



The 5 Thinking Levels

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★ The Two Types of Prompts ★

WHY?

- Complex Sentence with Subordinating Conjunctions
- Answers with **Reasons**
- Example: Explain why it is important to be kind.

Clue Words:

- importance, significance
- reason, infer, meaning
- most likely, whether
- should, should not

These ask:
Why does this matter?



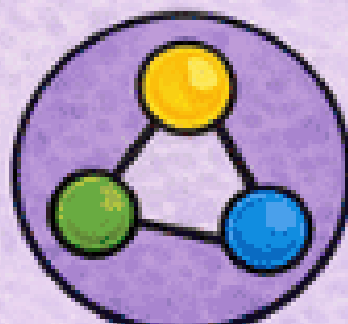
HOW?

- Simple Sentence with Prepositions
- Answers with **Ways/Methods**
- Example: Explain how to be kind to others.

Clue Words:

- influence, reveal
- similarities, differences
- ways, develop
- show, demonstrate

These ask:
How are ideas connected?



SCR Structure

Thesis + Evidence + Explanation

Thesis Types

- **WHAT** = Simple sentence (facts/details)
- **WHY** = Complex sentence
(subordinating conjunction + reason)
- **HOW** = Simple sentence
(preposition + method/connection)





Power Words for Stronger Writing



Subordinating Conjunctions

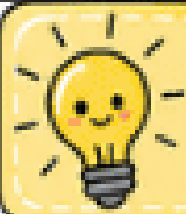
- ★ because
- ★ since
- ★ when
- ★ after
- ★ so that
- ★ although
- ★ even though
- ★ due to
- ★ given that
- ★ in light of
- ★ while
- ★ if
- ★ before
- ★ unless



Common Prepositions

- ★ by
- ★ through
- ★ in
- ★ with
- ★ during
- ★ through the use of
- ★ in response to
- ★ based on
- ★ at
- ★ under
- ★ over
- ★ between
- ★ across
- ★ on





Evidence Citation Stems by Thinking Stage



Stage	Introduce the Source	Bring in the Evidence (quote/paraphrase)	Tie to Claim	Higher-utility Verbs
 Foundational (Level 1)	"The text says..."; "The author says..."; "In the story..."	"For example..."; "One part shows..."; "It says, "...""	"This shows..."; "This proves..."; "This means..."	says, shows, tells
 Emergent (Level 2)	"According to the text/author..."; "In paragraph ____"; "The narrator explains..."	"The passage states..."; "The author writes, "..."; "One example is..."	"This suggests..."; "This reveals..."; "This supports the idea that..."	states, explains, describes
 Visible (Level 3)	"As [author] notes..."; "The text indicates..."; "Evidence in lines ____ demonstrates..."	"Specifically, the author writes..."; "The scene illustrates that..."; "Data in the chart show..."	"This implies... because..."; "This detail underscores..."; "Taken together, this supports..."	notes, indicates, illustrates, demonstrates
 Independent (Level 4)	"Building on this, [author] argues..."; "The text establishes..."; "[Character/event] exemplifies..."	"To that end, the author contends..."; "The evidence corroborates..."; "Consider the moment when..."	"This nuance advances the claim that..."; "This pattern strengthens the inference that..."; "Consequently..."	argues, contends, establishes, corroborates, substantiates
 Reflective (Level 5)	"Positioning the reader to see... [author] begins with..."; "Through diction/imagery, the text constructs..."; "Critically, the passage frames..."	"The evidence converges on..."; "This motif operationalizes..."; "The author's move here foregrounds..."	"Therefore, the evidence warrants the conclusion that..."; "Synthesizing these details reveals..."; "Ultimately, this reframes..."	advances, interrogates, synthesizes, frames, warrants

SETTING

Where and When a Story Takes Place

1. Historical Setting



- Time Period

- Real Events

- Past Locations



2. Cultural Setting

- Customs & Traditions

- Language & Clothing

- Food, Music, & Lifestyle



3. Scenery Setting (Location)

- Where? Mountains, City, Farm, Beach, Forest, etc.



4. Time of Story



- Past, Present, Future

- Time of Day: Morning, Night, Season



Why Does Setting Matter?

- Creates Mood / Atmosphere

- Helps Characters

- Understand the Story Better!



Clues in the Text:

Look for:

Description Words

Character Thoughts

Dialogues

Historical/Cultural Details.



CSI Habit



Strong writers think deeply
and write with purpose!

C = connect

The evidence
connects to the
prompt and thesis.



S = support

The evidence
supports the reason.



I = infer

The evidence
infers more ideas
that I can explain.



Three Pieces to a Thesis!

