

Illustration (Exemplification) Essay Guidelines

Structuring an Illustration (Exemplification) Essay

An illustration (exemplification) essay is simply an essay that uses specific examples (facts, anecdotes, or other specific information) to illustrate a general idea. The following basic steps should help you write an effective illustrative essay.

1. Carefully select a topic

Make certain that you can find specific, relevant examples to develop your thesis (a statement informing the reader of your topic).

2. Carefully select examples

Consider your purpose and thesis when gathering examples (personal experience, observations, reading). Narrow your selection to your strongest examples. An outline will help you.

3. Organize examples

Use transitions effectively as you move from point to point. Arrange examples in a logical order: for example, from least important to most important or from general to specific.

4. Details

Include enough details for clarity; however, select only the facts that are relevant.

5. Conclusion

Sum up your main idea in a concluding paragraph.

Illustration Sample

An illustration essay is a generalization supported by examples. In this sample (1-3-1), note the thesis statement. Then read each paragraph and look for the topic sentence (the main idea for the paragraph) and specific examples. Finally, note the conclusion and how it relates to the paper.

Title:

Do not underline, italicize, or boldface your own title. Note how the title complements topic.

Introduction:

General information narrows to the specific monarch (Elizabeth I) and the thesis statement.

Body paragraph:

Note specific examples that support the thesis statement: ended the war, instituted reforms, reestablished the Anglican Church.

Transition words:

Note underlined words that help essay move from point to point.

Body paragraph:

Note supporting details: defeated Spanish Armada, launched era of empire building.

Conclusion:

Summarizes the main ideas, repeats thesis sentence, and draws a conclusion.

Note to students: This essay is a sample to illustrate format. Course instructors have copies. Duplication or near duplication would be regarded as plagiarism.

The Leading Lady

King Arthur established the Knights of the Round Table. Alfred the Great provided us with a clear history during the Dark Ages. Richard the Lion-Hearted led the Crusades. The infamous Henry VIII established a new religion, uniting church and state. James gave us a version of the Bible nearly 400 years ago, and it is still widely used today. Victoria ruled for sixty-three years at the height of British power. **Monarchs have ruled and influenced England for centuries; however, perhaps none was as singularly responsible for the country's development as Queen Elizabeth I.**

Upon taking the throne in 1558, Elizabeth faced many serious problems: war with France, a bankrupt treasury, religious turmoil, fear for her own safety, and an educationally backward populace. She attacked these problems with fervor. For example, she ended the war with a truce, which helped alleviate England's financial problem. Next, she instituted tax and educational reforms, while dangling hints of marriage in front of French and Spanish royalty to keep them placated. Finally, she reestablished the Anglican Church, which was not done without bloodshed but did have a unifying effect on her people, who came to call her "Good Queen Bess."

In 1588, Spain, the most powerful nation in the world, attacked England. The Spanish Armada was the greatest naval fleet ever assembled, but it was destroyed by Elizabeth's hand-picked captains. This victory instilled a sense of national pride in the people, and Elizabeth became a living legend. The defeat of the Spanish also vaulted England into prominence as a world power, and the English period of empire building began.

Concurrently, in peacetime England, Elizabeth nurtured the arts through royal benefactors. She was, in part, responsible for the flowering of the English Renaissance (also called the Elizabethan Age), which ranks among the greatest creative periods in the history of the world.

From a child who was declared illegitimate after her mother was beheaded to arguably England's greatest monarch, Elizabeth and her storied reign occupy an important place in English and world history. It was she who was primarily responsible for advancing the development of England in the 16th century.

-David Bardsley