

**YEAR 7 ENGLISH**  
**TEXT RESPONSE ESSAY**  
**WRITING GUIDE**



Your essay topic:

How can people respond in times of crisis?

Discuss in relation to *A Different Sort of Real*.

Check the STL Link Year 7 English Essay Writing Guide for more information:  
<http://learn.stleonards.vic.edu.au/yr7eng/writing/essay-guidelines/>

# **STRUCTURING AN ESSAY**

## ***INTRODUCTION:***

The introduction is the first paragraph of your essay, and will need to communicate how you will be responding to the essay topic. It provides an outline of how you will be structuring your answer. In particular, the introduction needs to introduce:

- ❖ The book (What is it? Who wrote it? Very briefly, what is it about?)
- ❖ The essay topic (Rewrite it in your own words. Pay close attention to key terms!)
- ❖ Your overall answer to the essay (your overarching argument, or **CONTENTION**)
- ❖ Outline how your argument will unfold (Generally speaking, what are your arguments? What will you be looking at?)

The introduction gives us your argument. You do not need to provide evidence at this point, and we do not need to know everything – the person reading your essay just needs an overview of your response so that they know what to expect.

## ***BODY PARAGRAPHS:***

The 'body paragraphs' are the real guts of your essay. This is where you explore your ideas and provide your arguments and evidence. Your essay will need to have between 3 and 5 body paragraphs. Each paragraph will need to be **AT LEAST** four sentences long, and will normally need to be longer. A typed paragraph should not be more than half a page in length (with single line spacing).



Each body paragraph will need to follow the **TEEL** formula. It will need: (1) a **TOPIC SENTENCE**; (2) an **EXPLANATION**; (3) **EVIDENCE**; and (4) a **LINK**. This is explained in detail on the following pages.

You must make sure that each body paragraph has its own argument, which then links back/answers the overarching Essay Topic. You need to be exploring an argument – if you are just retelling the story, then you are not writing an essay.

## ***CONCLUSION:***

Your conclusion is the last thing that we read in your essay. It is a paragraph that sums up your argument in a clear manner. In particular, your conclusion needs should provide the following:

- ❖ Summing-up statement about the text and main idea of ideas you have covered.
- ❖ Summarise/draw together the content of the body of your essay, drawing together main points.
- ❖ Give a final evaluation of issues/point of view.
- ❖ Have links back to the intro – key words are important.
- ❖ Strong terminating sentence. It could relate back to the topic.

There should not be any new information in your conclusion which influences your overall argument. It should be a final, comprehensive answer to the essay topic.



# **SAMPLE PARAGRAPHS**

[ Note: These examples come from a variety of slightly different essay topics ]

## **Example of an Introduction discussing *A Different Sort of Real*:**

Kerry Greenwood's fictionalised novel, *A Different Sort of Real*, is set in the time when the Great War was coming to an end. The story revolves around the day to day life of Charlotte McKenzie and explores the devastating impact that war has, not only on Charlotte, but her family and her community at large. As the war comes to an end, families must endure the impact of what this will bring; for many, it involves having to deal with loved ones who have been physically and emotionally scarred by this conflict. For Charlotte, she is forced to grow up well beyond her years and in doing so must take on many responsibilities. However, in this time of tragedy, we also encounter many individuals who join together and embrace the support and love that others provide.

## **First Example of a Body Paragraph discussing *A Different Sort of Real*:**

The influenza pandemic forced people to come into contact with others in their community who they would otherwise have ignored, forcing people to confront their personal prejudices and realise the truth about the world around them. When Charlotte joined Doctor Barnes on his rounds, she saw the community in different way and found that her understanding of the people around her changed as a result. Her meeting with Mr Lee, the gypsy, forces Charlotte to re-evaluate her perspective on others. The people that Charlotte meets on her round provide her the opportunity to learn about her community. She discovers "harmless people, for the most part" but she also learns some shocking truths that "fathers hurt their children, husbands hurt their wives and women hurt their babies, and all work and suffer". Eventually the way other people perceived Charlotte changed as well, and she became known as "the Doctor's Assistant" which provided her an income and a local identity. In time it inspired her to realise her dream of becoming a Doctor herself realising how invaluable her efforts were during the Influenza pandemic.

