

TO: Sample
FROM: Kevin Folliard
DATE: 10-5-2016
SUBJECT: #91602, Final Paper for ENGL 102



Congratulations on your progress in writing this assignment for ENGL 102. I see some nice improvements on your literary analysis from the previous draft that I looked at on this story. I think you have some good insights on the meaning and symbols at work in "To Build a Fire."

My name is **Kevin**, and we have worked together once before on your ENGL 102 literature paper. It's my pleasure to assist you further! **Hold CTRL and click on the video to the right** for an extended welcome message!



Before we begin, let's review a few important guidelines and resources:

- Students may submit one request for advice (either written feedback or live online advising) every 48 hours.
- You are welcome to come to the Effective Writing Center for help at any stage in the writing process, whether you are just getting started an assignment or want feedback on a rough draft.
- Resources to help you revise your writing assignment are hyperlinked within this letter and in the [More Resources](#) section at the end.
- Before reading this advice, please review the writing that you submitted. We've pasted your draft at the end of this advice letter.

At the EWC we are attentive readers who help you improve as a writer by explaining and modeling effective writing skills. For a more detailed discussion of our services, please [click this link and visit the Effective Writing Center web site](#).

Are You Interested in More Help?

Schedule a Live Advising Appointment!

- The Effective Writing Center also offers live, online advising via teleconference. You can submit an appointment request through the [MyUMUC portal](#).

Attend an Online Workshop!

- The EWC hosts monthly live workshops in Google Hangouts. Our [complete calendar is available here](#).

Join the Google+ Community!

- Join the UMUC Effective Writing Center [Google+ community](#). Here, all UMUC students and faculty members can find resources to help students improve their writing. Whether you are a student who needs your paper reviewed or a faculty member who would like us to provide a guest lecture on writing for your class, the EWC is here to help. [Click here to join!](#)

Advice Overview

We will discuss the following strategies that can help you to strengthen your paper:

- I will offer some more tips on your developing **thesis statement**.
- I will review advice **on body paragraphs and conclusions**.
- I will review proper **MLA citations and formatting**.
- I will also review additional tips and provide new examples on **proofreading for grammar, mechanics, and punctuation**.

Throughout my advice, you will notice that I copy/paste **text from your paper highlighted in yellow**, and may then show **corrections or suggested alterations in green**.

Although we will cover revisions and rules, **your professor's instructions always take precedence over any advice you receive from the EWC**. If you have any questions, refer to your assignment guidelines first and don't hesitate to ask your professor to clarify any unanswered questions.

Assignment Management

Here at the EWC it always helps us if you can be as detailed and specific about your assignment requirements as possible. Unless you provide us with your instructor's expectations regarding length, content, and research we can't cater our advice specifically to those requirements.

In the future when you upload your paper, try to remember to be more detailed and specific with the requirements. Copy and paste you instructor's exact words if possible. That helps us help you better! 😊

Fortunately, since I looked at a previous version of this paper, I have a sense of your goals, and can still provide some good insights about strengthening your literary analysis. Let's take a brief moment to review my main tips from the last time we worked together:

- Think about the more complex or interesting themes or ideas of the story and start to develop a more precise topic and thesis to explore and support throughout your paper. There are a lot of themes you could explore with this story, so choose one that interests you. 😊
- Review tips on thesis statements, introductions, and organization.
- Clarify the citation style for the paper for when you write the full draft: APA or MLA?
- Proofread carefully for grammar and mechanics once you have a more finalized draft of your paper. 😊

In this current paper, I see . . .

- Clearer and more interesting literary themes.
- A stronger introduction that introduces the work and builds to key ideas.

I think as you revise, you will still be able to:

- ✓ **Continue to refine your thesis and topic sentences** to best bring out your literary analysis.
- ✓ **Adhere to MLA citations and formatting** standards. Right now, you use endnotes, rather than proper MLA citations. I will review MLA in full below.
- ✓ **Continue to proofread carefully** for typos, grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure. Reading aloud will help you catch many of these errors.

Thesis & Organization

Goals:

- Articulate your thesis, argument, main idea, and/or purpose clearly.
- Organize your document or presentation in a manner that promotes understanding.

Again, I think your introduction has really improved a lot! I get a good sense of the work that you are analyzing, and you move purposefully from an overview of that short story, toward more interesting literary ideas within the story.

