

Examples/Outlines of Literary Essays that follow a 5-PART (Classical Arrangement) Model

	<i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i> Question: What value Harper Lee’s novel have for today’s readers? (R-T-W)	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> Question: What causes the tragedy in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>? (T)*
INTRODUCTION (at least 1 paragraph)	In 1992, Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld founded the Innocence Project, a non-profit organization committed to helping those in jail who have been wrongfully convicted. Since its founding, the Innocence Project has helped to exonerate more than 300 individuals when DNA testing proved their innocence. Many of those freed would have been spent their lives imprisoned, convicted of a crime they did not commit. While it may have been easier to simply let those individuals remain incarcerated, those at the Innocence Project believe that justice cannot be served if even one innocent man remains in jail.	In the final Act of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Juliet awakens and to her horror, she sees the lifeless body of her beloved Romeo lying dead before her. Without little hesitation, she takes the “happy dagger” and with her dying breaths, she proclaims, “let me die” (5.3.169). To many contemporary readers of Shakespeare’s play, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ’s decision to kill themselves seems rash and foolish. What then could cause this nobleman and gentlewoman—who otherwise have everything to look forward to in life—to take such drastic action?
NARRATION (typically 1 paragraph)	If the Innocence Project existed in Harper Lee’s novel <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> , no doubt that Atticus Fitch would be among its founders. <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> follows the story of Scout, who... [insert background info] . . . By defending Tom, <u>Atticus teaches Scout and Jem the most important lesson he can: that no matter how difficult, we must always stand up for justice.</u> ← This is thesis statement; notice how it includes a specific topic (justice) + debatable view (that we must always stand up for justice). This is a claim of <i>value</i> .	Shakespeare wrote <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> in . . . The play tells the story . . . [continue background information about the play and its plot] . . . Romeo and Juliet commit suicide at the end of the play because they cannot imagine life without one another. <u>Thus, Shakespeare seems to say that love lead us to act in reckless and ultimately, tragic ways.</u> ← This is an initial thesis; notice the way it differs from the final thesis in the end. This is a claim of <i>fact</i> (you’re saying that this is <i>true</i> , that love is what drives <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> to kill themselves).
CONFIRMATION (multiple paragraphs; use meaningful paragraph breaks)	At the beginning of the novel . . . [insert examples for the lessons that Atticus teaches his children] Soon, however, Scout and Jem learn more about . . . [insert examples that show how the children learn more about the racism in their community] Ultimately . . . [insert examples from the climax/resolution of the novel that show how Scout and Jem learn the importance of justice through Atticus’ actions]	The tragedy of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ’s story is immediately clear from the opening scene. As the Prologue announces to the audience: “A pair of star-cross’d lovers take their life” (1.1.6). Shakespeare’s use of the words “star-cross’d lovers” implies that <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ’s fate is written in the stars, that they were <i>meant</i> to fall in love. Before the audience meets the couple, however, they learn about the decades-long “strife” that has plagued their two houses . . . continue with examples from the beginning of the play . . . When <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> meet . . . [develop body paragraphs that show how <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> meet, fall in love, and make foolish decisions] At the end the of play . . . [continue with examples that show how <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> continued to make critical choices that would lead to their deaths]
REFUTATION (typically 1 paragraph)	Of course, Atticus could have chosen to look the other way. It certainly would have made his life easier, and it’s doubtful that many in Macomb would have blamed him for not defending Tom [continue with other points-of-view] . . .	Did <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> really have to take such extreme actions to be together? Perhaps <i>Juliet</i> could have confided in her mother and she would understand. Yet given both her parents’ feelings towards the Montagues—especially in light of Tybalt’s death—it’s more likely that <i>Romeo</i> would be killed in retribution. Perhaps when <i>Romeo</i> believes that <i>Juliet</i> has died that he could run away to save his own life rather than drink poison. After all, if <i>Juliet</i> loves him, she would want him to save himself. Yet <i>Romeo</i> ’s fate has already been sealed. Even if he doesn’t kill himself, there is no life for a nobleman without honor.
CONCLUSION (typically 1 paragraph, sometimes included with refutation)	But aren’t there times in life when something else beyond personal interest is more important? Justice can’t be something that only applies to those who have power or status. Justice applied selectively isn’t justice at all [continue developing the conclusion, make connection to the Introduction or Narration] . . .	Thus, perhaps love is not to blame for <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ’s tragedy. Instead, what drives <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> to take such drastic action is the society in which they lived—a society that makes their love impossible thanks to the feud between their two families. ← Notice that this <i>final</i> thesis differs from the initial one stated. As you write your paper, you should leave open the possibility that after looking at the text that your initial thesis is less the “final word” on the issue but more of a hypothesis that is tested as you examine the text in the body paragraphs. [Continue with a few more sentences to defend this new view]

* The question is text-based (T), but because the answer might include some information about Shakespeare’s society—in particular, how its rules may have affected the actions of the characters—the essay is both *text- and world-* based (T-W).