

"A Streetcar Named Desire" - Analysis Paragraph

This paragraph earned an "A." Read the paragraph and the comments to understand why.

In the Tennessee Williams play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche's excessive bathing is her attempt to wash away her worries and past. In the beginning of the play, Blanche arrives at Stella's home and doesn't want to be seen until she has bathed, saying, "But don't you look at me . . . not till I've bathed and rested!" (Williams 18-19). Wanting to bathe shows Blanche is worried about what people think of her physical appearance, but her strong desire to bathe before anyone really sees her suggests she feels that people can see evidence of her less-than-pure past in her outward appearance, so she bathes to look her best and to wash away any other uncleanness she thinks people may be able to detect by looking at her. Near the opening of scene 2, Stella tells Stanley that Blanche is bathing to help "quiet her nerves" (Williams 32). This shows that bathing calms Blanche down, which helps her cope with her worries, such as the damage she's caused to her reputation, the trauma of losing her husband, and her dire need of support after losing Belle Reve. Upon finishing a bath before leaving for her night out with Stella, Blanche says, "Here I am, all freshly bathed and scented, and feeling like a brand new human being!" (Williams 37). It's perfectly normal to feel clean after a bath, but feeling like a new person shows that a bath truly makes Blanche feel "clean," as in she has washed herself of her dirty past, such as her relations with soldiers from the army base, random men at the Flamingo, and the 17-year-old boy at her school. Even though she can't physically undo her filthy past, Blanche attempts to wash away the person she used to be and the mistakes she has made.

Notice how each analysis sentence clearly shows how its evidence helps prove the inference. If you realize your analysis sentences don't really show how the evidence proves the inference, you either need to develop the connection between the evidence and the inference statement, or you need to consider whether the evidence itself actually supports the inference statement. It's possible you might need to select a different piece of evidence.

Also, this paragraph is comma splice-free! It has commas where we have learned to put commas (after introductory phrasing, before a coordinating conjunction that connects two independent clauses, after a dependent clause that begins a sentence, etc.).

Commented [LC1]: In the inference statement, include the title of the work and the name of the author.

Commented [MAU2]: Always use present tense verbs when writing about literature. BE CONSISTENT IN THIS THROUGHOUT THE PARAGRAPH! Ensure that you don't drift between past and present tense.

Commented [MAU3]: This shows the background context of the quote; *never let a quote stand on its own in a sentence* – always establish background.

Commented [MAU4]: Use a comma before going into a direct quote (when the quote itself could stand alone as a complete sentence).

Commented [MAU5]: Use ellipses (. . .) to show an omission in a direct quote.

Commented [MAU6]: To prepare for a research paper that references multiple books, get in the habit of putting the author's name before the page numbers. Also, note that there is no abbreviation of the word "page." Furthermore, the cited quote begins on page 18 and finishes on page 19; to show a range of pages, use a hyphen between the starting page and the ending page.

Commented [MAU7]: Periods come AFTER parenthetical in-text citations.

Commented [MAU8]: Keep each piece of evidence and each analysis to a single sentence. This will provide the best focus. If you can't think of a way to get your evidence or analysis idea into a single sentence, it's probably not focused enough; it probably tries to cover too much ground, which actually weakens the strength of your idea development. Also notice that this sentence is 68 words long – it provides very specific detail AND it provides variation in sentence structure and length. Set beside two considerably shorter sentences, it provides evidence of strong sentence fluency.

Commented [MAU9]: This is a partial quote (the quote is not a complete sentence), which is why, unlike the other quotes, it doesn't begin with a capital letter. It's also why there's no comma before this quote.

Commented [MAU10]: Each piece of evidence cites a very specific passage in the form of a direct quote. Specific passages, especially direct quotes, make the strongest evidence.

Commented [MAU11]: The clincher wraps up the paragraph by restating the idea of the inference statement using different words.