TOPIC

✓ noun of importance from the prompt

CHARGE

✓ verb of importance from the prompt

ANSWER

✓ the writer's answer to the charge

Habit for Building a Thesis

1. Read the prompt
2. Find the **TOPIC**.
3. Find the **CHARGE**.
4. Think of the **ANSWER**
5. Match the prompt type to sentence type.
6. Write the thesis



Thesis Types

- **WHAT Prompt**
 - simple sentence
 - answer includes facts/details
- **WHY Prompt**
 - complex sentence
 - includes a subordinating clause such as *because*
- **Relational HOW Prompt**
 - simple sentence with a preposition
 - answer includes ways/connections





Explanations Anchor Chart



What an Explanation Does

An explanation sentence helps me tell:

- what the evidence means
- why the evidence matters
- what I can understand from it

Explanation is NOT:

- another quote
- a copy of the evidence
- a random thought

Our Two Bookends for Explaining

DEEP FACTS – Bookends for Now

- D = Definition
- S = Story/Anecdote

Sentence Reminder

- Capitalize the first word.
- Punctuate the last word.

Why We Use “THIS”

- points back to the evidence sentence right before it
- is a demonstrative pronoun
- refers to something already named and close by

Explanation Signal Markers

Definition Signal Markers

- This means
- This shows

Story/Anecdote Signal Markers

- This reminds me of
- This makes me think of

Explanation Chant

“Wow! Wow! Wow! I’m explaining now!”

Motions:

- three fingers up on either side of the face for
“Wow! Wow! Wow!”
- rolling hands in front of body for “I’m explaining now!”





What Is Evidence?



What Is Evidence?

Evidence is proof from the passage that helps support an answer.

Evidence IS:

- ✓ words or sentences from the text
- ✓ details from the passage
- ✓ proof that supports a thesis

Evidence IS NOT:

- ✗ a random detail that does not match the prompt
- ✗ a personal opinion not found in the text
- ✗ a sentence copied from the passage without a reason

CSI HABIT for Strong Evidence

Strong Evidence Uses

- C = Connects to the prompt
- S = Supports my thesis statement
- I = Infers additional ideas.

If my evidence does not connect, support, or help me infer, it is probably weak evidence.

Signal Markers

Signal markers introduce quoted evidence:

- The text states,
- The author says,
- The passage explains,
- The text shows,



Quoted Evidence Punctuation

Signal marker + comma + quotation marks

Examples:

- The text states, "There was also fresh water and land where crops could be planted."
- The author describes, "There was..."

Evidence Chant

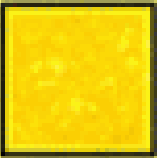
"Hey! Hey! Hey! Evidence is on the way!"

Motions:

- raise both hands in the air on "Hey! Hey! Hey!"
- make quote fingers in the air when saying "evidence is on the way!"



Shaping the Prompt

Shape	What It Means	What to Look For
	Noun of Importance (NOI)	The topic or subject of the question 
	Verb of Importance (VOI)	The action the question is asking you do
	Question Type Clue	Words that show what it is a WHAT, WHY, or HOW?

Three Types of SCR/ECR Questions

- **WHAT** • Identify or describe something
- **WHY** • Explain a reason or cause
- **HOW** • Explain a process, method, or way something happened



