Common Essay Pitfalls:

* Use **MLA Format**! You all have the directions, so please use them.
* Include **title** that is original and addresses the theme of the paper. Do not change the font or underline the title.
* Stay in the PRESENT when discussing literature.

**Example:** Montresor realizes when he ~~killed~~ kills Fortunato……

* Put quotations around “short stories” and “poems” and underline or italicize *novels and movie titles.*
* Citations: In a single source essay you need only include the # in parenthesis. Make sure to place the punctuation outside the parenthesis “…….” (374). Multi sources: (Rushdie 164) (Burton) “Does blah blah blah ?” (Rushdie 42).
* ~~Don’t~~ Do not use contractions!
* Blend quotes:

**Wrong**- Connell’s use of the word “beast” emphasizes his traumatized and dehumanized state***, “I am still a beast at bay” (80).*** This is a run-on sentence!

**Better**- Connell’s use of the word “beast” emphasizes his traumatized and dehumanized state when he says, **“I am still a beast at bay” (80).**

**Best**- Connell emphasizes Rainsford’s dehumanized state when he proclaims that he is **“still a beast at bay” (80).**

* **Sandwiching quotes**: Do not say ***Poe writes, “…..”*** when a specific character says it. State who says it and why. Use your transition/quote introduction as an opportunity to further develop your idea.

**Example**: At the end of the story, when Rainsford has clearly won the game, it is made clear that his experience has awoken a “kill or be killed” mindset when he claims that he is “still a beast at bay” (80) and not willing to simply just return to the mainland as a victor.

**Use this site if you have questions about citations!** [**https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/03/**](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/03/)

***There is more! Turn this paper OVER!!!***

* Don’t give 3 pieces of **evidence** that illustrate the exact same idea. A common pitfall is to say that each quote is yet another example of the same idea (usually copied from the thesis) rather than building on the idea or breaking it down more specifically. It is better to develop the ideas and THEN find evidence to support. Obviously, the evidence drives our ideas but organize the ideas before you start writing.

**Example:** Thesis: In Richard Connell’s short story “TMDG” he demonstrates that a feeling of superiority by predetermined destiny is ultimately self-destructive when threats are underestimated.

1. He believes in Natural Selection and that he is superior.
2. He objectifies and trivializes those beneath him.
3. This makes him underestimate those beneath him, ultimately leading to his defeat.

* **Concluding sentence:** Omit these phrases. ***“In conclusion” or “To conclude”*** may be appropriate for an oral presentation, but in writing are considered redundant or overly mechanical. Find a new way to REITERATE the thesis without simply repeating it word for word.

**Example:** Thesis says that superiority is self-destructive.

Strong concluding sentence: Zaroff is ultimately defeated by underestimating the true “beastly” potential of the man he once deemed “droll.”

**Another great way to conclude a literary analysis is to make some sort of real world connection to your theme. How might you make a real world connection to the above example? How could you tag that on to the above example?**