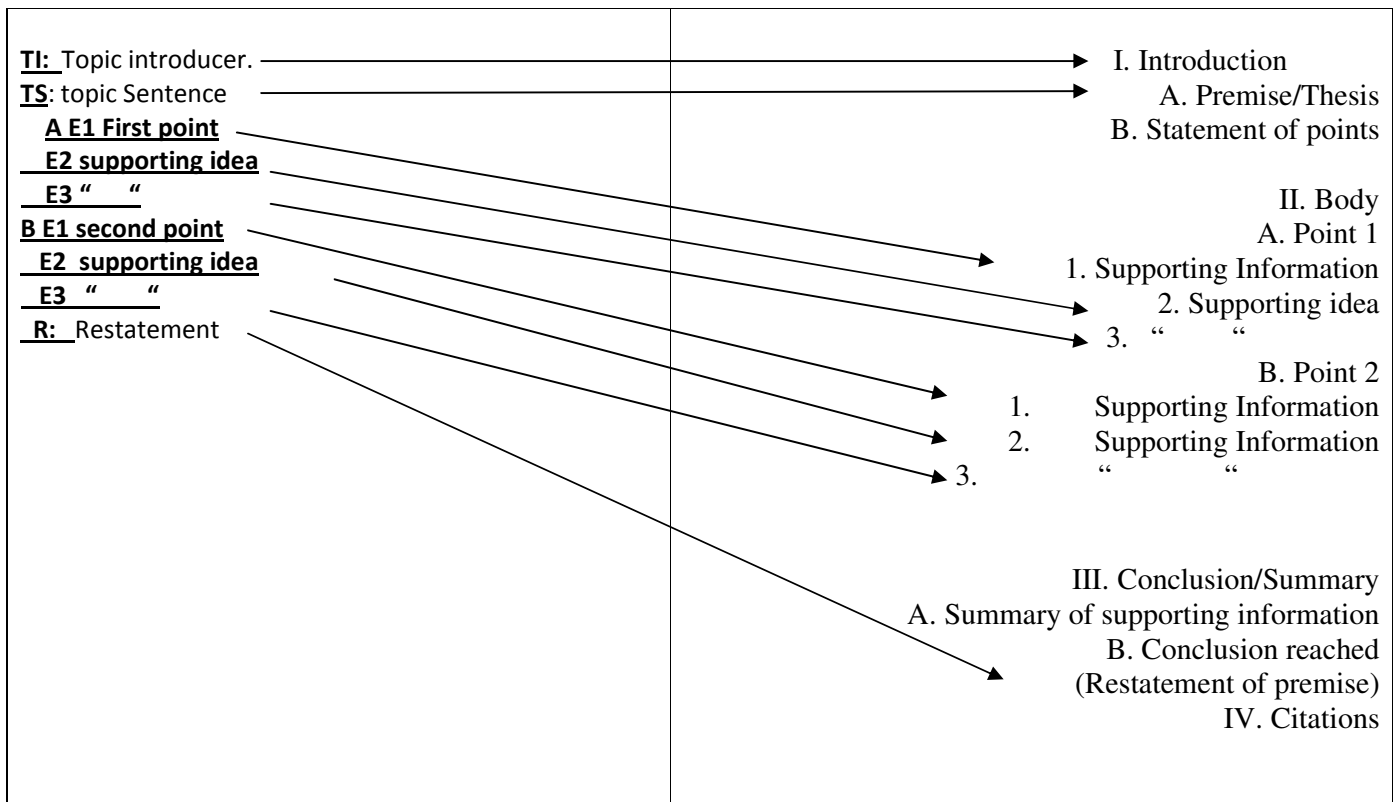


Workshop on Stylistics and writing

Inspiring yourself from the given paragraph, write an essay following the outline below:

From Paragraph to Essay:



The interlocking of the level of articulation with the level of information:

Now write a personal essay showing how the symmetry and the actor are closely interlinked, reminding us of Walter Nash’s intermeshing of the level of articulation and information taking inspiration from the two paragraphs below or write an essay either on the symmetry or on the actor Hester.