(ECR) TREES

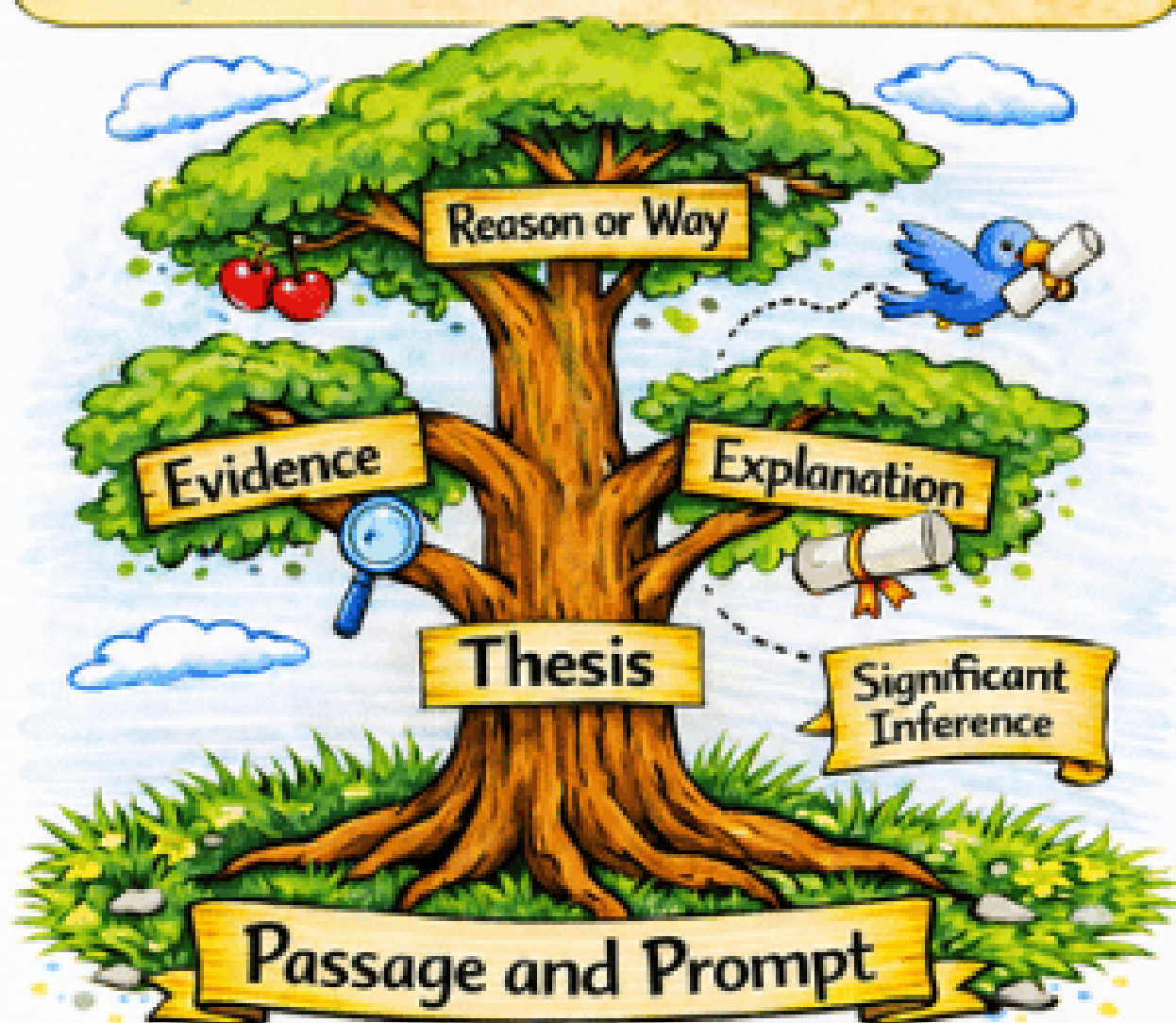
T- Thesis: The answer to the prompt

R- Reason/Way: Why or how it is true

E- Evidence: Text proof

E- Explanation: How the evidence proves it

S- Significance: Why it matters



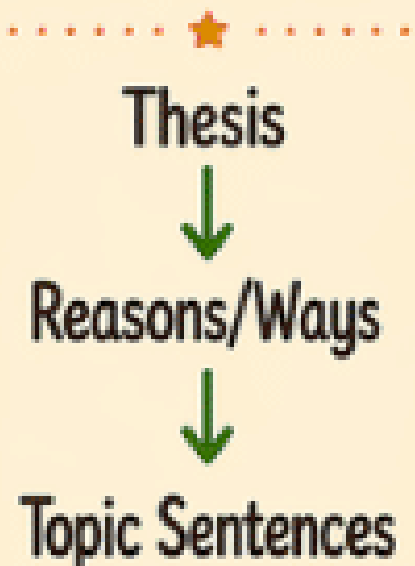


Reason/Way Branch

- ★ A reason tells **why**
- ★ A way tells **how**
- ★ Each reason or way must **prove** the thesis



Topic Sentence Connection



Thesis Construction

Thesis + Evidence + Explanation

Shaping the Prompt

- Red Circle = Noun of Importance (NOI)
- Yellow Box = Verb of Importance (VOI)
- Green Triangle = Cue Words (why/how)

What a Thesis Needs:

- Noun of Importance
- Verb of Importance
- Student Answer

SCR vs. ECR
SCR = Question
ECR = Statement
WHY/HOW

How Prompt = Simple Sentence

- must include a preposition
- example frame:
through, by, with,
through his, by his,
with his

Why Prompt = Complex Sentence

- must include subordinating conjunction
- example frame:
Because / Since /
Although

Prompt to Thesis Transformation

Read the prompt

- Find the noun of importance
- Find the verb of importance
- Decide if it is why or how

