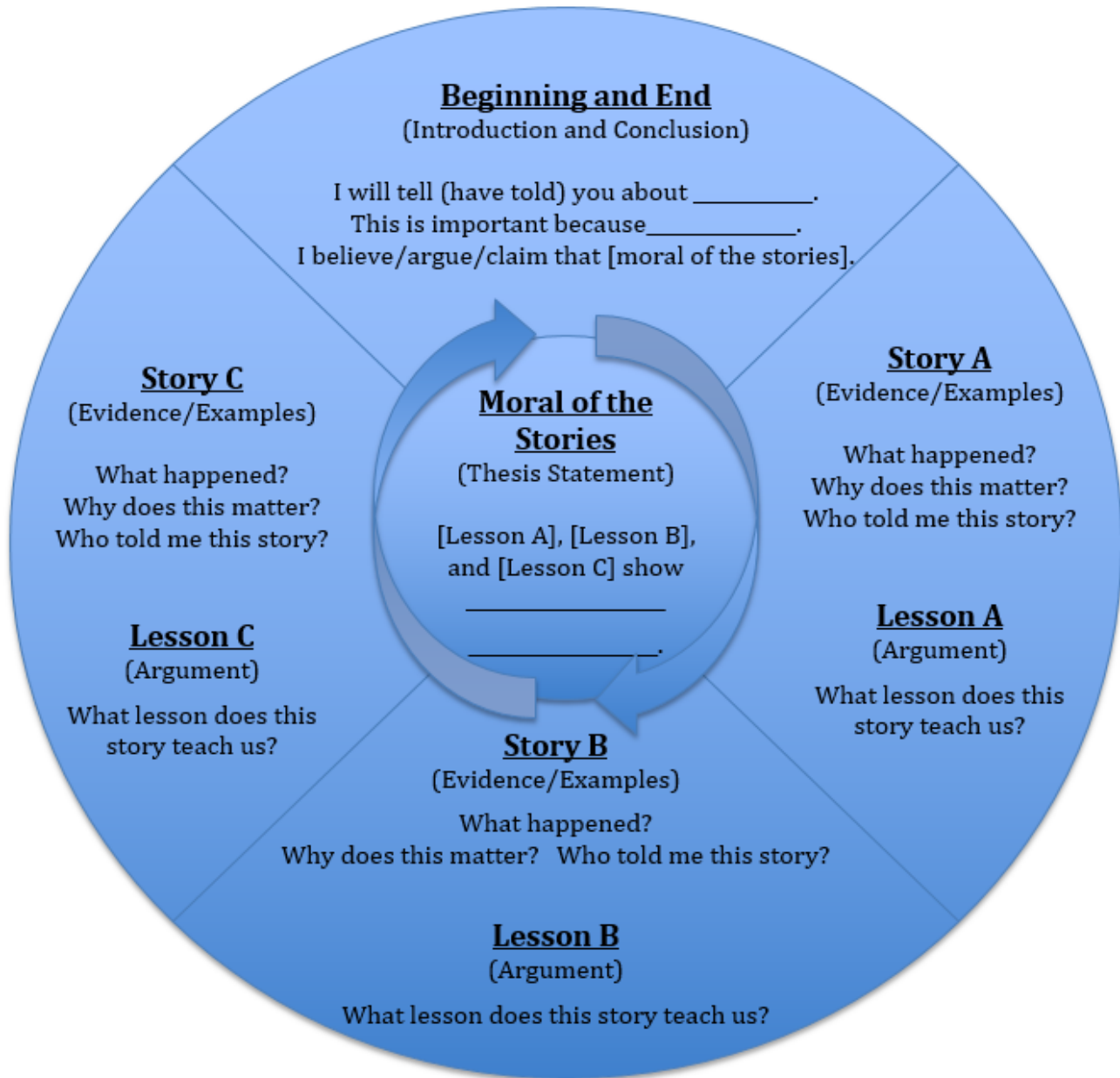


Circle Essay Planner



*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

- T. S. Eliot -

This essay planner uses Indigenous Ways of Knowing to describe the basic structure of writing an academic essay.

The circle shape is significant to Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Rather than looking at things as a linear process with a definitive start and finish, many Indigenous people view the world in a circular way, recognizing that a beginning and an end are often the same. In other words, the process of learning usually brings us back to where we began, but we see it in a different way. This is also true in academic writing. A good argumentative essay will begin with a clear thesis statement, then present evidence to support that statement, and finally return to the thesis statement in the conclusion to summarize the main argument.

This essay planner also uses storytelling language to show how different kinds of knowledge can be used in academic writing. Stories are accounts of things that have taken place, and they can provide valuable evidence to support academic work. For many Indigenous cultures, oral storytelling is the primary way of keeping and passing knowledge from generation to generation. In academic writing, we show that our accounts are accurate by including references to the people or writings that gave us the stories.

To use this essay planner, start by drawing a circle and dividing it into sections, as shown on the previous page. You can fill in the circle in any order that makes sense to you. As you collect notes and ideas, use the circle to reflect on the connections between your ideas.

- **Beginning and End:** This is where you can make general notes about your topic, why your topic is important, and what you hope people will learn about your topic from reading your essay. The notes you make in this section should be your guide when writing both the introduction and conclusion paragraphs in your essay.
- **Stories (A, B, and C):** Your essay should have approximately 3 main sections. In general, this is considered enough to show that you have thoughtfully explored your topic from different angles. Each section should focus on a story (or a few related stories) that illustrates whatever you hope people will learn from reading your essay. Since some stories are more complex than others, always check with your professor to be sure you have chosen examples with an appropriate amount of detail. Remember to include references to where you learned the stories.
- **Lessons (A, B, and C):** Each story should have a specific purpose in your essay. This means that for each of the 3 main sections in your essay, you will need to say clearly how that particular story connects to the broader message, or moral of the stories.
- **Moral:** This is the overall message of your essay. The moral, or thesis statement, is what you hope your reader will learn about your topic, and it should be the focus of each section of your essay. For more specific advice, the Academic Success Centre has a separate handout on how to write an effective thesis statement.