

UNIT 6

Lesson:

The Basic Introduction and Conclusion and Historical Figure Essay (Part 2)

6.1 Learning Objectives

- A. To understand the form and development of a basic introduction.
- B. To understand the form and development of a basic conclusion.
- C. To complete the historical figure essay by adding a basic introduction and conclusion.

6.2 The Basic Essay Introduction

In the five-paragraph essay format, the introduction is a single paragraph. The most common introductory form could be called the “general-to-specific introduction.” While it was covered briefly in the previous lesson, let us look at it in greater detail. This introduction begins with an opening statement which serves as an “attention getter” or “hook.” This opener is followed by a series of “narrowing statements” that lead to the thesis statement, the final sentence in the introductory paragraph. Frequently, the introduction is written after the preparation and writing of the body paragraphs. Completing the body first can help generate original ideas for the introductory paragraph.

A. The “Hook”

An initial goal of the “hook” is to capture the attention of, or perhaps even startle, the reader. Additionally, it should give an indication of the essay subject and persuade the reader that the subject is worth contemplating. This statement may be an interjection, a rhetorical question, a quote, a sentence fragment, a one-word element, a cliché, or some other catchy phrase or sentence. Whatever the attention getter, it must be in keeping with the mood of the paper. For instance, if the essay addresses a solemn topic, the opening sentence should not make light of the topic. However, if the subject is a less serious one, more levity may be fitting.

***The “hook”
captures the
reader’s
attention.***

In creating an effective “hook,” you may need to adopt a more conversational style. Doing this draws in the reader. This means that you may consciously include some of the informalities that the *Level One* text limited. Too often, students use informalities because they simply do not know any better. To break that unconscious pattern, *Level One* eliminated their usage. However, the goal in using informalities is to use them for specific effect. Now, you must consciously master their use. The following informalities may be effective tools as part of introductions or as wrap-ups of conclusions:

- contractions
- first or second person usage
- sentence fragments/single word elements

These informalities will not be appropriate in the body of your essay unless you are using direct quotes or writing a personal narrative. Remember that you are only using these informality tools to win the audience.

B. Narrowing Statements

Narrowing statements follow the hook. These sentences should increasingly refine the general idea introduced in the hook down to the specific topic of the paper. Each sentence moves closer and closer to the actual assertion offered in the thesis statement. One should be careful not to jump too quickly to the thesis, or to take too long getting there. Accomplishing the narrowing process within five to ten sentences generally works well. Also, the content of these sentences should not present the argument for one’s case.

C. Thesis

Once the narrowing statements have moved to the specific topic, it is time to present the thesis. This may be a simple statement of the contention or it may also contain the plan of attack as explained in Unit 5, Section 5.3C. The thesis statement closes the basic introductory paragraph.

6.3 Creating an Introduction

A. Brainstorm the Approach

Ideas for creative introductions must be brainstormed. Coming up with just the right approach for narrowing from a general topic to the specific may take a few tries. Ideas generated in these steps usually relate to key words or central ideas in the thesis statement. Each concept

The narrowing statements refine the general idea down to the specific topic of the paper.

listed in the brainstorming process may represent more than one sentence in the final introduction. As an illustration of this process, consider the following brainstorming notes for an introduction to the historical figure essay about Thomas Edison essay on pages 57 to 59:

6A - Brainstorming the Approach - General to Specific Introduction

	Focusing on difficulties	Focusing on inventors
General:	Everyone faces difficulties	Traits of inventors
More specific:	Handling difficulties	Lesser known inventors
More specific:	Some people give up	Well known inventors
More specific:	Some people overcome	Thomas Edison
Working thesis:	Thomas Edison overcame a difficult childhood and became successful.	Thomas Edison overcame a difficult childhood and became successful.

B. Brainstorm the Hook

Once a possible direction is determined, the writer brainstorms potential openers that relate to the brainstormed approaches shown above. The following lists represent possible attention-getting ideas that could be turned into openers for the Edison essay. Any of these ideas could lead into your narrowing statements and chosen thesis.

