



Start writing essays

The main body of the essay

Jane Van Hool:

Tim Baugh, Leslie Hoose and Beth Lewis talk about the main body of the essay and what to put in it.

Tim Baugh:

I was wondering if you might further sub-divide your plan, for example, into exegesis, which means clear explanation of the issues in question, and then the critical analysis, where you start to, to critically examine the question.

Beth Lewis:

I, I mean I have to say this, this is a new word I've not come across before but, (LAUGHS) ...

Tim Baugh:

Let me give an example, when we're looking at our, at our essay title, 'Are Blood Sports Cruel?', and there's certain things that, in order to get a, a decent analysis of that question going, you're going to have to explain to the reader, because it's a cliché, but I think it's true that in an essay your reader is intelligent but uninformed.

Beth Lewis:

Yes.

Tim Baugh:

You know, so you can assume that, that you have to explain to them, and that's quite functional, because what it really means is you have to show that you understand, as well, yourself, what the issues are. That's a solution to your, one of your problems which is What Am I Going To Write About In My Essay? If there's a, a series of, of disagreements about what constitutes cruelty, then you can discuss those, and present your own view in the context of that discussion. Beth, how do you go about trying to ensure that you've covered all the main points that are required for a given essay?

Beth Lewis:

I still have the, the original list usually, you know, taken from the essay question. I check back with the original question every now and then, so I, sometimes I have it sort of floating about in the essay. You know, if I'm very organised at the beginning of each paragraph I might put it and, you know, or the section of the question that I'm supposed to be concentrating on. Just so that as I'm reading through, it suddenly sort of jumps out and reminds me what I'm really supposed to be concentrating on. But I must admit, sometimes you're reading through and then you suddenly feel that the general answer from the essay hasn't answered the question that's been asked but what you thought it asked.

Tim Baugh:

Your answer in other words ...

Beth Lewis:

Yes.

Tim Baugh:

... is, is maybe not quite as focused as you'd hoped, which is fine, because you're in the....

Beth Lewis:

Yes, or has gone off to one side slightly.

Tim Baugh:

You're in the process of writing the essay, so that's fine, you can pull yourself back on track, and, and that's no problem... You know, whenever there's a solid point being made in the essay, whether it's taken a paragraph or sometimes two or three paragraphs, it should be really clear to the reader, how, when they draw their line under that little point to take a breath and, move on to the next point, precisely how it relates to the question. And that doesn't necessarily mean pedantically repeating the question through every paragraph or every other sentence, but there just shouldn't be any doubt that, that that three paragraphs has shown that in fact blood sports are cruel, because cruelty is, is, is defined in a certain way.

What if, what if I was to, to suggest to you that, thinking about the question 'Are Blood Sports Cruel?', because it's a relatively easy one to address, and most people have a view about it, what if I would suggest that one thing you might, it might be very profitable for you to do, would be to try and develop as good an argument as possible for a case which disagreed with what you believed? So, for example, were, were you to think they weren't cruel, you would have to think as hard as possible about what someone who argued they were would say.

Beth Lewis:

Well, I must admit I think personally, I, if I was actually writing that essay, then I'm sure that I would be, either one side or the other, I would be looking up scientific reports on, on cruelty and the behaviour of animals, natural behaviour of animals, and, and I would be talking to people who enjoyed hunting, and trying to understand their point of view. I, I think it's, it's all just a question of, of researching, and researching things in the right sources from people who know what they're talking about, in order to get a certain amount of evidence for each side of the argument.

Tim Baugh:

Great, because that's the way you'd build layers into a discussion.