Hingham High School's Survival Guide to Writing
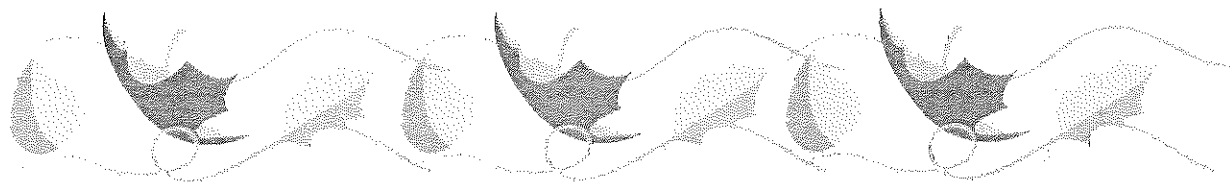
Don't Lose This!
It's Important!!
Put it Someplace Safe!!!

You will be using it every week
for the next four years!

Did I mention this was important?

Back to School Refresher
Class Notes

Term	Definition	Function	Problems Created
Introductory LI (lead-in)	A sentence that "hooks" the reader's attention and broadly opens the paper	Reader interest	Boring or unoriginal opener
CI	Complete identification-the title and author of the work	To clarify for the reader who and what is being discussed	Creates confusion
MI	Main Idea-what the paper is about	Give direction and a line of development to the paper	Lacks focus-gets off topic easily
Thesis Statement	A clarifying statement that states the theory or belief that writer will prove	Clearly tells reader what the paper will be about	Creates confusion
DI	Developing Idea-a smaller part of the MI	It helps the writer tackle the MI in a smaller, more organized, more detailed way	Paper becomes too broad or too unorganized
DP	Developing paragraph	A paragraph that is devoted to proving a specific DI	Paper becomes too broad or too unorganized
TS	Topic Sentence- A statement that clearly states the topic of a specific paragraph	Gives the writer focus and the reader clarity of the paragraph's content	Creates disorganization or confusion
LI in a DP	A lead-in in a developing paragraph-this eases the reader into a detail and gives background on it.	Creates flow and offers important information	Interrupts flow, creates choppiness and confusion
DD	Developmental Detail-a offering of evidence or proof of the MI/DI	Evidence of your topic helps to prove your MI	Paper lacks content-You don't prove your MI
DQ	Direct Quotation- words taken directly	Offers specific evidence from a	Papers lacks content -you don't prove your

	from another text	specific text that proved your MI	MI
A/I	Analysis and Interpretation- connects the specific DD/DQ to your specific MI.	Helps to prove the argument of your paper	Generates a superficial summary or overview of topic
CS	Closing sentence- restates the MI and DIS of the paper	Lets the reader know your paper is coming to a close- summarizes and recaps the MI	Paper ends abruptly without warning- paper feels unfinished and unpolished
RFS	Reach for Significance-when the writer connect the MI to something beyond the work itself	Offers the writer's own insight and opinion-highlights the critical thinking and ability of the writer	Paper is boring and lacks style. Papers ends with dud

Sample Thesis Paragraph on "The Birds".

Often times popular stories are made into a film. Sometimes, the movie version differs greatly from its original story; other times the similarities are quite obvious. Daphne du Maurrier's short story "The Birds" and Alfred Hitchcock's movie version are both similar and different. One way the two versions is different is the setting. Du Maurrier's story takes place in Post World War II England in an isolated rural area while Hitchcock's version occurs in Bodega Bay, a seaside town outside of San Francisco. Although the bay is a more picturesque setting, the isolation of the farm is more effective. Readers know the characters from the story are trapped without help. Further, the main character is different in both tales. Nat is a family man in Du Maurrier's story. He tries throughout the story to protect his wife and children. In the film, however, Melanie Daniels plays the lead. In this way, viewers care far less for the well-being of a spoiled newspaper heiress than they would for a hardworking father. Although quite different in setting and character, both stories lack a complete resolution. Du Maurrier leaves readers wondering if Nat smokes his last cigarette in a moment of hopelessness or hope. *"He reached for it, switched on the silent wireless. He trew the empty packet on the fire and watched it burn"* (Du Maurrier 53). Similarly, Melanie, Mitch, his mother and Kathy drive away from a now deserted bay. It is unclear if they ever return. In both cases, the viewer or reader is left to interpret the characters' fates on their own. Film versions of popular stories sometimes fall flat of the orginal tale for viewers cannot fully know the characters enough to care about the conflict. Hitchcock's version of Du Maurrier's story, however, is a good one. For while it lacks the isolation of a rural setting, it adds a romance and several spooky scenes that cause readers to worry over whether or not the odd mix of characters will survive.