6B - Brainstorming the “Hook”

Hooks pertaining to difficulties	Hooks pertaining to inventors
“Climb every mountain...follow every rain-bow...till you find your dream.”	Click! The light comes on!
Buck up!	What a bright idea!
Look for the silver lining!	Genius. Intellectual property. Patents. Trademarks.
Problems! Everybody has them!	Vision. Creativity. Perseverance.
“Be brave as your fathers before you. Have faith and go forward!” (Thomas Edison)	

C. Draft the Introduction

Now, work the ideas together into a coherent introduction. The objective is to select the combination of opener and approach that work for you and fit the mood and message of the essay. Here is a possible

introduction taken from the above brainstorming for the Thomas Edison sample essay:

Visionary. Idealist. Overcomer. These seem to be key traits of all inventors. For some inventors, their creativity and perseverance did not result in great success or renown. Who remembers Mary Anderson for inventing the windshield wiper? Walter Hunt for the safety pin? Or Joel Houghton for the dishwasher? (Bellis, 2006). For others, the vision and persistence resulted in triumph and fame. Among those whose efforts led to achievement and renown are Benjamin Franklin, Cyrus McCormick, Isaac Singer, Louis Pasteur, and Alexander Graham Bell. Another successful inventor was a man who struggled against significant odds. That man was Thomas Edison. Fortunately though, Edison overcame his difficult childhood and achieved great success.

The following illustration shows how this introduction transitions step-by-step from the opener to the thesis.

6C - Example General-to-Specific Introduction

Flow	Sentence
Attention getter:	<i>Visionary. Idealist. Overcomer.</i>
General inventors:	<i>These seem to be key traits of all inventors.</i>
Lesser known inventors:	<i>For some inventors, their creativity and perseverance did not result in great renown. Who remembers Mary Anderson for inventing the windshield wiper? Walter Hunt for inventing the safety pin? Or Joel Houghton for the dishwasher? (Bellis, 2006).</i>
Well known inventors:	<i>For others, the visions and persistence resulted in fame. Among those whose efforts led to achievement and renown are Benjamin Franklin, Cyrus McCormick, Isaac Singer, Louis Pasteur, and Alexander Graham Bell.</i>
Specific well known inventor:	<i>Another successful inventor was a man who struggled against significant odds. That man was Thomas Edison.</i>
Thesis:	<i>Fortunately though, Edison overcame his difficult childhood and achieved great success.</i>

D. Problems with Basic Introductions

It is important to avoid some common problems when writing standard introductions.

1. Too General

Avoid starting with overly broad generalizations. Doing so begins too far from the specific topic. Consider the samples below:

Weak: *Since the beginning of time, humans have created things.*

Weak: *Every human being has a creative side.*

Stronger: *Inventors seem to be especially creative people.*

Clearly, the stronger statement, while still broad, points in the direction of a specific group or topic. Thus, it better prepares the writer to narrow to a specific inventor or invention.

2. Too Wordy

Avoid tangling yourself and the reader in long-winded sentences that move too slowly toward the thesis statement. The reader loses interest when this happens. Do not meander or wallow in detail. Rather, write narrowing statements that move smoothly and directly toward the proposition. The introduction is only an “appetizer,” not the “full meal.”

3. Going Nowhere

Avoid this more common problem, which occurs when students simply write five or six loosely related sentences that fail to progressively narrow to the thesis. Instead of flowing, the paragraph seems to stall and go nowhere for a few sentences, then leaps to a different concept. The following sample exemplifies this type of weak development:

Example rough introduction:

Well-educated. Well-informed. Well-versed. Aren't these valuable qualities? Many children go to school every year. Students study beginning subjects. Then they study harder subjects. Some concepts are learned in other countries. Older children can become exchange students. Living for a time in another country as an international exchange student produces a change in one's perspective.

Even though much of the content in the weak sample above is related, each sentence seems disconnected from its neighbors. They may be connected in the writer's mind but not in the reader's mind due to a lack of transitional words and phrases. Sometimes developing a cohesive introduction takes hard work. To achieve a smooth flow, you as the writer must see how each sentence ties to the previous one. Then use phrasing to help the reader follow your connections.

6D - Example “Rough” Introduction

Flow	Sentence
Good opener:	<i>Well-educated. Well-informed. Well-versed. Aren't these valuable qualities?</i>
Stall:	<i>Many children go to school every year.</i>
Stall:	<i>Students study beginning subjects.</i>
Stall:	<i>Then they study harder subjects.</i>
Disconnected:	<i>Some concepts are learned in other countries.</i>
Leap:	<i>Older children can become exchange students.</i>
Good thesis:	<i>Living for a time in another country as an international exchange student produces a change in one's perspective.</i>

Thesis restatement:
Expresses the same assertion in a new and interesting way.

