**Essay Writing Language Defined**

**Ms. Diehl**

*Teacher of CPE 11, English I Honors, and Language Arts Development*

**Summerville High School**

**Kdiehl@summbears.net 209.928.4228 ext. 271**

*“There are no great limits to growth because there are no limits of*

*human intelligence, imagination, and wonder.”*

*–Ronald Reagan*

**Academic Language Defined**

1. **Grabber/Hook (GR)**—As a writer you want to get the attention of the reader immediately with an effective grabber, or hook.  Avoid asking a question unless you are a very proficient writer, because asking good rhetorical or deep questions can be tricky. If you do choose to start with a question, make sure you ANSWER that question in your writing.  Another grabber/hook can be a quote that expresses your main point and offer commentary on it, or make a comment about society or the issues presented in the story.  Another idea is to reference a well-known example, archetype, or quote.  For example, you could say, **GR:** “What if issues such as texting and driving, school shootings, and bullying will still be around in year 2104? Unfortunately, chances are, they will be.” Do not assume that the **Grabber** must be only one sentence. From here I would transition to giving **Context** (see below) about the book/short story/poem and offer pertinent information.  Then, connect to the **Thesis** to round out the introduction and offer a clear plan for what the essay will achieve.  (Intro=GR+CX+THESIS as needed.)
2. **Context (CX)**—The background information is needed to make your references understandable.  For example, in *“*In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby,* Fitzgerald shapes his story around societal issues such as alcoholism, racism, and the ever-unattainable, American Dream. This beautifully crafted tale is set in post WWI and entails the lives of the ever-rich, ever-shallow, and ever-displeased characters living on East and West Egg.” Usually, the “when,” “where,” “who,” and “why do we care,” are given.
3. **Thesis**—Also called the controlling idea, it is the central message—the reason you are writing the paper. THIS IS THE HEART OF YOUR ESSAY! IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A THESIS, YOU DO NOT HAVE AN ESSAY.  Your paper is meaningless and terrible if it doesn’t have a thesis (no offense).  The whole point of a body paragraph is to PROVE that the thesis is valid.  This is called, “supporting your thesis,” and your paper must absolutely do that with ample evidence (concrete detail/quotes). If you noticed in my context I hinted at the three societal issues that I will be focusing on in this essay. The thesis is where I am going to bring this all together. My thesis would look something like this, *“Fitzgerald centers his novel around three prominent societal issues present in the 1920s that are still causing a threat to individuals today: alcoholism, racism, and the yearn to attain The American Dream.*

**Topic Sentence (TS)**—The first sentence in a body paragraph that introduces the idea the paragraph is going to express.   (Body=TS+CX+CD+CM+TR) Students often ask, “How long should my essay be?”  The answer, “Long enough.”  Effective writing has plenty of concrete details and commentary.

1. **Concrete Detail (CD)**—A concrete example or evidence (also called a quote).  This always includes a citation for where it came from, usually with the author’s last name and page number, such as “(Fitzgerald 25).” However, if you have already introduced the author (which you should in the introduction) you do NOT need to put his last name in the parenthesis, the page number will suffice. Ex (25). Period goes AFTER the parenthetical citation.
2. **Commentary (CM)**—Your analysis of why the quote you referenced is significant and what it means.  **This is the most important aspect of good writing.**Anyone can write down quotes from a book/short story.  Not everyone can interpret them and relate them to themes or ideas expressed in the story.   **Transition (TR)**—All writing should have a certain rhythm or flow to it, and good transitions make it so that the reader doesn’t get lost.  A helpful website to consult when looking for the proper transition is <http://www.studygs.net/wrtstr6.htm>.