English Essay: Writing a Thesis Paragraph

1. First, introduce your topic with an engaging lead: a visual image, a quotation, a provocative statement.

   Ex: In William Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth*, the king of Scotland targets women and children, all much less powerful than he.
   
   OR
   
   “Fleance/…must embrace the fate/ Of that dark hour” (3.2.154-7).

2. Second, make a transition into your thesis statement.

   Ex: Fleance, Banquo’s son, barely outraces the murderers hired by Macbeth, and Macduff’s young children are all slaughtered along with their mother.

3. Finally, state your thesis, which should concisely express your central argument and answer the essay question.

   Ex: Despite the boldness Macbeth shows with these attacks, these deeds reveal he is a weak man, obsessed with who will inherit his throne and so cowardly that he fears children.

**DO** mention the full title of the work you’re discussing, the full name of its author, and its genre (novel, short story, essay, poem, or play). Italicize titles of novels and plays; place titles of stories, essays, and poems in quotation marks.

**DON’T** ever use the thesis paragraph to make general statements about literature, society, or human nature. For example, *Many great works of literature address love and conflict between men and women*. Instead, focus on the particular work you’re analyzing.