4: Ask your question using 4 introduction elements.

- Notice, in your model text, how the introduction contains four basic ingredients: hook, background, stakes, and thesis claim/question. The hook opens with a “kind start,” inviting your reader to be your intended audience, offering enough background to understand and care, as well as showing the stakes of your thesis, the reason why it matters. A great thesis pulls us in and makes us curious. It does not have an obvious True/False, Yes/No answer. A great thesis will work at two levels, head and heart: at the head level, a great thesis will help us see some small element of life (or text) differently; and at the heart level, it will offer a perspective on larger-scale issues that affect our lives and relate to the betterment of society.

Try this: A great question, distilled and framed.

1. Distill, in a sentence, what question your model text asks.
2. Based on your précis (#3), write a single question that you will address. Make sure a.) that it does not invite an oversimplified or obvious answer, and b.) that it has stakes beyond a text.
3. Free-write 2-5 minutes on hook, background, stakes. This will fill out your intro draft.

5: Write the Dream Conclusion

- While the process of writing itself generates huge discovery and revelatory change of ideas, most writers find that if they have an ending in mind, it is much easier to keep writing toward it. A great conclusion will offer the reader a real sense of why this idea matters and how it requires us to rethink something. A great conclusion will give a reader goose bumps, for feels both true and surprising, inevitable and also somehow a shock. Your introduction and conclusion will invariably echo each other, but you do not want them to actually repeat.

Try this: Dream conclusion

1. Distill, in a sentence, what feeling, thought, or idea your model text leaves you with.
2. Jot down the feeling, idea, certainty, action you wish to leave your audience with.
3. Raise the stakes by asking: What consequences could my claim, if true, have beyond my field/paper?
4. Take 5-10 min. to draft your dream conclusion, or make a list of ideas it should contain. You can smooth it all out later.

6: Stuff Envelopes

- You’ve got a sources list, an intro, and a conclusion. Now, shape all this information into paragraphs. A great way to do this is to draw or type out “boxes” or “envelopes” representing each paragraph. For 8-10pp academic essays, I suggest 13 boxes, equivalent to paragraphs of ½ to ¾ of a page. Place intro info in Box 1, conclusion info in Box 13. Copy evidence/ideas from “sources list” into each box. The boxes provide a “spine” between intro and conclusion. Knowing these points helps you stay on track. Make a box for ‘what’s needed’ in terms of further evidence, to streamline your research.

Try this: Stuff Envelopes

1. Make 13 (or the number you estimate for paragraphs) envelopes. Take 25 min. to fill them!
2. Once this outline is made, write the draft as quickly as possible.