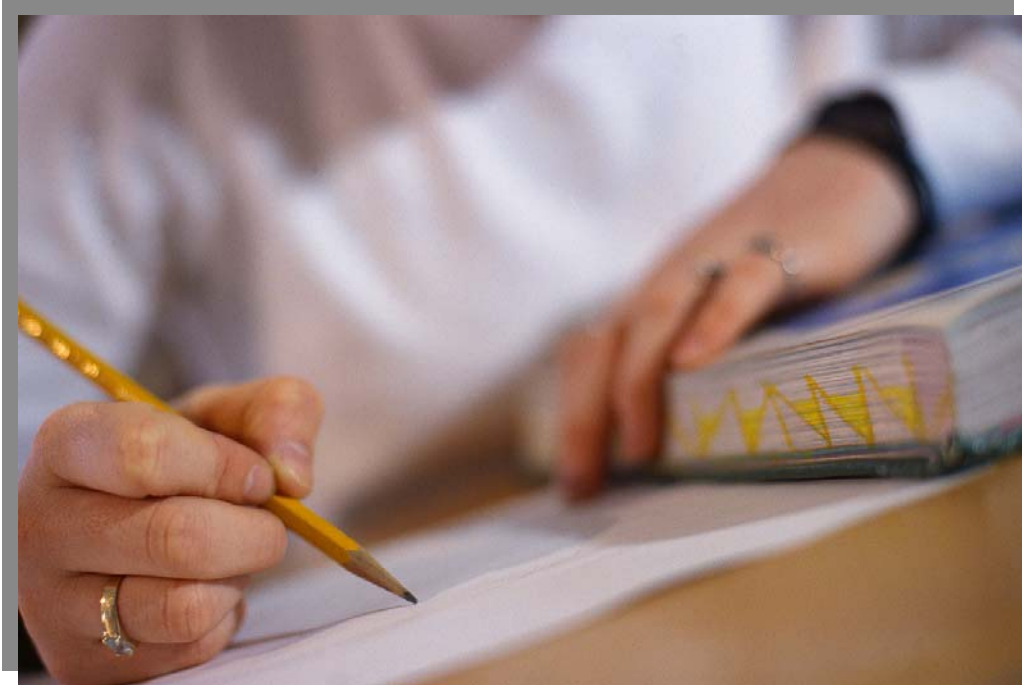


# **How to Write an Essay Based on Literature**



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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Objectives .....	2
<b>Part 1</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Fact vs. Opinion .....	
Structure and Content .....	
Review of the Essay: Organizing a Five Paragraph, Basic Essay.....	
<b>Part 2</b> .....	
How Does the Literature Essay Compare to the Basic Five Paragraph Essay? .....	
How Do You Know What Topic You Will Develop? .....	
How Do You Use the Literary Piece to Help You Support Your Topic? .....	

## **Introduction**

This instructional module is designed to guide you, the first and second year students, through the processes involved in expressing an opinion in writing. Because most academic writing in any field of study requires you to take and support a position, the essay is the most appropriate medium for the development of the skills you need to learn these processes.

In the first part of this module, you will take yourself through a review of the basic structure and format of an essay.

The second part of this module will help you to build on that knowledge by using the basic structure of an essay to develop the ability to express an opinion when parameters for that opinion have been previously set. To do this, you will be using the literature essay to be guided through a logical approach to the writing of an essay that has been directed by a premise based on a given piece of literature.

Each part of this module will provide you with the tools you need to learn, assess your learning, and strengthen the skill when you feel insecure about it.

Nobody learns for somebody else and nobody can determine how long it will take you to master a skill; so, take yourself through this experience at your own speed. Have fun.

# Objectives

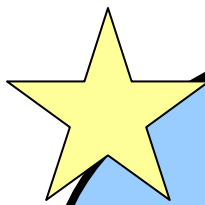
## General Objective

To learn how to write an academic essay that expresses and supports an opinion about a topic based on a given piece of literature in English.

## Specific Objectives

Having read a piece of literature, the students will be able to...

- ... distinguish between fact and opinion.
- ... recall the structure and content of a basic five paragraph essay.
- ... organize a basic five paragraph essay.
- ... follow a logical process to write an opinion based on a premise provided for them using the basic essay format.



Before you start studying the contents of this module, I recommend that you take a few minutes to answer the short test that follows.

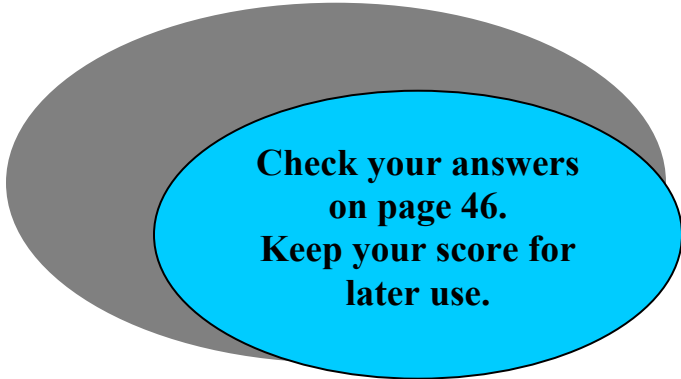
This will serve as an self-assessment of how much you know before entering the module and how much you have learned after completing the experience. You can compare your first results with those from the final test.



## Pre -Test for How to Write a Literature Essay

**Directions: Write “True” in the space provided if you think the statement is true and “False” if you think it is not true.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What I consider true is a fact.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. My opinion can serve as evidence in an essay.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The purpose for writing an essay is to tell a story.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. An essay has three types of paragraphs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. An introduction includes an explanation of why I am writing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The body of an essay provides all the support necessary to help my reader understand the way that I think and how my opinion makes sense.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. To conclude an essay, I have to write “the end “ after I finish.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A thesis statement is to an essay what a topic sentence is to a paragraph.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A literature essay does not express my opinion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A literature essay proves what I read is true.



**Check your answers  
on page 46.  
Keep your score for  
later use.**

## Part 1

# Review of the Structure and Content of an Essay

In this section you will work with...

- ...distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- ...recalling the structure and content of a basic, five paragraph essay.
- ...organizing a basic, five paragraph essay.

### What is an opinion?

You can think about it as a belief or judgment that is a product of your own experience or somebody else's. It does not have to be absolutely true, but you accept it as true based on what you know, feel or think.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- People are strange sometimes.
- Nobody likes losers.
- Friends are always there when you need them.

