

Example academic writing

Aarzu

Aarzu failed to include some key features of academic writing in her piece. You can see some feedback about her work in the image below and a summary of the feedback in the numbered bullets:

Academic writing without structure

This is vague and unhelpful. If you are making a judgement – ‘very well’ – you must explain how this is done. A paragraph’s opening point should always be clear, concise and self-explanatory.

‘How to Tell a True War Story’ combines story-truth and happening truth very well. The title itself, as Giorgio Mariani notes, exemplifies the two together already: on the one hand, telling a true war story may be a reference to making sure the retelling of the story is correct, or true. On the other hand, it also making sure the reader knows the difference between a false and a true war story, which implicitly invites the art of fiction into telling a true war story.

The power of story-telling is properly emphasised and an emotional experience. An example of this is the narrator’s (Tim O’Brien) repetitive, changing account of Curt Lemon’s death. The happening truth of the situation is that ‘the dead guy’s name was Curt Lemon’ and Rat Kiley, his best friend, is devastated by his death, that they were ‘soul mates’ (68). The narrative is blunt, abrupt and undescriptive, which is precisely intentional. O’Brien narrates the fact of Lemon’s death with objectivity, but the aloofness and distance conveyed by the tone is supposed to send a message to the reader. It is inadequate. The splitting of the story into different sections emphasised the abruptness and disjointedness of the narrative. This part of the story, happening truth, is cordoned off and soon succeeded by O’Brien’s true version of events.

I am citing the wrong critic here. I made the mistake of assuming that what follows is Mariani’s argument. Upon re-reading the journal entry however, I realised that Mariani is paraphrasing someone else instead. Always double-check whose argument you are actually using.

Classic waffling. It makes little sense and could be cut down to be more concise and clearer.

Needs a citation here. Usually a footnote, or an in-text citation.

Unnecessary

I am quoting the novel here for the first time. When quoting anything for the first time a full citation is usually needed (whether this is an in-text citation or footnote reference).

How? Vague/illogical.

This is out of place and awkward. There is little flow in these sentences and so the argument becomes weak.

1. If you’re making a judgement – “very well” – you must explain how this is done. A paragraph’s opening point should always be clear, concise and self-explanatory.
2. Always double-check whose argument you are actually using.
3. Waffling makes little sense and could be cut down to be more concise and clearer.
4. Citations are needed when referencing other’s work. Do this by using a footnote or in-text citation.
5. When quoting anything for the first time, a full citation is usually needed.
6. Don’t include vague or illogical comments.
7. Arguments become weak if there is little flow through sentences.
8. Don’t use contractions as they aren’t formal enough (e.g. it’s instead of it is).

Katie

Katie responded to feedback about her work and created a plan for her essay. Her plan break down the question she was going to answer, the introduction, the main body of the essay and the conclusion. She also used some academic writing techniques by including evidence in a well structured essay that was written in a formal tone. You can read her work in the images below and a summary of the feedback in the bullets:

Academic writing with structure

Restoration and 18th Century essay

- Plan -

Question

"In the writing of this period, female beauty is a contradiction: it gives women power, but also makes them vulnerable." Discuss.

Intro

Introduce my ideas and produce a thesis statement. Explain how female beauty allows women to be seen but this leads to sexual objectification - which ultimately strips women of their power.

Body

Open the essay with a quote about the male gaze from John Berger. Explain how this shows up in Samuel Richardson's 'Pamela' (quote from p22).
- Introduce Burke's theory of beauty and how this related to Pamela (quote from p63 + 23)
Explain how this shows up in Pamela through other female characters like Mrs Jervis and Mrs Jewkes.

Conclusion

Consolidate my argument - provide a closing statement to round off the essay. Explain how beauty is designed to keep women in a position of vulnerability - thus it can never give them power, at least not in any way that would allow them to exert it over a man.

Plan

Planned clearly and focussed, writing up a rough plan helps to make sure you are staying on track and answering the question throughout.

1. Plan

Plans should be clear and focused,. Writing up a rough plan helps to make sure you are staying on track and answering the question throughout.

Restoration and 18th Century -Essay-

This essay will explore how female beauty allows women to be seen in eighteenth-century society. Although a seemingly empowering statement, I suggest that the presence of the male gaze makes sexual objectification inevitable. Furthermore, this essay aims to demonstrate how the patriarchal construction of female beauty in eighteenth-century writing takes power away from women and makes them vulnerable, both physically and emotionally, with a focus on Samuel Richardson's Pamela.

Structure

Coherence, logical order and bringing together related points and materials - in your introduction you can outline your ideas and argument so that the rest of the essay flows naturally.

The construction of beauty in eighteenth-century writing further contributes to this power dynamic and facilitates the male gaze, thus stripping women of their power and making them vulnerable. In 1757, Edmund Burke outlined his definition of beauty, arguing that: 'in the animal creation, out of our own species, it is the small we are inclined to be fond of; little birds, and some of the smaller kinds of beasts'. (insert citation from Edmund Burke).

Evidenced

Demonstrating knowledge as the subject area, supports opinions and arguments with evidence - the use of theory and secondary materials is essential in establishing your argument.

Alluding to the creation of the sexes and suggesting that his actions are based on natural, loving instincts, confirms the idea that female beauty can never give women power. Consolidating the violence which precedes the male gaze, this idea of sexual objectification being 'natural' implies that female bodies were designed for men, or as Mrs Jewkes puts it, to be 'loved' by men.

Formal in tone and style

Using appropriate language - clear concise, balanced - using relevant terminology is essential when writing any essay.

2. Structure

Coherence, logical order and bringing together related points and materials is essential. Your introduction can outline your ideas and arguments so that the rest of the essay flows naturally.

3. Evidenced

Demonstrating knowledge in the subject area, and supporting opinions and arguments with evidence is important. Use theory and secondary materials to establish your argument.

4. Formal in tone and style

Use appropriate language that is clear, concise and balanced. Using relevant terminology is essential when writing any essay.