**11EN** Writing an Introduction

**Broad**: How can you grab the reader’s attention and introduce the central idea that will be analyzed? Avoid cheesy clichés and rhetorical questions.

**Theme**

**More focused:** Begin to introduce the reader to the ideas in the essay.

* Introduce the title, author, and publication date
* Introduce the theme and connect the theme to the context of the poem
* When applicable, identify the poet’s intentions

**Context**

**Focused**: A one-sentence statement that contains the argument that responds to the essay question and a plan for your essay. The thesis statement is the map for the entire essay

**Thesis**

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| **Good Introductions…**1. **Identify a theme or “big idea” within a text**
2. **Identify the poem, author, and main ideas of the text**
3. **Provide any contextual information (e.g., setting, character, time period) that would help frame your thesis**
4. **Introduce your thesis statement**
5. **Never, ever, under any circumstances use a rhetorical question**

**Good Thesis Statements…**1. **Makes an argument rather than states a fact / opinion**
2. **Offers an answer / conjecture in response to the guiding question**
3. **Identifies a big idea or theme**
4. **Is 1 - 2 sentences in length**
5. **Offers the writer an opportunity for essaying (exploring an issue with reference to texts)**
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**Example 1**

The short story “The Rule of Jenny Pen” by Owen Marshall shows us society’s marginalization of elderly and the Western cultural belief of institutionalizing the elderly. The writer influences the reader to reflect on their actions, challenge stereotypes and he forces the reader to face their own mortality.

**Example 2**

Owen Marshall’s “Mr Van Gogh” is a realistic portrayal of society’s attitude towards individuals who are different. Marshall causes the reader to reflect upon the social marginalization of the “other” and the underlying motivation for this marginalization. Marshall suggests to his readers that they derive their “inclusion” by “excluding” others in order to make themselves more socially accepted. This is often seen in the world today and is a pressing issue in many various contexts.

**Example 3**

Swirling clouds, pulsating stars, a shadowy cityscape flowing through wisps of paint. These are the defining features of Vincent Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*. These images are brought to life with an intensity of brush work that at times appears almost to be moving. Fluid. Alive. Van Gogh’s masterpiece has left an impression upon generations of art lovers; however, behind the painting, the man himself saw a beauty in life that was never quite appreciated in his time. Every generation has its Van Gogh, or so says Owen Marshall in the closing lines of his short story, “Mr Van Gogh.” Set in a sleepy village in rural New Zealand, Marshall’s story depicts the life of one Frank Reprieve Wilcox, a man the villagers refer to as Mr Van Gogh due to his obsession with the work of the artist. Through the use of symbolism and biblical allegory, Marshall uses the metaphorical Mr Van Gogh to illustrate the plight of those who live in the margins of society, those whose beauty is never quite appreciated. Marshall paints the readers along this margin, creating an impressionistic reflection upon those we may inadvertently place in the margins of our own villages.