Add your answer
Build the thesis



Nine ways to Explain a Piece of Evidence

Type	How to Explain	Example Explanation
D Definition	Define or clarify what the evidence shows literally.	This means the doors are made of metal and use modern, automatic technology, setting a futuristic or advanced tone for the setting.
E Example & Illustration	Add a specific instance or sensory detail that builds on the evidence.	This means the writer wants readers to imagine a smooth, mechanical door like those in airports or high-security buildings, helping us picture the setting clearly.
E Expert Testimony	Reference an authority or expert to validate interpretation.	This means, as architects often note, metallic sounds and automated movements in a building can symbolize efficiency and progress, showing how this school values innovation.
P Process / Step-by-Step Explanation	Break down how or why the evidence creates meaning.	This means the door opens automatically, air rushes through the hall, and the sound lingers—each step revealing how technology literally fills the school's space with its presence.
F Facts & Statistics	Support the explanation using data or factual context.	This means the school's investment in advanced technology—such as automated doors, which cost thousands of dollars per set—proves its commitment to modernization and safety.
A Analogy	Compare the evidence to something familiar to deepen understanding.	This means the doors function like a robot's exhale—cold, smooth, and precise—helping the reader feel the mechanical, almost lifeless atmosphere of the school.
C Comparison & Contrast	Show how the evidence differs from or resembles something else.	This means unlike the warm creak of old wooden doors, these metallic whooshes feel impersonal and distant, revealing how technology replaces human touch in this environment.
T Tipping Point (Cause & Effect)	Explain what caused the evidence and what results from it.	This means because the school installed high-tech systems, the once-bustling, friendly lunchroom now feels sterile and controlled, changing the mood and behavior of students.
S Story (Anecdote)	Illustrate the meaning with a short story or moment.	This means that every time those doors open, students pause mid-sentence to listen—the sound has become part of their daily rhythm, reminding them they're living in a digital age.

Cluster 3: Module 1

How to Magnify a Reason or a Way!

After writing a thesis, decide if you should brainstorm Reasons or Ways.

1. Brainstorm Reasons or Ways

2. Group your like Reasons or Ways

3. Decide on only ONE idea per group

4. Narrow it down: Only use 3 groups!

* These 3 ideas become your Main Body Paragraph topic sentences!



WHY Prompt Thinking

1



- Why prompts ask for reasons, importance, significance, purpose, meaning, or value
- Strong writers do not stop at one reason
- Strong writers magnify their ideas before choosing their best three

2



Magnifying Process for WHY Prompts

Layer 1: Brainstorm as many reasons as possible

Layer 2: Place reasons into like-minded groups

Layer 3: Narrow each group to one strong idea

Final Step: Keep the best three and turn them into topic sentences

3



Topic Sentence

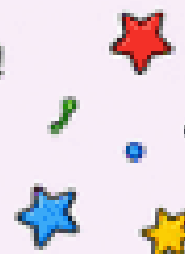
- names one strong reason
- connects clearly to the thesis
- prepares the reader for the paragraph

4



Chant

Hear ye! Hear ye! Reasons are near me!
Brainstorm wide!
Group with pride!
Narrow with care!
Choose the best three there!





Quick Reference

- ★ Poetry and drama can both develop big ideas.
- ★ In this cluster, the literary thread is problem/conflict.
- ★ Writers move from prompt → thesis → reasons/ways → evidence → explanation → **TREES**

Prompt Analysis

- ★ Circle the task.
- ★ Box the topic.
- ★ Underline what the response must include.
- ★ Ask: Is this asking for reasons/importance or ways/development?



Thesis



- ★ A thesis answers the prompt clearly.
- ★ A thesis names the main idea the writer will prove.
- ★ A thesis prepares for the body paragraphs.



Significant Inferencing



- combine what the text shows
- combine what you know or have experienced
- create a bigger idea not directly stated
- connect the learning to others
- reflect on the moral, lesson learned, theme, or takeaway

MICE = My Inference = Connections I have
+ Evidence I have found



Signal Phrases for Significance

- As you can see,
- Ultimately,
- The big picture is,
- As everyone can benefit,
- This reminds us that,
- What this shows is,
- In the end,
- One lesson we can learn is,



A strong inference is not directly stated.
It is built from evidence and
thoughtful connections.



Signal Marker Phrases

Hear ye! Hear ye! REASONS are near me!

- ★ One reason...
- ★ Building on that idea...
- ★ At first glance...



Hear ye! Hear ye! WAYS are near me!

- ★ The first way this happens is...
- ★ Beyond that...
- ★ Upon deeper consideration...



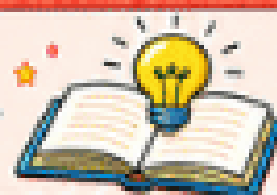
Hey! Hey! Hey! EVIDENCE is on the way!

- The author says, "..."
- "The scene illustrates that..."
- "Synthesizing these details reveals..."



