**Introductions**

**Dr. Gingrich, 10H English/AP Language and Composition**

The introduction (it can be more than one paragraph has three essential goals:

* give background information and “introduce your topic” this may include establishing warrants and information readers may not know or what the audience for the piece is (to inform, to entertain, to persuade)
* generate interest in your topic or paper
* establish the claim of your argument

The following eight types of introductions may be used: funnel/inverted, narrative/anecdotal, interrogative/questioning, minding the gap, paradoxical, quotation, setting the scene, or definition

#### 1. Funnel or Inverted Triangle

**In this style of introduction, a wide, general, opening statement gradually becomes more narrow, just like a funnel, which has a wide opening that narrows to a small spout. In a way, the information is** [**funnelled**](javascript:openGlossaryWin('/courses/glossary/popup.aspx?termID=13709');) **to the thesis statement. It starts with general information or description and then hones down to a thesis or claim usually in the final sentence of the paragraph.**

**In his essay on visual culture how does Scholes begin the paragraph? What is the final claim of the paragraph? Where does this occur? How has he lead into that claim?**

Taken from Robert Scholes “On Reading a Video Text”

“The moments of surrender proposed to us by video texts come in many forms, but all involve a complex dynamic of power and pleasure. We are, for instance, offered a kind of power through the enhancement of our vision. Close-ups position us where we could never stand. Slow motion allows us an extraordinary penetration into the mechanics of movement, and, combined with music, lends a balletic grace to ordinary forms of locomotion. Filters and other devices cause us to see the world through jaundiced or rose-colored optics, coloring events with emotion more effectively than verbal pathetic fallacy and less obtrusively. These derangements of normal visual processing can be seen as either constraints or extensions of visual power-that is, as power over the viewer or as extensions of the viewer’s own optical power, or both. Either way they offer us what is perhaps the greatest single virtue of art; change from the normal, a defense against the ever-present threat of boredom. Video texts, like all except the most utilitarian forms of textuality, are constructed upon a base of boredom, from which they must promise us relief.

Visual fascination—and I have mentioned only a few of its obvious forms—is just one of the matrices of power and pleasure that are organized by visual texts.

#### 2. Anecdote or Narrative

**An** [**anecdote**](javascript:openGlossaryWin('/courses/glossary/popup.aspx?termID=13507');) **is a short story about something that happened, which illustrates the point you want to make in your essay. Using a story at the beginning of an essay is an effective way to interest the reader. These anecdotes may be personal experiences, they may observations, they may be historical stories, myths, parables, or scenes from works of literature or film.**

**In this essay on the lives of medical residents and interns, how does Perri Klauss use a narrative to begin the essay? From where does the story originate?**

Perri Klauss “Invasions”

“Morning rounds in the hospital. We charge along, the resident leading the way, the interns following, the two medical students last, pushing the cart that holds the patients’ charts. The resident pulls up in front of a patient’s door, the interns stop as well, and we almost run them over with the chart cart. It’s time to present the patient, a man who came into the hospital late last night. I did the workup—interviewed him, got his medical history, examined him, wrote a six-page note in his chart, and (at least in theory) spent a little while in the hospital library, reading up on his problem.”

#### 3. Question/Interrogative

**Asking a question at the beginning of an essay is a useful tool for** [**drawing**](javascript:openGlossaryWin('/courses/glossary/popup.aspx?termID=13642');) **the reader in. The question can be used to** [**intrigue**](javascript:openGlossaryWin('/courses/glossary/popup.aspx?termID=13764');) **the reader, or it can set the tone for the essay. The writer can ask a question in the introduction and then wrap the essay around the answer. Questions should be open ended and to a certain degree provocative. The question should also raise questions that the rest of the paper will consider, though not necessarily definitively answer.**

**How does Diamond raise a question which intrigues the audience about his topic?**

Jared Diamond from *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (2004)

Why Do Some Societies Make Disastrous Decisions

“Education is a process involving two sets of participants who supposedly play different roles: teachers who impart knowledge to students, and students who absorb knowledge from teachers. In fact, as every open-minded teacher discovers, education is also about students imparting knowledge to their teachers, by challenging the teacher’s assumptions and by asking questions that the teachers hadn’t previously thought of. I recently repeated that discovery when I taught a course, on how societies cope with environmental problems, to highly motivated undergraduates at my institution, the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). In effect, the course was a trial run-through of this book’s material, a time when I had drafted some chapters, was planning other chapters, and could still make extensive changes.

