Coming of Age and Theme – Suggested Outline

I. Introduction
   A. Introduce your paper by explaining how your novel fits the coming-of-age genre; use coming-of-age-vocabulary. You might also explain the novel’s sub-genre (from the classification activity you completed last week).
   B. End by stating the novel’s message in the form of a theme statement.

II. Explain how the author uses plot events to develop the theme.
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Evidence (2 or 3 details or quotes) that support the theme with page numbers (see MLA guidelines below)
   C. Explanation of how each piece of evidence supports the theme

III. Explain how the author uses character development to develop the theme.
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Evidence (2 or 3 details or quotes) that support the theme with page numbers (see MLA guidelines below)
   C. Explanation of how each piece of evidence supports the theme

IV. Explain how the author uses setting and mood or symbolism and imagery to develop the theme.
   A. Topic sentence
   B. Evidence (2 or 3 details or quotes) that support the theme with page numbers (see MLA guidelines below)
   C. Explanation of how each piece of evidence supports the theme

V. Support the universality of the theme by explaining its relevance to another work and to your own life. You might also return to a discussion of the coming-of-age genre.
   A. Reiterate the novel’s theme.
   B. Explain how this theme applies to another work (poem, song, novel, movie, TV show, picture book, artwork, etc.).
   C. Explain specifically how the theme of the story has affected your thoughts or actions.
   D. You might comment on coming of age in general—in your life and in works of art, literature, music, etc. Or you could say what you hope your readers will take away from reading your most excellent essay.

MLA Guidelines for in-text citations
After quoting from a work or referring to a specific detail from a work, you must indicate where that quote or detail came from by giving the author’s last name and a page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

Formula: You’re writing a sentence with a quote or detail in it (Author Number). There is no punctuation inside the parentheses, and the period for the end of the sentence goes after the parentheses.

Examples: Rachel describes the red sweater as “all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It’s maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me I wouldn’t say so” (Cisneros 7).

Rachel is horrified and embarrassed when Mrs. Price puts the red sweater on her desk (Cisneros 7).