Assignment:

- ✓ Put a light green box around the **background information**
- ✓ Put an orange box around the **TS**
- ✓ Underline the **CI** in brown
- ✓ Underline the **MI** in red
- ✓ Underline the lead ins in **light blue**
- ✓ Underline the **specific examples** in black
- ✓ Circle the **analysis** in yellow
- ✓ Find **words** of transition that lead into each developmental detail. Circle them purple.
- ✓ Underline the **DQ** in dark green
- ✓ Put a dark blue box around the **RFS and the concluding sentence**

Common Pitfalls in
Thesis Paragraph Writing

The Vague Page-General, Superficial analysis-no insight offered

The Plot Summary-a usually long reiteration of the book's plot-a book report

The Scatterbrain-wrong, confused, misdirected information-a desperate, muddled mess

The Repeat Offender-restating each example disguised as analysis

The Analysis Skipper-Completely jumps from DI example to the LI of the next example

Typical point value for a quiz paragraph (30 points)

3 points Topic Sentence (MI and CI)

8 points DI#1 (2 for LI, 2 for DD or DQ, 4 for A/I)

8 points DI#2 (2 for LI, 2 for DD or DQ, 4 for A/I)

8 points DI#3 (2 for LI, 2 for DD or DQ, 4 for A/I)

3 points for the closing (RFS)

Pitfall #1--_____

I'll just throw in all the information I know about the book. Yeah, that's it. Then she won't notice I have no organized structure and no analysis. Great Idea!

The book <u>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime</u>, by Mark Haddon, is about Christopher Boone, a boy with a learning disability. In the beginning of the book, Christopher finds his neighbor's dog murdered with a pitchfork. Intrigued, Christopher starts to investigate all the possible suspects. To do this, he starts talking to all his neighbors, which is hard for him to do since he is Autistic and is afraid of people. Eventually, Christopher learns from Mrs. Alexander that his mother, when she was alive, had an affair with Mr. Shears, another neighbor. This makes Christopher snoop around even more. Later, when looking for his detective book under his father's bed, Christopher finds a box full of letters from his mother. Eventually, he realizes that his mother is not dead. She is living in London and Christopher's father only told him she was dead. Once Christopher confronts his father, the father admits that he killed the dog. Frightened, Christopher runs away to find his mother in London. This is extremely difficult for him since he must do all the things he fears to get there--like travel on a train, talk to strangers, and go to new places. Eventually, Christopher finds his mother and they move back to Swindon where Christopher takes his math exam. He slowly learns to forgive his father too. Since Christopher told the story, readers heard the story from his point of view, which was interesting because he has so many fears about so many different things. This point of view made ordinary events like riding the train more exciting.

Christopher Boone is an unreliable narrator in Mark Haddon's <u>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime</u> because he is Autistic. First, Christopher cannot understand emotions. At school, his teacher Siobhan tries to teach him that people often make faces to reveal how they are feeling. She even drew different faces to help Christopher understand emotions. But Christopher said "I kept the piece of paper in my pocket and took it out when I didn't understand what someone was saying" (3). It is hard for readers to understand what is going on in the story with Christopher as the narrator because he doesn't always understand what people are telling him. Also, Christopher is an unreliable narrator because he is afraid of strangers. Since Christopher is trying to find out who killed Wellington, he has to talk to a lot of strangers, which he doesn't like to do. But later Christopher says "I was nervous. I did not know Mrs. Alexander...I decided to walk to the park with Mrs. Alexander, even though it scared me" (59). Christopher is scared when he talks to Mrs. Alexander, but he talks to her anyway. Finally, Christopher is an unusual narrator because he sees everything all at once. Most people only notice the important things when they are in a new place, but Christopher notices everything. "...It is like when a computer is doing too many things at the same time and the central processor unit is blocked up and there isn't any space left to think about other things" (143). With Christopher as the narrator, he shares every little detail with the reader because he sees everything all at once. Christopher Boone made an unusual narrator in the book <u>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime.</u>

