

## Brief Overview of an Essay

1. The **title of the essay** is not merely the title of the work discussed; rather, it gives the reader a clue, a small idea of the essayist's topic.
2. The **opening or introductory paragraph** does not begin by saying "In this story..." Rather, by naming the author and title, it lets the reader know exactly what work is being discussed. It also develops the writer's thesis so readers know where they will be going.
3. The **organization** is effective. The smaller points are discussed in the first paragraphs, and the central (chief) points are presented in later paragraphs. That is, the essay does not dwindle or become anticlimactic; rather, it builds up from the least important to the most important points.
4. **Brief but powerful quotations** are used, both to provide evidence and to let the reader hear – even if only fleetingly – the author/poet's voice.
5. The essay is chiefly devoted to **analysis** (how your examples/claims illuminate the work and help foster true understanding and appreciation). You should not focus on summary. The writer, properly assuming that the reader has read the work, does not tell the plot in great detail. Be aware that the reader has not memorized the story, so you should offer helpful reminders.
6. The **present tense** is used in narrating the action: "Mrs. Mallard dies"; "Mrs. Mallard's friends assume she is happy."
7. A **concluding paragraph** is useful – if it does more than merely summarize what has already been said. The writer should offer a final insight or explanation as to why the reader can really learn from or appreciate the text.