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6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall:

- Learn what an essay is and what function this piece of literature serves.
- Enhance essay-writing skills by discovering the nuances of an effective essay.

On completing the unit, you should be able to:

- Develop the basic ideas required to build an effective essay.
- Write a well-structured essay in English language.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most desired 21st century skill is critical thinking. When you are given an open field to play, you can test your strength. Similarly, when you are asked to write an essay on a topic that might have multiple opinions, you get a chance to express your unique idea.

An essay is a short piece of writing on a particular subject. It presents and supports a thesis or proposition. The word 'essay' derives from the Latin word 'exagium'. Exagium means the presentation of a case.

The essay writing tasks involve the validation of a particular point of view, analysis, interpretation, or set of facts or procedures.

Essay writing is useful in giving the students an opportunity to interpret and analyze an idea and then present it with a new opinion. A good essay requires effective command of the language that you are writing in and also good vocabulary. Regular essay writing practice can help you develop your logical abilities and create smooth flow of idea in your written communication.

Writing essays enables you to develop the skills such as –

- reading and note-making
- critical thinking and analysis
- organizing ideas
- arguing a case, and
- communicating effectively with a reader.

You can transform the information into knowledge with effective essay writing.

In the following section, we will explore the types of essays and go through the process of writing a good essay.

6.2 TYPES OF ESSAYS

The essays mainly fall under the following categories:

- **Argumentative essay**
An argumentative essay attempts to compel the readers to see the world from the author's viewpoint. It is a challenging task to change the mindsets of the people with the help of words and makes this form one of the most challenging forms of writing. When you are writing an argumentative essay, you need to use firm language combined with facts and accurate illustrations.
- **Descriptive essay**
As the name suggests, descriptive essays are meant to describe the details of given subject. These types of essays can be written about any object or its features. Here the author tries to describe how a particular thing looks and works.
- **Analytical and critical essay**
The analysis is an integral part of any essay that you write. However, when it comes to this particular category of analysis and criticism, you try to focus on strengths and weaknesses of the theme or an object that you have identified. It aims to describe the characteristics of the chosen subject and make the reader aware of it. Here you find strong comparison and contrast
- **Exploratory essay**
This form of essays requires you to research first and then prepare your draft. It should reflect the knowledge you have acquired from different sources. So, along with the information, you also need to weave the knowledge you have. Writing such kind of an essay gives you an

opportunity to explore new areas and express acquired knowledge. Of course, along with that knowledge and information, what matters the most is your opinion. So, do not forget to share it.

- **Cause and effect essay**

‘Air pollution and human health’ for example, is a topic that refers to the cause and effect essay. In this type of essay, you need to explain why the event or the situation occurs (causes) and the results of its happening (effects). This form of essay writing requires the writer to perform a critical analysis of the situation and express the ideas. These types of essays are divided into three parts: introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.

- **Expository essay**

In this form of essay writing, the writer has to research and investigate an idea, gather supporting evidence and present a point of view or argument on the topic. To present the ideas in the expository essay, the writer can choose methods such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, or examples. A research paper is an example of expository essay.

- **Persuasive essay**

The word ‘persuasive’ means what is designed to convince. Persuasive essays are written with the objective of convincing the readers. Here the author tries to convince the readers of the essay about a particular idea or focus. A persuasive essay can be based on anything about which the author has a clear and firm opinion. In this type of essay, you should be able to make a clear argument about what you believe.

6.3 QUALITIES OF A GOOD ESSAY

An essay needs to be built with logic. It should reflect the objective behind its creation in such a language that the reader gets the idea quickly.

Here are some of the qualities that make an essay, a good essay.

- An essay should have a structure. The writing should be woven around the central idea of the work.
- It should have a clear introduction and conclusion.
- It should answer the questions you address in the writing. An ideal essay has a point, offers evidence to prove the point, and an example to make the work authentic.
- It should present an in-depth analysis of the topic you are trying to address through the essay. The analysis too should be supported by the evidence. You should try to combine the facts and opinions to make your arguments and statements clear and stronger.
- The language of the essay should be lucid. You can also use the alliteration techniques as you advance in your essay-writing journey. The

words that you choose should make people curious and compel them to read what you have written.

- As it comes to language, you should be careful with the grammar, and punctuation. Most essays are normally written in *third person*. So remember it. Also stick to one tense. Make sure you do not mix up multiple tenses. For example, you can use present tense for a topic such as ‘A day in a life’ and you can use past tense for stories or retelling things.
- Make sure that your essay is interesting enough for the readers to read through.

