

Example and Practice for Written Response to Literature Essay

Use the story "On the Bridge" (pgs. 18-21) for the example/ practice.

Body Paragraph #1 (Example):

Topic Sentence:

Strasser emphasizes the **theme** that a person should follow his own thinking and actions rather than conform to another's ideals.

Concrete Detail: (A quotation from the story is lead into; the page # exists in parentheses.)

Seth, the protagonist, reveals that his behavior differs greatly from Adam's, the antagonist, when he thinks, "It was pretty cool to think that the cops didn't like you. Seth was pretty sure the cops didn't even know who he was" (18).

Commentary or Elaboration: (can be more than one sentence)

Although Seth had never been in trouble until he begins to spend time with Adam, he indicates that he admires Adam for his reckless actions. Seth's thoughts foreshadow that he soon will have an experience uncharacteristic for himself.

Concrete Detail #2: (A specific, important incident from the story is summarized)

Later that afternoon, Seth finds himself attacked by three men as a result of Adam flicking a cigarette butt onto the men's car windshield from the bridge. Seth lies on the ground bleeding after the men leave.

Commentary or Elaboration: (can be more than one sentence)

Seth's desire to be like Adam not only results in him being attacked, but he also learns that Adam is not the tough outlaw he portrays himself to be. Instead of Adam helping Seth, he blames Seth for the cigarette butt incident and watches without helping as the men attack Seth.

Concluding Sentence/ Transition:

Through Adam's actions, Seth learns that being someone other than himself leads to negative consequences.

Turn over →

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Directions: With a partner, choose a second literary term essential to the story “On the Bridge”, and plan a paragraph supporting the term as I demonstrated on the previous page. Refer to your story. Find at least one quotation to use as a concrete detail.

Body Paragraph #2 (Example):

Topic Sentence:

Both external and internal conflict move the story forward while creating suspense for the reader.

Concrete Detail: (this concrete detail is a combination of quotation and paraphrase)

Seth, wanting to be like Adam, wears a worn-looking denim jacket but “feels like a fraud” because the jacket was actually new but made to look worn. Like Adam, he has a pack of Marlboro cigarettes sticking out of the pocket of his jacket (18).

Commentary or Elaboration: (can be more than one sentence)

The fact that Seth “feels like a fraud” reveals his internal struggle. Throughout the story he expresses a desire to be like Adam yet realizes their differences; however, Seth still attempts to be like him even though his personality conflicts with Adam’s.

Concrete Detail #2: (This concrete detail is a sentence of summary with a quotation which supports the sentence. The colon indicates that the quotation supports the sentence.)

In addition, Seth experiences external conflict when he is attacked by the three men and forced to lick the cigarette ash from their windshield: “The husky guy leaned harder against him, squeezing Seth painfully against the car. He pushed Seth’s face down until it actually pressed against the cool glass. Seth could feel a spasm in his chest as his lungs cried for air” (20).

Commentary or Elaboration: (can be more than one sentence)

The struggle between the men and Seth creates suspense for the reader in that the reader cannot help but wonder what will happen to Seth.

Concluding Sentence/ Transition:

Seth’s conflicts interest the reader and reveal him to be a character similar to an ordinary teenage boy.