## **Second Example of a Body Paragraph discussing *A Different Sort of Real*:**

While they experience many difficulties, there are some characters who respond to the influenza crisis in a positive way that their entire community can benefit from. Characters such as Charlotte and the Mayor's Wife see that the influenza is a significant issue, but rather than hiding away they use their initiative and make a big, positive difference to their community. Charlotte is shocked when she comes across "the first dead man [she] had ever seen". However, she is able to overcome her fears and instead seeks to help the rest of the family, "wash[ing] the children's faces and hands" and "feel[ing] their foreheads" to make sure they were not infected by the flu as well. Even though she was faced with a frightening situation, she was able to respond in a helpful way. Similarly the Mayor's Wife, Mrs Collins, "[tries] to persuade [her] husband that [they] must do something about [the] flu", and she will not give up until he agrees. She acts in an "able and intelligent" manner, identifying problems and trying to find solutions to them. Despite an unhelpful husband, she pushes her way through to help the suffering community. These two characters prove that there are people in the community who have the strength to push away their doubts and emotions, and deal with the problem to the best of their abilities, thus providing a positive response to a crisis.

# CONSTRUCTING A PARAGRAPH

When you are starting out in essay writing, **TEEL** is a very useful acronym to use. It gives you a nice, easy way to order your paragraphs and ensure you have a well-developed argument that is backed up by evidence. For those of you who need a refresher, **TEEL** stands for:

**T**opic sentence

**E**xpand

**E**vidence

**L**ink

## **Topic Sentence:**

The topic sentence is always the first sentence in a body paragraph. It should tell us what the paragraph will be about or what it will be arguing. By the time the reader has finished reading the topic sentence, they should know EXACTLY what the paragraph will be discussing.



A topic sentence needs to provide an **argument**, and it **must relate to the essay topic**.

Here are some examples of topic sentences:

Example One: *Charlotte's experiences during the influenza crisis allowed her to develop new skills and changed the way she saw her community.*

Example Two: *During a crisis, some people will react in a way that emphasises personal flaws, such as selfishness or indecisiveness.*

Example Three: *The influenza crisis has a positive effect on Alec, forcing him to confront his own fears in order to save his family.*

## **Stating an Argument:**

The first sentence in a paragraph should not simply be a statement of fact. A statement of fact is a closed piece of information. An argumentative statement will require further evidence and examples to support it, whereas a factual statement is much more simplistic and can be very easily proven, usually with a single quote from the book.

Look at the following examples of argumentative statements and factual statements:

Argumentative Statement: People in positions of authority do not always act in a helpful way when faced with a crisis.

Factual Statement: The mayor is described as being indecisive and incompetent.

Each of your body paragraphs will need to begin with an argumentative topic sentence. Look at the following pairs of sentences and identify which one is the ARGUMENTATIVE statement and which one is the FACTUAL statement:

### **QUESTION 1**

Charlotte's experiences during the pandemic changed the way she saw her community.

Charlotte followed Dr Barnes on his rounds.

### **QUESTION 2**

Charlotte is an extremely brave character, helping many people in her community and assisting Dr Barnes extensively on his rounds, all while caring for her own family.

Charlotte reacted in a positive way to the pandemic crisis, discovering new strengths and skills.

### **QUESTION 3**

Charles Dickens had a very traumatic childhood.

Charles Dickens worked for twelve hours a day in a shoe polish factory.

### **QUESTION 4**

Men went to fight in the war, leaving women to work in factories for the first time.

The effects of the war meant that many women were able to break out of gender stereotypes.

### ***Making it Relevant:***

Every topic sentence must be responding to the essay topic. If your topic sentence doesn't answer the essay question, then nor will the rest of your paragraph.

