Body Paragraph Model: Key Terms and Summarized Examples

1. Begin by writing a topic sentence that makes the point or proposes the idea you wish to explore in this paragraph; this sentence should express an idea of your own that you can relate to the key term you will soon discuss.

2. Then, write a sentence that makes a transition from your topic sentence by introducing the author whose key term you have chosen and showing how the author can contribute to the conversation you began in your topic sentence.

3. After that, write a few sentences that explain the key term. Ask yourself these questions: What does the key term mean? What point does the author wish to make by using this key term? How does the author apply the key term? What experience or idea did the author have that led her to introduce this key term? As part of your explanation of the key term, include a quotation from the author whose term you are borrowing that defines the term or applies it in some crucial way.

4. Place the quotation in context: How is the quotation related to the key term? What’s going on in the essay at the moment when the quotation appears? What language or ideas need to be explained in order for readers to understand the author’s message?

5. Next, integrate the quotation into your own language with a signal phrase, or a combination of indirect quotation and direct quotation. Don’t forget to put “quotation marks around the author’s exact words,” and use parenthetical citation (#).

6. Then, write a few sentences that interpret the quotation: What does it mean—in your own words? How does the quotation help us understand the key term? How do the author’s ideas relate to the ideas in your topic sentence?

7. After explaining the key term, write a sentence that makes a transition to the second author you will discuss in this paragraph, by explaining how the key term applies to this other source.

8. Then, write a few sentences that describe, in your own words, an example of the key term at work. Remember to explain your example fully; you are writing for an audience that has not read the sources you have read.

9. Then, write a few sentences
that analyze the connection between the example you have chosen and the key term. Ask yourself these questions: How does the key term relate to the example? How can the second source help us understand the key term? Does the key term apply differently to the second source than it does to the first? What new point can you make by applying this particular key term to this particular example? Finally, write a few sentences that apply the connection you have made to the idea you introduced in the topic sentence. How has making this connection led to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the idea you set out to explore in this paragraph?

The 10 Steps:
1. Topic Sentence
2. Transition
3. Define/Explain key term
4. Context
5. Integration
6. Interpretation
7. Transition
8. Summarized example
9. Connection
10. Application

Don’t forget: this paragraph model requires you to use a key term and a quotation from one source, and a summarized example from another.

Example:

1Culture is often thought of in broad terms, but it’s common to locate a culture in smaller groups such as schools, offices, or neighborhoods. 2No matter the group, it’s certain that the people in it are operating from a set of cultural myths. 3A cultural myth, as Colombo defines it, is a social rule that helps people sort out and make sense of their surroundings. 4The concept of cultural myths is critical to his discussion in alerting college students to the benefits of critical thinking. 5Myths are powerful and necessary, according to Colombo, because they “[hold] people together by providing [them] with a shared set of customs, values, ideas, and beliefs, as well as a common language” (3). 6Myths ground people in a sense of what is right,
that the things they do seem logical and in line with what is acceptable to their peers, but there is an inherent danger because they can block new thinking. 7 Cultures are often found in schools where students have similar socio-economic backgrounds, social interests, or academic aspirations. 8 At Mercy High, Rose and his voc-ed classmates formed a culture in which they shared a set of customs and values developed primarily from the experiences they had with teachers who lacked knowledge and proper disciplinary skills. Rose gives several examples of rowdy classrooms where teachers such as Mr. Montez lost control of students who were acting out physically, one student, Dweetz, “cracking Billy on the side of the head, right behind the eye” (160). Rose and his classmates developed an admiration for “physical prowess” and a popular student, Dave Snyder, “enjoyed acting the fool and could care less about studies” (161). 9 Such were the customs of students who were, as Rose later concludes, “scuttling along at the bottom of the pond” (160). The voc-ed students were held together by the belief that they were “average” and not worthy of attention. For a time this belief worked for Rose, and it helped solidify his membership. But later he had difficulty imagining a different future, and he struggled with other ways to approach his studies. 10 Seeing beyond cultural myths is one hurdle to overcome, but taking the steps necessary to actually transcend the group-think is much more difficult.