

THESIS FORMULATING AND JUSTIFYING

Essays are analytical only if expressing thesis (position) and justification (argument). Essays lacking thesis and justification tend to be merely descriptive (like listing laundry).

By and large, Technological Inventory essays were merely descriptive – and can be summarised thus:

- Technology is prevalent in society
- Technology is prevalent in my life
- We can't get away from technology – though maybe we should try sometimes

How to start writing analytically? Start by formulating your thesis. Remember: your thesis must make a claim and answer a 'why' question. It's easy – we do it whenever we want to make a point.

For example, in Technological Inventory context, you could claim technology is good – and answer why it's good with, "Because it helps us do things we couldn't otherwise do." So, your thesis would be: "Technology is good because it helps us do things we couldn't otherwise do." Once you've formulated your thesis, you can begin to justify (argue for) it.

You can claim anything you want – it's good, it's bad, it's terrible, it's the best, it's terrible but we can't live without it, life isn't worth living without it – you can claim anything you want. Claim what you want – but don't forget to finish formulating. That is, give your reason. Use terms or phrases like because, since, due to, as a consequence of, based on and etc.

Afterward, in the body of your essay, proceed to justify. Use examples – but don't forget to declare what your examples are supposed to prove. The latter is more important than the former.

We argue for and justify our position all the time. It's as natural as breathing. Now, start doing it in your essays. Take a look at my comments on a draft essay, below.

"The moment man first picked up a stone or a branch to use as a tool, he altered irrevocably the balance between him and his environment" (Burke)."

Ok, who's Burke? What and when did she write? If online, URL will do for now.

"Such is the case for me. As I became aware of the technologies that surround us, my own life transformed before me. I have become a victim of "Technological Determinism". Technology began to determine my interactions with people, my culture, and the patterns of my behaviour."

There's a thesis in there - but not very clear. Punch it up. The term "victim" suggests that technology has, overall, damaged your quality of life. Well, don't just suggest it - say it loud and clear. Trumpet your thesis.

"Technology mediates my interactions with people in various ways. For example, I no longer purposely present myself in an interactive environment. Rather, I turn on my computer to find myself chatting on a virtual communication service; Microsoft MSN Messenger. "Microsoft MSN Messenger is an online application that allows you to converse with fellow internet users instantly, in addition to real audio and even live video streaming with the use of web camera technologies" (<http://www.users.bigpond.com>)."

Ok, that's a good example.. but (see below)..

"It is apparent why I can not see any reasoning behind leaving the comfort of my own home in order to communicate."

That's not an explanation or an argument. The moment you say "it's apparent" or "it's obvious" you've said you won't say why. That's refusing to justify your thesis/position. And what's job 1 and 2 in a university paper? You got it: trumpeting your thesis/position and justifying your thesis/position.

"Yet, there is no debating whether or not this has caused conflict between me and the individuals in whom I communicate with. The term "virtual" has become too much of a reality in my life."

There, you see? "There is no debating.." If there's no debating then there's no justifying. And that's just walking off the job (when it comes to an analytical paper).

What's wrong with MSN, eh? I love MSN! My MSN friends beat your book-club readin', neighbour gossipin', dog walkin', tea sippin' acquaintances any and every day of the week. I can count on my MSN friends. Can you say the same of the riraff you loiter with?

Kidding. I don't use MSN. But I do hope this helps clarify how crucial establishing and debating/justifying your thesis/position is.