All of these statements can be true or false, accepted or not accepted. That would depend on what you know, think, or feel. That is why they are statements of opinion.

## **What is a fact?**

Opinion is different from fact. A fact is more absolute. It can be proven. Most people accept a fact as truth.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Puerto Rico's hurricane season lasts from August to November.
- English and Spanish are two of the languages most used in the world.
- All humans have the same basic needs.

All of these statements are verifiable. In order to disagree with them, you would have to present different, verifiable evidence to prove them wrong. Also, most people who share your way of life or community experiences would probably accept these statements as true. That is what makes them facts.

[To practice distinguishing between fact and opinion CLICK HERE.](#)

Learning to understand opinion is crucial to writing an essay. When you write an essay, you are writing your opinion for a reader to understand, agree or disagree with. Because your experience and knowledge is important enough to write, you need to express your opinion in the clearest way possible. Remember opinion is not absolute, so your reader needs the greatest clarity and the best information to understand your opinion; especially if it is different from his.

Therefore, we need to remember what we know about the structure and the content of an essay.

**Structure and Content**

You can think of **structure** as **form** and **content** as how that structure provides **meaning**. Study the table below to help you remember how these two interact in a basic five paragraph essay.

**Table 1: Structure and Content in a Five Paragraph Essay**

<b>Structure (Form)</b>	<b>Content (Meaning)</b>
Part 1: Introduction  1 <sup>st</sup> paragraph (Could be more than one paragraph)	Presentation of topic  Necessary background information  Thesis statement
Part 2: Body  2 <sup>nd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> paragraph (s) (3 paragraphs)	Supports thesis with details, explanations, descriptions, facts, data, anecdotes, examples,...
Part 3: Conclusion  5 <sup>th</sup> paragraph	Ends the essay

**Introduction, body, and conclusion** are the three types of paragraphs we find in an essay.



Directions: Use the table on the previous page to help you fill in the blanks with the type of paragraph that is being described.

**In which type of paragraph do you think we would find ...**

... writing that expresses the idea that no more information will be provided? \_\_\_\_\_

... reasons to explain a writer's perspective? \_\_\_\_\_

... a sentence that tells the writer's opinion? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you fill in the blanks with the correct answer? [CLICK HERE](#)

If you were able to fill in the blanks correctly, you see that each paragraph in an essay has a form and a function that identifies it as a particular unit and designates its role in the totality of the essay. This is much like each organ works in your body. Each has a particular (and very important) physical aspect and also a specific function that is needed to secure that the whole body can function. Imagine how your body would work if it didn't have a heart!

If you were not able to fill in the three blanks with the correct type of paragraph, you need more help. [CLICK HERE](#).

**In the next part of this module you will see how each paragraph looks (structure) and works (content) in an essay.**

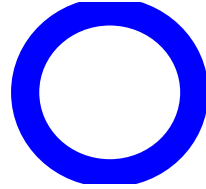
Let's organize the following essay to show how each part acts separately and forms a whole.

Directions: Read all of the following paragraphs carefully. Organize them in the logical sequence that would form an essay by writing a number from 1-5 in each of the circles provided.

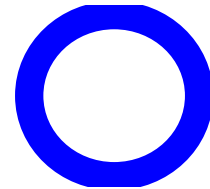
( 1= Introduction; 2 = First Body Paragraph; 3 = Second Body Paragraph; 4 = Third Body Paragraph; 5 = Conclusion)

***Why Are We Recognized by Our Paternal Last Name?***

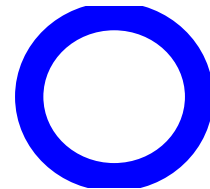
*The law seems to recognize the mother's strong influence on the child, too. When parents separate or get a divorce, the court system most frequently grants custody almost automatically to the mother. Although lately more fathers have been challenging that "automatic" custody, it is still granted overwhelmingly to the mother. Our newspapers and welfare statistics still report that single-parent households are led by mothers, predominantly.*



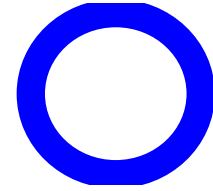
*A child's first contact is his mother. It is the mother who exerts the greatest influence in a child's life. While he is developing, her body creates the perfect environment to nurture and secure him until the process is complete. An emotional bond is born from the moment the mother realizes she is pregnant. When the child is born, he continues to depend on his mother. Mothers are most frequently the caretakers of the family. It is enough to conduct a quick memory test to conclude that your mother was the one who was always around when you needed someone during those hard years of physical and emotional development that encompassed childhood and adolescence and, in some cases, even pre-adulthood. Yet, when it comes down to giving the child a name, we traditionally give the child the father's last name first. Why?*



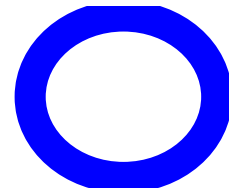
*Life is full of situations that don't really make sense if you submit them to some scrutiny. The interesting thing about it is that although they don't make sense, and don't really stand up to scrutiny, people continue to act in the same way or repeat the same illogical situation because of things like tradition, convention or fear of change. One of the things that we do in our society that doesn't make sense is that we identify our children with their father's last name. If we consider this social act closely, we wouldn't. Children should carry their mother's last name first.*



*It seems to make perfect sense to give a child his mother's last name first. In societies where he carries both parents' last names, it is fine to add the father's last name to the mother's. However, in societies where only one last name is used, it only makes perfect sense that it should be the mother's.*



*Interestingly, although fathers are an important part of the child's upbringing, few of them have the sensitivity it takes to foster the sensitivity it takes to improve the affective quality in a child's life. Mother's, for example, tend to be more patient, so they are better role models to teach that patience to their children. Mothers always seem to understand. I remember that when permission to go somewhere or do something with friends had to be granted, it was my mother who I went to first. I knew she would be more reasonable and would be my ally if she thought it was okay. The continuance of these affective traits in humanity rests in the hands of mothers. It is a great responsibility. Yet, a child's mother's last name is totally eliminated in some societies where he is identified only with his paternal last name. In others, it takes a second place which is then lost in the second generation or, in a woman's case, immediately upon marriage. It seems our society does not recognize that huge responsibility mothers shoulder.*



Compare your organization to the correct organization for this essay, [CLICK HERE](#).

# **Part 2**

## **Basic, Five Paragraph Essay**

### **Vs.**

## **The Literature Essay**

In this section you will be working with...

