

# The In-Class Essay: Be prepared

- ✓ **Start reviewing your notes** several days before the in-class essay.
- ✓ **Look for connections.**
  - ✓ What points did your teacher emphasize?
  - ✓ Does your textbook offer chapter summaries?
- ✓ **Work on your reading, writing, and study skills.** Don't wait for the day of the essay. Do it now. Accept your responsibility.

# Important tip

**Do not miss any classes leading up to scheduled in-class essays.**

- ✓ Most teachers are fair; they will test on what they have stressed in class.
- ✓ Listen critically, take notes, and practice good study habits.
- ✓ If you have any concerns, discuss them with your instructor days before the essay.

# A game plan

- ✓ Anticipate material that might be used as prompts for in-class essays.
- ✓ Create a study sheet: Review your notes and required readings. Make outlines for important material.
- ✓ Talk to students who have already taken the course to get ideas about what to expect.

# If you study alone

- Review your notes and textbook.
- Think about what questions you could ask about this material.
  - What were the most important points the class covered?
  - What questions could you ask about those points?
- If your teacher seemed to emphasize one point, study and write questions about that.
- Ask your professor what sort of questions to expect.
- Write a practice essay using a time limit.

# If you study with a group

- Share your notes and ideas.
- Share questions you could ask about the material.
  - What were the most important points the class covered?
  - What questions would you ask about particular points?
- Discuss any points that the teacher seemed to emphasize.
- Discuss what sort of questions to expect.

## **Read the prompt carefully!**

- ✓ Read the prompt the whole way through  
– at least twice! This reading gives you an overall view of what to write about.
- ✓ Analyze the prompt. What exactly is the instructor asking for?

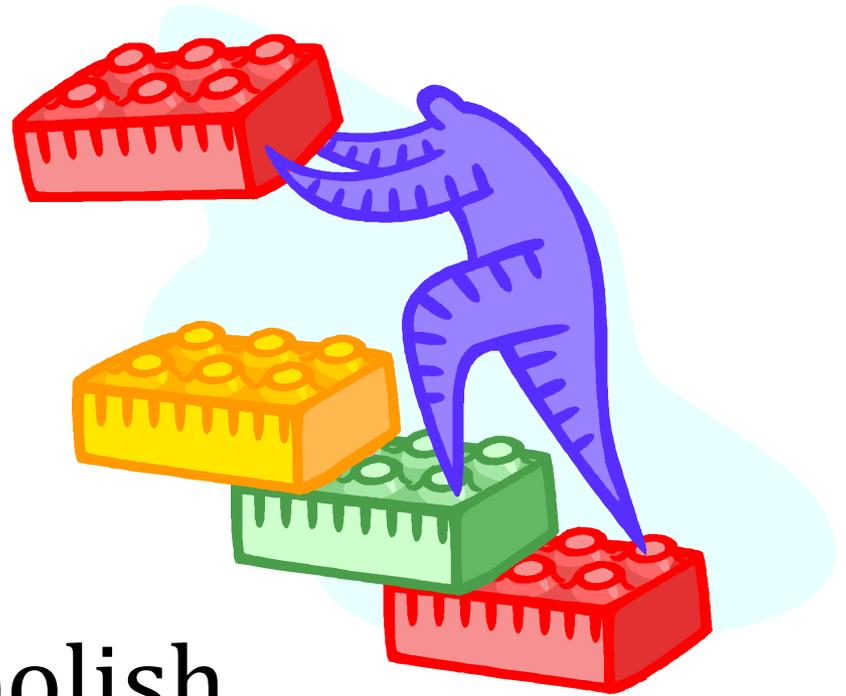
After you have decoded the prompt,  
you need a plan: **A four-step strategy**

1) Compose a thesis

2) Create an outline

3) Write your essay

4) Revise, edit, and polish



# Step 1

## **Your thesis: Make a point**

Most of your in-class writing assignments will share one characteristic: You will be asked to make or prove a point, which should be expressed as a thesis statement.

**A good thesis statement** says something significant about the topic and proves your understanding to the instructor.

# Look for a clue to a thesis

Can you turn the prompt into a thesis statement?

