Top 10 Writing Tips for your TTTC Essay

1. **Titles of books are in italics.** Titles of shorter works (or chapters) are in quotes.

   Example:
   
   > In Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, his characters...
   > In the chapter “Beast from Water”...

2. **Quotes longer than 3 lines (or quotes with multiple characters speaking) should be put into a block quote.** Indent 1 inch on both sides, and single space.

   Example:
   
   > Golding illustrates Simon’s benevolent and sacrificial nature early in the novel as the ideals of civilization begin to crumble.

   Then, amid the roar of bees in the afternoon sunlight, Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach, pulled off the choices from up in the foliage, passed them back down to the endless outstretched hands. When he had satisfied them he paused and looked around. The littluns watched him inscrutably over double handfuls of ripe fruit (Golding 55).

   In this case, Simon takes no fruit for himself, giving the best fruit to the children.

3. **However, for the most part try to avoid block quotes. Use paraphrase to get to the key part of the quote.**

   Example:
   
   > Golding’s subtle description of Roger’s arm being conditioned by societal expectations “...invisible, yet strong, was the taboo of the old life...protection of parents and school...and law” illustrates the tether still holding the children in check from the savagery lurking within themselves (61).

4. **Intro paragraphs begin with one sentence connecting to broader world.** Something that grabs our attention, as well as cues us to why what you’re about to talk about is important or relates to the world or to the audience. **Then narrow to the book** (and usually mention the title and author). Then the last sentence of the paragraph should be the thesis. *(See example after discussion of thesis statements.)*

5. **Thesis statements:** You need to make a clear statement of what your paper is arguing.

   **It can’t be too broad.**
   Bad Thesis = *Animal Farm* is an allegory about Russia and it also applies today.

   **It can’t be too specific.**
   Bad Thesis = In *Animal Farm* Snowball represents Trotsky.
An ideal thesis gives us a hint of what each of the three body paragraphs is going to be about. So if my essay was about how Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie are the greatest Hollywood couple of all time, I might go with this thesis. (It’s a little stiff and formulaic, but at this point— and on the AP essay --USE THE FORMULA. IT WORKS!)

Okay thesis = Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie are a classic Hollywood couple because of their sex appeal, their love for each other, and their concern for the world around them.

Sample introductions:

When all inhibitions and laws are removed, we find what people are truly capable. Large houses, green lawns and paved streets often define a civil society. People are trained from a very young age in school to obey the rules in order to maintain societal order. As adults, people are pressured to maintain the status quo for fear of being publicly shamed. In his novel, *Lord of the Flies*, Golding uses the allegory of young men trapped on an island without adult supervision, to explore the idea of the dark side of man’s personality and ultimately identify the evil all men are capable of doing.

6. Topic Sentences – Topic sentences need to address a segment of your thesis statement and give us a clue what your paragraph is going to be about:

Example:

During Golding’s chapter on “Gift for the Darkness”, Simon’s vision provides insight about the evil existent in all human beings, even those people perceived as leaders in an otherwise organized, rule-oriented society.

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One of the most important aspects of being a Hollywood star, let alone part of an iconic Hollywood couple, is sex appeal. Brad Pitt exudes this. Indeed his first big breakout role was in the film *Thelma and Louise*. Pitt’s part was a relatively minor one. He was only on the screen for a total of twelve minutes. Yet eight of those minutes featured Brad Pitt shirtless and in a cowboy hat, with his six pack abs prominently displayed. The man is ripped. Shortly afterwards, People magazine named him the “Sexiest Man Alive” for 1998.

For her part, Angelina is easy on the eyes as well. She has been cast in a variety of action movies featuring her long legs wedged into very short skirts. In *Tomb Raider*, Jolie plays Lara Croft, widely recognized in the gaming community as the sexiest action heroine ever to be pixilated. Indeed, Jolie and Pitt’s relationship began with an onscreen/offscreen romance on the set of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*. Yet sex appeal is only part of this couple’s charm.

7. Do NOT have extra space in between paragraphs. MS Word defaults to place 10 pts between each new paragraph. You want ZERO.

Example of what NOT to do:

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8. Adverbs are NOT your friends.
Example:
Avoid the following:
Fear is constantly inhibiting character's actions. (*also avoid the generalization of “constantly”*)
He was completely at war with himself.
Clearly he was very unhappy.

Better to just write:
Fear inhibits the character’s actions
He was at war with himself.
He was unhappy. (*Note: avoid CLEARLY at all costs. Things you are analyzing are rarely clear*).

9. Changes to the original text in brackets in order to maintain agreement or capitalization in your sentence.
Example:
In O'Brien's view "[t]hey went home because they had to" (56).

10. Verb Tense and Agreement – Literary analysis is in present tense. Historical analysis is in past tense. (This will be challenging when we get to your *Crucible* essay because you’ll be doing both. So try to keep track.)
Example:
Tim O'Brien faces the choice of running away from the war or being labeled a coward. He fears that label, more than he fears dying in the war. Ultimately he decides to go and fight. When Lyndon Johnson signed the executive order to begin bombing campaigns in Vietnam, he may not have considered the impact it would have on American soldiers.

Problems:
(Can you spot the problems with agreement in these sentences)?

1. All the events leading up to our friendship was a long drawn out process.
2. I timidly offered the name of my dream school, adding that I will never get in.
3. There was a part of me that would get mad because I want all 36 of them to make it on the team.
4. Getting noticed as a little kid is hard to do. People tried everything from listening to music, to dressing like Michael Jackson.
5. I walk into the bathroom, without knowing what I was doing look head first into the mirror and realize I’m not going to make it.
6. She yelled. Her accent giving her words power. She sounds mad. I’ll never forget her look as she glared down on the girl.
7. I remember Amanda called me around noon the day of the party, to ask if some of her friends that I didn’t invite can come along, and to tell me that she and all her friends will probably be late. I say okay, because there isn’t really anything I could do about the situation.

8. It was welcome entertainment and I was gonna savor every moment. Slowly I pick up my math book, bring it close to the fly and BOOM! My text book slammed against the table.