- ... examining a reading selection to find the writer's perspective
- ... managing the premise for a literature essay
- ... preparing to write a literature essay.
- ... using what you know about the basic, five paragraph essay to follow the development of an essay based on a given piece of literature.

# Explain analyze interpret

Now that you have reviewed the basic five paragraph essay and you have also learned to identify an opinion, you are ready to expand on that knowledge and use it to build more knowledge.

When a writer expresses himself, he does so because he has something to say that he thinks you can share with him. He can do that in many ways. Some ways are very direct; like in an essay. Sometimes, the writer uses what he knows about the reader's senses, taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing, to express something to the reader in an indirect way; like in a poem. He can try to make the reader feel things he knows he will remember or notice things he knows might escape the reader's attention.

No matter what type of literature he uses to communicate with you, he knows you will find something in his experience that is similar to yours because you share a common humanity. That common experience can be translated into an opinion. The writer has one and you can react to his message by formulating your own opinion.

That's what a literature essay helps you to do. A literature essay is based on something you have read; a piece of literature. It is your opinion about what you have read. Writing a literature essay has three major phases.

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Phase 1 | What is the message the writer is trying to deliver in this piece of literature? What is his opinion? |
| Phase 2 | How do I formulate my opinion based on his writing?   |
| Phase 3 | How can I justify my opinion using his writing?   |

Let's work on each phase separately.

**Phase 1    What is the message the writer is trying to deliver in this piece of literature? What is his opinion?**

**The Reading Sample (Literature)**

Let's read the following piece of literature. Travel with the writer. Try to see what he sees. Enjoy yourself.

**The Market Place**

By Denise Rodríguez

“¡Diablo!” A deliciously ripe orange came rolling down the stairs to greet us upon arrival. Booming salsa music playing on invisible equipment drowns out the male voice's colorful exclamation. People dressed in casual clothing and talking with their whole bodies compete with the loud music.

“Lady, can I help you?”

“Whatever you need, I have!”

The vendors engage with the shoppers enthusiastically. A man in “Pepe” jeans and a vibrant orange t-shirt is moving his body to the rhythm of the music as he snacks on a piece of something.

A municipal guard strolls down the widest corridor, immune to the alarm that has just gone off coming from the pawn shop behind him to his left. Mostly men populate the aisles here at 11:05 on Saturday morning. As they talk to each other they circle one another as a rooster does when a young cock threatens his supremacy in the flock.

I feel the need to record what I see here; a tribute to eternity's moment. No one notices what I am doing because I am here and not here; alone in a crowd. I am both me and them.

All kinds of roots, vegetables, and fruit form rainbow displays in a collage of stands germinating from the center of this vast space. Nobody wrangles or haggles. Prices must be fair.

Directly in front of me, a small, dark, and gloomy stand labeled “Kiosko 17” in bright red letter on a white background blatantly contrasts with the other stands. It conjures up thoughts of the necessary things in life while all the other stands appeal to things wanted or desired. The two-toned, upper black, bottom cloudy blue, exterior of the stand is almost uniform with the military-like clothing for sale on the inside. The plain, strong clothing arranged in neat piles is navy blue, army green, janitor gray, or tree bark brown. The vendor matches his stand perfectly.

Lost in thought, this old, gray-haired man with a mustache seems incapable of a bright smile. He's dressed in a gray shirt, brown trousers, navy blue socks, and black, K-Mart sandals. Sheer as his gray shirt that fails to cover his white, v-neck undershirt, his hair and mustache fail to lend his appearance strength and vigor. The sole bright spot in his attire or his surroundings is a gold wedding band.

His body language is just as glum. He sits as if time is still. Eyes set in some faraway, unreachable place, he alternately rocks his body back and forth, and his left foot up and down. He crosses his right leg over his left knee. It is now that foot's turn to rock. Occasionally, he raises his right arm with utmost dexterity to a place above his head where a nylon loop like the strap of a gym bag hangs. He does not need to look. It is a movement he has rehearsed eternally. The loop fits around his wrist like a bracelet.

Suddenly, he decides it is time for the pile of clothing by him to join the ones in front of him. He jumps up to stack them neatly placing the only bits of color, a pile of multi-colored baseball caps, on top. My gosh, he's whistling! He's locking up his stand. He's leaving; hands effortlessly dug deep into his pockets.

In an hour, there have been no customers. Two men to my left are weighing yams from cardboard boxes into a shopping cart. A girl is with them. She is not attractive. No one notices her presence; like a fly on the wall.

Mr. "Kiosko 17" is back. He's playing with a "quenepa" in his mouth. It makes a lump in his right cheek, then his left as he reopens his stand. He takes the pit out of his mouth and flings it at the garbage pile in front of the empty stand beside his.

Finally, a customer approaches; or is she? She is saying something to him. He answers uninterestedly, never changing his resumed position. She leaves. He eyes find his place in nothing and he stares at nothing, in particular; or, maybe, it's his whole life that he's reviewing on constant replay. Maybe the past in his memory is less cumbersome than his present.

## Thinking About Why the Writer Wrote This Piece

Let's focus on why the writer wrote this selection. See if you can answer the following questions.

Most of the paragraphs refer the reader to the sense of \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. taste
- b. touch
- c. sight
- d. smell
- e. hearing

The setting for this reading selection is a place where a lot of people go, but few people really \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. choose to visit because it is so different
- b. want to think about in their busy lifestyles
- c. stop to hear because it is in a secluded spot
- d. consider important enough to focus on
- e. see the variety of life that is represented there

The writer describes with detail things that we would normally \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. not notice
- b. always see
- c. plan carefully
- d. want to have
- e. never see

The writer probably thinks it is important to notice every \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. orange that rolls towards you
- b. piece of loud music you hear
- c. alarm that goes off
- d. person you encounter
- e. manifestation of life

To compare your answers to mine, [CLICK HERE](#).

If you were able to answer the questions correctly, fantastic! Let's continue.

If not, you need more help to understand the reading selection. [CLICK HERE](#).



## Writer's Opinion

Which of the statements below do you think best describes an opinion this writer might think is important enough to share with you through his writing?

1. A market place offers many colorful things to see that can make you feel happy and accompanied. Colors make life interesting.
2. A market place is a good place to entertain yourself when you have nothing else to do and nowhere else to go. Fun is where there are a lot of people.
3. A market place is not a good place to be alone because you can be embarrassed by somebody that could be watching you to see how you are. There is no privacy.
4. A market place is as full of life as every other place if you stop to look closely enough. All of life is important enough to take time to see.
5. A market place can really be confusing because you are bombarded with so many different sounds you can't hear any of them.

