Tips & Reminders for Critical Essays Using Outside Sources

1. Create a DETAILED outline or graphic organizer to work through your thesis and plan out each point you plan to make. In this outline / g.o., develop each point by listing (at the very least) the examples & specific quotes you will use to ***prove*** each point. Be sure that each point you make connects back & clearly ***supports*** your thesis; be sure that you have read through the prompt carefully & are addressing each part of the prompt. They all, in some way, ask you to explain how the writer develops the overall meaning or theme. It is essential to identify that meaning / theme before you get too far into this process.
2. Once you’ve developed your plan ***and*** the points you will make, search through various critical essays you can find using WiseOwl for points or examples you can use to support your points. (Remember: the password for all of those databases is wiseowl.) As you read those articles, create a word document and take notes. Create a Works Cited list using MLA format then take notes from each source under its entry. This is basically like creating an annotated bibliography. Be sure to note page numbers and avoid any possibility of plagiarism by using quotation marks.
3. Adapt your outline / g.o. by adding in support from the critical essays you’ve found.
4. Begin writing your draft by following that outline. As you incorporate textual evidence, be sure to follow MLA guidelines. All evidence should be properly cited using in-text citations. If you name the article or the author within the text of your sentence, your parenthetical citation only has to have the page number. If you do not name the author or article within your sentence, the parenthetical citation must include the first word of the source entry (usually the author’s last name) from your Works Cited page and the page number. *Avoid any plagiarism possibilities; be sure that you clearly cite all evidence, even when you paraphrase*.
5. Remember that the school’s media center page has links to Easy Bib to help you with the particulars of creating documentation for articles you found using databases available in WiseOwl.
6. ***Never “drop-in” quotes.*** All quotations should be introduced or incorporated into your sentence. They cannot stand alone. You should also be sure to connect / explain the quote’s relevance or how it supports your point. Be careful, though, not to do this in a trite way.
7. When you feel that you have completed the draft, put it away for at least an hour or two – if possible, even a day so that you can look at it with fresh eyes. After you’ve reviewed it and even revised, ask a classmate or me to read through what you have to see how it works. Be sure the reader looks at the prompt to know what all is expected within the essay.
8. Reread and revise again. Yes, again. You MUST be sure to read through your own work and polish it. Carefully consider the points you’ve made and the support you’ve used. Also look over your sentence structure and diction; you should present your information in a polished manner. It would be a good idea to use the rubric I use to evaluate your work to see where you need improvement.
9. EDIT! EDIT! EDIT! Use the handout I gave you with writing feedback symbols to see the suggestions for common issues and work on those issues.
10. Reread and polish. Hopefully, you are ready to submit it. ***Do not forget the formatting & Works Cited page.*** There are some samples below to help you.

Annotated Bibliography

Anaya, Rudolpho. *Bless Me, Ultima*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1972. Print.

* “I felt my body trembling as I saw the bright golden form disappear” (114).
* “ ‘It’s blood now,’ Abel whispered when the priest raised the chalice with the wine, and his thin voice mixed mysteriously into the ringing altar bell” (219).

Lahiri, Jhumpa. “Year’s End.” *Unaccustomed Earth*. New York: Vintage Books, 2008. 252-93. Print.

Tipping, Joy. "Jhumpa Lahiri Writes of Longing for Home in 'Unaccustomed Earth'" *Dallas Morning News*

23 Apr. 2008: n. pag. *Newspaper Source Plus*. Web. 01 Mar. 2013. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,custuid&custid=s8455861&db=n5h&AN=2W6142600496&site=src-live.>.

* “Like Faulkner, **Lahiri** sticks to a certain culture and setting (in her case, mostly Boston-area Massachusetts), but the themes, emotions and human needs fueling her books are unconditionally universal.”
* **“Lahiri’s** older generation of characters, so thrilled at first to come to America from Calcutta, go back time and again, sometimes permanently. They love the comforts and blessings of America, yes, but the yearning for home overcomes them.”

"Unaccustomed Earth." *Christian Century* 16 Dec. 2008: 26. *MAS Complete*. Web. 01 Mar.

2013. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,custuid&custid=s8455861&db=mat&AN=35767316&site=src-live.>.

* “Each story weaves together issues of cultural and generational difference” (26).
* **“Lahiri** is a wise and sensitive observer of characters' inner lives and external circumstances” (26).
* I will post tips for incorporating quotes on the website Monday. I already have a file with this information, but I cannot access it from home. If I go by school Saturday, I will post it then. I apologize for that inconvenience.