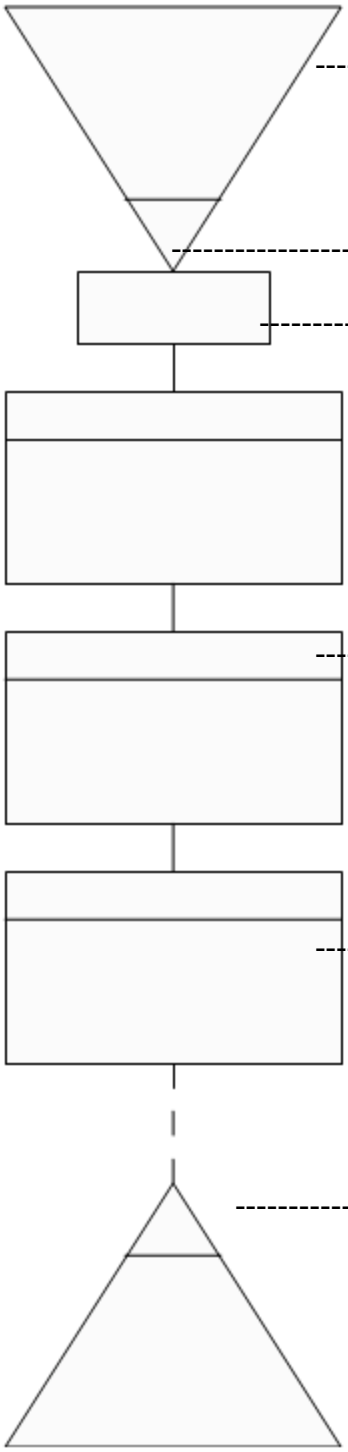
Structuring a Formal Essay



---------INTRODUCTION: Start with a broad consideration of the topic or question, providing some context and definitions if appropriate, and narrow your discussion down to the thesis statement.

----------THESIS: Make an arguable claim.

----------FORECAST STATEMENT: Provide a roadmap of how your argument will unfold (optional).

PARAGRAPH: Each paragraph in the essay should articulate a clear idea that helps support your argument. Start a new paragraph when you make a new point, need to expand a point, or need to divide up a point into more manageable portions (Raimes 2005: 21-2).

---------TOPIC SENTENCE: Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that states the paragraph's main idea. This is a sub-claim of your thesis statement. Use transitional phrases between paragraphs to help the flow of your essay.

---------EVIDENCE: Support your sub-claims with solid evidence. If you use quotations, be sure to introduce them with the author's name, and to explain the quote. A concluding sentence which summarizes the paragraph can sometimes be helpful at the end.

----------CONCLUSION: Using a new wording, restate the thesis statement that you have proven. Then you might refer back to some of the broader ideas from the introduction. Also you might extend your analysis to consider some broader implications of the paper. What questions might this analysis raise?