

Basic structure of an essay:

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Paragraph Level Work: "Points before Particulars"—please note—you must have points in order for this to work! 😊

- In order for this to really work, you need to actually know your points before you begin. Create main points (that are outlined in the "blue-print" thesis sentence) that will govern and guide each main paragraph.
 - "Blue-print" thesis sentence:

 - Example (using one of your possible essay prompts):

- When you start each paragraph, make the topic sentence a clear explanation of the particular main point you are about to explore in the paragraph, and make sure the topic sentence/main point relates back to your overall thesis sentence.

- It is crucial that your main point appear at the beginning of the paragraph—this allows the reader to actually use the particulars (support) you give them to think about your argument.

TOPIC SENTENCES

- The most common main problems with topic sentences:
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PARTICULARS TO SUPPORT SPECIFIC POINTS

- Particulars include: facts, quotes, research, illustrations, anecdotes, summaries, and plain logical thinking
- One of the many struggles that I see in my ENG 101 classes is the struggle to be specific, detailed, and successfully explain/develop a point. Remember, support is almost always needed when a point is made. If you make a claim—support it!
- Example:
 - Loung has to die to the childlike desires in her heart in order to survive the Khmer Rouge takeover in Cambodia.....
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Exercise: Here is a final paper written this semester for my ENG 101 class. This paper received a low A. In most ENG 101 classes, shorter response papers are written once a week. These response papers serve several functions: (1) they offer padding for final grades, as each one is worth around 20-25 points, (2) they build to the final essay, making the completion of the final essay much less time consuming and difficult, and (3) they give the students a chance to receive feedback on their work before the final, major grade is earned. From these response papers come the final papers, such as the one shown below.

Consider the paragraphs in the paper below in light of the things we have discussed on this worksheet. Do the paragraphs have topic sentences, do they relate back to the main thesis, does the paragraph content match the topic sentence, are particulars given to support the point(s)?

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Where My Shoes Fit

In many religions, it is important to take care of religious books and objects that hold spiritual value. For instance, holy books like the Bible and the Torah are not even supposed to touch the ground. I consider my sneakers to hold spiritual value, so, because they are holy to me, does this mean they are worthy of special treatment and care? If books are allowed to be given places of honor, where should my sneakers be 'allowed' to settle? In *The Circle and the Square*, Lame Deer explains that every single thing has spiritual value, even if it is an everyday object. However, Freud argues in *The Future of an Illusion* that the spirituality and religiousness of something comes from a person's own wishes, not from the object itself. Values differ for every facet of our lives as well. Something that holds great meaning to one person could be considered worthless to another. For instance, my sneakers hold great personal value to me, but not to everyone else. So, while my sneakers represent something precious and holy to me, Lame Deer's perceptions about spirituality in all living things ruins their uniqueness, and Freud would believe the sacredness of the sneakers is merely a manifestation of my own desires.

My sneakers are religious to me because they preserve the memory of a close friend. I bought the sneakers because they were a mandatory accessory for all varsity cheerleaders at my high school; but I value the sneakers for many other reasons. A month into his junior year of high school, a basketball player and close friend of mine named Anthony Brandariz was killed in

a car accident on his way to practice. Although Tony is not physically here anymore, the times we shared together have not been forgotten. One of the main reasons my shoes hold so much value to me is because they always remind me of Tony. Putting them on takes me back to when the other cheerleaders and I used to cheer for him at basketball games. Those games hold some of my most treasured high school memories and the shoes I wear now take me back to that time whenever I put them on. At face value, one would not be able to realize that kind of memory could come out of something as simple as a pair of tennis shoes. Just because something is ordinary does not necessarily mean it is not special to someone. However, it is understandable why someone might consider my shoes to be secular and unworthy of religious consideration; they are in fact just shoes. It is not the shoes themselves that make them valuable; it is what they represent that makes them important. They represent the hard work and dedication that went into one of my favorite high school past times. Just as religion takes dedication of faith, my sneakers represented the dedication I had for my team.

When a loved one passes away, it is never fair, and it is never easy to deal with; especially when a person has not been able to live a long and healthy life. A parent should never have to bury his or her child; it is one of the saddest things to ever endure. Any little thing that can help someone, who is grieving the loss of a loved one, ought to be considered sacred on a completely different level. A pain that unbearable can sometimes never leave you, but it is important for people who have lost someone to be able to move on. I believe that my shoes are a small way to help me remember Tony and to preserve his memory even though he has been gone for almost a year now. Although it is hard to think about him not being here anymore, it is much harder not to think of him at all. For the memory of Tony, I consider my shoes to have spiritual value.

This begs the question, on the scale of what holds spiritual value versus what does not, where would my shoes fit in? Is there even an accurate way to measure just how religious or non-religious something is? Could it be possible that each individual measures the worth of things differently? The answer is yes; there is no clear way to determine whether or not my shoes have spiritual value. The fact is that it is all up to the viewer. I believe that if something is religious it is of immense importance. A religious person, thing, or feeling evokes intense emotion; emotion about God, and emotion about love. The love I feel for my friends, like Tony, is reflected in my shoes, and that is what makes them spiritual. For me, my tennis shoes come attached with all the memories and anecdotes of my past; the things that remind me why they are special in the first place.