Let's look again at our essay topic:

**How can people react in times of crisis?  
Discuss in relation to *A Different Sort of Real*.**

There are three key words in the first sentence of this question which tell you exactly what you need to discuss in your essay:

**People:**            *You will need to discuss people – i.e. the characters in the novel.*

**Crisis:**            *You will need to discuss a crisis that is seen in the novel, such as the flu.*

**React:**            *You will need to look at the actions of characters in relation to the crisis, and how they react to/deal with this crisis.*

These words are called **KEY TERMS**. We use key terms to keep our responses focussed on the essay topic. To make sure you are answering the essay, each paragraph will need to discuss:

1. One or more characters;
2. One or more crises;
3. The reaction of those characters to that crisis.

Using the above essay topic, this would be an example of a bad topic sentence:

*Charlotte develops into a very brave and independent character over the course of the novel.*

This is a bad topic sentence because it only links the paragraph to one aspect of the essay topic: the character. There is no mention of the crisis we will be looking at, or how Charlotte is reacting to it.

A better topic sentence would be:

*Some characters, such as Charlotte, react to crises in a positive way through learning new skills and becoming stronger individuals.*

This sentence is better because it makes a clear link between the crisis, character and reaction. There is not yet any evidence to support this claim (that will come later), but there is a clear argument that relates to the essay topic.

In the spaces below, create a relevant topic sentence which includes each of the three listed elements:

#### QUESTION 1

**Character:** Mrs Benson

**Crisis:** Influenza pandemic

**Reaction:** Bad (fear/selfishness)

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#### QUESTION 2

**Character:** Alec

**Crisis:** Influenza pandemic

**Reaction:** Good, but only after a big thing occurs

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## Expand:

In the next sentence or two, you will need to expand on your topic sentence. Explain what you mean in greater detail, and give it a more SPECIFIC FOCUS. This is where you can use some of those factual statements and supporting details that you can't use in your topic sentence.

Ask yourself: *What is it that you are trying to say or argue? What exactly do you MEAN?*



Pretend that you are talking to an alien. The alien doesn't have much of an idea about what goes on here on Earth. When you tell him your topic sentence, it's still a bit unsure what you mean. So now you need to spend a sentence or two explaining, in more detail, what you think is important, and what you are trying to argue.

Returning to the earlier examples of topic sentences, here are two examples of basic expansions:

Example One: *When Charlotte joined Doctor Barnes on his rounds, she saw the community in different way and found that her understanding of the people around her changed as a result. Her meeting with Mr Lee, the gypsy, forces Charlotte to re-evaluate her perspective on others. The people that Charlotte meets on her round provide her the opportunity to learn about her community.*

Example Two: *The Mayor is one character who represents these flaws. His personality traits, particularly his indecisiveness, become much more obvious when he is presented with a dangerous and urgent situation. He is in a position of responsibility and power within the community, yet when he is faced with the flu crisis, he does not know what to do, attempts to avoid the situation, and needs others to step in and take action.*

## Evidence:

Now that you have put forward an opinion or an argument, you will to provide some evidence to support these claims and show that you are right. This will usually be done through finding a relevant quote from the book you are studying.

Ask yourself: *What proof do you have that shows that your claim is correct? What in the text supports your argument? What in the book made you think this was true?*



You can do this directly, for example by writing: *This is demonstrated when Charlotte sees "...". OR An example of this can be seen when Dr Barnes says "...".*

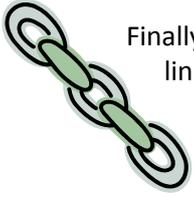
Continuing on with the above paragraphs, here is an example of how you can incorporate evidence:

Example One: *Charlotte discovers "harmless people, for the most part" but she also learns some shocking truths that "fathers hurt their children, husbands hurt their wives and women hurt their babies, and all work and suffer". Eventually the way other people perceived Charlotte changed as well, and she became known as "the Doctor's Assistant" which provided her an income and a local identity.*

### Hints for writing quotes:

- *If you leave out some words, use ellipses:* The mayor wanted to hear something "official...under the health act" before taking action.
- *If you need to change a word (e.g. from 'talk' to 'talking', or 'I' to 'Charlotte'), use square brackets:* the characters "were talk[ing] about..."; we are told "that [Charlotte] will never..."

## **Link:**



Finally, you will provide a linking sentence, which summarises your paragraph in a sentence, linking it back to the key terms from your topic sentence (or the essay topic, if one is provided). This will happen after you have explained your argument and provided evidence.

