

Claims vs. Statements

Before working through the claims vs. statements sort, let's make sure you *really* understand the difference between claims and statements. First, read through the definitions of each below. Then, look at the sentences below and review what makes one sentence a **claim** and one a **statement**.

CLAIM

A sentence that can be argued.

Evidence can be found to prove or disprove the sentence.

STATEMENT

The act of stating or declaring.

Something that is factual.

CLAIM:

In Paul Laurence Dunbar's powerful poem, "Frederick Douglass," Dunbar describes Douglass as a powerful person.

What makes this a claim?

- It's arguable. Not everyone would agree that Dunbar shows Douglass as powerful.
- It can be supported with evidence. Read through the paragraph below to see how this claim can be supported with evidence from the novel itself.

STATEMENT:

The poem, "Frederick Douglass," was written by Paul Laurence Dunbar and published in 1913.

What makes this a statement?

- It simply CANNOT be argued. One quick check as to when this poem was published will show you a publication date of 1913.
- This is a factual statement.

Sample Paragraph Arguing the Claim:

Later in the poem, Dunbar compares Douglass' courage to the strength of the sun. The text states, "The sunlight of his truth dispelled the mist . . ." (Dunbar 21).

This line shows that Douglass' actions in life brought positivity to the world, just as the sun brightens each day. This comparison displays the strong impact Douglass made.



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Claims vs. Statements

Now, it's your turn. Carefully examine the two sentences below and determine which one is a claim and which one is a statement. On the lines below each sentence explain your reasoning.

CLAIM

A sentence that can be argued.

Evidence can be found to prove or disprove the sentence.

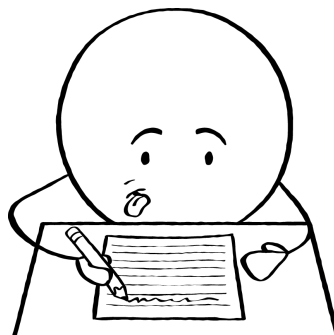
STATEMENT

The act of stating or declaring.

Something that is factual.

"The Gift of the Magi" a short story by O. Henry tells the tale of Jim and Della, a married couple with little money, who each give up their favorite possessions to buy a gift for the other.

Although both Jim and Della make a large sacrifice for the other in O. Henry's short story, "The Gift of the Magi," Jim makes the larger sacrifice in selling his gold watch.



Name: _____

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ANSWER KEY **Introductory Paragraph Practice**

Before you're sent off to write your own introductory paragraph, let's take a look at two examples, so you can see what a strong introductory paragraph should look like. After you read through each example, go back through the paragraph and, with different color highlighters/markers, highlight each element of an introductory paragraph – the TAG, summary, and claim. Even though you do not know the prompt that was given, remember that a claim is an *arguable* statement.

EXAMPLE ONE:

TAG

SUMMARY

“The Gift of the Magi,” a short story by O. Henry, tells the heartfelt tale of Jim and Della, a married couple with little money, who kindly give up their most prized possessions to purchase a gift for the other. Jim willingly sells his gold watch that had been passed down through the generations to purchase hair combs for his wife, who ironically sells her hair to buy a platinum watch chain for him. Although both Jim and Della give up a lot for each other, Jim is more generous in selling his gold watch. **CLAIM**

EXAMPLE TWO:

TAG

SUMMARY

In Guy de Maupassant's short story, “The Necklace,” Madame Loisel is embarrassed by her lack of money and laughs at an invitation to a ball, claiming she does not have the right clothes or jewels to attend. When her husband buys her a new dress and suggests she borrow a necklace from a friend, her attitude quickly changes, and she becomes the beauty of the ball, dazzling in her borrowed diamond necklace. Unfortunately, at the end of the night, Madame Loisel discovers she has lost the necklace, and instead of simply telling her friend the truth, she and her husband take on loan after loan and job after job to purchase an identical necklace for the unsuspecting friend. In the end, it is revealed to Madame Loisel (after ten bitter years) that the necklace she had lost was actually fake and nearly worthless, revealing the moral of the story: material items are not what is important in life. **CLAIM**

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All About Justification

Directions: The justification element of a body paragraph is really your time to shine and show off your thinking! It's an opportunity to explain your evidence and connect it back to the premise and claim.

But, before we dive into some strategies to write high-level justification, let's first go over some "No-No's":

NO-NO #1

Do not use only one sentence for justification. This is really the heart of your body paragraph, and it's important to explain your reasoning in detail and expand on your quote. (Also, it kind of looks bad if your quote is longer than your justification!)

NO-NO #2

Do not use first person personal pronouns in justification. Never write something like, "I think this quote supports my premise because..." or "I believe this is good evidence because...." Instead, simply start your explanation!



Here's what you SHOULD do:

Write at least two sentences for your justification.

Seems fairly straightforward, right? Right.

Here's a recipe of sorts to help you organize your writing:

- Write at least one sentence explaining how the evidence supports the premise you stated at the beginning of the body paragraph.
- Write at least one sentence explaining how the evidence supports the claim you wrote in your introduction paragraph.

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All About Justification

To see what this looks like in action, check out the example below. Note: in this example, we've only included the claim and the body paragraph.

CLAIM:
Although both Jim and Della make a large sacrifice for the other, Jim makes the bigger sacrifice in selling his gold watch.

Premise: To start with, Jim's sacrifice is greater than Della's because his watch held extreme personal value.