6.4 ESSAY WRITING PROCESS

Since we know now what makes a good essay and the key qualities of an essay, we will dive into the process of writing an essay. Go through the steps and craft your own essay.

6.4.1 Decide the topic

First thing first! The soul of your essay lies in the topic or the issue that you are addressing. The first and most important step in initiating an essay writing task is deciding the topic. Make sure that your topic is something you are interested in and what you write is capable of capturing the interest of the others. To choose the right topic for your essay, you need to list down a few possible areas of your interest and then find out the topic on which you have sufficient information as well something that you are interested deeply.

An ideal essay does not try to cover everything about the topic but it tries to share a specific piece of information that the readers would find useful. Your essay should focus on particular aspects of the topic you are addressing. This focus statement should be reflected in the title that you choose for your essay.

For example, you have decided to write an essay on *Virtual Reality (VR)*. Now VR is a huge area and you cannot touch upon every aspect of it in a single piece of writing. So what you need to do is to choose a specific characteristic or part of the VR that you are most interested in and you have sufficient information about.

6.4.2 Prepare an outline

To write an essay swiftly, you need an outline to help you plan it and produce it. A good outline helps you stay focused on the topic you have chosen and an outline lets you stay on track. To prepare the essay outline, and think about the issues or points that you want cover in your writing. List them on a piece of paper and try to put them in a logical order. This order becomes your outline.

For example, if you are writing an essay on *Virtual Reality (VR)*, what are the components that you are going to put in the outline? Well, it depends on the topic you have chosen under the broad theme of VR. Assume that you are writing an essay for a layman to help him understand what VR is. In this case

you are going to talk about ‘what is VR?’, ‘when was it invented?’, ‘who invented it?’, ‘what exactly it is?’, ‘how is it helpful to humans?’, and ‘what are its basic applications?’.

It is not necessary that you are going to write your outline in the same manner as it is mentioned in the example here. Remember, an essay has to reflect your uniqueness through the creativity that you put at work while planning and writing it. You would be able to find thousands of essays on VR but what you write has to be unique and it has to have something that adds value to it for people who read it.

6.4.3 Write your key statement

When we write a paragraph, we have a central sentence, which is called topic sentence. Similarly when you are writing an essay, it has to stand on a key statement. This has to be a solid statement, which can be referred to throughout the essay.

To form a strong key statement, you need to firstly complete the steps that we have gone through so far. Once you are done with that, you can try to find out a sentence or two that are strong enough to convey your message strongly to the readers. This statement should be crystal clear, and free from any ambiguity.

For example, the following sentences on VR are strong enough to reflect the central idea.

Virtual reality is an artificial environment generated with the help of computer. It allows the users to experience the things, which are not real.

Similar to this one, you can try to build up a sentence that presents your idea to the readers. While writing a key statement, you should be double-checking the facts and information that you are putting forward so that you can effectively convey the intended message to the readers.

6.4.4 Write the body (main points, subpoints and elaboration)

Once you are done with the above three stages, carry on. With the help of the rough ideas that you have gathered, build up your content. Try to break your content into pieces with the subpoints and make it comprehensive by elaborating each and every idea that you are trying to convey through your essay.

Keep the main body of the essay error free and make sure that each and every word that you write – makes sense.

Be attentive and try carefully to cover the minutest detail that will make your essay an authentic piece of literature while drafting the main body. Keep a list of keywords handy to state the facts and figures in your essay. Make sure that you are putting your critical thinking ability to work so that your essay presents a well-thought idea to the readers.

Do not exaggerate the information while elaborating the details. Try to keep it precise and at the same time make sure that you are not letting any useful detail uncovered. When dealing with the main and sub points, try to use the formatting style that helps the readers to distinguish them. It will allow them to go through the essay quickly and understand it well.

6.4.5 Write the introduction

This one of the most important ones in the process of essay writing. As it gives the base to your essay and allows you to elaborate your idea and information well. You need to fill in every piece of content that will make sense in that phase.

Once you are done with the main body of the essay, it is the time to give a strong beginning to the essay in the form of an introduction. An effective introduction should offer a cursory view of the whole essay. Though it seems a short piece of content that informs the readers about your essay, creating an apt introduction is a challenging task.

The introduction should let the readers know what they are going to discover in the essay using simple terminology. Also it should state the reason why you chose to write this particular essay. Knowing the reason behind the creation of the essay makes them interested in your work and arouses eagerness to discover what you have shared. The introduction to your essay should be such that it would make the reader curious about what you have talked in the essay and make them read the essay thoroughly.

