

Essay II: Explanatory Essay

Length: At least 3 full pages

Paper must follow MLA Conventions and be stapled

Rough Draft Due: October 3rd

Final Draft Due: October 6th

This essay will demonstrate your ability to explain a topic with which you are familiar, but your audience may not be. Your job is to explain your subject to your audience as clearly as possible in order to help them understand something about you better. You will employ the various methods of explanation using the three main journalistic questions *what*, *how*, and *why*. You may be as creative as you like, as long as your essay is still driven by a clear thesis statement. For both of the options, balance the essentials of good explanation (e.g. analysis, clarity, conciseness, etc.) with the features of good narrative (e.g. vivid detail, description, dialogue, etc.). You must propose a topic and get it approved before you can begin writing.

Select one of the following options:

Option 1: Explain something that you learned *how* to do at some point during your life “education.” While it may be relatively easy to choose a skill that means something to you, the challenge will be to choose something that is focused enough so that you will be able to explain it thoroughly using the three main journalistic questions. As you explain *how* you learned to do this particular skill, you will necessarily have to attend to details pertaining to *what* and *why*. [For example, explaining *how* you learned to fish will require a detailed analysis of the steps involved combined with a thorough explanation of terms (*what*) and a careful consideration of causes and effects (*why*).] In order to add an additional layer of meaning to your explanation, you must also find a way to explain your relationship to the person who taught you this particular skill.

Option 2: Write about a specific ritual, tradition, or place, and explain its meaning or significance. Think of one specific practice or place to focus on. The goal for this option is to take something fairly common or simple (e.g. *place*: your family pew at church, your favorite chair in your living room, your favorite restaurant, etc.; *tradition*: the food you eat on New Year’s Day, the way your family does road trips, etc.; *ritual*: the way you make your coffee every morning, the way you choose what to wear, etc.) and explain it in an engaging, fresh way, explaining what it signifies or what it means to you on a deeper level. Describe concrete, sensory aspects of the place/tradition/ritual (what you can perceive with the five senses), as well as the greater significance of the place/tradition/ritual.

A basic outline for the paper:

Introduction should...

- Grab the reader’s attention in an interesting way and introduce the topic
- Transition to thesis (final 1-2 sentences of the introduction), which indicates the focus of the essay. (The thesis will likely introduce/indicate the “What,” “How,” and “Why” of your essay in a manner appropriate for your particular topic; this will look different for different topics, writers, and essays)

Body Paragraphs should...

- Be well organized (clear and logical)
- Begin with clear topic sentences that guide the focus of each paragraph
- Fully develop one main idea
- Address/answer the three main journalistic questions in a way appropriate to the topic and organization
- Use examples and specific details drawn from personal knowledge, experience, and research
- Have clear, concise, and specific support
- Have strong, clear transitions between paragraphs

Conclusion should...

- Summarize the answers to the questions “What,” “How,” “Why”
- Reemphasize thesis
- Explore the larger significance of the learning/ritual/tradition/place. (Answers the question, “So what?”)

Include an interesting and informative title.

Your essay should be double-spaced, and the font should be 12 pt. Times New Roman.

Quotations from any text should follow proper MLA formatting. Please include a Works Cited page if you have any sources.