The Classification or Division Essay

Classification and division are two simple organizing techniques that can be very helpful in analyzing the world around us. When classification is used, this type of essay starts with a broad group of subjects to be put into descriptive categories. When division is used, it starts with a single complex subject to be analyzed and split up into distinct parts.

**Purpose:** to inform readers about or lead them to a particular view of a group or subject

**Perspective:** third-person (*he, she, it, one, they...*)

**Organization:** in order of importance, with each point leading logically into the next

**Typical Structure:**

1. **Introduction:**
   a. Introduction of the subjects to be categorized or single subject to be divided into parts
   b. Background information showing the need for this classification or division
   c. **Thesis:** broad description of this classification or division

2. **Body (each paragraph):**
   a. **Topic sentence:** concise description of one category or part
   b. Explanation with description and examples
   c. Transition to the next category or part

3. **Conclusion:**
   a. Concise summary of the main point emphasized
   b. Overall significance of this analysis

**Notes:**

- For *classification*, the goal is to create a small set of non-overlapping categories into which each of the subjects can be sorted.
- Include enough examples to make sure your readers fully understand your categories.
- If your total set of subjects to be classified is something really large (like *all the people in the world*, for example), then it is fine if a few subjects don’t fit neatly into one of your categories. Just try to minimize this.
- For *division*, be sure to indicate the function of each part and show how they all work together as a system.
- It is possible to describe multiple levels of classification or division, but this will make your essay much longer.
Sample Essay

Poetry is one of the most varied and interesting forms of writing. While prose is the landscape or figure-drawing aspect of writing, poetry is the abstract art. It is representational and varies widely in terms of expression. There are many different types of poetry; three interesting types are sonnets, elegies, and odes.

There are two different types of sonnets: the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean. It gets its name from the Italian name, sonetto, or “little song.” The most commonly used and talked about is the Shakespearean, which is made up of fourteen lines, with ten syllables in each line. It consists of three quatrains (four line stanzas) and a couplet (two line rhyming stanza). The couplet plays a pivotal role in the sonnet, as the divide between the final quatrains and the couplet is called the “fulcrum” and is where the subject or focus of the poem is changed, thus giving new meaning, or an epiphany, to the piece. For example, in Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 130,” the quatrains describe the woman in a grotesque manner, with “Black wires” for hair, and breath that “reeks” (“Poetic Form: Sonnet”). However, the final couplet is “And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare/As any she belied with false compare (“Poetic Form: Sonnet”),” making the poem about how in love the Speaker is with an ordinary woman.

While sonnets are usually associated with love poems, the elegy is a poem of lamentation. The elegy is Greek in origin, and is written in response to the death of a person or a group. It is written to mirror the three stages of loss. First, the speaker expresses grief and sorrow; for example, Walt Whitman’s “O Captain, My Captain,” an elegy for President Lincoln, where he says “But O heart! heart! heart!/O the bleeding drops of red, /Where on the deck my Captain lies,/ Fallen cold and dead” (Whitman). Second, the speaker expresses praise and admiration for the lost one(s), thereby idealizing them. In Whitman’s poem: “Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills, /For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding, /For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning” (Whitman). And finally, the feelings of consolation and solace are expressed. While this is not present in Whitman's piece, it is exhibited in W.H. Auden’s “In Memory of W.B. Yeats.” It reads “In the deserts of the heart/ Let the healing fountain start/ In the prison of his days/ Teach the free man how to praise (Auden).” While similar in function to the epitaph and the ode, the elegy is neither brief like an epitaph, nor solely exultant like an ode.

The ode belongs to the tradition of lyric poetry, as it was originally accompanied by music and dance, then later used by the Romantic poets as a formal address to a person, event, or thing not present. There are three types of odes: Pindaric, Horatian, and Irregular. While the Pindaric Ode, named for the poet, Pindar, was made for performance by a chorus, the Horatian Ode, named for the poet Horace, is more contemplative in nature, less formal, and meant for silent reading. The Irregular Ode has been used in many formal possibilities while still retaining the tone and thematic elements of the traditional ode. Most famously, John Keats wrote “Ode to a Grecian Urn” while experimenting with the sonnet form.

It is often that different forms of poems are used to create works that inspire the reading public for centuries. A poem may begin as a sonnet and end up as one of the most famous odes ever written. Despite the ebb in its popularity with the reading public in recent decades, it is important for members of society to know the forms of poems, such as the sonnet, the elegy, and the ode, so as to lessen the feeling of “abstractness” and help to reconnect the casual reading public with poetry.