Remember, introduction to your essay should clearly inform the readers about the idea behind your essay and brief them on the information it offers. The introduction is not a summary of the essay. Even so, it should offer a glimpse of the whole essay.

6.4.6 Write the conclusion

Again, conclusion is not just the summary of the whole essay. Here, you need to put forward a striking note that uses the contents of the main body of the essay as a backup and tries to once again inform the readers.

In your conclusion bring back the key statement and briefly elaborate it. Once you are done with this, take the readers to the central idea of the essay and then take the core idea of each paragraph of the essay. The objective behind writing a concluding paragraph is to get the readers revise and refresh the whole content of the essay. So you should restate very carefully the main ideas once again as simple language as possible.

You should be extra careful while writing the conclusion as it is going to deliver the final thought to the readers. Make it crystal clear so that the readers get the message and your essay could initiate an action.

6.4.7 Give finishing touch

Finally go through the whole essay once again to see if there are any mistakes related to grammar, spellings, punctuations etc. Remember you might have instilled best of the ideas in your essay but if it is not delivered in lucid and pure language, you would not be able to get the desired response. So make sure that you make your writing error free and also ascertain whether you are exaggerating any of the portions of the essay, or if any kind of polishing is required to the idea you have shared in any section of the essay.

6.5 KEY WORDS

Critical thinking: the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment.

Thesis: a dissertation embodying results of original research and especially substantiating a specific view.

Note-making: process which involves writing the important points and putting down the vast knowledge and information in a precise manner.

Authenticity: conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features.

Exaggerate: to enlarge beyond bounds or the truth.

Plagiarism: to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own : use (another's production) without crediting the source.

6.6 LET US SUM UP

Many a times we are tempted to take shortcuts and quickly write the work we are supposed to submit. These shortcuts usually comprise of *plagiarism*, an act of copying someone else's work. This quick creation may help us temporarily but in the era of smart technology, it is not possible to hide if you have copied someone's work. Even a single sentence that is taken and the credit is not given to the original work, could put you at fault.

Apart from this, do try to make your work unique by applying your analytical skills while writing the essay. Read your essay twice or thrice and see if there is any scope for the corrections. This will help you make your essay a well written one. There are multiple sources available online that you could use as a ready reference guide for polishing your essay writing skills.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

WRITE AN ESSAY ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS.

1. Is pollution a necessary evil?
2. Importance of newspapers in our lives.
3. India and vocational education
4. Festivals of India

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

CHOOSE APPROPRIATE OPTION FROM THE GIVEN BELOW.

1. What is an essay?

- a. *series of paragraphs about one main idea or point*
- b. The final stage in the writing process
- c. An excellent way to get a lot of information down on paper
- d. The sentence that expresses the main point, or idea, of a paragraph

2. How to effectively proofread an essay?

- a. Reading out the essay loud
- b. Read the paper backwards, from the last sentence to the first
- c. Reading each line of the essay at a time

- d. *All of the above*
- 3. What do you mean by keystone in an essay?**
- a. *The statement that expresses the main point, or idea, of the essay*
- b. A statement with signal words that increase the effectiveness of organization
- c. It concludes essay so the reader knows what the essay was about
- d. Reasons, examples and other details to support the main point the essay
- 4. What are some resources you can use to ensure that you write error-free sentences in your essay?**
- a. Dictionary b. Grammar handbook
- c. Style manual d. *All of the above*
- 5. What are some strategies that help effectively prewrite your essay?**
- a. Free writing b. Clustering
- c. List making d. *All of the above*
- 6. What is revising?**
- a. *Rewriting an essay, building on what has been done to make it stronger and better*
- b. Questioning, clustering, list making, and brainstorming about the essay
- c. Making brief plan for the paragraph or essay
- d. Writing a draft without thinking about grammar, punctuation or spelling
- 7. What tricks can you use for effective proofreading in an essay?**
- a. Read the essay out loud
- b. Use a sheet of paper to cover the paragraph and read each line at a time
- c. Read the paper backwards, from the last sentence to the first
- d. All of the above

6.7 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. Greetham, B. *How to write better essays*. London: Palgrave, imprint of MacMillan, 2018.
2. Page, M., & Winstanley, C. *Writing essays for dummies*. Chichester, England: Wiley, 2009.
3. Redman, P., & Maples, W. *Good essay writing: A social sciences guide*. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2017.
4. Warburton, N. *The basics of essay writing*. London: Routledge, 2010.
5. Williams, P. *Advanced writing skills for students of English*. S.L.: Rumian Publishing, 2018.

ANSWERS

1-a, 2-d, 3-a, 4-d, 5-d, 6-a, 7-d