

*Problem:*

Weak thesis – nonexistent thesis or a thesis claim that is factual and not debatable (or non-analytical).

*Solution:*

Present a specific thesis that makes a debatable claim (one that someone might disagree with) about the purpose of the work or the purpose of certain details within the text.

And follow the instructions on the assignment prompt

*Problem:*

Presenting a thesis statement that makes a claim about the world that has nothing to do with what the primary text communicates.

*Solution:*

Focus on the argument(s) of the text and what the text accomplishes as a language performance. The subjects of your sentences should always be something in the text: a character, an event, a line, a paragraph, the tone of the work, the argument of the text (NOT society, NOT history, NOT personal experience, NOT philosophy, etc.).

Typical Problems with Major Essay #1

*Problem:*

Body Paragraphs Often Appear Like This *Throughout* the Essay :

Plot summary – no link to a thesis claim (no argument)

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*Solution:*

Have no more than one paragraph of plot summary, if at all;  
fill the essay with analysis/argument.

Typical Problems with Major Essay #1

*Problem (this is worth repeating):*

Body Paragraphs Often Appear Like This *Throughout* the Essay :

Plot summary – no link to a thesis claim (no argument)

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*Solution (additional):*

Body paragraphs need to explain *how* details from the text accomplish your analytical claims about the work.

Typical Problems with Major Essay #1

*Problem:*

Often, a statement near the end of the essay could have been an excellent thesis if it had been presented in the introduction *and argued effectively throughout the body.*

*Solution:*

After drafting your essay, you may need to have the courage to change your thesis and revise the entire essay to be consistent with a new thesis.

*Problem:*

Paragraphs that lack focus on a single idea or have no apparent relation to the thesis claim.

*Solution:*

Body paragraphs (ideally) should begin with a topic sentence that focuses the paragraph.

All discussion in each paragraph should focus on one topic presented in the topic sentence. The evidence in each paragraph should have some relationship with your analytical thesis claim.

*Problem:*

Using personal experiences as evidence to support an interpretation of a literary or visual text.

*Solution:*

Use only evidence that is in the text to support claims about the text. Personal anecdotes are ineffective when writing about texts because they do not appear within the text. Your goal is to write about what the text accomplishes.

*Problem:*

Describing the action of a text in the past tense.

*Solution:*

The action of characters, speakers, arguments, rhetorical strategies, essayists, story plots, etc. happen each time a reader experiences a text. When writing about anything that happens in a text or what a text does, use present tense verbs.

Caveat: Direct quotes must use the exact language of the text.



*Problem:*

Little or no proofreading/editing.  
Or, peer reviewers providing little or no critical feedback during peer review workshops.

*Solution:*

When proofreading, read your essay aloud to detect errors. Pretend you are reading it before an audience of specific people you know and respect and make changes when necessary.

Use peer review workshops as opportunities to help team members improve their essays.

Typical Problems with Major Essay #1



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