Timed-Writing Outline

The next step is outlining, meaning you need a thesis. Thesis statements can almost be seen as a formula:

* In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, J.K. Rowling uses **x (your topic)** to represent/show **y (what you think it means)**.

Seems easy enough, right? Well, then you actually have to figure out what it means.

* For example: In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, J.K. Rowling uses **Harry’s invisibility cloak and the Mirror of Erised** to show **Harry’s illusions of identity.**

I would allow this to serve as a thesis for the purpose of this timed-writing. If you want to do well, however, your thesis will also need to answer the ever present question—“So what?” or “Significance?”

* In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, J.K. Rowling uses **Harry’s invisibility cloak and the Mirror of Erised** to show **that finding the illusion of family identity results in the loss of present sense of self.**

Or, if you have no idea why the heck your thesis matters yet, continue outlining. You’ll often figure out what you’re actually trying to say in your conclusion.

You now have the core of your essay. A basic way to organize your essay is:

1. Introduction: introduce the prompt/topic and your novel (very short, 2-4 sentences)
   1. Thesis (last sentence)
2. Example 1: The Invisibility Cloak
   1. Give specific examples from the text:

-“Sure enough, his reflection looked back at him, just his head suspended in midair, his body completely invisible. He pulled the cloak over his head and his reflection vanished completely” (201). 🡨N.B. You **must** include the **page** **number**, and the period goes **after** the page number.

-“He felt very strange” (202).

-“Looking down at his legs, he saw only moonlight and shadows. It was a funny feeling” (205).

-“his father’s cloak…he wanted to use it alone…. find out who Flamel was” (205).

* 1. **ANALYZE** YOUR EXAMPLES.

E.g. Upon receiving his father’s legacy in the form of the invisibility cloak, Harry immediately begins to lose himself quite literally, as his body has become “completely invisible” (201). Harry’s “head” alone remains, before consciously deciding to “pull[] the cloak over his head” and lose himself in body and mind. This mental surrender leaves Harry “fe[eling] very strange” as he wrestles with the identity of cloak’s sender, his father’s, and his own (202). This later becomes a physical “funny feeling” when he can no longer see his legs (205). In finally connecting to “his father’s cloak,” Harry ends up “alone” and disconnected from his best friend Ron, and himself. Mentally and physically confused and isolated, Harry sets off on a quest of forbidden identity to “find out who Flamel was”(205).

C. Example 2: The Mirror of Erised

* 1. Give examples from the text. How does this example prove your thesis (that family creates a [false] sense of self)? How and what kind of illusion does it point to, and how does it affect reality?

1. Etc.
   1. You may include as many examples as you like, but depth is better than breathe, and I would much prefer to read fewer well thought-out examples than a greater number of cursory (superficial and surface level) examples.
2. Conclusion
   1. “So what?”

Your conclusion should remind me why I should care that illusions/identity mean anything.

E.g. Over the course of a couple pages, Harry’s goals change completely. His initial task of “find[ing] out who Flamel was” (205) is “almost forgotten,” and doesn’t “seem very important anymore” (209) after encountering the mirror. Even more illuminating than Harry’s exchanged identities, or his realization that men cannot “dwell on dreams” lest they “forget to live” (213), however, is Harry’s realization that Dumbledore “might not have been quite truthful” (214) about what he sees in the Mirror. Neither dreams, nor reality, are really true, and “personal questions” (214) are not meant to have accurate answers, as distortions are what makes a person.