Let's review a few pointers on thesis statements, and then take a look at how your thesis has evolved since the previous draft I reviewed. 😊

THESIS:

A **thesis statement** is a one sentence declaration that shows us what your paper is about, and more importantly what it seeks to prove. Another, even simpler way to think about it is this:

Your **thesis** = the **topic** of your paper + **your position** on it!

Check out [this video](#) (hold control and click the link) on forming a thesis statement. Sometimes creating a thesis can sound intimidating, but at the end of the day all you are doing is expressing your position on the topic of your paper in a clear concise manner.

When writing persuasive papers, the more argumentative your thesis is, the better it is. The more declarative or matter of fact it is, the weaker it is. For example:

Smoking is an unhealthy and addictive habit.

This is a **weak thesis** because it is generally accepted that smoking is both unhealthy and addictive. It's not making a very strong argument because it is so easy to prove.

The tobacco industry will collapse because future generations will be more informed about the dangers of addiction.

This is a **strong thesis** because it is making a very specific claim, and the writer has his work cut out for him to find details that support his belief that the tobacco industry will not be supported by future generations.

The best thesis statements do the following:

- **Make a strong argument.**
- **Bring unity to your paper.**
- **Make your reader curious as to how your ideas will be proven later in your paper.**

A thesis is almost always one sentence long and almost always found at the very end of your first introductory paragraph. At the end of your intro, you state:

In "To Build a Fire," Jack London shows how venturing into the Yukon Territory unprepared and alone can cause the traveler quite the struggle to survive, especially if they have never experienced such harsh conditions

Again, I think this is a good start. You're underscoring this idea of survival which is linked to the "Man vs. Nature" conflict of this story.

Make sure that you have a period at the end of your sentence.

In addition, I wonder if you can make this claim come alive even more by bringing out some of the more interesting elements of this story's survival-based conflict. **In the body of the essay you mention the idea of "stubbornness" several times**, and it seems like there's an interesting relationship between being stubborn and survival.

On the one hand, stubbornness keeps you going, right? But on the other hand, sometimes it can get you killed.

Maybe that's a theme that you can make come alive more in your paper? Perhaps you can alter that sentence, revise it, or even just add another sentence that engages more deeply with a theme or idea that's going to be very important throughout your paper.

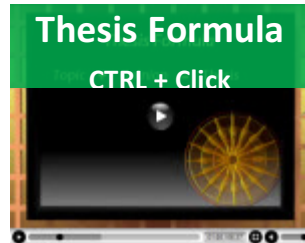
Example:

In "To Build a Fire," Jack London shows how venturing into the Yukon Territory unprepared and alone can cause the traveler quite the struggle to survive, especially if he has never experienced such harsh conditions. London's story grapples with the elements of preparedness and stubbornness, exploring the vital

role of preparation in a survival situation, but also showing the complex impact of a man's stubborn will to survive vs. his stubborn insistence to venture into danger in the first place.

Again, this is just an example, but notice how that second sample sentence goes a little deeper into that theme and the meaning of that theme in this story. Those are the best kinds of thesis statements to develop for a literature paper, because they go beyond the obvious elements of the plot and characters that exist on the surface of the story, and tell us a little more about the *meaning* of that story.

Also, be sure to check out the following videos (hold **CTRL** and **click** on the thumbnails to play in a new browser window!)



Development & Research

Goals:

- Develop coherent paragraphs, points, and/or sections so that each is internally unified and functions as a part of your entire document or presentation.
- Tailor your communications to the audience.
- Provide sufficient support for your ideas
- Integrate material from research (if required) smoothly into your own content.

You have some good analysis throughout the body of your paper of symbols and ideas that grapple with those ideas of survival and stubbornness. My main tip is to look for more places to emphasize those deeper themes, just like in your thesis.

I really like the analysis you provide of the fire as a symbol for the main character's will to survive. I also like your analysis of the dog. Maybe you can tie those ideas together more with those recurring ideas of preparedness and stubbornness that surface throughout the essay?

Is the dog "better prepared" than the man? Is the dog less stubborn than the man? Those might be interesting questions to answer or explore. Again, the best literary analysis has that unifying thesis that helps bring the various other elements of your analysis together, so look for opportunities to link your analysis of different plot points to a central theme or idea. 😊

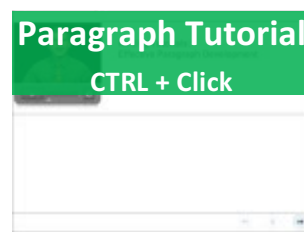
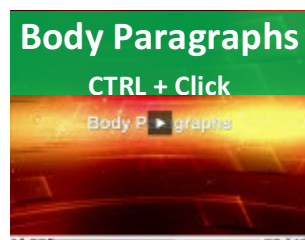
Body Paragraphs:

Body Paragraphs are most effective when they have all of the following:

- **A transition**
- **A topic sentence that relates to your thesis**
- **Relevant supporting details**
- **A strong concluding thought that relates to your thesis**

Sometimes it helps to think of each body paragraph as its own miniature essay that supports the larger one.