For example, you could begin your linking sentence by writing: *“This shows that ... .”*

A linking sentence is very similar to a topic sentence: it needs to link everything back to the essay topic and offer a mini-conclusion of the evidence you provided in that paragraph.

To round out the first examples Topic, Explaining and Evidence sentences above, here is an example of linking sentences:

Example One: *Were it not for this crisis, Charlotte would not have come into contact with as many different aspects of her community, she would not have learnt about the different lives people lead, and she would not have realised the true extent of the strength that she had inside herself.*

## **Putting it together:**

By putting all four of these elements together and in the correct order, we now have a fully formed body paragraph. Using each ‘Example One’ from above, we now have a final paragraph that reads like this:

Charlotte’s experiences during the influenza crisis allowed her to develop new skills and changed the way she saw her community. When Charlotte joined Doctor Barnes on his rounds, she saw the community in different way and found that her understanding of the people around her changed as a result. Her meeting with Mr Lee, the gypsy, forces Charlotte to re-evaluate her perspective on others. The people that Charlotte meets on her round provide her the opportunity to learn about her community. Charlotte discovers “harmless people, for the most part” but she also learns some shocking truths that “fathers hurt their children, husbands hurt their wives and women hurt their babies, and all work and suffer”. Eventually the way other people perceived Charlotte changed as well, and she became known as “the Doctor’s Assistant” which provided her an income and a local identity. Were it not for this crisis, Charlotte would not have come into contact with as many different aspects of her community, she would not have learnt about the different lives people lead, and she would not have realised the true extent of the strength that she had inside herself.

### **USE THIS CHECKLIST WITH EACH OF YOUR BODY PARAGRAPHS:**

- Is there a **TOPIC SENTENCE**? (*Does it tell us what the paragraph will discuss?*)
- Is the topic sentence **EXPANDED** upon and explained in greater detail? (*What does it all mean?*)
- Is **EVIDENCE** provided to support this opinion? (*Has it been incorporated/put into proper English?*)
- Is there a final summarising sentence that **LINKS** back to the essay topic?

# HOW TO WRITE IN A 'FORMAL' WAY

An essay is a very formal piece of writing, and as a result you need to write in a very formal way. Think about how Mr Davis speaks in assemble, or how a rule-book for sport is written, or an encyclopaedia entry: this is the type of voice that you need to use!

The two examples below each convey similar information, but one **reads** much better than the other because it has been written in a formal tone:



*I think Charlotte is a good character and it's like she can do a lot of things that make us think she is really smart, even though people will put her down for being a girl and she doesn't come from a rich background and other stuff like that.* ← **This is informal writing. You must NOT use it in an essay!**



*Charlotte is a complex character, who must overcome the challenges presented by her age, gender and social circumstances.* ← **This is written with a more formal structure and use of language.**

There are some easy rules that will help you to write in a formal way. Follow these when writing your essay:

## ***Rule 1: Write in the Third Person***

In an essay you can never write in the first (I, me, my, we, etc) or second (you, etc) person. Everything you write must be in the **third person** (he, she, they, it, names/nouns, etc).

### **THESE ARE BAD:**

I think that...

In my opinion...

You see this when...

Let us look at...

When we read about...



### **THESE ARE GOOD:**

It could be argued that...

The character's actions show that...

This can be seen when...

An example of this is...

An important change occurs when...



## ***Rule 2: Do Not Use Contractions***

As a rule, you do not want to use contractions in an essay: write the words out in full instead. This is another quick and easy way to make your writing read more formally.

A contraction is where two words are joined together and one or more letters are removed, replaced instead by an apostrophe.



Remember that you still need to use apostrophes to show possession! You cannot simply stop using them entirely!

## ***Rule 3: Do Not Simply Write How You Speak !***

As was mentioned above, you should not simply write your essay as if you are talking about it to a friend. An essay is not a conversation: it is a piece of very formal writing.

Many things are written in a formal way: newspaper reports, rule books, encyclopaedias, (most) textbooks, and so on. You can probably think of several people who speak in a very formal way, such as your principal or a police officer.

Avoid really casual sayings, like “the icing on the cake”, “she was dead meat” or “they bit off more than they can chew”: we may say things like this to our friends, but you would want to steer clear of them in a more formal setting.