6.5 The Basic Essay Conclusion

The most commonly used conclusion includes three features:

A. Restatement of Thesis

First, the writer restates the proposition. This new statement of the thesis must express the exact same contention but should do so in a new and interesting way. Here, a well-developed vocabulary, creative wording, and strong sentence skill become vital.

B. Summary of Paragraphs

Following the thesis restatement, the next three sentences summarize each body paragraph in respective order. In doing this, you are creating a “sentence summary.” Just as with the thesis restatement, these sentences should not repeat exact phrasing from the body paragraphs. Neither should these sentences introduce new arguments. They should simply summarize the assertions made in each paragraph.

C. Closing

Lastly, a final sentence or two closes the essay and re-affirms the contention for the reader. Possibilities include some sort of general statement about the topic, an overt appeal to the reader, a question, or even a short quotation. In addition, as mentioned above in this unit, this may be a time to employ a bit of informality in your appeal to the reader. This is an ideal time to show your creativity. For example:

- *It is no wonder that Washington is called the “Father of His Country.”*
- *What would have become of this nation without George Washington?*

- *As Washington so aptly said in his farewell address, "...timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it..."*
- *Helen Keller sets an example for everyone in overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds. Let us follow her example.*
- *"I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble." – Helen Keller (http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/h/helen_keller.html)*
- *What would this world be without people like Edison?*
- *Motivated individuals should be an inspiration to us all. Like Edison, we would do well to manage difficulties as he did.*

Using the essay on Thomas Edison, here is a sample standard conclusion.

Realizing great accomplishment, Edison triumphed over the many challenges before him. Behavioral problems, disciplinary problems, and financial problems could have proved to be a genuine setback for the lad. In spite of these difficulties, Edison applied himself to learning and to hard work. Reaching adulthood, the inventor excelled in his scientific pursuits, producing numerous innovations of his own and improvements of others' creations. Motivated individuals should be an inspiration to us all. Like Edison, we would do well to face difficulties as he did.

6E - Example Standard Conclusion

Thesis restatement:	<i>Realizing great accomplishment, Edison triumphed over the many challenges before him.</i>
Summary of B. P. #1:	<i>Behavioral problems, disciplinary problems, and financial problems all could have proved to be a genuine set-back for the lad.</i>
Summary of B. P. #2:	<i>In spite of these difficulties, Edison applied himself to learning and to hard work.</i>
Summary of B. P. #3:	<i>Reaching adulthood, the inventor excelled in his scientific pursuits, producing numerous innovations of his own and improvements of others' creations.</i>
Closing (appeal):	<i>Motivated individuals should be an inspiration to us all. Like Edison, we would do well to face our difficulties as he did.</i>

Addendum - Unit 6

A. Additional Example Introductions

The assignment for this unit includes writing an introduction to your historical figure essay. Perhaps seeing the same brainstorming process with a completely different topic may help you better understand how to create your introduction. Therefore, we will attempt to create two improved introductions for an essay on becoming an international exchange student. (Refer to the “Example rough introduction” on pages 71 and 72.)

1. Brainstorm Narrowing Ideas.

The following two lists show possible approaches for introductions that narrow from general idea to specific:

6F - Brainstorming the Approach - General to Specific Introduction

	Focusing on travel	Focusing on education/learning
General:	Travel	Education
More specific:	Travelers	Concepts learned
More specific:	Tourists	Students
More specific:	Exchange students	
Working thesis:	Benefits of being an exchange student	Benefits of being an exchange student

2. Brainstorm Possible Attention Getters.

6G - Brainstorming the “Hook”

Hooks pertaining to travel	Hooks pertaining to education/learning
“On the road, again” song lyrics	The Scarecrow in the Wizard of Oz who needs a brain
Passports. E-tickets. Traveler’s checks. Ready to go!	Learned. Erudite. Well-educated. Cultured. Civilized.
Travel brochures call out, “Come, get away from it all!”	“Know it like a book.” “Know it by heart.” “Know the ropes.”
No grass grows under his feet!	Well-educated. Well-informed. Well-versed.
Go for a walk. Take a trip. Get away from it all.	

3. Write the Attention Getter.

Choosing an idea, develop an attention getter:

“Come! Get away from it all!” the travel brochures call out.

4. Develop the Full Introduction.

As explained in this lesson, create sentences that flow from the attention getter down to the thesis statement. Following are two standard introductions developed from the approaches brainstormed above.

