

INTRODUCTION ANALYSIS

Motive – This essay is motivated by the author’s claim that there is a lot more to Joyce’s presentation of Dublin than is evident in an initial reading of *Dubliners*. Implicitly, the author tells her readers that they should continue reading her essay in order to learn things about the novel’s rendering of Dublin that they would not otherwise have seen. The goal of the essay then becomes to carry out this initial promise to the reader. Note how the motive’s placement in the introduction is related directly to the paragraph’s structure: after presenting a more straightforward reading of *Dubliners* in the opening sentences, the author destabilizes this interpretation, thereby generating a problem for her essay to solve. In this way her intro not only makes a claim about *Dubliners*, but also demonstrates why that claim is significant.

Topic or Purpose – The author very specifically states her topic—Joyce’s Dublin as a “locale for a drama...about home”—in order to clarify the scope of the essay for her reader. The purpose of her essay will be to explore and arrive at some conclusion about this topic. Again, note that the author’s placement of her essay’s topic relates directly to the structure she has chosen for her introduction. Immediately after the motive which announces that she will not pursue a more obvious ethnographic investigation of Joyce’s Dublin, she tells directly states the topic her essay *will* explore. Because it is essential to clearly define an essay’s topic before presenting a thesis about it, the topic statement also precedes the thesis statement

Thesis Statement – The author’s thesis statement is particularly strong because it pursues a tension in the novel by examining the way in which Joyce’s attitude toward home pushes in two directions. It has Joyce simultaneously indicting and showing compassion for different aspects of home in *Dubliners*. As in most college essays, the thesis statement comes toward the end of the introduction. Again, note the way in which the placement of the thesis statement fits into the overall structure of the paragraph: the author motivates and clearly defines her topic before offering her thesis about it. Giving the reader a clear understanding of the topic to be explored in an essay (as this author does) is essential for the formulation of a central claim that engages that topic with this sort of tension and double-edged complexity.

Opener – This introduction proceeds from the particular to the general (it is also common to proceed from the general to the particular), beginning with a quotation before moving on to more large-scale issues. The detail contained in the opening quote establishes Joyce’s ethnographic rendering of Dublin as the most obvious site of inquiry when writing about *Dubliners*. However, the author does not use this initial detail to define the topic of her essay; she uses it to highlight how her essay does *not* pursue the most obvious avenue of investigation, choosing instead to focus on Dublin’s more universal significance as a site of home. By using her opening sentences to suggest an approach that she quickly undermines, the author puts herself in a position to convey why her thesis is not obvious, thereby sparking the reader’s interest

“Dublin is such a small city: everyone knows everyone else’s business” (65). This is Doran’s lament, one of many such laments in *Dubliners*, a book whose very title seems to presage a comprehensive portrait of Ireland’s capital city. Joyce makes full use of the advantages Dublin offers as a setting. Both national capital and provincial town, the city was the ideal site for cutting—and often scathing—dissections of this land. It would be unfortunate, however, to see *Dubliners* merely as an ethnographic study, for Joyce’s commentary has a broader scope. Dublin comes to serve as a locale for a drama which is played out all over the world, a drama about home. Joyce studies the nature of home, what it is, and what it means to leave it. However different his characters may be, together they form a tableau which, while it does much to indict the idea of home, also shows a deep compassion for those who are bound to it. Although this theme may be examined in many stories—the failed attempt at leaving in “Eveline” is an obvious example—a look at two less obvious works, “The Boarding House” and “Little Cloud,” may best suggest its subtlety and pervasiveness.

Roadmap – While this author’s roadmap falls a bit short of the brief outline of an essay’s structure that is often found in the introductions of longer college essays, she does give the reader an indication of the argumentative path the body of her essay will follow. In addition, indicating that she has limited herself to an examination of two of the novel’s fifteen stories further clarifies the essay’s scope, and the reference to these works as “less obvious” enhances her motive.

WRITING SUCCESSFUL INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPHS

In the most abstract sense, the function of an introductory paragraph is to move your reader from the world of daily life into the textual and analytical space of an essay. In a more concrete sense, an introduction performs three essential functions: 1) it articulates the topic or question that you will address in your essay; 2) it motivates that topic or question by suggesting why it is consequential or interesting; and 3) it states, clearly and directly, your position on this topic or question (i.e. your thesis).

Conceptual Components

Ethos – While reading your introduction, your audience will begin to make assumptions about you as an author. Be sure to present yourself as a thoughtful, knowledgeable, and nonbiased writer capable of dealing effectively with the complexities and nuances of your topic. Your introduction should set the tone that will remain consistent throughout your essay. In addition to emphasizing the uniqueness of your approach to your subject matter, you should seek to draw your reader into your essay with the gracefulness of your prose and the rational demeanor you project as a writer.

Problem – A *question* becomes a *problem* when your reader feels a stake in resolving it. Your introduction should convey not simply that your essay will provide an answer that your reader may not have considered, but that he or she will benefit from this answer with practical knowledge or increased understanding. Writing problems are typically generated by complicating (in the motive) a seemingly obvious or settled claim (presented in the opener).

Structural Components

Opener – In addition to grabbing the reader's attention, the opening sentence of an essay sets up the structure of the introductory paragraph. Because the larger goal of an intro paragraph is to demonstrate what the reader might learn from an essay, openers will often establish a stable position that is then complicated or destabilized by the motive sentence, thereby exposing a gap in understanding for the essay to address.

Topic or Purpose – The introductory paragraph must leave the reader with a clear understanding of the specific subject area that your essay will investigate. Defining your essay's scope in this way often requires distinguishing your specific focus from the larger discourse on your topic. Though this is not always essential, many essays include a *purpose statement* that tells the reader directly: "this paper examines..." or "the aim of this essay is to..."

Motive – The motive is a specific sentence, usually near the middle of your introduction, that clarifies why your thesis is interesting, non-obvious, and/or contestable. In essence, your motive answers the question "so what?" that a reader might ask of your thesis. Because they typically generate interest by complicating a stable position elaborated at the beginning of your intro, motive statements often employ terms of reversal—"yet," "but," "however," &c.—that reflect a departure from the obvious.

Thesis Statement – The thesis statement is your essay's central claim about your chosen topic. It should present a position that resolves the problem generated in the motive sentence. Since the topic area must first be described and motivated, the thesis statement is usually placed near the end of the introduction.

Roadmap – Though this is often unnecessary in shorter papers, essays that are long (7+ pages) or especially complex are often easier for the reader to understand if the author offers some preview of the essay's structure at the beginning of the paper. In especially long essays (20+ pages), this outline of the essay's structure may demand a paragraph of its own (usually the second paragraph).