Evidence: O. Henry clearly shows this idea when discussing the two favorite possessions of the couple: "One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's" (2).

Justification:

Obviously, Jim's watch had been passed down to him through the generations and holds a great value to him - one that cannot simply be replaced with any other gold watch. Because the meaning and emotional attachment to the gold watch can never be replaced, this makes Jim's sacrifice greater than Della's.

Alright, let's break it down. Take a closer look at the justification and see if you can determine which sentence is fulfilling which requirement of the justification part of a body paragraph.

Which sentence explains how the **evidence supports the premise?**

Which sentence explains how the **evidence supports the claim?**

Name: _____

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All About Justification

Directions: Let's take this concept one step further. While completing this activity, you'll need to think of a book you're currently reading or have recently read. Complete each section of the graphic organizer to help you create an original body paragraph based on that book!

CLAIM:

_____ is the most interesting
character in all of literature.

Premise: To begin with, _____ is the most interesting
because _____

_____.

Evidence: (Choose a quote from the novel/story where your character appears that showcases your character as interesting.)

Justification:

Justification Sentence One (connect back to premise):

Justification Sentence Two (connect back to claim):

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Restating the Claim

Directions: This activity focuses on the first part of a conclusion paragraph – restating the claim. In this activity, you will be working with seven claims that you must reword as if you were writing the first part of a conclusion paragraph. Remember, you are *rewording* these sentences, so you cannot simply state the same exact thing! It will also be helpful to include a transition word or phrase at the beginning of your new sentence.

Original Claims

Your Restated Claims

The Hunger Games books has more complex characters than the Harry Potter books.



If Cinderella's fairy godmother had not helped her, Cinderella never would have married the prince.



Chess is the best game.



Name: _____

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Understanding TAG

Directions: When writing a Response to Literature, a good way to begin your introductory paragraph is to use a TAG (title, author, genre). Adding adjectives to your TAG can also make it more interesting.

For Example: Sandra Cisneros is the author of the touching fictional story, "Eleven."

Read the following titles, authors, and genres and create TAGs that could be used at the beginning of a Response to Literature. It's okay if you don't know anything about the story – feel free to make something up that adds interest to your TAG. Use the word bank to choose a strong adjective to describe each text, or come up with your own. *Make sure to pay attention to whether each piece is a novel or a short story.

1. Langston Hughes, "Thank You, Ma'am," short story

2. Walter Dean Myers, *Monster*, fiction

3. Laurie Halse Anderson, *Fever 1793*, historical fiction

4. Roald Dahl, "The Landlady," short story

Adjective Word Bank

Intriguing
Thought-provoking
Popular
Charming
Suspenseful
Enthralling
Riveting
Moving
Stirring

Name: _____

Date: _____

Transitional Word Categories

Utilize these transitional word categories when writing an RTL to help you compose even better transitions between paragraphs and sentences.

To show time: first, second, third, later, next, eventually, finally, meanwhile, sooner

To show place: above, amid, beyond, nearby, through

To add information: furthermore, in addition, for example, equally important, besides

To explain an idea: showcasing, specifically, illustrating, for example

To compare and contrast: similarly, however, even though, in the same way, on the other hand

To show a result: consequently, thus, therefore, hence, in conclusion, finally

To emphasize an idea: indeed, most important, above all

To gain more practice utilizing transition words, rewrite the following body paragraph, adding transition words where you think they would be the most effective. For each transition word you include, justify why you chose that word and specific spot for it.

The speaker refers to this idea of things being temporary at the start of the poem. It is as though the speaker does not want to leave any doubt in his words or his message when he states, “Nature’s first green is gold, / Her hardest hue to hold” (Frost 1-2). The speaker points out the fact that this “gold” of nature is the most difficult shade to hold on to. This gold color is short-lived, something that people must treasure while they can. Frost is giving a very important message to the reader: nothing lasts forever, and people must treasure each moment with items or people of dear value.

Name: _____

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Writing Post-Assessment for Students

Part One Directions: Define the academic terms listed below in the context of a Response to Literature/Literary Analysis Essay.

1. Claim/Thesis: _____

2. Premise: _____

3. Evidence: _____

4. Justification: _____

Part Two Directions: Compose a well-structured Response to Literature/Literary Analysis Essay that answers the prompt below. The poem continues on the back page as well.

Prompt: Which adjective do you believe best describes Casey in the poem “Casey at the Bat”? Use evidence from the poem to support your reasoning.

“Casey at the Bat” (Abridged)
Ernest Lawrence Thayer

Vocabulary

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood four to two with but one inning more to play.
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

Outlook (n.): view of the future

Patrons (n.) customers (in this case, spectators)

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought if only Casey could but get a whack at that—
We'd put up even money now with Casey at the bat.

Straggling (adj.): moving along slowly, usually behind a larger group of people

[Then] Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Despised (adj.): deeply hated

Then from 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

Lusty (adj.): healthy or strong

Recoiled (v.): moved back quickly

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face.
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Bearing (n.) the way a person stands or moves

Doffed (v.): took off or raised

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—
“That ain't my style,” said Casey. “Strike one,” the umpire said.

Haughty (adj.): arrogant

Unheeded (adj.): disregarded

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore.
“Kill him! Kill the umpire!” shouted someone on the stand;
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

Visage (n.): a person's face or facial expression

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, “Strike two.”

Tumult (n.): loud confusion or disorder

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clinched in hate;
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Sneer (n.): a mocking smile

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.