To see the correct answer, [CLICK HERE](#).

## Phase 2 How do I formulate my opinion based on his writing?

### Understanding the Premise for a Literature Essay (A Prompt for Writing)

A literature essay is an essay you write in response to a question or premise that is based on a piece of literature. Examine this premise.

*In literature, as in life, people can become so immersed in the endless variety of manifestations that life is composed of that they fail to take time to stop and really appreciate the drama in life. In approximately 200 words, tell how this reading selection reminded you of a person or situation that was always around you but you really didn't see or appreciate. Discuss how this person or situation is important and compare his or her (or its) invisible presence to the many invisible presences in the reading selection.*

## Steps to Follow in Order to Understand the Premise for a Literature Essay

Step 1            Look for Key words

The first thing to do is focus on words that give you important information. Those words are your key words. They guide you to a complete response that uses the writer's opinion to explain your opinion.

Step 2            Underline the key words in the premise.

Most of them can be included in some way in your literature essay.

Step 3            Read the key words a few times.

This will help you to get used to them as a group that makes sense.

Compare the words you have underlined to mine. [CLICK HERE](#).

I'm sure your choices were not very different from mine. They do not have to be exactly the same ones. Once you have chosen these key words, they can help you to formulate your thesis and even provide the majority of the content for your introduction.

## Preparing to Write a Literature Essay

Now you are ready to prepare to write your literature essay. Like any essay, because the purpose of an essay is to express an opinion, you need to decide what you want to express as an opinion based on the key words you chose from the premise. That will be your thesis.

If you need to see these key words again, [CLICK HERE](#).

Choose an appropriate thesis for a literature essay based on the key words found in this premise.

- a. Life offers a variety of experiences. Loneliness is present in everybody's life just as it was in the life of the man in "Kiosko 17" in the reading selection "The Market Place" by Denise Rodríguez.
- b. There is no one as blind as a person who does not want to see. I have heard this many times, but when I read "The Market Place" by Denise Rodríguez, I realized people just don't want to see.
- c. No other color has the greatest presence in life as orange. The most important color in the world is orange. I came to realize this when I read "The Market Place" by Denise Rodríguez.
- d. Although I see her every day, I never really realized what a beautiful human being my mother is and how important she is in my life until I read "The Market Place" by Denise Rodríguez.
- e. In "The Market Place" by Denise Rodríguez, the reader has to really focus his attention because too many things are mentioned to be really supported effectively in any one essay.

For the correct choice, [CLICK HERE](#).

### **Phase 3    How can I justify my opinion using his writing?**

#### **The Thesis**

In a literature essay, like any other essay, the thesis controls what you will write and how you will write it. For this essay, we have a thesis which was formulated based on the premise that was provided.

Let's see it again.

*Although I see her every day, I never really realized what a beautiful human being my mother is and how important she is in my life until I read "The Market Place" by Denise Rodríguez.*

In this thesis statement, you will find the opinion:

*...I never really realized what a beautiful human being my mother is and how important she is in my life...*

You will also find the direction this essay will take.

*... until I read "The Market Place" by Denise Rodríguez.*

This means the essay will bring two important elements into the discussion. It will show the beautiful human being the mother is and how important she is in the essay writer's life and it will do this by referring to the reading selection and the things in it that made this essay writer realize this about his mother.

## The Introduction

Once you have a clearly stated thesis, you have the most important part of the **introduction**. The rest of the introduction is the background information that leads the reader to the thesis, and a statement or two that the essay writer uses to capture his reader's attention.

Let's see what it can look like.

*Our very busy lifestyles are to blame. Modern life is composed of fast everything. We eat fast food, drive speedy cars, communicate via a quick e-mail, and even demand immediate health and beauty solutions. Time is a luxury few people afford themselves. We let the quality of life escape our grasp to the point where we cannot see what is directly in front of us. I am no different. **Although I see her every day, I never really realized what a beautiful human being my mother is and how important she is in my life until I read "The Market Place" by Denise Rodríguez.***

What makes this introduction effective?

Directions: Use the space below each item in the checklist below to write the sentences from the introduction that you think are being described.

### Checklist for Writing an Effective Introductory Paragraph

A sentence or sentences that ...

- ... capture the reader's attention.

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- ... present a logical sequence of thought that leads to the thesis

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- ... expresses the writer's opinion and the direction of the entire essay (the thesis)

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To see the correct answers to this exercise, [CLICK HERE](#).

## The Body Paragraphs

Now you are ready to work with the **body** of this literature essay. It needs details; specific language that refers back to and supports the thesis. It is evidence, evidence, and more evidence. The purpose for this part of the essay is to make your opinion clear to the reader. Remember the reader does not necessarily see things the same way you do.

Let's see what it can look like.

*In the reading selection "The Market Place" the writer, Denise Rodríguez, seems to show us what she sees in this place we have all visited some time or other. On this trip, she stops to really see colors and contrasts. She leads us to notice the color of a "deliciously ripe orange", a man's bright orange t-shirt; the absence of bright colors in the stacks of clothing for sale in "Kiosko 17". That special attention to the obvious that we do not really see is the product of taking the time to appreciate the variety in the manifestations of life that surround us. That reminded me of my mother's presence. Immediately, I saw in my mind's eye the bouquet of flowers my mother cut from her garden and placed on the table to delight my sense of sight with colors. Cooking my dinner for me had not been enough. She activated every sense that makes a person feel alive. She sat down to share some time with me because I am special to her. She turned an ordinary moment into an extraordinary event. Until I read this selection, I had not really understood that.*

*I also remembered how I mentally recorded but did not really see the way my mother stares out into space when she is worried about something like the man in "Kiosko 17". She automatically reacts to that specific behavior when one of us does it. She knows we have some worry and she tries to share the burden with us. She can never just ignore it, the way we do when she's the one who worries. What a caring human being she is. What an expert she is in finding time to really live with the ones she loves. It is a behavior she seems to have "rehearsed eternally".*

*In the reading selection, the writer takes the time to see the woman nobody else seems to see; the one who is "like a fly on the wall". That made me think about the many days I walked in and out of my house and only automatically recognized my mother's presence with a mechanical, "Bendición, mami." That really does not do any justice to the commitment, dedication and love my mother has exemplified for me every day of my life. It took her lifetime to create the home I now take for granted.*

Each one of these three paragraphs provides an explanation that connects to the thesis and to the reading selection. This provides the coherence that the essay requires.

