

## AP Style Introductions

### Things to avoid in your introductions:

1. Avoid opening with questions, especially rhetorical questions. You want to open with a powerful, specific statement, not a weak question.
2. Do not open with a quotation as the opening line. You may use a brief (2-3 word) phrase, especially in poetry essays, but a whole quote belongs as evidence in the body of the essay.
3. Do not open with a general statement about humankind or the nature of the universe. (*Human beings often struggle with the idea of change.*)
4. Do not open with a general statement about literature. (*Poets often write about feelings.*)
5. Do not use the author and title as the opening of your essay. They should appear in the introduction, but not in the opening sentence, particularly NOT the opening words.
6. Do not restate the prompt.

### What should your introduction be like?

1. They should let the author of the original piece do the heavy lifting. Use his/her ideas or words to give the introduction quality.
2. They should be short. The focus of your essay must be on the argumentative body, not the introduction. 3-4 sentences max.
3. They should open with action-oriented verbs or powerful adjectives that immediately engage the reader.
4. They should be brief, interesting and contain a bit sparkle--punch--originality.

### What should your thesis be like?

1. Should capture the entirety of the prompt. If the essay asks for the meaning of the work as a whole, then answer what that is.
2. Should be the last sentence of the first paragraph 96% of the time (remember the first paragraph is only 4 sentences in length. You may have a thesis and then a qualifying thesis that reduces the original thesis to a more precise statement).
3. Must be an argument/or persuasive in nature.

Free-Response question from 2011. (Question 3) Suggested time--40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.

In a novel by William Styron, a father tells his son that life "is a search for justice."

Choose a character from a novel or play who responds in some significant way to justice or injustice. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the character's understanding of justice, the degree to which the character's search for justice is successful, and the significance of this search for the work as a whole.

You may choose a work from the list below or another work of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

The list:

*All the King's Men*  
*Atonement*

*All the Pretty Horses*  
*Beloved*

*Antigone*  
*The Blind Assassin*

<i>The Bonesetter's Daughter</i>	<i>Crime and Punishment</i>	<i>A Gathering of Old Men</i>
<i>The God of Small Things</i>	<i>Grapes of Wrath</i>	<i>Invisible Man</i>
<i>King Lear</i>	<i>A Lesson Before Dying</i>	<i>Light in August</i>
<i>Medea</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Murder in the Cathedral</i>
<i>Native Son</i>	<i>No Country for Old Men</i>	<i>Oedipus Rex</i>
<i>The Poisonwood Bible</i>	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</i>	
<i>Set This House on Fire</i>	<i>The Story of Edgar Sawtelle</i>	<i>The Stranger</i>
<i>Things Fall Apart</i>	<i>A Thousand Acres</i>	<i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i>
<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	<i>The Trial</i>	

The following are sample introductions addressing this prompt. These are actual student essays provided by the College Board. The scores range from 1-9. There are two "9's" and two "6's" and two "5's" and two "4's." There is one each of the other scores. Working in pairs, see if you can figure out which score goes to which intro. All errors are student errors.

**Sample GG** your score: \_\_\_\_\_

For this assignment I chose "A Raisin in the Sun." In this book the plot is a not so wealthy African American family living in the 1920's or 30's. The father is the only working one in the house. He has lots of stress try to bring justice to his family and to everyone else.

Why did you assign GG this score?

**Sample D** your score: \_\_\_\_\_

In Pulitzer Prize winner Toni Morrison's work *Beloved*, Morrison recounts the tale of how a mother Sethe killed her infant daughter *Beloved* out of the ultimate motherly love because of a perceived injustice "in a search for justice." Although Sethe's actions are morally questionable to some, the fact that she carried them out to protect her daughter from the same injustice she remembered from back at Sweet Home cannot be contested.

Why did you assign D this score?

