrases!
- perform a cursory SOAPStone
- scribble a BRIEF outline in the margins addressing 1: the poet's view of modern love, and 2: how he conveys this view to the reader.

Let's actively read the poem together with this in mind.

------(cue intermission music while we read the poem as a class)-----

Ok, now you have notes about the poet's view and notes on the devices. You're ready to write.

Part Three: Write the Three Sentence Intro

Your introduction should follow this format:

- Sentence One: General statement about the overall theme addressed in the poem
- Sentence Two: F.A.T.t. sentence
- Sentence Three: SPECIFIC thesis statement

Now let's look closer at these three sentences and how to construct them.

Sentence One: General statement about the overall theme addressed in the poem: The theme of the poem presents a bleak outlook of marriage and love. Your opening statement should contrast this by stating the antithesis to Meredith's theme; it should discuss the "standard" view of marriage and love.

The commonly held belief of love and marriage is one full of endearments and shared respect and affection.

Sentence Two: FATt sentence: Once again, this sentence contains the Focus (the theme), the Author (in this case, the poet), the Title of the work (the poetic sequence *Modern Love*), and the type of work (a poem).

However, in the poem taken from Modern Love, poet George Meredith likens marriage to a living death, a bleak institution fraught with unhappiness, and an utter lack of passion and understanding.

Sentence Three: SPECIFIC thesis statement: Use specific words to show HOW the focus is conveyed to the audience.

This pessimistic view is communicated primarily through Meredith's use of personification and metaphor to characterize modern lovers and the melancholy predicament in which they find themselves.

Viola! I present to you the opening of a 9 essay:

The commonly held belief of love and marriage is one full of endearments and shared respect and affection. However, in the selection from Modern Love, poet George Meredith likens marriage to a living death, a bleak institution fraught with unhappiness, and an utter lack of passion and understanding. This pessimistic view is communicated primarily through Meredith's use of personification and metaphor to characterize modern lovers and the melancholy predicament in which they find themselves.