

English 11 Writing Workshop—Example Proof Paragraphs

Follow the directions and answer the questions following each sample student paragraph.

EXAMPLE A

Gregor's life before his transformation was similar to his life as a bug. Gregor got up in the morning and went to work. When he got home he ate dinner, then got his clothes ready for the next day then went to sleep. Being a bug (like an ant) all you do is repeat your day over and over again. Nothing changes. That sounds like Gregor. Before and after Gregor's transformation his father paid little to no attention to him at all. Even though Gregor was keeping his family from losing their house, his dad didn't treat him with respect. Gregor's life was miserable even before his metamorphosis.

1. Underline **all plot summary** in the above paragraph. As a reminder, plot summary is any description of events in the novel that is not accompanied by analysis (the introduction of your own ideas).
2. Circle analysis (places where the student introduces his/her own ideas) in the above paragraph.
3. What is the main problem with this sample paragraph? How could this paragraph be improved?

EXAMPLE A (WITH ADDED ANALYSIS IN ITALICS)

Gregor's life before his transformation was similar to his life as a bug. *{Gregor experienced alienation prior to his transformation into a bug. Gregor's life prior to his metamorphosis was bleak and lonely.}* Gregor got up in the morning and went to work. When he got home he ate dinner, then got his clothes ready for the next day then went to sleep. Being a bug (like an ant) all you do is repeat your day over and over again. Nothing changes. ~~That sounds like Gregor.~~ *{Removed previous sentence. Insert further analysis: Gregor's life as a traveling salesman was as repetitive as the life of a bug, and he experienced little fulfillment and satisfaction.}* Additionally, before and after Gregor's transformation his father paid little to no attention to him at all. Even though Gregor was keeping his family from losing their house, his dad didn't treat him with respect. *{Add Analysis: Gregor's father and the rest of his family left him alone in his room, and only bothered him when they were worried that he wasn't going to work on time. Thus, they only cared about Gregor to the extent that it directly affected them. As long as he went to work on time, he was left alone and did not form close relationships with his family members.}* Gregor's life was miserable even before his metamorphosis.

1. How does the addition of further analysis affect the effectiveness of the paragraph?
2. What else would you change to make the paragraph more effective?

EXAMPLE B

In *Metamorphosis* Gregor never really knew his family. When he was human his family was very supportive of him since he was the one who made money, but that all changed when he became a bug because now that he was in a new body he was now able to see them all in a new light. His father became abusive towards Gregor treating him as if he were a pest. In each chapter Gregor's father hurts him and each time makes him bleed. Gregor becomes the father's outlet since he is beaten brutally. But Gregor also sees people who he thought did nothing step up and take responsibility, such as his mother. His mother began to take charge by defending Gregor from his father's abusive attacks and clean the house, including his room with his sister helping also. Kafka shows that people can change for the good or better and can be different than you expect them to be when you look at them in a new light.

In my opinion, this writer does a better job of providing a more detailed argument. However, this person would still benefit from the addition of analysis (instead of plot summary) in his/her paragraph.

1. Again, underline all plot summary and circle analysis.
2. The **topic sentence** of this paragraph doesn't exactly capture the argument in the paragraph; it would have us believe that the paragraph will prove that Gregor didn't know his family. Tweak the topic sentence so that it fits the paragraph more accurately.

ASSIGNMENT (30 point writing grade)

Look at one of the body paragraphs from one of your own essays (distributed in class) and complete the following steps. You'll be rewriting one of your body paragraphs from an in-class essay for this assignment.

1. Make sure that your topic sentence accurately captures the argument you make in the body paragraph. Tweak your topic sentence if it doesn't.
2. Underline all plot summary in your paragraph.
3. Circle all analysis.
4. Make sure that you have **three sentences** of analysis (your own ideas) for every **one sentence** of plot summary/textual evidence. Rewrite your paragraph to achieve this **3:1 Analysis:Evidence** ratio. This will mean that you need to elaborate on many of the points you made, and that you'll need to scale back some plot summary to **expand your analysis**.