

SUPPORTING YOUR THESIS: How to Formulate Strong Supporting Ideas

Reviewing the Steps for OR Writing:

Prewrite/brainstorm ideas about the question/topic.

Formulate a thesis statement which directly and clearly answers all parts of the question in a single sentence.

Find your Three Supporting Ideas. Be sure they are ideas and that they connect to your thesis **EXPLICITLY**.

Figure out what evidence/details you will use to prove or demonstrate your supporting ideas. Be sure to introduce and explain all quotations.

Write your Conclusion—restate your thesis and bring together your Supporting Ideas.

Write your Lead. Be sure it is connected to the thesis and provides necessary background information.

Put all the pieces together using transitions to make sure it flows.

Finally—REVISE AND EDIT!

If you are struggling to get a firm grip on these steps, I have created a new graphic organizer which guides you through this process step by step. It is in the file cabinet.

We are going to focus in today's minilesson on Step 3: Supporting Ideas

In order to find my Supporting Ideas I can use two basic strategies:

Strategy 1: Break the Thesis down into its parts and make each part one of your Supporting Ideas.

You want to use this strategy when your thesis has multiple parts. This is particularly helpful in compare and contrast theses and in theses that discuss some sort of change over time.

Strategy 2: Find Three Ways in which your Thesis is true and use these ways as your three Supporting Ideas.

Example 1:

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

In literature as in life, people can make choices and must live with the consequences of those choices.

From a work of literature you have read in or out of school, select a character who makes a choice. In a well-developed composition, identify the character's choice and explain what happens as a result of this choice.

I turn the question around into my lead and thesis and it reads:

All human beings have the ability to make choices. Similarly, all human beings must live with the consequences of the

choices that they make. In August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, Citizen Barlow chooses to steal a bucket of nails and as a result he feels tremendous guilt and must undergo a spiritual journey in order to free himself from his bad deeds.

For the thesis we're working on we want to use Strategy 1 because it has multiple parts. We can break the thesis down into its parts in order to find our Supporting Idea.

We can break our thesis down into three Supporting Ideas—they are highlighted and underlined.

In August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, Citizen Barlow chooses to steal a bucket of nails and as a result he feels tremendous guilt and must undergo a spiritual journey in order to free himself from his bad deeds.

Then we can phrase these 3 Supporting Ideas so that they EXPLICITLY and directly support the thesis.

Supporting Idea 1: Citizen Barlow enters the play feeling tremendous guilt about the choice he made to steal a bucket of nails.

Supporting Idea 2: In order to try to deal with his sense of guilt, Citizen Barlow undergoes a spiritual journey.

Supporting Idea 3: As a result of his spiritual journey, Citizen frees himself from his bad deeds.

Then we would go on to find the Supporting Details/Evidence that would demonstrate our Supporting Ideas.

Example 2:

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Based on your reading of August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, what role does Solly Two Kings play?

Let's say I decide I want my thesis to be:

In August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* Solly Two Kings plays the role of a freedom fighter.

This thesis doesn't have multiple parts—it has one basic claim. So I would use Strategy 2—Find Three Ways in which my thesis is true. (I would use my lead to identify the character.)

Brainstorming three ways that Solly is a freedom fighter are:

Fighting against the oppression of blacks

Helping others to become freedom fighters themselves.

Seeking to act as a free man himself.

Now, to phrase them as Supporting Ideas so that they EXPLICITLY relate back to the thesis:

Solly acts as a freedom fighter as he works against the oppression of blacks.

As a freedom fighter, Solly helps others to become freedom fighters themselves. Solly further fights for freedom in his attempts to be personally free.

Another option (which is more simple):

Solly acts as a freedom fighter when he vows to rescue his sister from the oppression in the South. Solly has a long history of being a freedom fighter through his involvement in the Underground Railroad.

Solly further fights for freedom when he takes Citizen under his wing and inspires him to be a freedom fighter.

Then we would go on to find the Supporting Details/Evidence that would demonstrate our Supporting Ideas.

Now you try. Here's the question:

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Often in works of literature, there are characters—other than the main character—whose presence in the work is essential.

From a work of literature you have read in or out of school, select a character, other than the main character, who plays a key role. In a well-developed composition, identify the character and explain why this character is important.

First, we turn the question around into a thesis and lead:

Characters other than the protagonist are often essential to the plot development and overall meaning of great works of literature. In August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, the character Caesar is essential because he places the responsibility of the black community back on itself rather than on whites or on society.

Now, which strategy would you use?

Strategy 1: Break the Thesis down into its parts and make each part one of your Supporting Ideas.

or

Strategy 2: Find Three Ways in which your Thesis is true and use these ways as your three Supporting Ideas.

Using that strategy, please write 3 Supporting Ideas:

Supporting Idea 1:

Supporting Idea 2:

Supporting Idea 3:

