

Time breakdown

1–2 min	Read and deconstruct the prompt
3–4 min	Read and annotate the passage; highlight 3–5 strong pieces of evidence
1 min	Draft your thesis
33–35 min	Write your essay; proofread as you go

Before you write

- ✓ Paraphrase the prompt into your own words
- ✓ Decide exactly what the prompt is asking (tone, character, relationship, theme, setting, etc.)
- ✓ Choose evidence you can actually explain

Strong thesis

- ✓ Answer the prompt directly
- ✓ Make an arguable claim (not a summary!)
- ✓ Keep it clear and defensible
- ✓ Putting it in the introduction usually works best

Choosing evidence

- ✓ Highlight only 3–5 pieces of evidence
- ✓ Pick evidence that:
 - Directly answers the prompt
 - Shows development or contrast
 - Has emotional or thematic significance
 - You can confidently analyze

Analysis > summary

- ✓ Don't tell the grader what happened. Explain:
 - What is the author doing?
 - So what?
 - How does it support your thesis?
 - Why did they do it?
 - How does it affect the reader?
- ✓ **Analysis formula:**
Context → Quote → Function → So what? → Reader effect → Thesis connection
- ✓ **Literary devices:**
Don't just identify devices. Always explain how they contribute to meaning.

Quick reminders

- ✓ Break your essay into paragraphs
- ✓ Use transitions
- ✓ Vary sentence structure
- ✓ Use precise vocabulary
- ✓ Address the work as a whole
- ✓ Go deeper instead of adding more quotes
- ✓ Explain every piece of evidence

Scoring priorities

- ✓ 1. Clear, defensible thesis
- ✓ 2. Specific evidence
- ✓ 3. Strong analysis (this earns the most points)
- ✓ 4. Stay focused on the prompt
- ✓ 5. Depth over complexity

If you get stuck

- ✓ Ask:
 - What changed?
 - Why this word?
 - How should the reader feel?
 - Why does it matter?
 - What contrasts?
 - Why this image?
 - What does this reveal?

Transition words

Addition	Also, Additionally, Furthermore, Moreover, Besides, Indeed, In addition
Contrast	However, Nevertheless, Nonetheless, Conversely, Instead, Rather, Otherwise, Still
Sequence	Next, Then, Meanwhile, Subsequently, Thereafter, Finally
Conclusion	Therefore, Thus, Hence, To conclude, In conclusion
Result	Consequently, Accordingly, As a result, For this reason, As such
Comparison	Similarly, Likewise, Comparably, Correspondingly, Analogously
Examples	For example, For instance, Specifically, Namely, In particular, To illustrate
Summary	Overall, In summary, In short, In brief, In sum, Altogether, On the whole