Wow! Wow! Wow! EXPLANATION is Now!

- ★ This shows...
- ★ Based on the evidence that..., I can infer...
- ★ This helps me see that...





HOW Writing with MICE



HOW Body Paragraph Pattern

1. Way Sentence
2. Evidence
3. Explanation
4. Significance



**MICE = My Inference = Connections I have
+ Evidence I have found**

A strong significance sentence for HOW writing:

- ★ reflects on the process or pathway
- ★ connects to others
- ★ shows the lesson learned
- ★ reveals the big picture

Signal Phrases for Significance

- ★ As you can see,
- ★ Ultimately,
- ★ The big picture is,
- ★ From this we can learn that,
- ★ As everyone can benefit,
- ★ In the end,
- ★ This teaches us that,
- ★ Because of this,
- ★ One takeaway is that

SOLUTION AND RESOLUTION THINKING

When we think about solution and resolution, we ask:

- ★ How did things **change**?
- ★ How did people **solve** a problem or **shape** an outcome?
- ★ How did **actions** lead to a **result**?
- ★ How did the ending reveal a **lesson** or **impact**?



What a Statement of Purpose Does

A statement of purpose:

- ★ opens the paper
- ★ sounds **broad** and **meaningful**
- ★ **prepares** the reader for the topic
- ★ **connects** to a big idea
- ★ **does not** retell the passage
- ★ **does not** answer the prompt directly



Sets the stage
for the **topic**
and the **thinking**
to come!

Introduction Paragraph

Get S.E.T.

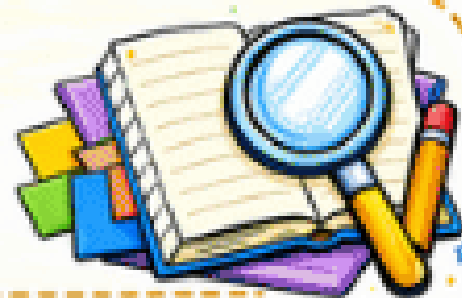
S

Statement
of Purpose



E

Evidence
REFERENCE



T

Thesis

* Your main idea!



★ A **STRONG** INTRO STARTS WITH **S.E.T!**



Color-Coding the Exemplar Paper

from Beginning to End



Introduction



= Statement of Purpose



= Evidentiary Transition



= Thesis



Main Body Paragraph



= Reason or Way Statement



= Evidence



= Explanation



= Significant Inference, when present



Conclusion



= R1 Restatement of Thesis



= R2 Reference Back to Evidence



= R3 Reflection Statement



Introduction and Conclusion Relationship

Introduction moves



Conclusion moves



What Each Color Means



= broader thinking or significance



= proof or movement toward proof



= main answer or reason



= explanation thinking



Broad vs. Specific

Broad Statements

- ★ sound global
- ★ express a big idea
- ★ can fit many topics
- ★ do not mention exact passage details
- ★ feel like a lesson, truth, or takeaway

Specific Statements

- ✓ mention exact people, events, or inventions
- ✓ connect directly to the essay prompt
- ✓ focus on the exact topic being discussed
- ✓ sound narrower and more precise

VS.

What the Thesis Statement Does

A thesis statement:

- comes after the evidentiary transition
- bridges the prompt to the paper
- answers the prompt directly
- sets the stage for the evidence and explanation that follows
- guides the whole response
- keeps the writing focused
- does not retell the passage
- does not list every piece of evidence



Shows the reader
exactly where
your paper
is going!



It sounds like a focused answer
that the paper will explain and prove.

What the Evidentiary Transition Does

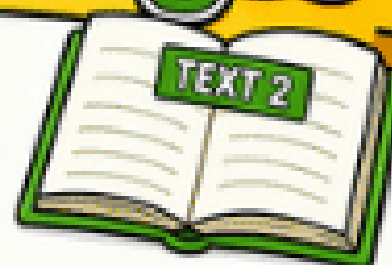
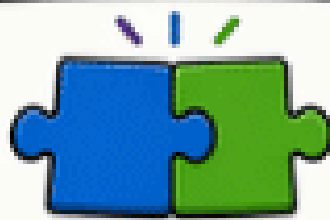
The evidentiary transition:

- ★ comes after the statement of purpose
- ★ comes before the thesis
- ★ mentions the evidence as a whole
- ★ does not list every reason
- ★ helps bridge broad ideas to the exact claim



It sounds like a grouped preview of the evidence.

★ Paired Passages ★



★ Paired Passages Need Paired Evidence

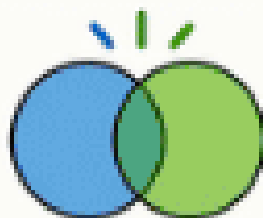
- ★ A complete answer uses information from both texts.
- ★ Do not stay in only one passage.
- ★ Match your evidence to the question.