Example #1 - Approach focusing on travel:

“Come! Get away from it all!” the travel brochures call out. For millions of people around the world, travel provides the means to rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation. They pack their bags, catch a cruise or a plane, and head off to exotic locations. Tourists crisscross continents craving someplace new. While these adventuresome tourists just want to see new destinations, another group of individuals travels away from their home countries for learning, discovery, adventure, and more. They are international exchange students. Their extended travel is born of a desire to actually experience other cultures. Living for a time in another country as an international exchange student changes one’s perspective.

The following illustration demonstrates the flow from general to more specific topics.

6H - Example #1 General-to-Specific Introduction

Flow	Sentence
Attention getter:	<i>“Come! Get away from it all!” the travel brochures call out.</i>
Travel:	<i>For millions of people around the world, travel provides the means to rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation. They pack their bags, catch a cruise or a plane, and head off to exotic locations.</i>
Tourists:	<i>Tourists crisscross continents craving someplace new.</i>
Exchange students:	<i>While these adventuresome tourists just want to see new destinations, another group of individuals travels away from their home countries for learning, discovery, adventure, and more. They are international exchange students. Their extended travel is born of a desire to actually experience other cultures.</i>
Thesis:	<i>Living for a time in another country as an international exchange student changes one’s perspective.</i>

Example #2 - Approach focusing on education:

Well-educated. Well-informed. Well-versed. Aren't these valuable qualities? For this reason, millions of parents send their children to school. There, studies cover math, grammar, history, and so much more. As the pupils grow, so does the extent and depth of learning. They move to higher math, specialized sciences, and classic literature. For some, the educational process takes them far from the classroom. These students learn by traveling to other lands as exchange students. Living for a time in another country as an international exchange student changes one's perspective.

Once again, consider this introduction as it is broken into its narrowing categories:

6H - Example #2 General-to-Specific Introduction

Flow	Sentence
Attention getter:	<i>Well-educated. Well-informed. Well-versed. Aren't these valuable qualities?</i>
Education:	<i>For this reason, millions of parents send their children to school.</i>
Learning in the classroom:	<i>There, studies cover math, grammar, history, and so much more. As the pupils grow, so does the extent and depth of learning. They move to higher math, specialized sciences, and classic literature.</i>
Learning outside of the classroom:	<i>For some, the educational process takes them far from the classroom.</i>
Exchange student:	<i>These students learn by traveling to other lands as exchange students.</i>
Thesis:	<i>Living for a time in another country as an international exchange student changes one's perspective.</i>

B. Additional Example Conclusions

1. The following standard conclusion would work well to end the essay on exchange students:

Living as an international exchange student in another culture broadens understanding in several areas. A first major blessing that comes from residing in another country is genuine appreciation for one's home country. Secondly, by living for a time with another family the student must learn to function outside of comfortable and customary situations. Finally, extended travel to another country opens the student's eyes to the positive aspects of that other culture. Seeing these great benefits, why not investigate the possibilities of becoming an exchange student? Who knows what adventure awaits you?

The following illustration outlines the construction of the above conclusion:

6I - Construction of Standard Conclusion #1

Thesis restatement:	<i>Living as an international exchange student in another culture broadens understanding in several areas.</i>
Summary of B. P. #1:	<i>A first major blessing that comes from residing in another country is genuine appreciation for one's home country.</i>
Summary of B. P. #2:	<i>Secondly, by living for a time with another family the student must learn to function outside of comfortable and customary situations.</i>
Summary of B. P. #3:	<i>Finally, extended travel to another country opens the student's eyes to the positive aspects of that other culture.</i>
Closing (appeal):	<i>Seeing these great benefits, why not investigate the possibilities of becoming an exchange student? Who knows what adventure awaits you?</i>

2. The next sample is the summary conclusion from the historical figure sample in Unit 5.

Obviously, this heroic figure had a profound impact on America. His innovative spirit and constant desire to improve current inventions led him to create many new devices, making life safer and easier. His leadership aided our nation in gaining its independence and helped to set a foundation for future growth. Lastly, he greatly contributed to his own community by reforming the police system, establishing schools and hospitals, and through many other beneficial actions. Because of a selfless desire to serve his country, Benjamin Franklin influenced America for generations after him. What are you doing to serve your country?