Without the knowledge of the past it would be almost impossible to find actual worth in them. In a way, I think it is very noble of someone like Lame Deer to appreciate the beauty of something as mundane as a person's old pair of shoes without actually having an attachment to them. However, how much could he really appreciate them? If they are just like any other object out there containing spirituality, then what would make them special? What would make them stand out from all the other pairs of shoes? Lame Deer believes that everything tells a story, and every symbol has meaning. Whether it be a "belt built by a young woman" (Lame Deer 109) or a pair of shoes; they both have value. However, I believe in order to fully comprehend why something like the shoes are important, one would have to be able to differentiate between them and all the others. With Lame Deer, every spiritual thing is too generalized; too impersonal. It would take a lot of time and understanding to comprehend why my shoes are so important, and Lame Deer claims "You have so little time for contemplation; it's always rush, rush, rush with you. It lessens a person's life, all that grind, that hurrying and scurrying about" (Lame Deer 128).

On the other hand, Freud considers this type of spirituality that I have for my shoes to be a figment of the imagination. He insinuates that what I consider holy about them is merely an illusion. Freud believes that, “according to one’s personal attitude one will classify this belief as an illusion or as analogous to a delusion” (Freud 53). So, according to Freud’s beliefs, because they would be considered an illusion, it would not make the worth of the shoes wrong; it would just be unrealistic to consider sneakers as spiritual beings. I cannot decide which is worse, believing in the holiness of my shoes without a clue as to what makes them special, or the general belief that the religiousness of all things comes from one’s own unfulfilled desires. Freud cannot be all wrong though; in a small way I can see why he considers the spirituality of the shoes to be made from my own wishes. I wish more than anything that Tony was still here, so by preserving his memory in something like my shoes, it is like he has never left me.

If I did not have faith and spiritual beliefs, then I might not be able to recognize that there is a place like Heaven out there. If there were no Heaven, there would be no place to say that Tony has gone. Which brings me to one of the fundamental reasons people have religion in their lives in the first place. In my mind, I need to know that people like Tony live on even after death. The security of knowing it is not the end is essential to many people’s well beings after they have suffered through the loss of a loved one. Freud’s ideas about unfulfilled desires causing the need to create things like religion, and places like heaven, start to make a little more sense when you think about it. Religion serves as a way for us to cope with our own mortality, and to seek redemption before we leave this world so that our souls can be ‘saved’. Religious ideas such as heaven serve many human needs: the need to understand our personal destinies, and the fear of death itself. The support of the group is essential when it comes to religion and its practices. It does not just have to be about religion, either. So many people came together when

Tony passed away. Even though I did not know all of his family or even all of his friends, we all were able to come together and support one another when he left. He brought many people together who would normally have never had a reason. Not to compare someone like Tony to God, but in a way the situations are the similar. There are many parallels between a group of people in a church, temple, or a synagogue coming together to think about God, with the way so many different people came together to think about and honor Tony.

It is increasingly more important to think about the things that one considers religious in everyday life. Things that are sacred are the ones that should make each day worth living. My sneakers might not necessarily be the reason I get up each morning, but the memory of Tony is something that definitely helps me get through each day. Just the reminder that he is watching over me is enough to want to make him proud. I would not want to waste my life when his was cut so short; it would not be fair to his memory to live that way. It goes for everyone who has gone through a big change in their lives. Things like a picture, a pair of shoes, or even a person that have value to you should not be ignored and forgotten. Religiousness should not just be reserved for special days of the year, either. It is something that should always be thought about because without the things you find important, what would you be? Without things that have value to you and standards and morals that you live by, how would you survive? Even if it is unreal to some people, spirituality is something that should be honored, not scrutinized and measured. It is impossible to say how important or unimportant my shoes are in general because they are not a general thing. They are my own special reminder of a friend I miss more than anything. It would be like trying to measure the love a mother has for one of her children over the other; it just cannot be done.

Ultimately, what religiousness is will vary for everyone. For some people it will mean being devoted completely to their religion. Others might see religiousness as things and rituals they do everyday to keep their life in order. Then there are some people like me who see it as a way to be closer to the ones they love and the ones they have lost. My sneakers represent a time for me that has both hurt me and taught me a lot. People will not be around forever, but it is possible to preserve their memory even after they are gone. For me, my shoes have helped me do that. Whether or not Freud and Lame Deer agree with my reasons for believing they are sacred, my shoes still have to fit in there somewhere. Perhaps there is a place between Freud's cynical yet level headed thinking, and Lame Deer's blind appreciation of the spirits in all of nature, where they could fit in. For now, the best place to fit my shoes seems to be between my head (the mind) and the ground (nature). Of course, that place is my feet, and that is exactly where they will stay.