It can be a good idea to think of a very formal person and pretend that they are writing this essay. What type of language would they use? What types of expressions would they avoid?

This type of formal, academic writing is used when a person needs to write in a very precise and informative manner. Have a look at the following extracts from the AFL's *Laws of Australian Football 2012*, and pay attention to how they are written:

#### 15.7 FREE KICKS – DELIBERATELY RUSHED BEHIND

A free kick shall be awarded against a player from the defending team who intentionally kicks, handballs or forces the football over the attacking team's goal line or behind line or onto one of the attacking team's goal Posts. In assessing whether a free kick should be awarded under this law, the field umpire shall give the benefit of the doubt to the defender.

#### 16.2 PLAYING FROM BEHIND THE MARK

A player who has been awarded a mark or free kick shall dispose of the football from directly behind the mark. If a player disposes or attempts to dispose of the football other than in a direct line over the mark, the field umpire shall call "play on" and the football shall immediately be in play.

QUESTION 1: *What makes the language in the above extracts 'formal'?*

QUESTION 2: *How is it different from how you would explain the game of AFL to a friend?*

QUESTION 3: *Why do you think it has been written this way?*

QUESTION 4: *Have a go at describing ONE of the rules of another sport you play, using this style of formal writing.*

The above extracts may not be particularly interesting, but they are very formal and precise. The language they use is very specific so that they can communicate information in a very efficient manner. Your writing doesn't have to be quite this bland, but it still needs to be formal.

Pay close attention to the **vocabulary** that you use, and don't be afraid to use interesting and precise verbs, adverbs, adjectives and nouns. In particular, don't forget to use some interesting **bridging words** to connect your ideas. Bridging words are good for connecting examples with analysis, and include words such as:

highlights, symbolises, signifies, illustrates, reflects, represents, proves, exaggerates, reinforces, acknowledges, conjures, illuminates, embodies, demonstrates, suggests.

For example: *Matty spilling the soup on the stove and putting out its flame **illustrates** how ill-prepared and ill-equipped she is for the responsibility of caring for her entire family.*

# ESSAY WRITING

## FINAL CHECK LIST

### Regarding the essay as a whole:

- Does your essay have an INTRODUCTION, which identifies your OVERALL CONTENTION (argument) and how you will respond to the topic?
- Does your essay have AT LEAST THREE BODY PARAGRAPHS?
- Does your essay have a CONCLUSION, which offers a FULL and FINAL ANSWER to the topic question?



### Does EACH body paragraph:

- Address each element of TEEL (Topic sentence, Explain, Evidence, Link)?
- Have a TOPIC SENTENCE that identifies that paragraph's ARGUMENT?
- Have AT LEAST ONE QUOTE as evidence?
- Has the quote been BLENDED/INCORPORATED, so that it reads properly if you take out the quotation marks?
- Have you provided some ANALYSIS/INTERPRETATION/DISCUSSION of your evidence?

### Have you proofread and ensured that:

- There are no SPELLING or GRAMMATICAL ERRORS?
- The LANGUAGE is FORMAL, and not conversational?
- CAPITALS ARE USED CORRECTLY, including in character names?
- The title of the book is *ITALICISED* whenever it is typed?
- You have NOT used CONTRACTIONS (e.g. make sure you write "is not", not "isn't")
- You have NOT used the first person ("I think that...") or the second person ("you see this when...")
- Quotation marks are used appropriately and appear EITHER SIDE of EVERY quote.

# **NOTES:**

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# **ESSAY PLANNING GUIDE**

**Key terms from the topic:**

**Rewrite the topic in your own words (what are you being asked to discuss?):**

**First Argument (Topic Sentence):**

**Your evidence from the book (identify characters, events, etc):**

**Quotes that show this:**

**What this example tells us about how people can respond to crises:**

**Second Argument (Topic Sentence):**

**Your evidence from the book (identify characters, events, etc):**

**Quotes that show this:**

**What this example tells us about how people can respond to crises:**

**Third Argument (Topic Sentence):**

**Your evidence from the book (identify characters, events, etc):**

**Quotes that show this:**

**What this example tells us about how people can respond to crises:**