Topic Sentences

*Imagine this is the beginning of a body paragraph in a Language A: Literature essay.*

In Chapter 8, Esteban Trueba begins a series of modifications to his hacienda, resulting in a much more efficient farming operation. These alterations include the purchase of a tractor, which allows Trueba to “dismiss eight of his sorriest workers” (Allende 82).

*Or that this is the beginning of a body paragraph of a history paper:*

Early on the morning of October 8, 1963, 200 American soldiers, led by CIA operative Kevin O’Brien came ashore under cover of darkness, preparing to storm a guard tower. Ten minutes into the operation, O’Brien realized he and his men had missed their target by almost 7 miles[[1]](#footnote-1) – an inauspicious beginning to the Bay of Pigs operation.

\*Neither of the above topic sentences is acceptable in an essay as both are considered **narrative rather than argumentative**.

***For the literature paper, ensure that:***

*• the author’s intentions or techniques are the focus of the topic sentence*

*• the topic sentence is phrased using literary language*

*• any reference to plot events are avoided until at least the second sentence*

*• key terms from the research question are used*

*• the topic sentence is an OPINION that is stated like a FACT*

Another way Allende explores the theme of progress is through her portrayal of the alterations her protagonist makes to his hacienda. Many of these changes, though they appear to be progressive, have real human costs the author suggests.

***For a history paper, ensure that:***

*• your topic sentence* ***is not*** *a historical event or fact*

*• your topic sentence is phrased as PART of a larger argument*

*• the topic sentence uses key terms from the research question*

*• the nature of historical research is acknowledged*

From the evidence collected, it seems clear that the CIA mismanaged the Bay of Pigs Operation from the beginning and should bear a good deal of the blame for its failure. One area where this mismanagement is apparent, is the landing itself; most scholars agree that the botched navigation that occurred on the morning of October 8, 1963, almost guaranteed the failure of the mission from the start.

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)