My first lecture after the class’s introductory meeting was on the collapse of Easter Island society…In the class discussion after I had finished my presentation, the apparently simple question that most puzzled my students was one whose actual complexity hadn’t sunk in before: how on earth could a society make such an obviously disastrous decision as to cut down all the trees on which it depended? One of the students asked what I thought the islander who cut down the last palm tree said as he was doing it. For every other society that I treated in subsequent lectures, my students raised essentially the same question. They also asked the related question: how often did people wreak ecological damage intentionally, or at least while aware of the likely consequences? How often did people instead do it without meaning to, or out of ignorance? My students wondered whether—if there are still people left alive a hundred years from now—those people of the next century will be as astonished about our blindness today as we are about the blindness of the Easter Islanders.”

#### 4. Minding the Gap

#### This type of response is drawn from the British underground system in which a computer voice warns passengers to mind the gap between the platform and the train when the doors of the train are about to close. In this type of opening, the author presents existing knowledge and the gaps that exist within that knowledge. The author then suggests that they have solutions that will bridge those gaps.

#### In Gladwell’s opening what gaps does he suggest exist in knowledge? How does he propose a closing of those gaps?

Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*

“*The Tipping Point* is the biography of an idea, and the idea is very simple. It is that the best way to understand the emergence of fashion trends, the ebb and flow of crime waves, or, for that matter, the transformation of unknown books into bestsellers, or the rise of teenage smoking, or the phenomena of word of mouth, or any number of the other mysterious changes that mark everyday life is to think of them as epidemics. Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do.

The rise of Hush Puppies and the fall of New York’s crime rate are textbook examples of epidemics in action. Although they may sound as if they don’t have very much in common, they share a basic, underlying pattern. First of all, they are clear examples of contagious behavior. No one took out an advertisement and told people that the traditional Hush Puppies were cool and they should start wearing them. Those kids simply wore the shoes when they went to the clubs or cafes or walked the streets of downtown New York, and in so doing exposed other people to their fashion sense. They infected them with the Hush Puppies ‘virus.’”

#### 5. Paradoxical

#### In this type of introduction an author creates a somewhat startling claim, that reality runs counter to what individuals perceive. This is to say, what we have come to believe about a topic may be in fact false.

#### What does Kozol suggest is paradoxical about our views of race and education in America?

taken from Jonathan Kozol, “ Still Separate, Still Unequal: America’s Educational Apartheid,” *Harper’s*, September, 2005.

“Many Americans who live far from our major cities and who have no firsthand knowledge of the realities to be found in urban public schools seem to have the rather vague and general impression that the great extremes of racial isolation that were matters of grave national significance some thirty-five or forty-years ago have gradually but steadily diminished in more recent years. The truth, unhappily, is that the trend, for well over a decade now, has been precisely the reverse. Schools that were already deeply segregated twenty-five or thirty years ago are not less segregated now, while thousands of other schools around the country that had been integrated either voluntarily or by the force of the law have since been rapidly re-segregated.

In Chicago by the academic year 2002-03, 87 percent of public school enrollment was black or Hispanic; less than 10 percent of children in the schools were white.”

#### 6. Quotation

#### Quotations use other information as a set up to establish new ideas and lead into a topic. Quotations may come from literature or history; they may be maxims or parables; they may come from interviews with individuals on a project; they may also use slogans or figures of speech that have become significant within our culture.

Quotations are used when someone has clearly and succinctly stated an opinion you agree with and that will give the reader a clear idea of your point. For this, the quotation needs to be [relevant](javascript:openGlossaryWin('/courses/glossary/popup.aspx?termID=13903');) to the topic and familiar to the reader. Quotations can be used independently or combined with other types of introductions such as anecdotes or questions. A well-chosen quotation adds [credibility](javascript:openGlossaryWin('/courses/glossary/popup.aspx?termID=13612');) to an essay because it is familiar to the reader and its truth has been recognized for many years.

Who does Friedman quote in the passage believe? What significance do his quotations have for the reader?

Thomas Friedman “While I was Sleeping”

No one ever gave me directions like this on a golf course before: “Aim at either Microsoft or IBM.” I was standing on the first tee at the KGA Golf Club in downtown Bangalore, in southern India, when my playing partner pointed at two shiny glass-and-steel building off in the distance, just behind the first green. The Goldman Sachs building wasn’t done yet; otherwise he could have pointed that out as well and made it a threesome. HP and Texas Instruments had their offices on the back nine, along the tenth hole. That wasn’t all. The tee markers were from Epson, the printer company, and one of our caddies was wearing a hat from 3M. Outside, some of the traffic signs were also sponsored by Texas Instruments, and the Pizza Hut billboard on the way over showed a steaming pizza, under the headline “Gigabites of Taste!”

