

Formula for an "A+" 5 paragraph essay

Getting Started - Step by Step

1. Choose an aspect of the work of literature that you find interesting. Quick-write about that aspect for 5 minutes (write as much as you can without stopping – do not worry about organization, punctuation, clarity, etc....).
2. Develop a 3 - prong thesis statement – what are you going to say about the piece and 3 examples that you will use to prove your point. It may be helpful to do a cluster/brainstorm beforehand to develop your 3 examples. Make sure that you are basing your thesis on objective criteria and not just your opinion.
 - a. Sample thesis statements
 - Beowulf is a good example of an epic hero because he has *exceptional strength*, he *battles against villains*, and he is *glorified for his great deeds*. - Evaluation
 - The story of "Beowulf" uses the motif of good versus evil to represent the human condition through the *hero's battles against villains*, the *descriptions of the villains*, and the *characterization of the hero*. – Analysis
 - The character of Oedipus Rex is a tragic hero because he is *highly renowned*, he has a *tragic flaw*, and he has a *tragic fall*. – Evaluation
 - The story of Oedipus Rex is symbolic of the part that fate plays in our lives as shown through the *Oracle at Delphi*, *Oedipus' murder of his father*, and the *character of Tiresius*. – Analysis
3. Develop an outline using your thesis statement as a road map (guide) for the organization of your essay.
 - a. Sample Outline
 - I. Introduction – thesis statement
 - II. Beowulf's exceptional strength
 - III. Battles with villains
 - IV. Glorified for great deeds
 - V. Conclusion (sum up and restate thesis)

Writing the Essay

1. Using the 3 parts of your thesis statement, write a topic sentence for each body paragraph.
 - a. Sample topic sentence
 - One of the things that make Beowulf an epic hero is his exceptional strength.
2. Collect evidence from the story that supports each topic sentence. When possible, quote directly from the text and explain how each quote supports/relates to the topic sentence.
3. Write out your essay, using the organization that you planned in your outline.
4. Each paragraph should be a minimum of 3 sentences and a maximum of 8 sentences and should be organized as follows:
 - a. Topic Sentence
 - b. Evidence #1
 - c. Explanation #1
 - d. Evidence #2
 - e. Explanation #2
 - f. Transition Sentence (sum up and flow into the next paragraph)
5. When you have finished your essay, write your conclusion relating back to the thesis statement and summarizing the main points of your essay.
6. Read your essay over – check for grammar and spelling errors, make sure it flows well, and be sure that all ideas are supported with evidence and explanation.
7. If possible, look at the rubric (grading scale) that the teacher will be using to score your essay and note weaknesses and strengths in your essay. What will you need to work on for next time?

Here are some sample essay prompts from previous GHSGT writing tests:

Here are some GHSGT writing prompts from the past years, so you can get a sense of the type of writing you will be doing:

1. Explain a course that does not exist at your school but that you would like to enroll in.
 2. You are going on a job interview; explain, in your essay, why you should be hired.
 3. Who is your favorite relative and why?
 4. Name a hero. What makes this person heroic in your eyes?
 5. What characteristics define
 - ...a good president?
 - ...a good friend?
 - ...a good parent?
 - ...a good school?
 - ...a good city?
 - ...a good vacation spot?
 6. What separates good television from bad television?
 7. What are your reasons for going to college?
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Here is an example of creating a specific thesis statement with related topic sentences for the body paragraphs. Based on a hypothetical prompt, a student has decided to write this thesis statement, "Watching TV has its good points." After brainstorming this notion, he decides that those "good points" involve it being, "educational, entertaining, informative, spiritual, and inspirational." If he wrote a body paragraph about each of these items, he would have a seven-paragraph essay, keeping in mind the need for both an introduction and conclusion.

By brainstorming each of these five body paragraph topics, the writer comes up with a great many opportunities for examples and points of discussion...

Topic sentence #1 = Watching TV provides an educational experience.

- The student can write about shows that involve:
 - learning how to cook
 - learning about history
 - learning about animals

Topic sentence #2 = The entertainment value of television cannot be avoided.

- viewing light comedy tends to relieve stress.
- watching cartoons reminds one of his childhood.
- watching one's favorite programs provides an escape or "break" from reality.

Topic sentence #3 = Television's informative nature cannot be denied.

A student could easily write about specific examples of news and political items that were revealed via television. 9-11 comes to mind immediately.

Another example of television's informative nature would involve a focus on natural disasters and weather-related items, including the damage caused and the existence of impending threats, as with floods and hurricanes.

Similar examples can be made for health, how-to

Topic sentence #4 = More than a few things aired on the television provide a spiritual experience.

TBN
EWTN
Sunday morning services
daily inspirational

Topic sentence #5 = Television can inspire viewers as well.

- watching others reach their goals
- watching an underdog overcome obstacles
- how-to shows can motivate someone to accomplish a certain task