

# Carson Essay Revision Cheat Sheet



## STRUCTURAL DIVISION OF THE PIECE

The most logical division probably looks like this:

- Lines 1-32 (impact on birds and other animals)
- Lines 33-46 (impact on humans)
- Lines 47-65 (the decision makers behind pesticides/our call to action)

## APOSTROPHES

*You absolutely have to be better at this. Failing to correctly use apostrophes conveys a lack of attention to detail in your work.*

- Apostrophes are used to show possession and contractions (the latter of which should rarely appear in formal essays).
- Plural apostrophes are a trickier case:
  - two boys' hats two women's hats
  - two actresses' hats
  - two children's hats

## TONE

*Tone analysis needs to be significantly more precise. Often, it feels like tone is being used as a filler phrase, without much specific analysis underlying it. Remember, tone is described by Word Choice, Imagery, Language, Syntax, and Diction.*

- You may not use the terms POSITIVE or NEGATIVE anymore. They simply don't mean anything.
- Want to know some superior tone words? Go here: <http://www.quixoticpedagogue.org/tone-words/>

## LITERAL ANALYSIS

*Move past summary of the text and literal analysis. You need to always be focusing on **how** specific word choice and devices affect the reader, not merely that they exist. You need to show **why** she makes specific claims and uses specific arguments, not merely that she does.*

## QUOTATION MARKS

*According to Grammar Girl, "In American English, periods and commas always go inside the closing quotation mark; semicolons, colons, asterisks, and dashes always go outside the closing quotation mark; and question marks and exclamation points require that you analyze the sentence and make a decision based on context."*

## BALANCE

*Don't run out of steam at the end of the essay. A lot of you had especially weak coverage of 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph.*

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## ELEMENTS OF THE PIECE YOU CANNOT IGNORE

### *SECTION 1: BIRDS AND OTHER ANIMALS*

- metaphor of war, like planes on “missions of death”
- universal killer, eradicating, deadly poisons
- farmer’s decision to destroy the birds despite lack not being necessary
- judge and jury (continued through rest of the piece)

### *SECTION 2: HUMANS*

- boys roaming the woods and fields
- her use of hypophora and rhetorical questions
- return to war metaphor, “lethal film”

### *SECTION 3: CALL TO ACTION*

- metaphor comparing the use of poisons to the ripples on a pond
- image of the scale of lifeless birds juxtaposed with leaves eaten by beetles
- the power of the authoritarian making the decision, contrasted with the **millions** who do/should care

## THESIS STATEMENTS

*The issue with the thesis statements in this set of drafts was the Goldilocks dilemma. Some of the thesis statements were far too specific and some were far too broad. The trick is finding the balance that is “just right.” Some sample thesis statement illustrate the problem:*

- **Sample 1:** In this excerpt from *Silent Spring*, Carson argues that a few "authoritarian" humans are wrongfully killing animals and endangering their own health through the indiscriminate use of pesticides.
- **Sample 2:** Carson argues that it is unjust for man to kill nature, but that it needs to be appreciated.
- **Sample 3:** In Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*, she argues that farmers will destroy anything that stands in the way of their crops, no matter the consequences.