

## Introduction

- **Start with a summary of the story which includes the author's name, the title of the story, the main character's name, the setting, the conflict, and any other background information necessary to understand the essay.**
- **Finish with a thesis statement that states the main idea of your essay in a single sentence.**

## Body Paragraphs

- **One to four paragraphs depending on the length of the story.**
- **Describe what the main character is like at the beginning of the story.**
- **Each paragraph focuses on an event that teaches the character something or causes him/her to change in some way.**
- **Describe what the character is like at the end of the story. How has he/she changed?**
- **Start each body paragraph with a topic sentence.**
- **Provide specific evidence from the text to support your thesis statement.**
- **Use transitional words and phrases to connect ideas.**

## Concluding Paragraph

- **Restate the thesis. Summarize how the main character changed over the course of the story.**
- **Summarize what the main character has learned from the key events. (Theme)**

## Adam's Recovery

The main character in Chaim Potok's short story "Zebra" is a young boy named Adam Zebrin. One day at school Adam sees a movie about zebras running in Africa. When he gets home, he runs around the neighborhood, trying to be as graceful as a zebra. Sometimes Adam runs so fast that he feels like he is flying. Racing along one day, he closes his eyes and seems to take off—right into the side of a car, injuring his legs and his left hand. As he struggles with his injuries, Adam feels like an outsider, but soon he learns that art can help heal his body and his mind, and he begins to gain self-confidence.

As Adam starts recovering from the accident, he begins to feel like an outcast. In a short time his legs recover, although he can't run anymore. However, his left hand doesn't heal as quickly, and it stays painful and stiff long after the accident. The useless hand makes him feel like he doesn't belong. Soon he becomes a loner, standing off on the side while everyone else plays. Finally, this inner conflict makes his only friend, Andrea, call him a "gloomy life-form."

One day during the next spring, Adam's life begins to change. He stands by himself near the playground when he notices a one-armed man coming toward him. The man pauses at a trash can, plucks something out, and places it in a plastic bag. When he gets to Adam, the man asks him for directions to the school office, and Adam tells him how to get there. It turns out that the one-armed man is John Wilson, a Vietnam veteran who plans to teach a summer art class. Adam and Andrea sign up for the class.

The art class teaches Adam about drawing and about life. John Wilson understands the problems Adam is experiencing. One day, John draws a picture of Adam and a zebra. The zebra seems to be moving mysteriously off the edge of the paper. Then John teaches Adam to draw, telling him not to look directly at the thing he is drawing. John instructs him to look at the space around the object. Adam takes the advice and discovers that he is as good at drawing as he once was at running. His left hand still hasn't healed, though.

At the end of the summer, Adam suddenly shifts his focus from drawing to building. He builds a sculpture of a helicopter from some of the junk, mostly wire and paper that John has collected from trash cans. As Adam builds the sculpture, he begins to use his left hand without thinking about it. Soon Adam's left hand recovers, and so does Adam. The conflict he has been having with himself slowly comes to an end.

After his accident, Adam felt dejected and sorry for himself. John teaches Adam to pay attention to the space around the object. In the same way, art trains Adam to think about what is around him rather than thinking only about himself. Art gives Adam a new focus. Like many people, Adam has been trapped inside himself, but art helps him escape. Adam's days as a loner are over. In the end, Andrea playfully tells him, "You are becoming a pleasant life-form."

## Steps to Writing a Response to Literature Essay

<p><b>1. Read and understand the prompt or writing directions.</b> What are you being asked to write about?</p>
<p>Example: Writing the Response to Literature</p> <p>Write an essay in which you present your understanding of the characters and the overall meaning of the story. Support your ideas with examples and/or evidence from the text.</p> <p>Your writing will be evaluated on how well you write an essay that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• shows your understanding of the author's message and your insight into the characters and ideas presented in the story</li><li>• is organized around several clear ideas and/or images from the story</li><li>• justifies your interpretation by giving examples and citing evidence from the text.</li></ul>
<p><b>2. Read, think about, and understand the text.</b> Identify the main character, major events, and theme or themes in the story.</p>
<p><b>3. Prewrite for ideas.</b> Make three charts.</p> <p>#1 – Character trait at the <i>beginning</i> of the story and evidence to support it.</p> <p>#2 – Events occurring <i>during</i> the story that cause the character to learn something and change.</p> <p>#3 – Character trait at the <i>end</i> of the story and evidence to support it.</p>
<p><b>4. Write a thesis statement.</b> In a single sentence, state the main idea of your essay. The thesis statement should mention the character traits you're going to discuss and how they relate to the theme of the story (what the character learned.)</p>
<p><b>5. Organize and outline ideas.</b> Refer to your prewriting charts. Select the most effective details to present in each of the body paragraphs. Put them in chronological order before writing.</p> <p>Topic Sentence: Evidence: #1: #2: #3:</p>
<p><b>6. Write your essay.</b> Write a separate paragraph for each major idea. Make sure each paragraph starts with a topic sentence. Add specific details from the text to support the topic sentence. Refer to your outlines. Be sure to organize your ideas chronologically. Connect your ideas with transitions.</p> <p>Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provides background information about your story: author's name, title of the story, name of the main character, the story's setting, and the conflict the main character faces</li><li>• states the thesis</li></ul> <p>Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• one to four paragraphs</li><li>• shows the key events in the development of the story's theme</li></ul> <p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• restates the character traits discussed in the essay</li><li>• explains and summarizes the theme (what the main character has learned / what the author is trying to tell us)</li></ul>
<p><b>7. Revise.</b> Have you indented all paragraphs? Does all your evidence relate to you thesis? Is your evidence accurate? Is there sentence variety? Have you avoided writing short, choppy sentences? Are there transitional words and phrases to connect ideas?</p>
<p><b>8. Proofread and edit.</b> Check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Is the essay's verb tense consistent? Are all names spelled correctly and capitalized?</p>
<p><b>9. Write your final draft.</b> Use blue or black ink. Skip lines. Write on one side of the paper only. Include a title on the top line.</p>
<p><b>10. Read your essay one last time before you turn it in.</b> Look for careless spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors, especially omitted words or letters. Cross out errors neatly with a single line and write the correction above.</p>

