

CLINCHERS: A WRITERS' WORKSHOP MINILESSON

Many students are having trouble writing clinchers.

Many students are also having another problem that I think can be solved through better clincher writing—this problem is that while your thesis and conclusion strongly answer all parts of the question, you seem to lose track of the key parts (and terms) of your thesis in your Supporting Idea paragraphs. So, in your tragic flaw essays, many people wrote essays in which the terms “tragic flaw” and “resolution” only appeared in the introduction and conclusion.

CLINCHER WRITING

Step 1:

Begin all three of your clincher sentences with a SUMMARIZING PHRASE:

Here are some good options:

Thus,

So,

And so,

Therefore,

In summary,

It is clear then that,

In other words,

Be sure not to start all three Clinchers with the same phrase.

Step 2:

Craft your sentence so that it summarizes the way the paragraph helps to prove your thesis. In doing this, try to re-use key words from the question and your thesis itself.

To do this you will need to clarify for yourself exactly how the paragraph you have just written really helps to prove your thesis.

If you are struggling to do this the reason is almost always that your paragraph doesn't clearly prove your thesis in which case you need to re-write your paragraph.

For examples, see the back of this sheet.

Thesis: In the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo is in conflict with society because of his fearless anger at the white European colonizers who are taking over his people's culture; this conflict is resolved when Okonkwo commits suicide.

Supporting Idea Paragraph 1:

Okonkwo developed fearlessness in his early childhood years when he was motivated to never show weakness. Okonkwo had a father that was known to the village as weak. His father was always in debt and did not work hard. Okonkwo was ashamed of his father and never wanted to become like him. Okonkwo at a very young age started to work for everything. He started his own farm, which was successful, in order to gain respect. His father was not a man who was well known, so that motivated Okonkwo to be someone who was known in the village. He hated his father and was ashamed of him because he was a weak man. **Thus, Okonkwo's fearless anger has its roots in his childhood shame of his father's weakness.**

Another possible clincher for this paragraph:

Therefore, Okonkwo's fearlessness grew out of his hatred of his father's weakness.

Even better:

So, the fearless anger that Okonkwo later shows towards the white European colonizers was first born in his childhood shame at his father's weakness.

Now you try: Here is the 3rd Supporting Idea Paragraph:

Okonkwo's disappointment that his culture doesn't share his fearless anger at the white colonizers is resolved through Okonkwo's suicide. Ever since Okonkwo was exiled from Umuofia, white settlers came and started to take over the land. The missionaries also started converting Igbo people to Christianity. Okonkwo thought this new religion was a disgrace to the Igbo culture and despised any converts. To make matters worse, Okonkwo's son Nwoye became a convert and this angered Okonkwo. When Okonkwo finally returned to Umuofia, six men, including himself, who were against the Christian structure, burned down a Christian Church and were thrown into jail. While in jail, Okonkwo and his friends constantly got beaten and went 3 days without food and water. When Okonkwo got out of jail there was going to be a meeting the next morning for the village. In the meeting the issue of the converts was discussed and the remaining non-converts were thought to be a disgrace to Ibo culture. After the meeting had been going on for a few minutes, a messenger from the white man's court came to break up the meeting. Okonkwo was so mad that he chopped off the man's head with his machete. However, his people, rather than responding in a war-like manner, did not chase the other messengers away. The next day Okonkwo was found hanging from a tree. He had killed himself because his people didn't share his feelings about the white colonizers.

What would be a good Clincher?:

Thesis:

In the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo is in conflict with society because of his fearless anger at the white European colonizers who are taking over his people's culture; this conflict is resolved when Okonkwo commits suicide.

Supporting Idea Paragraph 1:

Okonkwo developed fearlessness in his early childhood years when he was motivated to never show weakness. Okonkwo had a father that was known to the village as weak. His father was always in debt and did not work hard. Okonkwo was ashamed of his father and never wanted to become like him. Okonkwo at a very young age started to work for everything. He started his own farm, which was successful, in order to gain respect. His father was not a man who was well known, so that motivated Okonkwo to be someone who was known in the village. He hated his father and was ashamed of him because he was a weak man. **Thus, Okonkwo's fearless**

anger has its roots in his childhood shame of his father's weakness.

Another possible clincher for this paragraph:

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What would be a strong clincher?