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21L.001 Foundations of Western Culture: Homer to Dante
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Roles of Sentences in Body Paragraphs (and a few words on Conclusions)

Generally speaking, every sentence in each of your body paragraphs should clearly serve at least one of the following functions:

1. argument: a statement of the main contention of the paragraph as a whole; with rare exceptions, each paragraph should make only one substantive argument, though multiple pieces of analysis/close reading (#4 below) may be adduced to support it
2. transition: explanation of how this paragraph builds on/flows logically from the previous one
3. evidence/quotation: in support of the argument (#1 above), but quoting only as much as is necessary for the argument or as will be used for close reading (#4, below)
4. analysis/close reading: this you've done in the exercise; close examination of the significance of textual features like diction, enjambment, imagery, etc.
5. signpost: an explanation of the how the argument (#1 above) relates to the overall thesis of the essay; this will often involve restating the specific terms of the argument in terms of the broader thesis.
6. contextualization: akin to summary, but more targeted; telling us only as much as will make the evidence/quotation/close reading make sense.

Because essay-writing is an art rather than a science, I am not prepared to claim that this is an exhaustive list; moreover, a single sentence may serve more than one of the listed functions. In general, the first sentence of any paragraph will fill the transition function (and possibly others) and the last either the signpost or argument function.

A few words on Conclusions

What good conclusions do: 1) concede counter-evidence and either try to spin it or simply argue for the original thesis anyway (ends of paragraphs can also be a good place to do this, with more local or minor forms of counter-evidence); 2) limit the scope of the argument (or remind readers that you did so earlier, if you did), in an attempt to forestall objections raised from scenes, themes, or characters you didn't cover; 3) anticipate or articulate "where to go next"; what new questions the argument raises, and how one would follow up on the current paper, etc.; 4) some combination of these. The conclusion is often the trickiest (though not the most challenging) part of the essay to write, since there's a fine line between doing too little (merely restating the thesis and body paragraph arguments) and too much (raising counter-evidence so broad that it demolishes the whole argument; proposing a "where to go next" avenue so tangential that it weakens the rhetorical force of your closing).