★ Similarity and Difference Signal Words



Similar:
both, alike,
similarly, in the
same way



Different:
however, but,
unlike, while,
on the other hand

★ Reminders

- Evidence from one passage is not enough.
- A complete answer must include both texts.
- Compare carefully, not quickly.



Listing vs. Collectively Referring



Too Listed

- art changed
- government changed
- people studied Greece and Rome



Collective

- changes during the Renaissance
- ideas from the past
- important details from the passage
- examples of change and learning



Do not dump the reasons. Group them.

Helpful Collective Nouns and Phrases

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ★ details from the passage | ★ stories and achievements |
| ★ examples from the text | ★ evidence from the text |
| ★ changes during this time | ★ actions and experiences |
| ★ ideas from the past | ★ examples of influence |
| ★ information in the passage | ★ details about music and culture |

★ Paired Passage Structure ★

Parts:



Thesis

- A strong **WHY** thesis statement should usually be a complex sentence with subordinating conjunctions.
- A strong **HOW** thesis statement should usually be a simple sentence with prepositions.



Topic Sentence – Reasons/Ways



Evidence



Explanation



Significant Inference/ Closing Thought

- The last sentence should show the **bigger picture, lesson, takeaway, or how others can benefit.**



A complete answer must use information from **BOTH** texts to fully answer the prompt.



Why Prompt Habits



1. Read the prompt carefully



2. Circle the people or topics



3. Underline what you must explain



4. Prove your answer with evidence from **both** passages.



5. Explain how the evidence supports your answer.



How Prompt Habits



1. Read the prompt carefully



2. Circle what is being compared



3. Underline whether the prompt asks for **similar** or **different**.



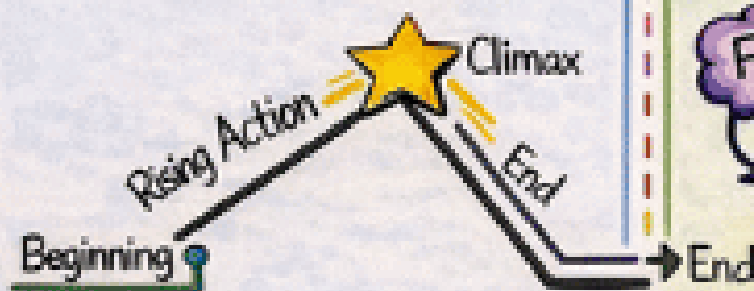
4. Prove your answer with evidence from **both** passages.