Pitfall #3 _____

Okay, I know the book. Analysis? Hmm. I'm a little iffy. Whatever. I'll make it work. I am smooth. Yeah, I got this. Look at everyone else freaking out. Ha! Stinks to be you guys, 'cuz I know what I'm doing.

Christopher Boone makes an interesting narrator in Mark Haddon's book <u>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime.</u> For starters, Christopher is Autistic, which means he cannot communicate normally or even share his emotions. Christopher does not understand facial expressions or gestures and he will not even hug his father because of this disability. This makes the book more interesting because it is not typical that a narrator is like that. Further, Christopher is a math whiz. Christopher's goal throughout the whole book is to take his math exam and get an A so that he will be in an A level math class. Since he loves math, he shares all different complex equations and puzzles with the reader anytime he is nervous or afraid. This adds to the book because most readers or typical narrators are not like that. Finally, Christopher is naïve because of his disability. Although Christopher is 14 years old, he acts like he is 8. When he finds his mother's letters, the readers know she is alive but it takes him a while to figure it out. This is also interesting because a normal narrator would not do that. <u>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime</u> does not have that much action, but since Christopher is an unusual narrator, the story is better than it should be.

Pitfall #4 _____

Point of View? Okay, what book was this? Something about a dog and an incident? Whatever!...Hmmmm... Okay, write anything...and make it sound good so she won't notice I have no clue what I'm talking about.

Christopher Boone had an interesting point of view in The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime. First, Christopher had a unique way of looking at things. When Christopher finds a dead dog, he wants to find out who killed it. Once Christopher found out his father killed the dog, he wanted to write a book about it, which is interesting. Also, Christopher is very brave. He travels across America just to visit his mom after his parents divorced even though he didn't know where he was going or how to get there. This made the novel exciting. Finally, Christopher is really smart but in a weird way. He is really into math and science and he likes to write about all the puzzles he solves on his journey to visit his mother in the big city. This makes the reading more mathematical. Christopher was an interesting narrator in the book.

Pitfall #5 _____

Analysis? What? Don't panic, okay, remain calm… Why does the word "analysis" mean anyway? I know my examples; I'll just give her those…that should be good enough.

Christopher Boone makes an interesting narrator in Mark Haddon's novel <u>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime.</u> First of all, Christopher has a disability. Christopher is Autistic, which makes him afraid of strangers, strange places, and of being touched. This is clearly shown when Christopher is at the train station and he barks at anyone who touches him. Also, Christopher is obsessed with math. He likes to explain all sorts of math diagrams and problems like the "Savant" problem to the reader while he is narrating. Finally, Christopher is a child so readers don't get all the correct information. Christopher did not know his mother had an affair or that she was even alive until much later in the story. Although Christopher is a unique person and a funny narrator, having the book written from his point of view can be confusing to readers because he is so unreliable.

Writing Workshop: Revealing Lead-Ins

When leading into DQs, **lead-ins should not only provide the context of the quotation but the emotional quality of the DQ as well.** This is especially true if the DQ is dialogue. Carefully chosen verbs can reveal the emotional condition of a character and his or her tone of voice. A thoughtfully worded, revealing lead-in also helps your analysis & interpretation, which appears after the DQ.