Let's see if you can identify the support provided in the body paragraphs.

Directions: Answer the following questions in your own words.

What does the first body paragraph say that connects to the thesis?

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What does the first body paragraph say that connects to the reading selection?

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What does the second body paragraph say that connects to the thesis?

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What does the second body paragraph say that connects to the reading selection?

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What does the third body paragraph say that connects to the thesis?

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What does the third body paragraph say that connects to the reading selection?

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Compare your answers to mine, [CLICK HERE](#).

Now you are ready to work with the conclusion.

## **The Conclusion**

The purpose of the concluding paragraph is to put an end to the essay. Two frequently used techniques that a writer can use to finish an essay are restatement and summary. In both cases, the writer is signaling to the reader that he will not offer any new information, so he is finalizing his essay.

**Restatement** is to write the thesis again, in other words.

**Summary** is to review each piece of support by mentioning it again in a very brief and precise way.

**Let's see what the conclusion to this literature essay looks like.**

*Thanks to this reading selection, I am reminded of how important taking the time to see is for my own life. I am especially reminded of how the real quality in my life can simply escape my perception. The wonderful human being my mother is and how her presence in my life has made all the difference in the world is only one example of the influence time can have in my life. Taking the time can be the difference between living and merely existing.*

Is this essay's conclusion using **RESTATEMENT** or **SUMMARY**?  
CLICK ON YOUR CHOICE.

No two essays are alike. Even when they are about the same topic, each person's opinion or perspective is different, and the way he chooses to express it is also different.

**Congratulations! YOU ARE NOW READY TO WRITE A LITERATURE ESSAY ON YOUR OWN.**



**Directions:** Use the following outline to guide you in your writing. Use “The Market Place” as the literature you will use as reference to formulate and write about your own opinion.

**Student Literature Essay Draft**

**Introduction:** (Write four to six sentences. Remember one of them has to be your thesis)

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**Body Paragraph:** (Write another four to six sentences. This time focus on one way in which you can illustrate what you think. Use a lot of detail and remember to refer to the literature to support what you write.)

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**Conclusion:** (Now write another set of sentences to let the reader know you are finished. Do not be abrupt. Be smooth.)

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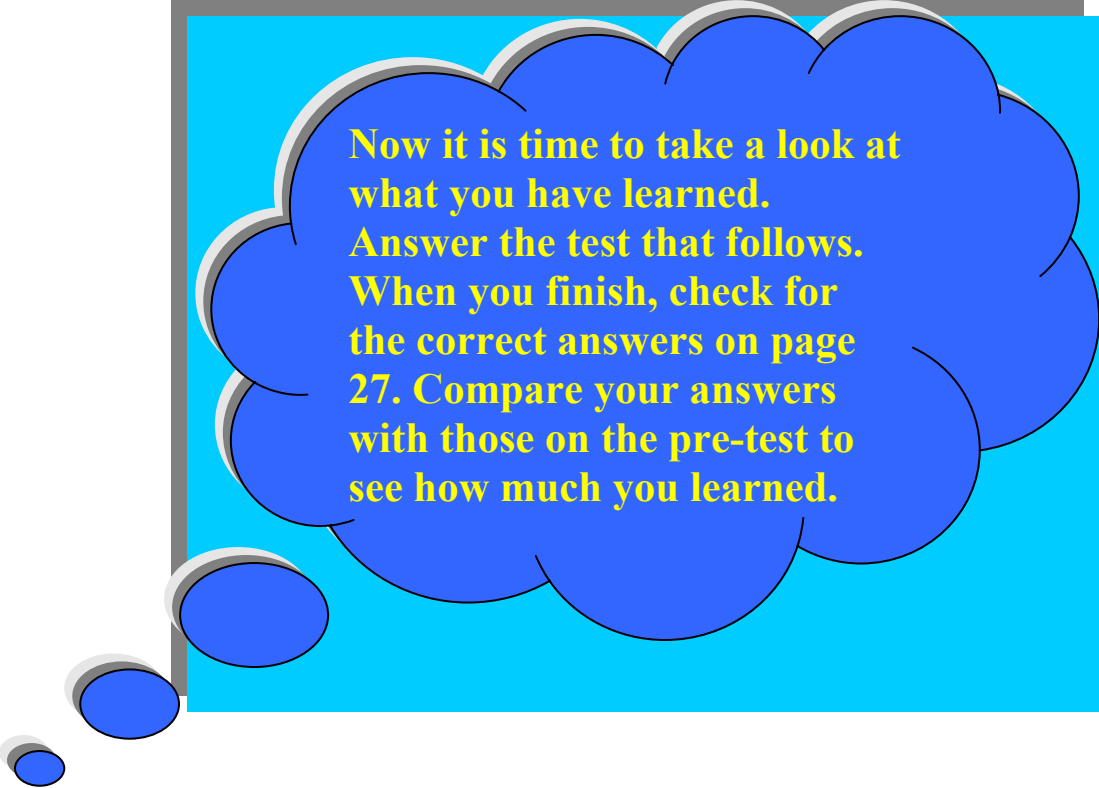
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Now, use the following rubric as a guide to help you check to see if what you wrote is a literature essay.

## Guide to Writing a Literature Essay

Components of the Literature Essay	Questions to Guide Structure	Questions to Guide Content
Thesis	<p>Does the thesis statement express your opinion?</p> <p>Does it provide the title and author of the piece of literature you read?</p>	<p>Does the thesis statement establish a connection between your opinion and the piece of literature you read?</p>
Introduction	<p>Does your introduction have 4-6 good sentences?</p> <p>Does it include your thesis statement?</p>	<p>Does your introduction make a smooth beginning by providing enough background information to help your reader understand how you are thinking?</p> <p>Does it lead your reader through a logical sequence of thoughts that leads to your thesis?</p>
Body	<p>Does each body paragraph have a topic statement?</p>	<p>Does each body paragraph revolve around one topic?</p> <p>Does each topic statement have adequate support?</p>
Conclusion		<p>Does your conclusion signal an end to your reader?</p> <p>Is it summarizing your evidence or restating your thesis?</p> <p>Does it revolve around your thesis statement?</p>



**Now it is time to take a look at what you have learned. Answer the test that follows. When you finish, check for the correct answers on page 27. Compare your answers with those on the pre-test to see how much you learned.**

## Post - Test for How to Write a Literature Essay

**Directions:** Write “True” in the space provided if you think the statement is true and “False” if you think it is not true.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What I consider true is a fact.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. My opinion can serve as evidence in an essay.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The purpose for writing an essay is to tell a story.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. An essay has three types of paragraphs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. An introduction includes an explanation of why I am writing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The body of an essay provides all the support necessary to help my reader understand the way that I think and how my opinion makes sense.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. To conclude an essay, I should write “the end “ after I finish.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A thesis statement is to an essay what a topic sentence is to a paragraph.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A literature essay does not express my opinion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A literature essay proves what I read is true.