5. Explain how the evidence proves the comparison.

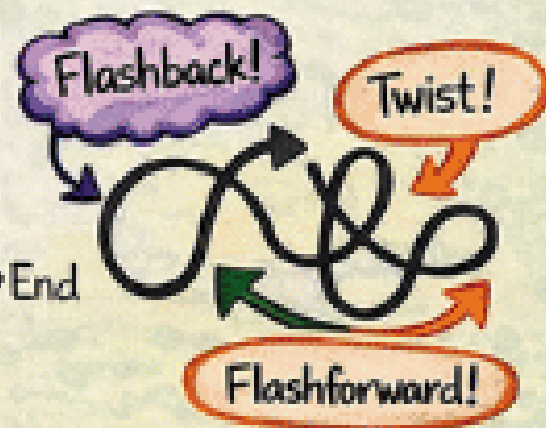
★ Parts of a Plot ★

Linear



- Beginning
- Rising Action
- Climax
- Falling Action
- Resolution

Nonlinear

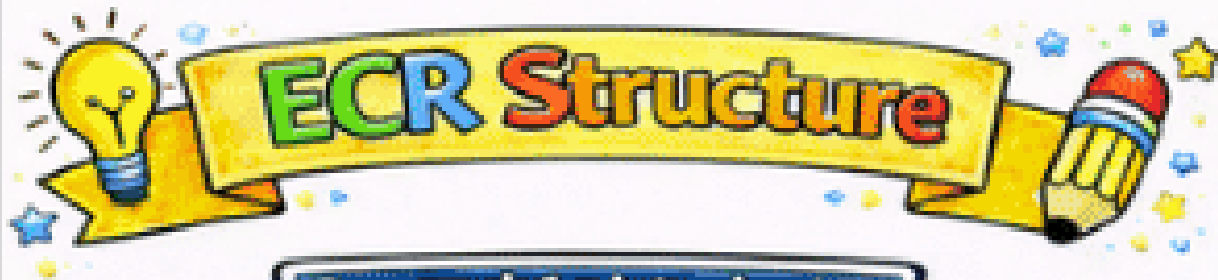


- Flashbacks
- Twists & Turns
- Flashforwards

The Plot Elements



- Characters - Setting - Conflict - Theme - Resolution -



Paragraph 1 = Introduction

- Statement of Purpose
- Evidentiary Transition
- Thesis

Paragraph 2 = Main Body 1

- Reason / Way
- Evidence
- Explanation
- Significant Inferencing

Paragraph 3 = Main Body 2

- Reason / Way
- Evidence
- Explanation
- Significant Inferencing

Paragraph 4 = Main Body 3

- Reason / Way
- Evidence
- Explanation
- Significant Inferencing

Paragraph 5 = Conclusion

- R1 Restatement
- R2 Reference
- R3 Reflection



Conclusion Paragraph

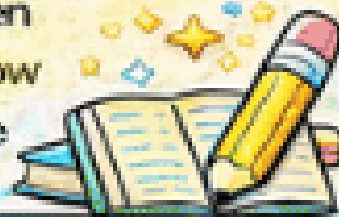


✓ The RRR Conclusion HABIT

- ✧ R1 = Restate the thesis
- ✧ R2 = Reference the evidence
- ✧ R3 = Reflection sentence

Color Code the Conclusion

- ✓ R1 = Green
- ✧ R2 = Yellow
- ✧ R3 = Blue



What Each Part Does

- ✓ R1 reminds the reader of the main answer.
- ✧ R2 points back to the proof from the paper.
- ✧ R3 leaves the reader with a thoughtful big-picture idea.

How to Restate at This Level

- ✓ Use the same idea.
- ✧ Change one or two words with synonyms.
- ⊘ Do not copy the thesis exactly.

Conclusion Reminder

- ⊘ Do not add brand new evidence
- ⊘ Do not make the conclusion longer than the body.
- ⊘ Do end with strength. 

Bluebird Moment

The final sentence can reflect the meaning of the whole paper.

"This is the sentence
"files away"
with the big idea.

It helps the
reader think
beyond
the page.



Full ECR Flow

1 Prompt ?



2 Thesis/Claim

3 Reasons / Ways



4 CSI Evidence



5 Explanation



6 Significant Inference



From Prompt to Response!

Argumentative Correspondence Structure

Introduction

- S** = Statement of Purpose / Big General Truth
- E** = Collective Evidence Statement
- C** = Claim / Thesis

Body Paragraphs

- Reason
- Evidence
- Explanation
- Significant Inference when natural

Conclusion

- R1** R1
- R2** R2
- R3** R3
- ★ Reflective Statement / Big Picture / Lesson Learned

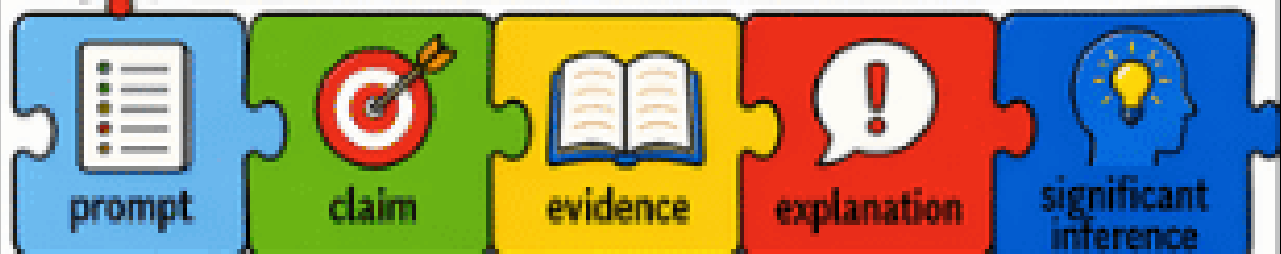


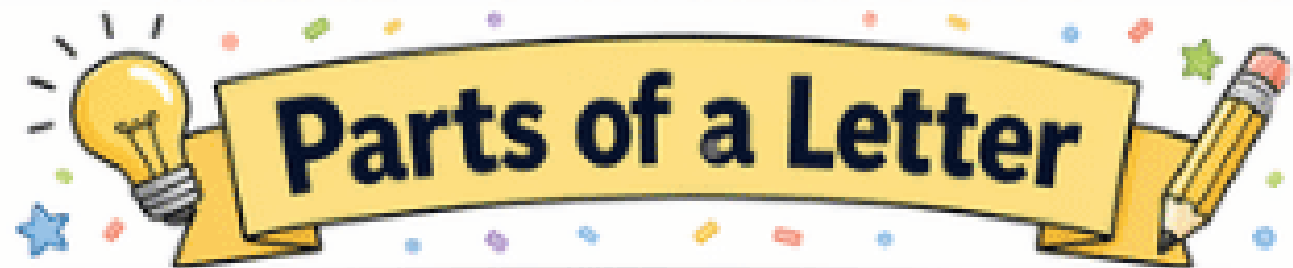
Prompt Analysis Questions

- 1 What am I being asked to decide?
- 2 What side will I take?
- 3 Why do I believe that side?
- 4 What three reasons can support my side?
- 5 Which evidence from the text best proves each reason?