No, this definitely wasn’t Kansas. It didn’t seem like India. Was this the New World, the Old World, or the Next World?”

#### 7. Setting the Scene

#### In this type of opening, the author gives a great deal of context for information as they then lead into discussing the significance of their topic. This relies heavily on contextualized and giving background. This type of opening may be useful if it introduces controversial information, a very new way at looking at a topic, or is discussing an issue upon which the audience may have little knowledge or experience.

#### Why is the context that Kimmel sets up necessary for the reader in this essay?

Michael S. Kimmel, “ Gender, Class, and Terrorism”

“The events of September 11 (2001) have sent scholars and pundits alike scrambling to make sense of those seemingly senseless acts. While most analyses have focused on the political economy of globalization or the perversion of Islamic teachings by Al Qaeda, several commentators have raised gender issues.

Some have reminded us that in our haste to lionize the heroes of the World Trade Center collapse, we ignored the many women firefighters, police officers, and rescue workers who had risked their lives. We’ve been asked to remember the Taliban’s vicious policies toward women; indeed, even Laura Bush seems to be championing women’s emancipation.

A few have asked us to consider the other side of the gender coin: men. Some have rehearsed the rather tired old formulae about masculine blood-lust or the drive for domination and conquest, with no reference to the magnificent humanity displayed by so many on September 11. In an article in *Slate*, the Rutgers anthropologist Lionel Tiger trotted out his old male-bonding thesis but offered no understanding of why Al Qaeda might appeal to some men and not others. Only the journalist Barbara Ehrenreich suggests that there may be a link between the misogyny of the Taliban and the masculinity of the terrorists.

As for myself, I’ve been thinking lately about a letter to the editor of a small, upstate-New York newspaper; written in 1992 by an American GI after his return from service in the Gulf War. He complained that the legacy of the American middle class had been stolen by an indifferent government. The American dream, he wrote, has all but disappeared; instead, most people are struggling just to buy next week’s groceries.

That letter writer was Timothy McVeigh from Lockport, N.Y. Two years later, he blew up the Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City in what is now the second-worst act of terrorism ever committed on American soil.

What ‘s startling to me are the ways that McVeigh’s complaints were echoed in some of the fragmentary evidence that we have seen about the terrorists of September 11, and especially in the portrait of Mohammad Atta, the suspected mastermind of the operation and the pilot of the first plane to hit the World Trade Center.

Looking at these two men through the lens of gender may shed some light on both the method and the madness of the tragedies they wrought.”

Creating a [mental picture](javascript:openGlossaryWin('/courses/glossary/popup.aspx?termID=13805');) for the reader helps introduce essays. Using words that describe how things smell, look, feel, sound, and taste raises the reader's [curiosity](javascript:openGlossaryWin('/courses/glossary/popup.aspx?termID=13617');) and draws the reader to read more.

#### 8. Definition

When a difficult or unknown term is going to be used throughout the essay, defining that term can serve as an introduction to the essay. Definition paragraphs define difficult terms or ideas, which are used throughout the essay.

What is the author, Appiah, attempting to define in this particular opening?

Kwame Anthony Appiah from *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, 2006.

“You don’t need to leave home to have disagreements about questions of value. In a crowd of people leaving a movie theater, someone thinks *Million Dollar Baby* superior to *Sideways*, but her companion demurs. “How can you respect a movie that tells you that life of a quadriplegic is so worthless that you ought to kill her if she asks you to?” In a lively discussion after a barroom brawl, some say that the bystander who intervened was courageous, others that he was reckless and should just have called the cops. In a classroom discussion of abortion, one student says that first-trimester abortions are bad for the mother and the fetus, but that they ought to be legal, if the mother chooses. Another thinks that killing a fetus isn’t even as bad as killing a grown-up cat. A third claims all abortion is murder: If we are to encourage cosmopolitan engagement, moral conversation between people *across* societies, we must expect such disagreements: after all, they occur *within* societies.

But moral conflicts come in different varieties. To begin with, our vocabulary of evaluation is enormously multifarious. Some terms---“good,” “ought”—are, as philosophers often put it, rather *thin*.”