Directions:

When you are finished, [CLICK HERE](#) to see the correct answers.

**Check your answers. Assign a +1 to those answered correctly. Assign a -1 to those answered incorrectly.**

**After finishing the post-test, state the differences in scores and sum up all scores in the third column.**

**Follow the scale below to assess your performance on the module.**

<b>Answers to the Pre and Post tests</b>	<b>Pre-Test Score</b>	<b>Post-Test Score</b>	<b>Differences in scores</b>
<b>1.</b>			
<b>2.</b>			
<b>3.</b>			
<b>4.</b>			
<b>5.</b>			
<b>6.</b>			
<b>7.</b>			
<b>8.</b>			
<b>9.</b>			
<b>10.</b>			
<b>Total points:</b>			

**Performance Assessment scale:**

**10 to 9 points**

**8 to 7 points**

**6 or less points**

**Excellent**

**You should go back to the module and study those areas which seemed to be difficult for you.**

**You definitely have to work on the whole module again.**

**I bet it did not take you as long as you thought it would to finish this experience. I know you now have a skill that will help you throughout your academic career. Continue to practice.**

**Feel free to contact me at:**

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**Suggestions for improvement of this module are also welcome. Creating this module for you was my pleasure.**

## Fact vs. Opinion

Now you try. (From page 7, Fact vs. Opinion)

Directions: Write an “O” in the space before each statement that you think is an opinion and an “F” if you think it is a fact.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Blue is the most beautiful color in the world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Everybody loves sports.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Puerto Rico is in the Caribbean.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Orange juice is just as important to health as water.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Love causes chemical reactions in the human body.

Did you get all five correct? [CLICK HERE](#).

If you did, great! Let’s move on. [CLICK HERE](#) to return to module page 7.

If not, you need more practice. [CLICK HERE](#).

## Correct answers to practice exercise on Fact vs. Opinion, page 6

Directions: Write an “O” in the space before each statement that you think is an opinion and an “F” if you think it is a fact.

- \_\_\_ O \_\_\_ Blue is the most beautiful color in the world.
- \_\_\_ O \_\_\_ Everybody loves sports.
- \_\_\_ F \_\_\_ Puerto Rico is in the Caribbean.
- \_\_\_ O \_\_\_ Orange juice is just as important to health as water.
- \_\_\_ F \_\_\_ Love causes chemical reactions in the human body.



Try again! (From page 27, Fact vs. Opinion)

Directions: Write an “O” in the space before each statement that you think is an opinion and an “F” if you think it is a fact.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Puerto Rican people love holidays. That’s why they have so many.

\_\_\_\_\_ The best way to acquire a second language is through immersion.

\_\_\_\_\_ Most athletes are poor students.

\_\_\_\_\_ Two – parent homes are best for children.

\_\_\_\_\_ Reading is a valuable learning tool.

Did you get all five correct? [CLICK HERE](#).

### **Correct answers to exercise for more practice on Fact vs. Opinion**

Directions: Write an “O” in the space before each statement that you think is an opinion and an “F” if you think it is a fact.

\_\_\_ **O** \_\_\_ The Puerto Rican people love holidays. That’s why they have so many.

\_\_\_ **F** \_\_\_ The best way to acquire a second language is through immersion.

\_\_\_ **O** \_\_\_ Most athletes are poor students.

\_\_\_ **O** \_\_\_ Two – parent homes are best for children.

\_\_\_ **F** \_\_\_ Reading is a valuable learning tool.

Great! Let’s move on. [CLICK HERE](#) to return to module page 7.

## Structure and Content

Answers to:

**In which type of paragraph do you think we would find ...**

... writing that expresses the idea that no more information will be provided?	Conclusion
... reasons to explain a writer's perspective?	Body
... a sentence that tells the writer's opinion?	Introduction

[More help, Structure and Content, page 7](#)

The explanation for the answers to Table 1, page 7 is:

<b>... writing that expresses the idea that no more information will be provided?</b>	Conclusion
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If no more information is going to be presented, then the writer obviously will end his essay. That is the purpose for the conclusion.

<b>... reasons to explain a writer's perspective?</b>	Body
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To provide reasons, a writer needs to explain in detail why he thinks the way he thinks. Details and explanations are the support for the thesis. This specific language is a characteristic of the body paragraphs.

<b>... a sentence that tells the writer's opinion?</b>	Introduction
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The sentence that states the writer's opinion is called the thesis statement. Even though the entire essay is the writer's opinion, this statement makes it explicit. At the beginning of your development as an essay writer, this statement is taught to be in the introduction. This way, you can have a reminder of the thesis visible to you while you are writing. It helps you to control your writing and not deviate from your topic.

## The Basic Three to Five Paragraph Essay

### Correct paragraph organization (From page 10, Organizing an Essay)

#### Sample 1: Why Are We Recognized by Our Paternal Last Name?

*Life is full of situations that don't really make sense if you submit them to some scrutiny. The interesting thing about it is that although they don't make sense, and don't really stand up to scrutiny, people continue to act in the same way or repeat the same illogical situation because of things like tradition, convention or fear of change. One of the things that we do in our society that doesn't make sense is that we identify our children with their father's last name. If we consider this social act closely, we wouldn't. Children should carry their mother's last name first.*

*A child's first contact is his mother. It is the mother who exerts the greatest influence in a child's life. While he is developing, her body creates the perfect environment to nurture and secure him until the process is complete. An emotional bond is born from the moment the mother realizes she is pregnant. When the child is born, he continues to depend on his mother. Mothers are most frequently the caretakers of the family. It is enough to conduct a quick memory test to conclude that your mother was the one who was always around when you needed someone during those hard years of physical and emotional development that encompassed childhood and adolescence and, in some cases, even pre-adulthood. Yet, when it comes down to giving the child a name, we traditionally give the child the father's last name first. Why?*

