

Lesson 4.2:

Structuring Your Essay Pt.2

State — Justify — Restate

by Nestor Walters

When we talk about structure for these essays, we're talking more about a nervous system than a skeleton. Meaning: it's not about organization or formatting. Definitely not order of presentation. It's the flow of ideas (and hopefully feelings) and how they interact with and reinforce each other.

One way of doing this is the State–Justify–Restate model. I made this one up. We'll define the components like this:

- State: Clearly (but briefly) state your answer to their question, whether it's intent, opinion, resolve, etc.
 - Justify: Describe how **your personal experiences** brought you to believe/feel that way. Did something change? What did you learn? How did you grow?
 - Restate: Bring it back to your original statement. Describe how this aspect of yourself will impact your community/the world.
- As always, bonus: Pure storytelling

Read the short sample essay below and see if you can identify the key elements. In the second version, I've used the above color coding to highlight where I think they are.

Sample short essay: "Anti-War Engineer"

Response to Stanford's prompt: Veterans at Stanford often contribute to our community in unique ways. Please use this space to explain, if appropriate, how your military experience has enhanced your ability to add to the classroom and campus environment at Stanford.

As a veteran of the U.S. Army and a political organizer I would hope to contribute to the Stanford community in a way that ties these two qualities together. Too often engineers and scientists jump at the chance to work for large weapons manufacturers: Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, BAE Systems. While I was in Iraq, I saw how totally we destroyed that country. I remember driving by a house whose front wall had a hole about the size of a watermelon in it. When we passed we saw the back had entirely collapsed. The rest of the house just wasn't there any more. These companies made billions off the suffering and damage caused by the prosecution of an illegal war. So I believe that I can lend an experienced anti-war voice to the engineering community, one I have not found very common. I have made my opposition to war the key facet of my veteran status. That cool plane someone is getting to work on at Lockheed Martin isn't just some abstract flying machine. It will be used for war, for destruction, for death. It is true that almost everyone contributes to the military industrial complex, but that is not an excuse for leaning in to the violence.

Color coded:

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This structure is great if you have a clear goal in mind and a strong why. In contrast, the What–So What–Now What model (from the previous lesson) is useful when you have a story to tell, but you're not sure what to do with it yet.

Just as before. Tell them what happened, how it changed you, and what you plan on doing with that change. It's as easy and difficult as that.