The notion of symmetry is extremely important in *The Scarlet letter* since N.Hawthorne has built his novel around three scaffold scenes representing important moments in the novel. The first scaffold scene opens on a woman Hester Prynne wearing a scarlet letter on her bosom and it

finishes with another reference to the same scarlet letter which this time transfigures the wearer. In the first part, reference will be made to the symmetry and in the second part to the actor: Hester Prynne.

The first scaffold scene starts with Hester Prynne who is sentenced by her puritan judges to stand for long hours with a scarlet letter 'A' on her bosom as a sign of her adultery and as a punishment for her wrong doing. The first scene is entitled *The Market Place*. (TI) A prominent feature of the passage is the symmetry represented by the scarlet letter in the first paragraph and in the last lines of text (TS). In the first instance, it is the minute description of the scarlet letter which is surrounded by an elaborate embroidery and flourishes of gold thread (E1). We can notice that two constituents of the sentence are put into prominence and stress: the adverb of place at the beginning of the sentence and subject « the letter A » as end-focus: *on the breast of her gown, in fine red clothe, surrounded by an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flow of gold thread appeared the letter A* (Connolly, T.E: 80) (E2). We also remark the inversion of subject and verb at the end of the sentence and between the adverb of place and the subject is a detailed description of the scarlet letter (E3). Emphasis is reiterated at the end of the text with the scarlet letter written in capital letters and it becomes the central focus of the Puritan society (E1). It is said that the letter transfigured the wearer as if she was under the effect of a spell. Hawthorne will often resort to the use of magical effects in the novel. Hester Prynne was so transformed by that scarlet letter that the people who knew her did not recognize her and Hawthorne gives us this information in a parenthesis or here between hyphens (E3). The author shows her as being resplendent instead of downtrodden as the mean people or matrons of Boston would like to see her. Finally, from the first description of the scarlet letter, synonymous of shame and adultery, the symbol turns into a magical token illuminating the wearer at the end of the passage. She appears as a supernatural figure (R and elaboration).

Again, in the first scaffold, Hawthorne throws light on one of the most famous characters of 19th-century American literature: Hester Prynne (TI). Being ashamed of her sin represented by a letter A, she is transformed under Hawthorne's magic wand into a character from a fairy tale (TS). The text starts with a time clause announcing that Hester Prynne is to stand on the platform with her infant in her arms: *when the young woman – the mother of this child – stood fully revealed before the crowd ... (idem)*. Hester is said to clasp the infant to her bosom and the writer gives us the real reason for it: she wishes to hide the scarlet letter. She did not do it out of affection for her child. But, she realizes that the baby itself is a proof (the physical embodiment of her sin and Hawthorne uses the present participle *judging that one taken of her shame ... (idem)* and a contracted form in order to give importance to the main clause: *... she took the baby on her arm and looked around at her townspeople and neighbors (idem) (E1)*. Between these two independent clauses coordinated by 'and', the author inserts adverbials of manner: *with a burning blush, a haughty smile, a glance that would not be abashed* (relative) (idem). So we may conclude that the position of the words and phrases are so placed as to give a special importance and a pre-conceived communicative effect. It shows the personality of Hester who is full of dignity and who does not want to lose her self-respect despite her wrong doing (E2). The second paragraph starts with a physical description of Hester Prynne; she looks like an oriental lady with abundant, black hair and deep black eyes. He does not hesitate to make her appear feminine and lady-like. The people who expected her to see her dimmed and obscured were astonished to look at how beautiful and dignified she appeared. Hawthorne wants her to appear gorgeous to run counter to the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code (E3). Besides, it is said that she wrought the letter A according to her own fancy which expresses the attitude of her spirit. She is gifted with an artistic talent which expresses the recklessness of her mood (E4). She acted and committed her sin out of spontaneity and without thinking of the consequences of her sin (E5).

Hawthorne's gift is to draw our attention to the scarlet letter first as a token of shame and then as a glittering letter making Hester a gorgeous apparition from a fairy tale (R).

Instead of revealing a woman oppressed by shame, the scarlet letter illuminates her, showing her artistic talent and her dignity. The adulterous meaning of the scarlet letter seems to give way to a magical symbol putting her in a sphere above human beings.

Connolly, T.E., Ed. *The Scarlet letter and Selected Tales* by N.Hawthorne. Great Britain: Penguin books, 1973. Print.