Pay attention to careful word choice (diction) that is appropriate to the DQ you are introducing. **Avoid simple, unrevealing verbs such as "states," "says," or "shows" ("Christopher shows", "Christopher states ", etc.).**

A lead-in's function is to provide the context of the direct quotation so that the flow from the lead-in to the quotation is smooth. **Basically, a lead-in should offer information about who is speaking or involved in the quote, where or when it is happening, and what is happening. (It is the who, what, when, where of the quotation)**

Notice how the revised lead-in below is much more revealing than the original:

POOR LEAD IN:
Christopher asks his neighbor, Mrs. Alexander, some questions about Wellington's murder.

BETTER LEAD IN
While investigating Wellington's murder, Christopher forces himself to talk to Mrs. Alexander, a stranger, to uncover information about his neighbors.

Who is involved: Christopher, Mrs. Alexander
When/where does it happen: while investigating Wellington's murder
What is happening: Christopher talks to a stranger to gain information
Emotional Value of Quote: he forces himself so he is fearful

Alternatives to "States"/"Says"/"Shows": All of these words have some emotional connotation to them, so choose your words carefully.				
implies	depicts	illustrates	portrays	conjures
reveals	insists	demands	suggests	whispers
admits	confesses	denounces	praises	encourages
persists	requests	mocks	refuses	inspires
YOU GET THE IDEA				

Common Pitfalls with Lead Ins
(what NOT to do!)

(1) Giving away the direct quotation
(2) Offering no context ahead (speaker, plot, etc)
(3) Offering too much plot summary
(4) Confused, muddled, or incorrect information
(5) Skipping it altogether and just plopping in a quotation

A proper lead in sentence should:

(1) Give the speaker of the quote if it is dialogue
(2) Explain who is involved in the quote
(3) Offer some context or plot background as to what is happening and when or where it occurs
(4) Reveal the emotional content of the quotation

NOTE: With practice, eventually you can learn to incorporate your lead-in into the direct quotation.

Below, please copy one direct quotation you feel was a good example of evidence in your paper. Copy the entire quote, including documentation.

DQ: _____

_____

_____

Now you will write 5 **poor** lead-ins to your quotation, each succumbing to a different pitfall.

Pitfall #1 (Giving away the quotation)

_____

_____

_____

Pitfall #2 (Offering no context clues)

_____

_____

Pitfall #3 (Offering too much plot summary)

_____

_____

_____

Pitfall #4 (Confused, muddled, or incorrect information)

_____

_____

_____

Pitfall #5 (Skipping it altogether)

Now that you can visibly see these five pitfalls, look again at your own paper and answer the questions below:

1. Did you fall into one or more of these five pitfalls when writing your lead-ins?
   - Yes, I succumbed to pitfall #_____
   - No, I did not commit one of these errors, but I still had poor lead-ins because_____
     _____.
   - No, my lead-ins were focused and specific because_____
     _____.

2. Below revise two poor lead-ins, focusing on everything we just learned in this workshop.
   - Poor lead-in#1 :_____
     _____
   - Revised Lead-in #1_____
     _____.
   - Poor lead-in#2 :_____
     _____
   - Revised Lead-in #2_____
     _____.

Writing Workshop: Transitions from DQ to Analysis & Interpretation
Avoiding "This quote shows...."

Choosing and introducing direct quotes are very important, however, you need to pay attention to how you **transition from DQs to your Analysis & Interpretation**. The ultimate goal here is to **avoid the DREADED, "This quote shows..."** (or "This quote elucidates...", or "This quote exemplifies...", or any fancy variation thereof).

Here is an example with a good lead-in but a poor transition into A/I:

While investigating Wellington's murder, Christopher forces himself to talk to Mrs. Alexander, a stranger, in order to uncover information about his neighbors. "I was nervous. I did not know Mrs. Alexander...I decided to walk into the park with Mrs. Alexander, even though it scared me" (59). ***Christopher is scared when he talks to Mrs. Alexander, but he talks to her anyway.***

THIS ANALYSIS IS NOT SMOOTH. IT JUST REPEATS THE DQ WITHOUT ANY CRITICAL THINKING. IT LEAVES OUT THE DQ'S "GOLDEN NUGGET."