**Sample A** your score: \_\_\_\_\_

In today's society, justice is almost exclusively viewed as an obligation of those who have chosen to become civil servants; however, John Steinbeck in his novel *The Grapes of Wrath* portrays justice through the eyes of Tom Joad, as an inalienable human right, and it is often that the injustices that are committed against Tom and his family are carried out by the supposed guardians of that justice. As he progresses through the novel Tom realizes that justice is no concrete set of laws and regulations, but instead ultimately a facet of the human character, and the purpose of that justice is to establish equality, not to be used as a device to subdue the weak by the strong.

Why did you assign A this score?

**Sample J**      **your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

Justice is getting what is deserved. when someone has achieved justice, they feel as if a weight as been lifted and the world has been put in its right order. In Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince Hamlet searches for justice about his father, King Hamlet's, mysterious death. Hamlet's delusions or actual sightings of his father's Ghost drive him to avenge King Hamlet's death as he relentlessly accuses Claudius until their deaths at the end of the play.

Why did you assign J this score?

**Sample KKK (not kidding)**      **your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

Life "is a search for justice." Some people find it, others spend their whole life looking for it, and some never find it at all. IN the novel, "The Scarlet Letter," Arthur Dimsdale is perplexed by a desire for atonement. He is the illegitimate love of heroine, Hester Prynne, who bears the scarlet letter over her breast, and he desired to reveal his sin but is to afraid to do so.

Why did you assign KKK this score?

**Sample G**      **your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

Although well-known for its humorous satire, Catch-22 explores deep complexities of the human condition. The protagonist of the novel, Yossarian, responds significantly to the idea of justice and how his forced service in the air force is unjust and undeserved.

Why did you assign G this score?

**Sample AA**      **your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

If life is a "search for justice," then the story of Bigger is in Native Son is clearly a misguided and misunderstood search for personal justice. Bigger actually responds to the injustice of racial discrimination on a level much larger than just one individual. His responses to all the injustices he faces in his time are quite significant in the work, and more so for showing the effects of racism, but they are far from successful to him as a character.

Why did you assign AA this score?

**Sample TT**      **Your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

In Feirenheight 451, Montag is a fire fighter in the future that burns books due to the government has made them illegal.

Why did you assign TT this score?

**Sample GGG**      **Your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment* changes the course of his life when he seeks to bring down the injustice of the pawnbroker, Alyona Ivanova. His understanding of justice, though, is slanted due to his excessive social isolation and his theory about supermen.

Why did you assign GGG this score?

**Sample YYYY**      **Your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

Though the people of America proudly hail president Obama as our first African-American president, a living symbol of the country's racial tolerance, it is of the utmost importance that people remember the adolescent nature of the United States' newfound sense of acceptance. Helpful in remind us of the dire state of racial affairs in the not so distant past is Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*; Its poignant depiction of the suffocating nature of white men of power and their hypocritical standards, against which the protagonist fights but fails at progress, stands as a monumental reminder of the injustice suffered by African Americans during that time period.

Why did you assign YYYY this score?

**Sample V V**      **Your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

Hosseini Surrounds his entire book, *The Kite Runner*, around a search for justice. Hassan waits his whole life almost before he tries to make up for his mistake of not helping his friend Sohrab when he was beaten and raped by three other boys, all over a kite for Hassan. The author uses a journey to show how Hassan responds to and tries to get justice for something hat happened in his childhood.

Why did you assign V V this score?

**Sample AAA**      **Your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov battles the dilemma of extraordinary versus ordinary people, he strives for extraordinary, in doing so he believes he can serve justice by his own hands through murder, however, he also committed an injustice. Raskolnikov, a young student stricken by poverty is forced to seek a pawn broker to get some money to pay his rent and continue living. Yet the old lady implements high interest rates that he can't pay. Raskolnikov feels the need to take matters into his own hands and make justice his way. Though he is successful in eliminating the injustice created by the pawnbroker, Raskolnikov commits an injustice as well. Although he had the strength and courage to make justice, the consequences were fatal.

Why did you assign AAA this score?

**Sample CCCC**      **Your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

The fight for justice is not always positive and some times there is not justice served or given. In the novel "The Picture of Dorian Gran" the protagonist serves injustice as his view of justice is obsevrred, which in turn allows for justice to prevail.

Why did you assign CCCC this score?