

**The American University of Rome****The Writing Center****General Purpose Model for Academic Writing****(replaces the introduction-body-conclusion model)****I. Identify the subject/event/phenomenon****A. Explain the problem**

Here, “problem” is intended very broadly. Think of the “problem” as something that invites and, in your view, requires understanding. This understanding can only come from detailed, careful analysis of primary sources or a case study.

(Ex. Female artists are seldom remembered when we compile histories of certain popular culture music genre. This is true of Hard Rock, Heavy Metal, and Grunge, among others. We should understand how and why this happens.)

**B. Provide background information**

Here, your goal is to inform your reader of the context in which the “problem” manifests itself. The most obvious context will be historical, but cultural context will be equally as important, as will the relevant ideological frameworks. You will identify and define historical, cultural, and material categories relevant to your case study.

(Ex. What is Grunge? When and where did it appear as a cultural form? Is it a movement or just a style? What influenced it? How is/was it expressed as a set of consumer preferences? Was it a distinctly “masculine” phenomenon, or did it defy gender categories? How did it relate to consumer culture and the music business?)

**C. Frame a thesis statement**

The thesis is a specific claim, a special idea about your “problem.” To avoid vague claims, make sure you select a concrete case study from which to draw concrete examples. For instance, scenes from a film; bands from a genre, place or period; narrowly defined social groups (music or sports fans, cohorts, morning train commuters, bar or venue regulars, street performers...); and so forth. In the initial stages of writing it is advisable to develop a “working thesis”; the true thesis will most probably be discovered in the course of writing.

(Ex. Although the grunge subculture and music has promoted a message of gender equality, grunge fans have largely forgotten female artists, recoding the genre as conventionally masculine.)

## II. Analyze the subject/event/phenomenon

To “analyze” is to isolate the constitutive components of a subject, event, or phenomenon, and to investigate how these are held together to constitute the whole. In this regard, the thesis is the guiding idea that determines which issues, themes, or aspects will be isolated and examined. Here, too, it is crucial to have selected a concrete case study. Big and broad ideas will inevitably lead to vague and poorly supported claims, hasty generalizations, clichés, and truisms.

### A. Examine the first major issue/theme/aspect...

Ex. The attitude of Grunge bands towards gender, in band membership, song lyrics, style.

#### 1. Present primary source

Ex. Female Grunge bands like L7, Hole, Bikini Kill. Or/And, Grunge bands with female members, like Smashing Pumpkins. Or/And, gender-related song lyrics in all male bands like Nirvana or Pearl Jam. Or/And, interviews with musicians, producers, fans; data from surveys.

#### 2. Analyze primary source

a) *Describe, Historicize, Compare, Contrast, Show Process, Interpret, Analyze, Respond (to alternative views from other secondary sources)*

This is follow up commentary and analysis of the information/data/texts introduced above.

### B. Examine the second major issue/theme/aspect...

Ex. Newspaper reporting and memorializing of Grunge.

### C. Examine the third major issue/theme/aspect...

Ex. fan recollection today and its relation to gender, as indicated in interviews or surveys.

### III. Discuss your findings

#### A. Interpret the findings

In the analytical section you have examined and interpreted your primary sources in relation to a specific and concrete case study. Here, you are no longer adding to your case analysis; here your specific discoveries from the previous section meet your larger theoretical framework. In other words, the discussion here becomes more abstract and you work almost exclusively with ideas. This is NOT the place to add more details, new examples, or to engage in further analysis of your case study. If you are tempted to do so, consider adding a new section to Part II.

In order to identify the ideas developed in the previous sections that you wish to reprise here, and connect into a coherent discussion, print out your paper, re-read, and highlight the main claim from each section. Try not to highlight more than one or two sentences per page. Carry these claims over to Part III, list them, and then rephrase them to show the causal, structural, comparative relations between them. This step may require you to rearrange their order, develop the ideas further (write more!), account for contradictions and contrasts.

##### 1. Restate your thesis in extended form and point beyond it

Here you will return to your thesis and present an extended version of it. In fact, the thesis statement in the introduction should be a concise version of the extended thesis at the end of the essay. Never simply repeat your thesis as this gives the reader the impression that nothing was learned in the process and that the essay is nothing more than an exercise. The extended thesis shows how your thinking grew and developed in the course of the argument.

#### B. Provide answers, solutions, or a final opinion

This part may or may not be necessary or relevant. It could also simply merge with the previous section (Interpret the findings/Restate your thesis). Here you have the opportunity of addressing your topic in even more general terms while taking care not to introduce new ideas or details that could open new and unexpected doors into related arguments. The goal, here, is to give a sense of closure. Consider, though, that the previous section may have done this already.