Here is the construction of the above sample conclusion:

6I - Construction of Standard Conclusion #2

Thesis restatement:	<i>Obviously, this heroic figure had a profound impact on America.</i>
Summary of B. P. #1:	<i>His innovative spirit and constant desire to improve current inventions led him to create many new devices, making life safer and easier.</i>
Summary of B. P. #2:	<i>His leadership aided our nation in gaining its independence and helped to set a foundation for future growth.</i>
Summary of B. P. #3:	<i>Lastly, he greatly contributed to his own community by reforming the police system, establishing schools and hospitals, and through many other beneficial actions.</i>
Closing (appeal):	<i>Because of a selfless desire to serve his country, Benjamin Franklin influenced America for generations after him. What are you doing to serve your country?</i>

UNIT 6

The Basic Essay Introduction and Conclusion and Historical Figure Essay (Part 2)

Daily Assignments

----- Exercise 1 -----

A. Reading Assignment:

Read the complete Unit 6 Lesson on writing standard introductions and conclusions. Be certain that you understand the objectives of this unit's assignment.

B. Lesson Assignment:

On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions in complete sentences:

1. What is the purpose of the “hook?”
2. What should you not present in your narrowing statements?
3. What are the three common problems with standard introductions?
4. What are the three primary components of a standard conclusion?

----- Exercise 2 -----

Writing Assignment:

1. *Based on your thesis and the ideas covered in your essay, brainstorm at least two possible ways to lead to your thesis statement, moving from a general topic to your specific thesis. Outline each option as done in illustration 6A on page 69 of this unit's lesson.*
2. *Think of different attention getters as well. Organize and list them by central idea like illustration 6B on page 69 of this lesson.*

----- Exercise 3 -----

Writing Assignment:

1. *Using your strongest idea from Exercise 2, write the attention getter for your introduction.*
2. *Now, create the additional sentences that will lead to your thesis statement. Be certain to use transitions and wording that make the concepts flow together smoothly. Remember that arguments in support of your contention are not to appear in the narrowing statements.*
3. *Add your thesis statement at the end of this introduction.*

----- Exercise 4 -----

Writing Assignment:

1. Now, draft a basic summary conclusion for your essay, restating the thesis, crafting summary sentences, and offering a final appeal.
2. Today is the final day to add the two figures of speech to your body paragraphs. Mark them in your text so that your instructor can easily recognize your efforts. If you cannot fit the devices into your assignment, write two sample sentences, each including one of this unit's figures, and submit them with your final essay.

----- Exercise 5 -----

Writing Assignment:

1. Print a copy of your entire essay for editing.
2. Review your body paragraphs using a copy of the Essay Edit Checklist from Appendix F.
3. Write changes and corrections on the paper as you edit your work in this order:
 - a. organization/content
 - b. style
 - c. mechanics

----- Exercise 6 -----

Writing Assignment:

1. Review the introductory paragraph. Carefully think over each chosen word and each sentence to be certain that they specifically serve a proper purpose. Write changes and corrections on your paper.
2. Review the concluding paragraph. Be sure you have used new and interesting wording in your thesis restatement and summary sentences. Write changes and corrections on your paper.
3. Add all changes and corrections to your essay.
4. Print an edited copy and ask someone to read your essay, mark corrections, and give you feedback on your entire essay.

----- Exercise 7 -----

Writing Assignment:

Based on the feedback given you, work to improve confusing areas or any other flaws in your essay.

----- Exercise 8 -----

Writing Assignment:

1. *Create a title page in proper APA format. See page 42 for an example.*
2. *Create a final APA Style “References” page for your paper. Remember to include any sources added during editing. See pages 41 and 42 for an example.*

----- Exercise 9 -----

Writing Assignment:

1. *Ensure your essay is properly formatted following APA Style, including title page, running head, page numbering.*
2. *Using a copy of the Essay Edit Checklist from Appendix F review your essay to be certain that you have followed the guidelines. Check off each item as you review your essay.*

----- Exercise 10 -----

Writing Assignment:

Submit all your work to your instructor.

1. *Completed Lesson Assignment from Exercise 1.*
2. *Writing Assignment work:*
 - a. *Essay formatted in APA style:*
 - *Title page*
 - *Final draft of your essay*
 - *“References” page*
 - b. *Completed Essay Edit Checklist*
 - c. *Figures of speech, if created separately*
 - d. *Copy of essay that was edited by someone else*
 - e. *Copy of essay that you marked with corrections*
 - f. *Brainstorming of introductory ideas*