

This is an example of a paragraph from a hypothetical essay that analyzes the lyrics of “Strange Fruit” by Billie Holiday.

While many of the lines in the song clearly refer to lynching, they speak more broadly about America’s history of racial relations. When she sings “blood on the leaves and blood at the root,” this is more than just a visual imagery of one individual being lynched, as it also represents the totality of all the blood that has been spilt due to slavery and cultural oppression, hence “at the root.” When she sings the “scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,” between the lines depicting “burning flesh” and “bulging eyes,” she is referring to the contrast of white and black culture in America. Just as the sweet smell of flowers covers up a foul smell, white culture covers up the violence by looking away and not talking about it.

POINT

Often called the topic sentence, here you see the topic is the history and the controlling idea is that this interpretation is slightly different than a focus on lynching.

ILLUSTRATION

Here the illustration is composed of one line of the lyrics as well as smaller incorporated quotes of key phrases.

ELABORATION

Here the elaboration is a continuation of the sentence. Marked by clear signal phrases “this is more” and “she is referring.” This is more than mere paraphrase of the quote. It is clear interpretation that takes an argumentative position. Another writer could interpret the lyrics differently, by downplaying the broader societal interpretation of the song.