*Interestingly, although fathers are an important part of the child's upbringing, few of them have the sensitivity it takes to foster the sensitivity it takes to improve the affective quality in a child's life. Mother's, for example, tend to be more patient, so they are better role models to teach that patience to their children. Mothers always seem to understand. I remember that when permission to go somewhere or do something with friends had to be granted, it was my mother who I went to first. I knew she would be more reasonable and would be my ally if she thought it was okay. The continuance of these affective traits in humanity rests in the hands of mothers. It is a great responsibility. Yet, a child's mother's last name is totally eliminated in some societies where he is identified only with his paternal last name. In others, it takes a second place which is then lost in the second generation or, in a woman's case, immediately upon marriage. It seems society does not recognize that huge responsibility mothers shoulder.*

*The law seems to recognize the mother's strong influence on the child, too. When parents separate or get a divorce, the court system most frequently grants custody almost automatically to the mother. Although lately more fathers have*

*been challenging that “automatic” custody, it is still granted overwhelmingly to the mother. Our newspapers and welfare statistics still report that single-parent households are led by mothers, predominantly.*

*It seems to make perfect sense to give a child his mother’s last name first. In societies where he carries both parents’ last names, it is fine to add the father’s last name to the mother’s. However, in societies where only one last name is used, it only makes perfect sense that it should be the mother’s.*

The sentences written in blue are the topic sentences. Each one controls the paragraph it is in. Notice that the first topic sentence is also the essay’s thesis. It is more powerful because it controls the entire essay.

**Did you organize the essay correctly? Great! Let’s move on.**

If not, let’s look at another sample essay and get a paragraph by paragraph guide to the logical organization we call cohesion. [CLICK HERE](#).

Sample Essay 2: **The Quality of Life in Rural Communities**

<p><i>People who live in cities are usually closer than those who live in the country to job opportunities and cultural centers like museums theaters, art galleries, and libraries. For many, this is probably why they chose to live in the cities in the first place. They thought these things would increase the quality of their lives. However, life in the city, despite the possible comfort and convenience, has its drawbacks. Sometimes, these drawbacks have serious repercussions on the lives of the people who have to suffer them. People everywhere are talking about the quality of their lives. City people are moving to the rural communities even though it means they will have to travel long distances to work. <u>Life in a rural community can be quite advantageous when you consider how noise, crowds, and crime affect the quality of your life.</u></i></p>	<p><b>Introduction</b>          The sentences in this paragraph present the logic behind the way of thinking of people who choose to live in rural areas. The writer uses this as background in order to present his thesis which is contrary to this way of thinking.</p> <p>The word, however, is the first clue that the writer’s opinion is going to be different. From this sentence on, the writer leads the reader through a different, but logical, sequence of thoughts.</p> <p>This is the writer’s thesis. His opinion is based on three factors; noise, crowds, and crime. This sentence will control the whole essay. It is also the topic sentence for the introductory paragraph.</p>
<p><i>Life in a rural community offers relief from excessive noise. The wails of police, fire engine, and ambulance sirens are an event. The only radio you are likely to hear is your own. Sometimes, days go by and</i></p>	<p><b>Body</b>          Each body paragraph has a topic sentence that controls the whole paragraph. Therefore, a topic sentence is to a paragraph what the thesis statement is to the whole essay.          Every other sentence in each body paragraph has to provide more specific information about</p>

*you don't even hear your neighbors. You can actually hear a car approaching your home, too. Visitors are announced whether that is their intention or not. The distance of the sound of the dogs barking gives them away. The serenity that you hear as you stroll in your own community makes you think about how the quality of life increases when noise is not assailing you.*

*There is a sense of blessed freedom in space. It provides the stage for the drama that each one of us recognizes as life. It affords us the luxury of time to be with ourselves and establish a relationship. Crowded cities can make acquiring a sense of personal identity confusing. Rural communities offer the space where personal identity can flourish. The lesser exposure to human contact can actually make you feel more human. You can enjoy people more because you get the opportunity to miss them. The absence of crowds in a rural community helps you to value human company and the quality of life each one of us deserves.*

*Although rural communities are in no way exempt from crime, the incidence of crime in these*

each topic sentence; greater detail.

Write what you think is the topic sentence for the each body paragraph in the spaces below.

Body Paragraph # 1

Topic sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

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Body Paragraph #2

Topic sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

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<p><i>communities is certainly decreased. Less crime is probably one of the most revealing indicators of the quality of life in any area because crime denies you the right to security and robs you of the control over your own life. Criminal actions take away your freedom, for example, by forcing you to practice security measures that set limits on you, the potential victim and confine you to a life behind locks and bolts. Therefore, a high crime rate means no quality of life. Rural communities offer more quality of life because there is less crime there.</i></p>	<p>Body Paragraph #3</p> <p>Topic sentence: _____</p> <hr/> <p>_____</p>
<p><i>Once people have settled down, how to survive is not their primary goal in life. They begin to think about the quality of their lives. Especially then, the noise, crowds, and crime that the cities are plagued with make people think about how living in the rural communities makes sense.</i></p>	<p>Conclusion: The writer ends his essay.</p> <p>Topic sentence: _____</p> <hr/> <p>_____</p>

To see the topic sentences for each paragraph and an explanation, [CLICK HERE](#).  
 To return to page 11 of the module, [CLICK HERE](#).

## Topic sentences for Sample Essay #2: The Quality of Life in Rural Communities

Topic Sentence #1: Introduction

*Life in a rural community can be quite advantageous when you consider how noise, crowds, and crime affect the quality of your life.*

**Remember that this sentence is both the topic sentence for the introductory paragraph and the thesis statement for the whole essay.**

Topic Sentence #2: Body paragraph # 1

*Life in a rural community offers relief from excessive noise.*

**All of the other sentences in this paragraph try to make the reader understand the difference between the two environments by mentioning what the noises are in the city and how they don't exist in the rural communities.**

Topic Sentence #3: Body paragraph # 2

*The absence of crowds in a rural community helps you to value human company and the quality of life each one of us deserves.*

**This paragraph starts by making you “feel” the effect of space. It calls your attention to the effect of no crowds; how it helps you to appreciate people instead of resent them.**

Topic Sentence #4: Body paragraph # 3

*Rural communities offer more quality of life because there is less crime there.*

**This paragraphs emphasizes on the negative effect crime has on your life.**

Topic Sentence #5: The conclusion

*Especially then, the noise, crowds, and crime that the cities are plagued with make people think about how living in the rural communities makes sense.*

**The writer has used restatement to end his essay. By repeating his thesis in other words, he has signaled to the reader that he will offer no new argument. He has taken the reader's attention back to the introduction and his thesis, creating a circle. Therefore, his essay has come to an end.**

To return to page 11 of the module, [CLICK HERE](#).



