**Writing the Analytical Paragraph**

Here are some tips on writing an analytical paragraph. As you start composing your paragraphs, make sure you refer to these aspects of the paragraph.

**The Topic Sentence**The topic sentence is a claim that includes a main idea or focus.  Developing that main idea or focus is the purpose of the paragraph.

**The Lead-in Statement**The lead-in statement is a transitional sentence that identifies the source, the function of the author in writing the quotation that follows, and the main idea of the quotation that follows.  The lead-in statement is important in that it provides a citation of the author and source necessary to avoid plagiarism.

**The Quotation**The quotation is a passage selected from an outside source that helps you develop the main idea or focus of the paragraph.  The quotation may be as short as a key word or phrase or as long as several sentences.  A short quotation is placed inside quotation marks at the beginning and the end of the passage.  A quotation longer than four lines of writing or typing is “blocked,” that is, each line is indented two tabs over from the left margin.  Since the blocking of the text indicates that it is a quotation, no quotation marks are placed at the beginning or the end of the passage.

**The Response to the Quotation**  
Generally, avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation.  Doing so assumes that the quoted text clearly 1) provides transition into your next paragraph, and 2) illuminates its relationship to the main idea of the paragraph without additional support or commentary.  In most cases, quotations will not be very successful in performing either function.

**How to Develop the Response to the Quotation**Approach the development of the third part of the paragraph from one of two different approaches:

***Content:***Ask yourself, “What do I want to***say about***  the quotation?”

You can answer one or more of these questions about main ideas in the quotation:   
Who? What? Where? When? Why? Or How?

***Function:*** Ask yourself, “What do I want to ***do to*** the quotation?”

For our purposes with Hamlet, you should ask yourself, “how does this quote contribute to the identity or give the reader insight into the identity of the character?”

**Here’s an example paragraph using something similar to what you may have included in your Character Analysis Journal:**

When beginning to analyze Hamlet’s character, it’s easy to see that one issue he’s dealing with is his suicidal nature; he contemplates suicide especially the question of what might happen to him after death. ***(topic sentence)*** As Shakespeare develops the character of Hamlet he writes, in perhaps what has become the most famous soliloquy from any of his plays, ***(lead-in statement***),

To die-to sleep,

No more; and by a sleep to say we end

The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to: ‘tis a consummation

Devoutly to be wished.”

--Act III, scene I, lines 67-71. ***(quotation)***

These lines spoken by Hamlet truly reflect his desire to commit suicide and to “end the heart-ache” or all of the problems facing him by way of simply sleeping. By referring to death as sleep, Shakespeare clues the reader in on Hamlet’s state of mind. “To die” or death in general, has a negative connotation, yet Shakespeare juxtaposes this negative term with one of a more positive nature, “to sleep.” This juxtaposition allows the reader to understand that Hamlet views death in a positive manner. The concept continues as Hamlet refers to all of the pain he must suffer during life by referring it to the “heart-ache” and “natural shocks” yet then goes on to say that ending these via death “tis a consummation/Devoutly to be wished.” By stating that he “devoutly wishes” to end all of this pain, again Shakespeare is clueing the reader in on Hamlet’s positive perception of death and thus his desire to end his life; thus further developing Hamlet’s suicidal nature. ***(response to the quote)***

**Note:**

* All of the aspects from the character analysis chart are present here: the quote, the context (with his most famous soliloquy), the inference (Hamlet’s suicidal), and the commentary. However, the commentary is much more developed than what you might find on your character charts. That’s okay, because this is a process. You still have all of the pieces of the puzzle put together!
* Notice too, the use of literary terms: juxtaposition, connotation, soliloquy **(don’t forget about your Literary Terms Toolbox!)**
* Also note how the quote is blocked: if using more than four lines, you must excerpt the quote, less than that and the quote can be included in the paragraph form. However, when quoting verse, be sure you put a / line in between the breaks in the line. Also, note the citation: you must include act, scene, and line numbers for your citation, as well as credit to the author (notice my discussion using Shakespeare as the writer).

Now…turn the commentary that you wrote for one of your characters in Act IV, into an analytical paragraph!