



# *HOW TO CONQUER THE IN-CLASS ESSAY*

*Texas State Writing Center*

# *BEFORE THE TEST*



- **STUDY THE INFORMATION !!!**

- Anticipate likely essay questions. Ask yourself:

- What were the main points emphasized in class?
- What connecting ideas and common themes did you notice between texts?
- What question would you ask if you were the instructor?



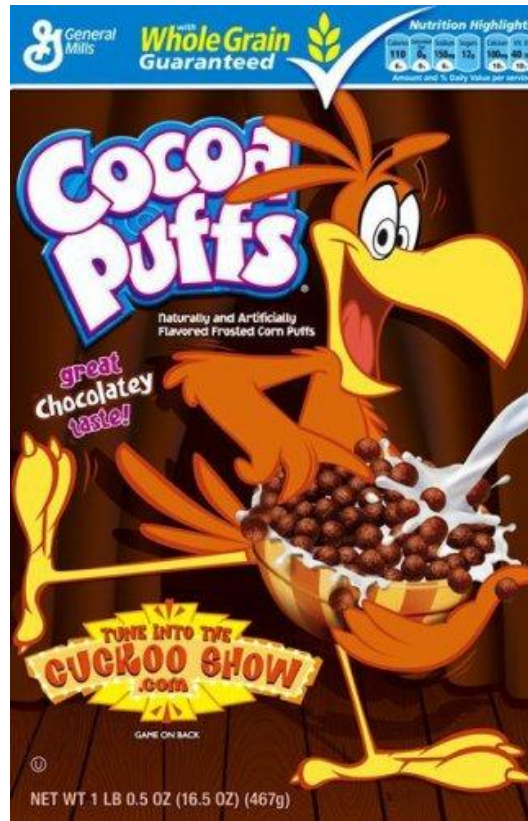
- Once you have a list of likely essay topics, outline a response for each one.
  - **Prepare to lean heavily on essay structure and clarity**
    - Your outlines should include a thesis, supporting examples, and a brief conclusion.
  
- By preparing in this way, you will have done most of the hard work before the test even begins!





Lastly...

- Get a good night's rest and eat a good breakfast.



- Choose the prompt that will allow you to write the best essay.
- If you've already practiced a few outlines, you may find a prompt that closely matches one you've already prepared for.



- Before beginning the essay, take a minute to analyze the prompt you've chosen. Find and underline keywords that let you know what to write about and how to write about it.
- You will be able to write an essay more quickly than you think if you already have an idea of the structure you're using (5 paragraph essay, P.I.E., etc.). Writing an essay before considering structure will lend itself to rambling and/or unorganized ideas.





# Example:



- “In his 2005 Cooking Magazine article on pie-making, Chef Gordon Ramsay ranks pecan above apple as the healthier of the two filling options. Do you agree or disagree with his assessment? Use specific examples from the texts/lecture to support your argument.”

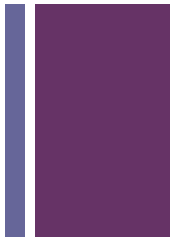
# OUTLINING (*again*)



- Don't spend too long in the outlining phase, but do so thoroughly. The time you take for this will vary from person to person, but be sure to have a couple specific arguments and examples from texts to back up each.
  - Know the information thoroughly. Don't be unnecessarily connected to examples from the text from previous outlines that just don't fit into what you're talking about.
- Again, the outline should include:
  - Thesis—containing specific arguments (it's best to be clear during an in-class thesis rather than attempting something too complex and/or cryptic)
  - Supporting examples—from the texts and class lecture
  - Brief conclusion—how everything ties together



# *THE INTRODUCTION*



## ■ Part One: Contextualize the Topic

- Introduce readers to literature/theory/history that helps explain your subject and thesis.
- Stay on task and keep it simple and brief. 2-3 sentences should suffice.

## ■ Part Two: Propose Your Thesis

- A good thesis is specific, addresses the prompt, and makes a strong and defensible claim.
- Again, when writing in-class, it may be best to be as to-the-point as possible.
  - Basic structure: “This (your main argument) is the case because of this, this, and this (your supporting examples).”

# + Thesis Example:



- Contrary to Chef Ramsey's claims, apple is a healthier pie filling than pecan due to its higher levels of Vitamin C, easier digestibility, and lower risk of allergic reaction.
  - Structure—
    - **Argument:**
      - Apple is a healthier pie filling than pecan.
    - **Supporting evidence/examples:**
      - Higher levels of Vitamin C
      - Easier digestibility
      - Lower risk of allergic reaction

# *BODY PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE*



**P** **oint:** What statement are you making?

(The “topic sentence” for your paragraph)

**I** **llustrate:** Where’s your proof?

(Cite from assigned texts and/or from class lecture)

**E** **xplain:** How does “I” prove “P”?

(Why is “I” in your paper? How does it prove your point?)



# *IMPORTANCE OF BODY PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE*



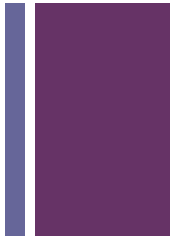
- **POINT:** Lacking a “P” (or topic) sentence is the easiest way to fall into a meandering, unclear paragraph. It orients the writer as well as the reader. If, as a writer, you don’t know the main point, or argument, of any given paragraph when it’s started, it’s difficult to determine the direction of the paragraph and may be nearly impenetrable to the reader.
- **ILLUSTRATION:** The “I” section shows the reader the thoroughness of your factual knowledge of the text and your ability to connect that knowledge to an outside prompt.
- **EXPLAIN:** The “E” section goes beyond your factual information of a text and shows your conceptual understanding. It’s your chance to explain why you chose a textual example and its specific connection to the argument you’re making.
  - This is the piece of a paragraph that is missing most often. **NEVER** let a textual example stand alone. No matter how obvious to you it may seem, always explain an example’s relevance to your argument.

# *THE CONCLUSION*

- Don't just restate your thesis – explain why what you've been arguing is important in a larger sense and advance your argument!
- A few ways to formulate a conclusion:
  - Look to the future (or the past).
  - Pose a rhetorical question.
  - Explain why people who don't agree with you are wrong.



# POST WRITING



- Check for Global Issues first:
  - Did you answer the prompt?
    - Look to your thesis to make sure of this.
  - Does your paper stay on task?
    - Look especially to your topic sentences. Do they all logically follow the thesis? Do you stick to your topic sentences during the “I” and “E” sections of each paragraph?
  - Do you support your arguments with specific evidence from the texts and/or lecture while **avoiding plot summary**?
  - Do you do the work to connect the examples you use to your thesis in a clear, concrete way? (This is the “E” section of your “P.I.E.” paragraph.
  
- ...and Local Issues second:
  - Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation
  - For practice, refer to The Writing Center’s handouts:  
<http://www.writingcenter.txstate.edu/Student-Resources/Handouts.html>

# *THE HOME STRETCH*

- Finally, take a deep breath and turn in your test. You're done!





## *PRACTICE*

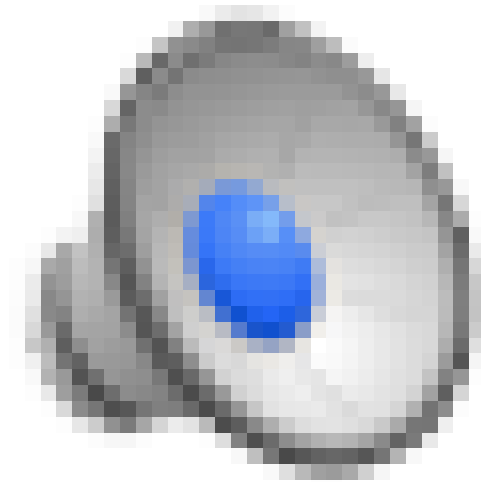
- Watch Philip Zimbardo's video, "The Demise of Guys?" with a mind toward possible essay questions and what specific evidence or example from the video can be used from the video to answer them.







# *PHILIP ZIMBARDO: "THE DEMISE OF GUYS?"*





## ZIMBARDO'S SLIDE

### Causes?

- Excessive internet use, and excessive video gaming/'porning' as *arousal addictions*; they are becoming more addictive, with more variety, competition, and higher video quality
- Jane McGonigal: by 21, **boys spend 10,000 hours gaming, 2/3 of that time in isolation**
- Cindy Gallop: guys don't know the difference between making love and doing porn
- Average boy watches 50 porn clips a week