Now here is the same lead-in & DQ with a smoother transition into the A/I:

While investigating Wellington's murder, Christopher forces himself to talk to Mrs. Alexander, a stranger, in order to uncover information about his neighbors. "I was nervous. I did not know Mrs. Alexander...I decided to walk into the park with Mrs. Alexander, even though it scared me" (59). ***Christopher's decision to face his fear not only leads him to uncover important information about his mother's affair with Mr. Shears, but it encourages him to communicate maturely and independently.***

NOTICE THIS ANALYISIS STILL TARGETS THE MI, YET IT IS MORE REVEALING AND ARTICULATE THAN THE ABOVE.

A helpful guide to a **SMOOTH TRANSITION** is the following format:

Possessive +	**Noun** +	**Strong Verb**
Who/What is subject of DQ?	What is the central idea of DQ?	Consider emotional/literary significance
Christopher's	decision	leads/encourages
Christopher's	fear	intensifies
The father's	lies	destroy
Christopher's	journey	symbolizes

Strong Verbs to use instead of "SHOWS"

Instills   pressures   manipulates

proves   illuminates   illustrates   highlights

symbolizes   underscores   inspires

embodies   ignites   urges   reinforces   elucidates

exemplifies   initiates

(This list could truly be endless depending on the reason you chose your DQs.)

Common Pitfalls with Analysis
(what NOT to do!)

(1) Telling the reader what happens next in the plot
(2) Repeating the direct quotation
(3) Offering a vague "blanket" analysis that could be used with any quotation
(4) Confused, muddled, misinterpretation, or incorrect information
(5) Skipping it altogether and moving to the next developing idea

A proper analysis sentence should:

(1) Explain HOW and WHY the direct quotation proves the main idea
(2) Offer critical thinking that goes beyond obvious connections
    A quotation may be
        a. Symbolic
        b. Ironic
        c. Foreshadowing
        d. A simile/metaphor
        e. Offer insight to a character

Remember the suggested format as a guide

Possessive + Who/What is subject of DQ?	Noun + What is the central idea of DQ?	Strong Verb Consider the emotional/ literary significance
Christopher's	decision	leads/encourages
Christopher's	fear	intensifies
The father's	lies	destroy
Christopher's	journey	symbolizes

Below, please copy one developmental detail or quotation you feel was a good example of evidence in your paper. Copy the entire example or quote, including documentation.

DD:_____

_____

Now you will write 5 poor analysis sentences, each succumbing to different pitfall.

Pitfall #1 (Telling the reader what happens next in the plot)

_____

_____

Pitfall #2 (Repeating the direct quotation)

_____

_____

Pitfall #3 (Offering a vague "blanket" analysis that could be used with any DQ)

_____

_____

Pitfall #4 (Confused, muddled, misinterpretation, or incorrect information)

_____

_____

Pitfall #5 (Skipping it altogether and moving to the next developing idea)

_____

_____

Now that you can visibly see these five pitfalls, look again at your own paper and answer the questions below:

1. Did you fall into one of these five pitfalls?
   - Yes, I succumbed to pitfall #_____
   - No, I did not commit one of these errors, but I still had poor analysis because_____

   _____.

   - No, my analysis was focused and specific because_____

   _____.

2. Looking at your detail/quotation, write down the key words that underscore your DI and MI:

_____

3. Do you target these words in your own analysis? Explain: _____

_____

4. Below revise two poor analyses, focusing on everything we just learned in this workshop.
   - Poor analysis #1
   :_____

   _____

   - Revised analysis #1_____

   _____.

   - Poor analysis #2
   :_____

   _____

   - Revised analysis #2_____

   _____.

5. What can you do for the next writing assignment to ensure that you focus your analysis next time? _____

_____

Blacklisted Words and Phrases

At some point during the year, these words will be blacklisted. You will be allowed only *3 blacklisted words per page* of formal writing. Any more than three blacklisted words per page will result a lowered rubric score in the diction/mechanics column.