Paper Pieces That Must Work Together





Parts of a Letter

Parts of a Letter

1

Greeting

- Addresses the reader
- Ends with a comma

2

Introduction

- States why the letter is written
- Includes the claim (why response)
- Must be a complex sentence

3

Body

- Each section includes: reason, evidence, explanation, inference

4

Conclusion

- Restates the claim in a new way
- Includes reflection or big idea

5

Closing

- Ends politely
- Ends with a comma



Sample Letter



Greeting:

Dear Mrs. Ramirez,

Statement of Purpose:

People are often faced with choices that require honesty and responsibility.

Evidentiary Transition:

In the story, Amina faced a difficult decision after breaking a jar.

Claim:

Amina should have told the truth because honesty builds trust, shows responsibility, and helps solve problems.

Closing:

Sincerely,





Argumentative Writing



If You Have to Decide, Declare the Why

- if the prompt says should or should not
- if the prompt asks whether or not
- if the prompt asks you to choose between ideas,
- Then it is a **WHY** prompt!

A **WHY** prompt needs a claim, reasons and proof

Claims

A claim is a thesis in argumentative writing.

A strong claim answers the prompt and includes a subordinating conjunction because it is a **WHY** response.

Example: *Students should learn about the regions of Texas because geography shapes how people live and work.*



The Magnifying Process



Layer 1: Brainstorm many possible reasons

Layer 2: Group similar reasons together

Layer 3: Narrow each group to one **BEST** idea

Layer 4: Choose your final three reasons

Strong Reasons

- match the claim
- are different from one another
- proven with evidence
- connect to the big picture or theme



Theme in Argumentative Writing

Theme helps writers connect their side to a bigger idea.

A strong argument is not only correct; it is meaningful.

The ending should leave the audience with a lesson learned or a big picture



All About Characters!

How do we learn about a character?

Their Words

What they say!

Their Actions

What they do!

Their Clothes

What they wear!

Their Friends

Who they hang out with!

Their Thoughts

What they think!

Body Language

How they show feelings!

Evidence of a Character

—> Clues that tell us who they are! <—

General

Ways to React

Actions

What do you DO?

- ✓ jumping
- ✓ crossing arms
- ✓ frowning



Words



What do you SAY?

No way!

Okay, fine...

What!

Maybe later ✓

Let's try...

Denial

You refuse, or ignore

✗ That's not true!

✗ I don't want to!



Acceptance

You go along with it calmly

✓ Good idea...

✓ I guess so.

Sure!



Compromise

You find a middle ground

✓ Let's both take a turn

✓ How about this...

Let's both take a turn.

How about this...



THEME

What is a Theme?

The **central message** or **lesson** the author wants the reader to learn.

Common Themes



Common Themes

Loyalty

Courage

Kindness

Honesty

Friendship

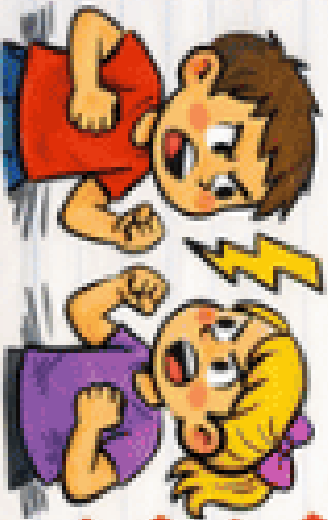
Responsibility

Friendship

Perseverance

★ Types of Problems ★

Man vs. Man



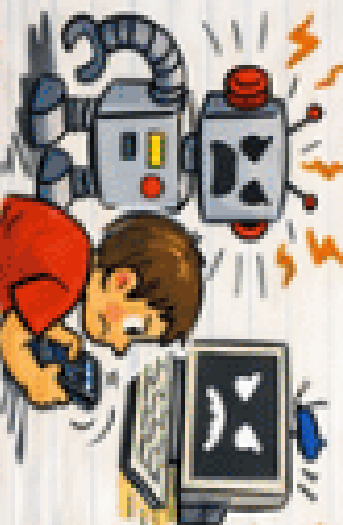
Man vs. Self



Man vs. Nature



Man vs. Technology



Man vs. Society



Man vs. The Unknown

