

AN EXERCISE ON LITERARY ESSAY WRITING

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EXTRACT

Please read the following extract from *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak.

THE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE SCHOOLYARD



In the break, she was taunted. A boy named Ludwig Schmeickl came up to her with a book. “Hey, Liesel,” he said to her, “I’m having trouble with this word. Could you read it for me?” He laughed—a ten-year-old, smugness laughter. “You Dummkopf—you idiot.”

Clouds were filing in now, big and clumsy, and more kids were calling out to her, watching her seethe.

“Don’t listen to them,” Rudy advised.

“Easy for you to say. You’re not the stupid one.”

Nearing the end of the break, the tally of comments stood at nineteen. By the twentieth, she snapped. It was Schmeickl, back for more. “Come on, Liesel.” He stuck the book under her nose. “Help me out, will you?”

Liesel helped him out, all right.

She stood up and took the book from him, and as he smiled over his shoulder at some other kids, she threw it away and kicked him as hard as she could in the vicinity of the groin.

Well, as you might imagine, Ludwig Schmeickl certainly buckled, and on the way down, he was punched in the ear. When he landed, he was set upon. When he was set upon, he was slapped and clawed and obliterated by a girl who was utterly consumed with rage. His skin was so warm and soft. Her knuckles and fingernails were so frighteningly tough, despite their smallness. "You Saukerl." Her voice, too, was able to scratch him. "You Arschloch. Can you spell Arschloch for me?"

Oh, how the clouds stumbled in and assembled stupidly in the sky.

Great obese clouds.

Dark and plump.

Bumping into each other. Apologizing. Moving on and finding room.

Children were there, quick as, well, quick as kids gravitating toward a fight. A stew of arms and legs, of shouts and cheers grew thicker around them. They were watching Liesel Meminger give Ludwig Schmeickl the hiding of a lifetime. "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," a girl commentated with a shriek, "she's going to kill him!"

Liesel did not kill him.

But she came close.

In fact, probably the only thing that stopped her was the twitchingly pathetic, grinning face of Tommy Müller.

Still crowded with adrenaline, Liesel caught sight of him smiling with such absurdity that she dragged him down and started beating him up as well.

"What are you doing?!" he wailed, and only then, after the third or fourth slap and a trickle of bright blood from his nose, did she stop.

On her knees, she sucked in the air and listened to the groans beneath her. She watched the whirlpool of faces, left and right, and she announced, "I'm not stupid."

EXERCISE I

Please use three quotes from the extract which contain *at least one* literary technique to answer the following question in the form of a *short analytical essay* (for steps on constructing this, see **Table I** on Page 6).

Question

In the chapter of *The Book Thief* entitled *The Heavyweight Champion of the Schoolyard*, do you agree that Zusak portrays Liesel as someone who does not care about what other people think of her? Please use evidence from the extract to support your answer.

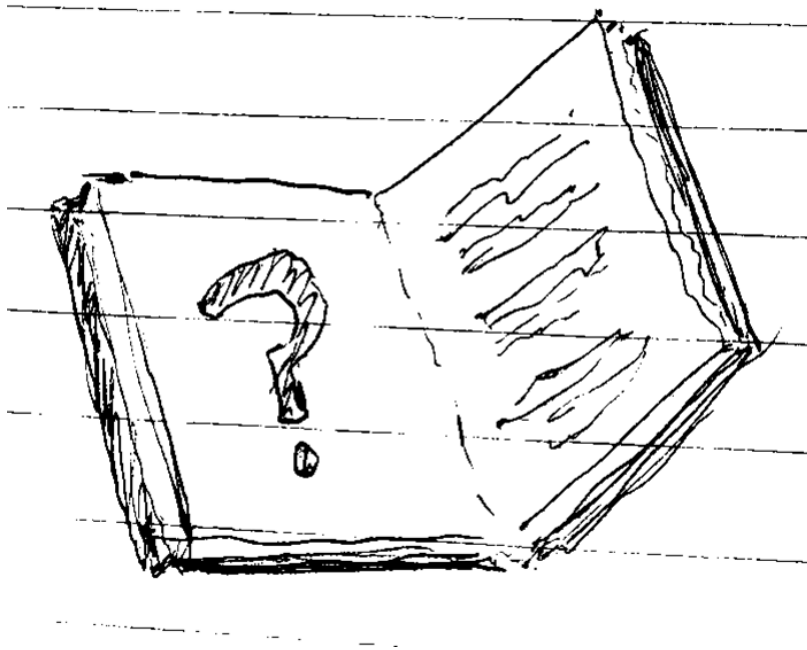


Table 1. How to write a short analytical essay

This example essay is answering the question: ‘do you agree that Zusak portrays dinosaurs as being the same species as humans?’

Introduction (5 sentences)	1. State your thesis (your argument) <i>In his book, Zusak portrays dinosaurs as not being the same species as humans.</i>
	2. State how many reasons you will discuss to support your thesis <i>This is clear for 3 reasons.</i>
	3. List your three reasons (1 sentence each, no evidence/quotes yet!) <i>First, Zusak writes a conversation between a dinosaur and a human, in which they agree that they are different species.</i> <i>Second, ... e.tc.</i>
Body paragraphs (4 sentences each)	1. Restate your reason <i>Firstly, Zusak portrays a conversation between a dinosaur and a human, in which they agree that they are not the same species.</i>
	2. Provide evidence for your reason from the novel (which must contain a literary technique!) <i>When the dinosaur meets the human in the café, Zusak uses a simile when he writes the dinosaur as saying that it and the human “are species which are about as alike as fire is to water”.</i>
	3. Explain what your evidence means to the reader <i>Zusak uses this simile to compare the level of similarity between the species of dinosaurs and humans to the level of similarity between fire and water – which are generally thought of as opposites.</i>
	4. Explain why your evidence supports your thesis <i>Therefore, the fact that Zusak used this simile shows that he is portraying dinosaurs and humans being opposite species, and therefore not the same species.</i>
Conclusion (3 or more sentences)	1. Restate your thesis and reasons
	2. Mention any limitations of any of your reasons <i>However, one might argue that since fire and water are both made of molecules, Zusak could still be portraying dinosaurs and humans as being the same species.</i>
	3. Explain why your reasons are stronger than any limitations <i>But monkeys and dogs are also both made of molecules, yet they are not the same species. So, the stronger argument is that Zusak thinks that dinosaurs and humans are not the same species.</i>