

Sample Essay Sketch: The Matrix**What is my topic, or angle?**

The portrayal of consciousness in The Matrix

What question will I address in the paper?

Is the film popular despite its philosophical content, or because of it?

Thesis. This should be a statement that answers the question above. Be sure it is clear and specific, as well as plausible without being obvious. Your thesis should also make your job in the rest of the essay clear.

The enormous appeal of The Matrix stems from the fact that it offers viewers the fantasy that we can transcend the limitations of consciousness.

Introduction (including a strong opener and a clear and interesting thesis)

Neo's body is pale, bald, emaciated, barely functional—yet his mind is active, alert, powerful. Viewers of the The Matrix spend much of the film inside this powerful mind. The premise of the film is that the technology exists for the mind to live independently of the body. Its characters defy space and time, explore simulated worlds while their bodies remain dormant, and even enter the consciousness of other beings. **The enormous appeal of The Matrix is rooted in the fact that it offers viewers the fantasy that we can transcend the limitations of consciousness.** On the surface it seems as though the film is suggesting that such freedom comes at too high a price: enslavement to a malevolent race of artificially intelligent machines. However, most viewers leave the film inspired by the fantasy more than terrified by its dark side. In reality, we are limited by our bodies, trapped in space and time, but for the duration of the film we can indulge the fantasy and imagine life without such limits.

Evidence (some possible ways to support the argument)

- quote from the film to lead into a discussion of body and mind
- detailed description of cinematic techniques
- mind/body relationships: quote from Damasio or something on e-reserves?; examples from the film to illustrate; maintain connection to the real world
- Neo's "training"—takes place in his mind; examine the role [position?] of the audience in relation to these scenes
- the evolution of Neo's skills; his ability to move between embodiment and disembodiment
- detailed discussion the climactic fight scene, in which Neo seems to enter the body of his opponent, almost occupying his consciousness and appropriating his power, with attention to visual elements, editing, and music

Conclusion (some possible ways to take things in a new direction)

-how realistic are the "predictions" of The Matrix?

-MY experience of watching this film

-discussion of art's [or film's?] role in depicting consciousness and exploring fundamental questions about it

-science fiction in general

-quote a philosopher (Descartes) or neurologist (Damasio) on the mind/body question