See the [EWCs advice on Paragraph Structure](#). Also, be sure to check out the following videos (hold **CTRL and click** on the thumbnails to play in a new browser window!)



Conclusion:

In a conclusion paragraph you'll want to:

- **Restate your thesis.**
- **Summarize your ideas.**

- **Show us why your ideas matter.**

You may want to use a transition to start such as “To Conclude,” or “In Summary” then restate your thesis statement in a way that tells us something new. You’ll want to review what you’ve told us, but also provide some insight.

The conclusion can be very satisfying to write because, even more so than the introduction, that’s where you as a writer are most free to speculate on your topic and offer your own opinion, ideas, or intellectual observations.

Find something that you think is interesting about the information you’ve presented and show us how it is relevant. Leave the reader with some really interesting possibilities to digest so they’ll be thinking about your paper later that night.

I’ve included a link to the [EWCs advice on writing conclusions](#) below which may give you some more ideas. Also, be sure to check out the following videos (hold **CTRL** and **click** on the thumbnails to play in a new browser window!)



Formatting & Citations

Goals:

- Format paper according to the rules of required style.
- Cite sources according to the rules of your required style.

Again, your paper does not currently follow MLA formatting guidelines. You need proper MLA in-text citations. Below, I have included a thorough overview of MLA.

MLA

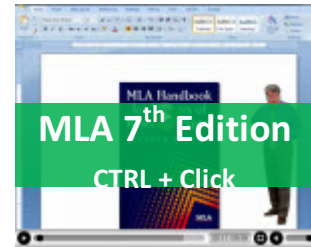
English and literature papers often use MLA style, but this style will be found in a variety of other classes and situations as well. 😊

An MLA paper needs in-text citations and a properly formatted Works Cited page (the references page's name in MLA).

In-Text Citations

The in-text citation is at the end of a sentence with the author's name and the page number inside the parentheses.

In-text citations should be used when you are quoting or paraphrasing a source.



Model:

(Author's Last Name #)

However, if the author's name appears in the sentence, only the page number has to appear in the parentheses at the end.

Example:

(Doe 170)

However, if the author's name appears in the sentence, only the page number has to appear in the parentheses at the end.

Example:

Jane Doe argues that it is impossible to truly know oneself (170).

An example from your paper:

The traveler had never experienced the harsh conditions of the winter, however, the dog knew of the treacherous it could become,"The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment"ⁱ.

In the above passage, we have a few grammatical concerns as well as an improper citation:

- Do not use a comma to do the job of a period or semi-colon.

- Do not use an adjective/descriptive word without using it to describe a noun: “treacherous” what? Or you could rework the sentence to untangle the mixed construction.
- Use proper spacing and face the quotation marks correctly when leading into a quote.
- MLA does not use footnote or endnote citation. Use in-text citations according to the model above.

Should be:

The traveler had never experienced the harsh conditions of the winter; however, the dog knew how treacherous the weather could become. “The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment” (London #).

The Works Cited List

The below is an explanation of how an article should be cited on the works cited page.

Please note that according to the new MLA guidelines the **medium of publication** must be noted for every source (ie, Print, Web, Radio, Television, CD, Audiocassette, Film, Videocassette, DVD, Performance, Lecture, and PDF file).

Model:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” *Title of Book or Journal that Article Appears In.* City: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of publication.

Example:

Doe, Jane. “Amnesia.” *Identity Politics.* Chicago: Harper, 2009. Print.

If you need more examples or assistance as you do MLA Style, please use the following resources:

[EWC's Video on MLA Style](#)

<http://polaris.umuc.edu/ewc/web/mla7.html>

MLA Formatting and Style Guide

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>

MLA In Text-Citations: Author-Page Style

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/03/>

Documenting Sources in MLA Style: 2009 Update

http://image.mail.bfwpub.com/lib/feed1c737d6c03/m/1/Hacker_MLA2009Update.pdf

Grammar & Mechanics

Goals:

- Use sentence structure appropriate for your task, message, and audience.
- Follow conventions of Standard Written English.

