Guide to Essay Writing

📏 Step 1: Taking Notes and Brainstorming

When reading a book or chapter, always take notes—track main ideas, notable quotes, and key moments. Organize your notes using a spreadsheet under various thematic categories. This structure helps you build rich analytical or personal responses later.

Suggested Thematic Categories

- Kindness, Empathy, Forgiveness, Love
- Family bonds, Parental expectations, Familial conflict, Sibling rivalry
- Intergenerational differences, Loss of family, Found family, Chosen family
- Divorce, Separation, Pressure to uphold family honour, Unconditional love
- Self-acceptance, Coming of age, Discovering one's purpose, Finding your voice
- Insecurity, Confidence, Transformation, Reinvention, Loss of innocence
- Belonging, Isolation, Authenticity, Identity crisis
- Doing what's right, Doing what's easy, Guilt, Redemption
- Justice, Fairness, Standing up for what you believe in, Taking responsibility
- Silence, Speaking out, Truth, Lies, Personal integrity
- Overcoming fear, Courage in the face of adversity, Resilience, Perseverance
- Failure, Strength, Independence, Freedom, Confinement
- Power, Control, Influence, Rebellion, Obedience
- Hope, Despair, Change, Memory, Nostalgia, Reflection

- Time, Growth, Healing, Letting go, Acceptance, Second chances
- Influence of the past, Responsibility to others, Inner conflict
- Duty, Expectations, Misunderstanding, Reconciliation

Brainstorming

After organizing notes under each category, brainstorm personal ideas or interpretations. For example:

📚 Step 2: Understanding Essay Types and Prompts

There are two main types of English essay responses:

1. Critical Response to Text (CRT)

A formal literary analysis where you analyze the author's craft, characters, themes, or structure. You must use textual evidence.

Sample CRT Prompts

- How does a character's decision reveal internal conflict?
- Analyze how symbolism reinforces the central theme.
- Explore how the setting influences a character's emotional state.
- How does the author use irony to develop the theme?
- What is the relationship between guilt and growth?
- How does fear influence a character's decisions?

2. Personal Response to Text (PRT)

A reflective or creative response to a theme. You can:

- Write a personal narrative,
- Reflect on real-world events,
- Or create a fictional/monologue response.

Sample PRT Prompts

- Describe a time you chose between doing what's right and following rules.
- Reflect on a moment your perception of someone changed.
- Have you ever felt like an outsider? How did it affect you?
- Write about a failure that helped you grow.
- Describe a time when empathy made a difference in your life.



Step 3: Structuring Your Essay

The CRT Essay Structure

- 1. Choose a Literary Text: Macbeth, The Great Gatsby, The Kite Runner, etc.
- 2. Thesis Statement: A clear position answering the prompt.
- 3. Outline: Introduction, 3 body paragraphs, conclusion.

Introduction

• Hook: General statement about the theme.

- Context: Mention the text and author.
- Thesis: Main argument (clear and specific).

Body Paragraphs (Use PEEL or TEEL)

- Point: Topic sentence introducing the main idea.
- Evidence: A quote or example from the text.
- Explanation: Analyze the quote and connect it to the theme.
- Link: Tie back to the thesis.

Conclusion

- Restate your thesis (in new words).
- Provide a broader insight into the theme's significance.

The PRT Essay Structure

- 1. Read Prompt Carefully: What's the core theme? What is being asked?
- 2. Choose an Approach: Personal narrative, real-world reflection, or fictional story.
- 3. Outline: Introduction, body, conclusion.

Introduction

- Hook that introduces the theme.
- Preview your story/idea.

Body Paragraphs

• Describe the event, decision, or reflection.

• Show how it affected you or revealed the theme.

Conclusion

- Reflect on how the experience changed you.
- Reconnect to the prompt's theme.

Step 4: Writing and Refining

Before Writing

- Practice hooks and thesis statements in a spreadsheet.
- Work on sentence variety (see below).
- Avoid retelling the plot in CRTs.
- In PRTs, be authentic—show voice, detail, and feeling.

While Writing

- Use transition words to improve flow:
 - o CRT: "Furthermore," "In contrast," "Consequently"
 - o PRT: "Looking back," "To this day," "I remember clearly"
- Use sophisticated vocabulary:
 - o CRT verbs: illustrates, suggests, portrays, emphasizes
 - o CRT adjectives: conflicted, tormented, corrupted, ambitious
 - o PRT verbs: overcame, realized, confronted, healed

Vocabulary & Sentence Structures

Sentence Types to Master

• Simple Sentence:

Macbeth kills Duncan.

Compound Sentence:

Macbeth hesitates, but his ambition overpowers his doubt.

• Complex Sentence:

Although Macbeth knows the consequences, he chooses to kill the king.

• Compound-Complex Sentence:

Although he longs for power, Macbeth feels guilt, and this ultimately drives his madness.

Appositive Sentence:

Lady Macbeth, a woman tormented by guilt, loses her grip on reality.

• Introductory Phrase Sentence:

Burning with ambition, Macbeth takes the throne.

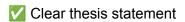
Parallel Structure:

He hesitates, he kills, and he collapses.

Rhetorical Question:

Is ambition worth the cost of one's soul?

Final Checklist Before Submitting



- ✓ Evidence-based analysis (for CRT)
- ✓ Personal insight and voice (for PRT)
- ✓ Vivid, varied sentence structures
- ✓ No plot summary
- ✓ Strong conclusion with reflection
- ✓ Proofread for grammar and flow