## Example

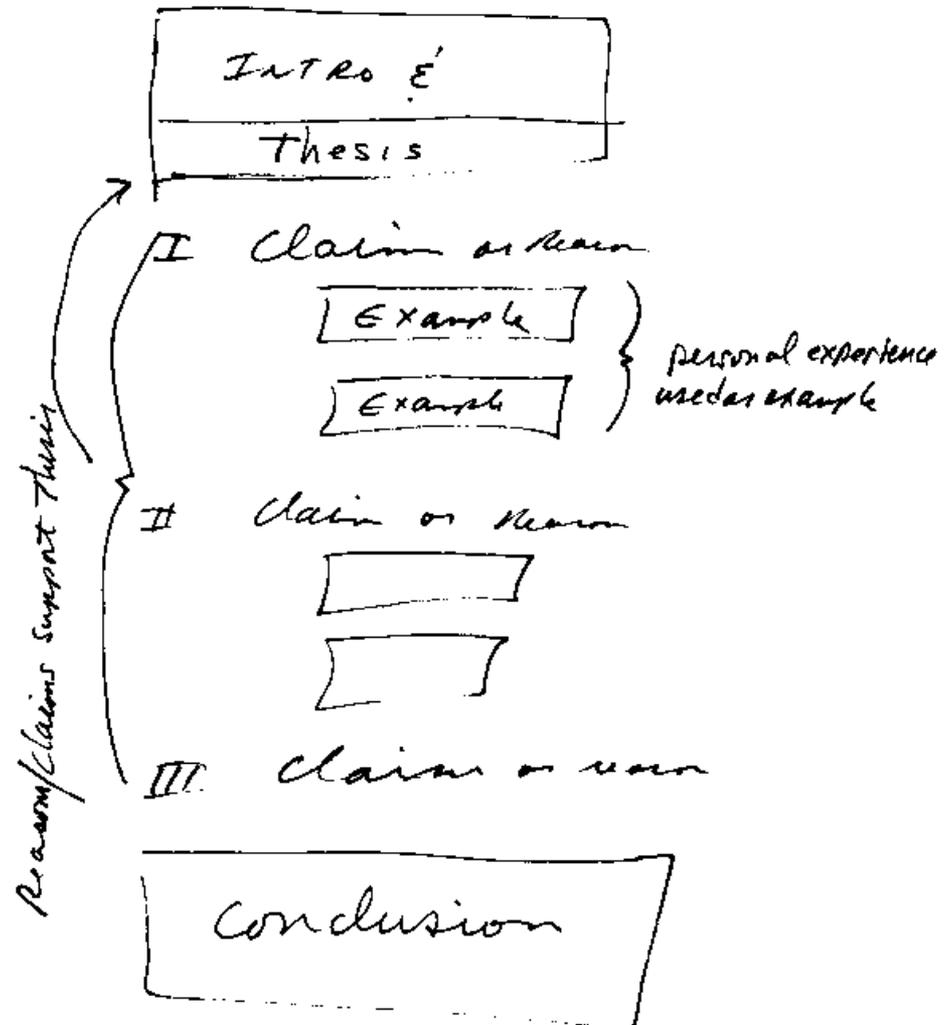
Explain one of the major conflicts presented by Graham Greene in *The Heart of the Matter*.

One of the major conflicts in *The Heart of the Matter* is Major Scobie's sense of morality, which radically differs from the standards set forth by his church and society.

# Step 2

## Create an outline

- Introduction
  - Thesis statement
- Body paragraphs
  - Topic sentence
  - Supports/examples
- Conclusion
  - Re-state thesis



# Step 3

## Start writing

**Introduction**

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graph TD; A[Introduction] --> B[Add point 1]; B --> C[Add point 2]; C --> D[Add a conclusion];
```

**Add point 1**

**Add point 2**

**Add a conclusion**

# Step 4

## Proofread and edit

- Does your thesis match the assignment?
- Have you supported your thesis?
- Do your paragraphs follow your topic sentences?
- Have you used transitions?
- Have you stayed on topic?
- Are there any spelling errors?
- Are there any sentence fragments or comma splices?

# **The most important paragraphs**

**Many teachers pay the most attention to the opening and final paragraphs. Make these paragraphs as strong as possible.**

## **☐ Introduction**

- Your initial impression on the teacher is extremely important. Is your introduction ...**
- Interesting?**
- Clear?**
- Unique?**
- Grammatically correct?**

## **☐ Conclusion**

- Your final chance to impress your teacher, but do not introduce any new ideas. Does your conclusion ...**
- Sum up your thesis (main idea)?**
- Does it leave reader with a sense of finality?**

# Budget your time

## Sample schedule for a one-hour essay

- 1) Compose a thesis**      Use 10 minutes to plan what you are going to write
  - 2) Create an outline**
- 
- 3) Write the essay**      Allow 45 minutes for actual writing
- 
- 4) Revise, edit**      Plan 5 minutes for proofreading and editing

# Do . . .

- **Review graded writing assignments.** Note your instructor's comments (positive and negative) and try to apply them to your in-class essay.
  
- **Be simple, direct, and detailed.** Remember that a clear, concise, well-organized response is as necessary as a knowledge of the subject matter (craft your first paragraph carefully).
  
- If possible, **quote or paraphrase your instructor.**
  - As discussed in class . . .
  - As explained by Dr. Smith . . .

# Do not . . .

- **Use first-person references** (“I”) unless necessary (a narrative essay, for example)
- **Use second-person references** (“you”) unless necessary (a process essay, for example)
- **Use contractions, abbreviations, slang, or texting jargon**
- **Confuse words** (there/their, too/to, then/than)
- **Attempt humor**
- **Turn in your in-class essay before the deadline** (use any extra time to review and revise)