Always proofread carefully. Sometimes it helps to read your paper out loud to yourself or switch papers with a friend to try and catch as many mistakes as possible. I cannot proofread your whole paper for you, but here are a few pointers to help get you started on revision...

Avoid First and Second Person:

The first person point of view is told from the personal perspective of the author using "I" and "me" . . .

I feel that smoking is a cancer on society, and it has affected me in a variety of ways as a survivor of lung cancer.

Second person is talking directly to the reader in a conversational manner using "you" or "your" . . .

You will be surprised to learn how many people in your world are affected by lung cancer!

In many different kinds of writing the first and second persons are acceptable points of view to take; especially creative writing, personal essays, and short responses.

However in a formal academic paper using these points of view takes away from your credibility and authority as an expert on your topic. Avoiding the first person and presenting information as convincing facts is part of being more persuasive. For example...

1. I feel that smoking should not be allowed in restaurants because I know that second hand smoke causes health problems.
2. The smoking ban in restaurants is justified because it discourages an unhealthy and addictive habit and protects non-smoking patrons from the dangers of second-hand smoke.

Notice how, in reading these two examples, the second one comes across as more official, authoritative, and academic. The reason is that in reading the first sentence the writing style comes across as one insignificant person's feelings about a particular topic. The second sentence reads as cold hard convincing fact (even though it's still expressing an opinion.) When writing a formal paper you want your readers to take the information you're presenting very seriously. Avoiding the first person prevents your reader from thinking of you as a student, an individual who is expressing his or her opinion; and it causes them to treat your academic writing for what it is: an authoritative presentation of convincing academic information.

An example from your paper:

Our fire and or passion and drive when things get tough or we seem beaten seem to go out on us. Alone and afraid without an understanding of what you are getting yourself into can be deadly.

Should be:

When people find themselves in hopeless situations, their fire, passion, and drive seems to go out. Being alone and afraid without understanding the odds of survival can be deadly.

That's just one example, but read both passages aloud and hear the difference it can make for your analysis to stay in that third person, analytical tone. Third person writing gives your literary analysis more confidence and authority.

4 Sentence Types

There are four major types of sentence to be familiar with. Understanding each type helps you to know how to punctuate and construct your ideas.

A **simple sentence** is one independent clause: **a subject and a verb.**

Jerry works at the electronics store. **(Jerry-works)**

A **complex sentence** is one independent clause and one dependent clause: **a subject and two verbs** perhaps.

The second verb does *not* require a comma if it is connected back to that original subject.

Jerry works at the electronics store and loves it. **(Jerry-works and loves)**

A **compound sentence** is two independent clauses: **two sets of subject and verb.**

Compound sentences require punctuation to set those two independent clauses apart. Either use a comma + conjunction OR a semi-colon.

Jerry works at the electronics store, and the customers love him. **(Jerry-works, and customers-love)**

A **compound-complex sentence** is two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. You will have **two subjects, and three or more verbs** between the two.

Jerry works at the electronics store and manages the inventory, and he loves it. **(Jerry-works and manages, and he-loves)**

What you want to remember is that independent clauses need proper punctuation, and you never have more than two independent clauses in one sentence.

If you have three or more complete sets of subject and verb then you need to split into separate sentences to avoid a run-on sentence.

An example from your paper:

However, the man struggles instinctively to stay alive and attempts to use the dog for warmth, but the animal is smart and outwits his possible deadly plan of making the body of his dog his warmer.

Right now, I get the sense that there's good info here, but you are packing too much information into just one sentence, and I am left uncertain of what you mean. Break up those ideas and clarify what is happening here. Potential example:

However, the man struggles instinctively to stay alive and attempts to use the dog for warmth. The animal, on the other hand, is too smart. The dog outwits his the man's deadly plan to use his companion's body for warmth, and escapes.

Summary

Good luck! As you continue your work on this project, be sure to:

1. Strengthen your opening/thesis to be clearer and more focused on your own goals.
2. Throughout your paper keep the central focus on you. Keep this essay personal. Try not to redirect the focus out at the reader in your conclusion.
3. Proofread carefully for grammar, mechanics, and punctuation.

Writing Advisor:

Kevin Folliard

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More Resources

SPECIAL INVITATION:

If you want more excellent tips on proofreading and revision, [check out this EWC Google Hangouts presentation](#):

"10 Proofreading Tricks They Don't Teach in School!"