1. Get (got, gotten)
2. Shows / Shows that
3. So / So that
4. First person pronouns (I, me, my, mine, us, we, ours, our) *Unless I make an exception for personal writing.
5. You, your *Unless I make an exception for personal writing.
6. Any form of "to be" and "to have" (is, am, are, were, was, be, being, been, has, have, has been, had been, have been, become...)
7. great, greatly
8. blatantly
9. a lot
10. basically
11. quote (unless you are using it as a verb)
12. First, firstly, second, secondly, third, thirdly...
13. ends up
14. all in all
15. slang of any kind (wicked, awesome, dude, sweet, ill).
16. swears of any kind
17. totally
18. like
19. major
20. "is when," "is how," "is who," "is what," "is where," "is why"
21. came, come, coming, came across

The list may grow...

Thesis Paragraph Outline

Topic sentence (MI and DI#1)_____

_____

Lead in to first DQ (gives plot background, this is the who, what, when, where of the DQ—who is speaking, what is going on, when and where in the story it happens)_____

_____

DD_____

_____

Analysis/Interpretation of DQ#1 (this explains why and how the above quote proves the

MI)_____

_____

_____.

Lead in to second DQ (gives plot background, this is the who, what, when, where of the DQ—who is speaking, what is going on, when and where in the story it

happens)_____

_____

DD_____

_____

Analysis/Interpretation of DQ#2 (this explains why and how the above quote proves the

MI)_____

_____

_____

_____.

Lead in to third DQ (gives plot background, this is the who, what, when, where of the DQ—who is speaking, what is going on, when and where in the story it happens)_____

_____

DD_____

_____

Analysis/Interpretation of DQ#3 (this explains why and how the above quote proves the

MI)_____

_____

_____

_____.

Closing sentence_____

Thesis Essay Outline (4 paragraphs)

Introduction

Optional anecdotal opening or background information_____

_____

Topic Sentence (includes Main Idea (MI) and Complete Identification (CI))_____

_____

Developing Idea #1 (DI#1)_____

_____

Developing Idea #2 (DI#2)_____

_____

Closing sentence (gives some suggestion as what RFS will be)_____

_____

Developing Paragraph #1

Topic sentence (MI and DI#1)_____

_____

Lead in to first DD (gives plot background, this is the who, what, when, where of the DD—who is

speaking if it's a DQ, what is going on, when and where in the story it happens)_____

_____

DD#1 _____

_____

Analysis/Interpretation of DD#1 (this explains why and how the above example proves the MI)____

_____

_____.

Lead in to second DD (gives plot background, this is the who, what, when, where of the DD—who is

speaking if it's a DQ, what is going on, when and where in the story it happens)_____

_____

DD#2 _____

_____

Analysis/Interpretation of DD#2 (this explains why and how the above example proves the MI)____

_____

_____

Lead in to third DD (gives plot background, this is the who, what, when, where of the DD—who is

speaking if it's a DQ, what is going on, when and where in the story it happens)_____

DD#3 _____

_____

Analysis/Interpretation of DD#3 (this explains why and how the above example proves the MI)____

_____

_____

_____

Closing sentence_____

_____

Developing Paragraph #2

Topic sentence (MI and DI#1)_____

_____

Lead in to first DD (gives plot background, this is the who, what, when, where of the DD—who is speaking if it's a DQ, what is going on, when and where in the story it happens)_____

_____

DD#1 _____

_____

Analysis/Interpretation of DD#1 (this explains why and how the above example proves the MI)____

_____

_____

_____

Lead in to second DD (gives plot background, this is the who, what, when, where of the DD—who is speaking if it's a DQ, what is going on, when and where in the story it happens)_____

_____

DD#2 _____

_____

Analysis/Interpretation of DD#2 (this explains why and how the above example proves the MI)____

_____

_____

_____

Lead in to third DD (gives plot background, this is the who, what, when, where of the DD—who is speaking if it's a DQ, what is going on, when and where in the story it happens)_____

_____

DD#3 _____

Analysis/Interpretation of DD#3 (this explains why and how the above example proves the MI)_____

_____

_____

_____

Closing sentence_____

_____

Conclusion

Topic Sentence (reiterate CI and MI)_____

_____

Expand on the two DIs explored _____

_____

_____

_____

Reach for Significance_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____