Answers to:

**Thinking About Why the Writer Wrote This Piece**

Most of the paragraphs refer the reader to the sense of ...[C \(sight\)](#).

- a. taste      b. touch      c. sight      d. smell      e. hearing

The setting for this reading selection is a place where a lot of people go, but few people really...[E \(see the variety of life that is represented there\)](#).

- a. choose to visit because it is so different  
b. want to think about in their busy lifestyles  
c. stop to hear because it is in a secluded spot  
d. consider important enough to focus on  
e. see the variety of life that is represented there

The writer describes with detail things that we would normally... [A \(not notice\)](#).

- a. not notice  
b. always see  
c. plan carefully  
d. want to have  
e. never see

The writer probably thinks it is important to notice every ... [E \(manifestation of life\)](#).

- a. orange that rolls towards you  
b. piece of loud music you hear  
c. alarm that goes off  
d. person you encounter  
e. manifestation of life

To return to page 16 of the module, [CLICK HERE](#).

Answer to:

### Writer's Opinion

**4. A market place is as full of life as every other place if you stop to look closely enough. All of life is important enough to take time to see.**

Answer to:

### The Premise (A Prompt for Writing)

### Key Words

*In literature, as in life, people can become **so immersed** in the endless variety of manifestations that **life** is composed of that they **fail to take time** to stop and **really appreciate** the drama in **life**. In approximately **200 words**, tell **how this reading selection** reminded you of a **person or situation** that was **always around** you but you **really didn't see or appreciate**. Discuss how this **person or situation is important** and **compare** his or her (or its) **invisible presence** to the many **invisible presences** in the **reading selection**.*

**BACK TO THE MODULE, PAGE 18**

Answer to:

### Preparing to Write a Literature Essay

**D.** Although I see her every day, I never really realized what a beautiful human being my mother is and how important she is in my life until I read “The Market Place” by Denise Rodríguez.

## BACK TO THE MODULE, PAGE 19

Answers to:

### CHECKLIST FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH (page 19)

A sentence or sentences that ...

- ... capture the reader's attention.

*Our very busy lifestyles are to blame.*

- ... present a logical sequence of thought that leads to the thesis

*Modern life is composed of fast everything. We eat fast food, drive speedy cars, communicate via a quick e-mail, and even demand immediate health and beauty solutions. Time is a luxury few people afford themselves. We let the quality of life escape our grasp to the point where we cannot see what is directly in front of us. I am no different.*

- ... expresses the writer's opinion and the direction of the entire essay (the thesis)

*Although I see her every day, I never really realized what a beautiful human being my mother is and how important she is in my life until I read "The Market Place" by Denise Rodríguez.*

## BACK TO THE MODULE, PAGE 21

Answers to:

### The Body Paragraphs

What does the first body paragraph say that connects to the thesis?

*That reminded me of my mother's presence. Immediately, I saw in my mind's eye the bouquet of flowers my mother cut from her garden and placed on the table to delight my sense of sight with colors. Cooking my dinner for me had not been enough. She activated every sense that makes a person feel alive. She sat down to share some time with me because I am special to her. She turned an ordinary moment into an extraordinary event. Until I read this selection, I had not really understood that.*

What does the first body paragraph say that connects to the reading selection?

*In the reading selection “The Market Place” the writer, Denise Rodríguez, seems to show us what she sees in this place we have all visited some time or other. On this trip, she stops to really see colors and contrasts. She leads us to notice the color of a “deliciously ripe orange”, a man’s bright orange t-shirt; the absence of bright colors in the stacks of clothing for sale in “Kiosko 17”. That special attention to the obvious that we do not really see is the product of taking the time to appreciate the variety in the manifestations of life that surround us.*

What does the second body paragraph say that connects to the thesis?

*She knows we have some worry and she tries to share the burden with us. She can never just ignore it, the way we do when she’s the one who worries. What a caring human being she is. What an expert she is in finding time to really live with the ones she loves.*

What does the second body paragraph say that connects to the reading selection?

*I also remembered how I mentally recorded but did not really see the way my mother stares out into space when she is worried about something like the man in “Kiosko 17”.*

*It is a behavior she seems to have “rehearsed eternally”.*

What does the third body paragraph say that connects to the thesis?

*That made me think about the many days I walked in and out of my house and only automatically recognized my mother’s presence with a mechanical, “Bendición, mami.” That really does not do any justice to the commitment, dedication and love my mother has exemplified for me every day of my life. It took her lifetime to create the home I now take for granted.*

What does the third body paragraph say that connects to the reading selection?

*In the reading selection, the writer takes the time to see the woman nobody else seems to see; the one who is “like a fly on the wall”.*

**BACK TO THE MODULE, PAGE**

**Answer to:**

**Conclusion: Restatement**

**Congratulations! You have correctly chosen [restatement](#) as the strategy this writer used to finish her essay. This conclusion [restates](#) (writes using different words) what the thesis said all along.**

**BACK TO THE MODULE, PAGE**

**If you chose SUMMARY, your answer is incorrect. Go back to module and click on [restatement](#) for an explanation.**

**BACK TO THE MODULE, PAGE**

## Answers to Pre/Post Test

**Directions: Write “True” in the space provided if you think the statement is true and “False” if you think it is not true.**

       **F**        1. What I consider true is a fact.

       **F**        2. My opinion can serve as evidence in an essay.

       **F**        3. The purpose for writing an essay is to tell a story.

       **T**        4. An essay has three types of paragraphs.

       **T**        5. An introduction includes an explanation of why I am writing.

       **T**        6. The body of an essay provides all the support necessary to help my reader understand the way that I think and how my opinion makes sense.

       **F**        7. To conclude an essay, I should write “the end “ after I finish.

       **T**        8. A thesis statement is to an essay what a topic sentence is to a paragraph.

       **F**        9. A literature essay does not express my opinion.

       **F**        10. A literature essay proves what I read is true.