<https://plus.google.com/events/ce08lmhodeifk1ea1ien2aif82o>

This brief lecture covers pointers on:

- Developing good proofreading habits
- Getting the most out of the tools and resources at your disposal
- Making revision a smooth, painless operation
- And *more!*

Also, here is a great breakdown of the [most common uses for commas in a sentence](#):

[Commas: Three Sentence Uses](#)

http://polaris.umuc.edu/ewc/web/commas_sent.html

Copy of Your Draft

To Build A fire

People have written tales and short stories on the meaning of life throughout history. Jack London's famous story "To Build a Fire," brings to light the dangers of venturing into the unknown and the wild in the dead of winter, especially alone. In his story, a man is traveling in the Yukon for the first time is bound for an old claim off of a fork in the Henderson Creek to meet the boys crossing the divide of the Indian Country. Alongside him, he brings his dog and some hot biscuits to make the travel into the cold and empty winter air. Throughout the story, the reader experiences a sense of possibly losing his life. In "To Build a Fire," Jack London shows how venturing into the Yukon Territory unprepared and alone can cause the traveler quite the struggle to survive, especially if they have never experienced such harsh conditions

During the earlier years of logging, mining, and traveling on foot, a man and his set out on a journey across the land to get a head start on the springtime logging ahead of them. The traveler had never experienced the harsh conditions of the winter, however, the dog knew of the treacherous it could become,"The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's

judgmentⁱⁱⁱ. The man's perseverance and optimism keeps him pushing to meet the goal of meeting the boys in a camp that he can reach before the sun goes down and it is too cold and

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bitter to travel. The issue doesn't just lie in how unprepared you are, it's the lack of knowledge and stubbornness from not wanting to back down or admit you may have gotten into deep in which may create an issue.

Throughout the journey as the man gets further into his travels his companion becomes concerned with the conditions of the terrain, environment, and the traveler. The dog itself is going to follow the man wherever he may go and in any conditions because it is his owner and master. Also, the man provides him with food and with the warmth of fire. The traveler's companion has been in this environment a long time and has an understanding of the situation which is why it leads most the journey through the wilderness. The dog helps the man throughout the journey being used to check out areas if they are safe to walk on or not. In this area the dog is very helpful to the man. One thing that separates the two is the fact that the dog is equipped for the mission and understands the environment whereas the man is not and has no clue. However, during this particular journey the traveler is losing his battle against the cold and against time. While lighting a fire can temporarily unthaw food and your body, it doesn't last forever and you must push to continue to move forward. The traveler in this short story is extremely stubborn and does not stop even when his hands are numb and he cannot feel his body. As the cold sets in, being able to build a fire is now a daunting task and when one is made, it was made out of laziness and it ends up being snubbed out.

Over and over again the traveler continues to fail at building this fire to keep him and his companion alive in the wilderness. The fire may however be symbolic of the traveler's perseverance and his hope and passion to excel and make this journey. As he sees it becoming

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more impossible, his hopes, passion, derive to stay alive, and fire seems to all burn out. Once the stubbornness has gone and the realization sinks in that he has been defeated he understands that he has truly been beaten and that he may have not been prepared at all for the feat in which he came upon. However, the man struggles instinctively to stay alive and attempts to use the dog for warmth, but the animal is smart and out wits his possible deadly plan of making the body of his dog his warmer. The traveler struggles to stay alive and continues to try to beat this endeavor he brought himself upon. He has truly been defeated. The dog on the other hand realizes upon the man's death that it needs a fire and food provider and continues to the camp in search of just that, "Then it turned and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food-providers and fire-providers"ⁱⁱⁱ.

In Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire," we see how the passion and drive to push forward on an unsuspecting journey can become more than we bargained for. Our fire and or passion and drive when things get tough or we seem beaten seem to go out on us. Alone and afraid without an understanding of what you are getting yourself into can be deadly. Stubbornness and failure to understand what he was getting himself into ultimately led to his death. His companion had an understanding of the environment and upon losing the provider of food, shelter, and warmth, continued forward in search thereof.

Bibliography:

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- ⁱ London, Jack. *To Build A Fire*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. *American Literature*. Web. <<https://americanliterature.com/author/jack-london/short-story/to-build-a-fire>>.
- ⁱⁱ London, Jack. *To Build A Fire*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. *American Literature*. Web. <<https://americanliterature.com/author/jack-london/short-story/to-build-a-fire>>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ London, Jack. *To Build A Fire*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. *American Literature*. Web. <<https://americanliterature.com/author/jack-london/short-story/to-build-a-fire>>.