



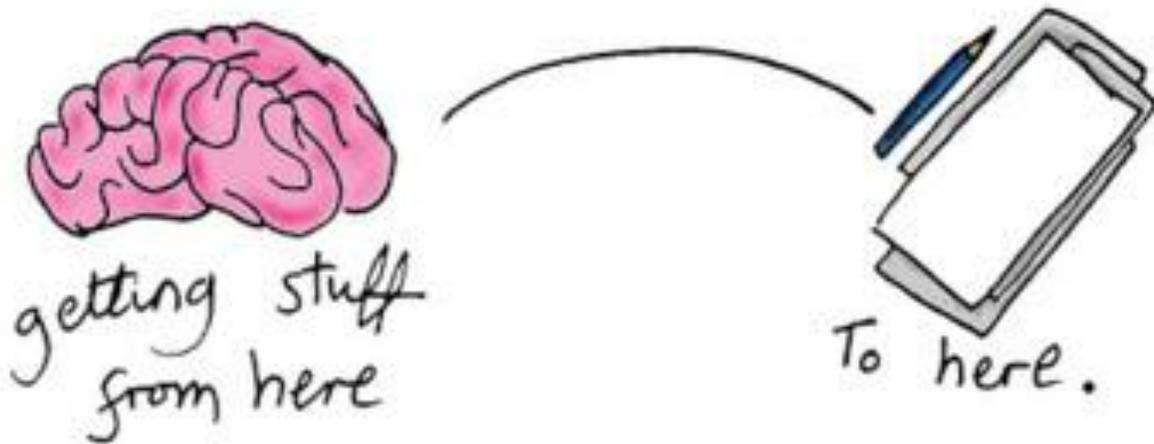
The Academic Writing Process: Strategies for Navigating & Inventing Academic Text

29 September 2016

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Academic Support Centre

The eternal struggle.



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considering how readers might respond to the text

= cognitive burden for inexperienced writers (Kellogg 2008)

Writing Processes

- A. Brainstorm. Read. Write. Edit. Turn in.
- B. Read. Read. Read. Read. Read. Write at the last minute.
Turn in.
- C. Read. Read. Panic. Ask for deadline extension.
- D. Usually starts with brainstorming → reading and note-taking → drafting → feedback → back to research which generates new ideas → more drafting → feedback → revision that leads to new ideas → more focused reading → feedback → more revising, which eventually leads to editing and proofreading.
Turn in.

Your Writing Process

1. What do you need, mentally and physically, to start writing?
2. Describe your writing process: what stages do you go through?
 - A. What is the hardest part?
 - B. The easiest part?

Writing = Thinking

“I write because I don’t know what I think until I read what I say.”

-Flannery O’Connor

Different texts at different times

- Process writing (focus on thinking & content)
- Product writing (focus on its form)

Different types of writing generate different types of text:

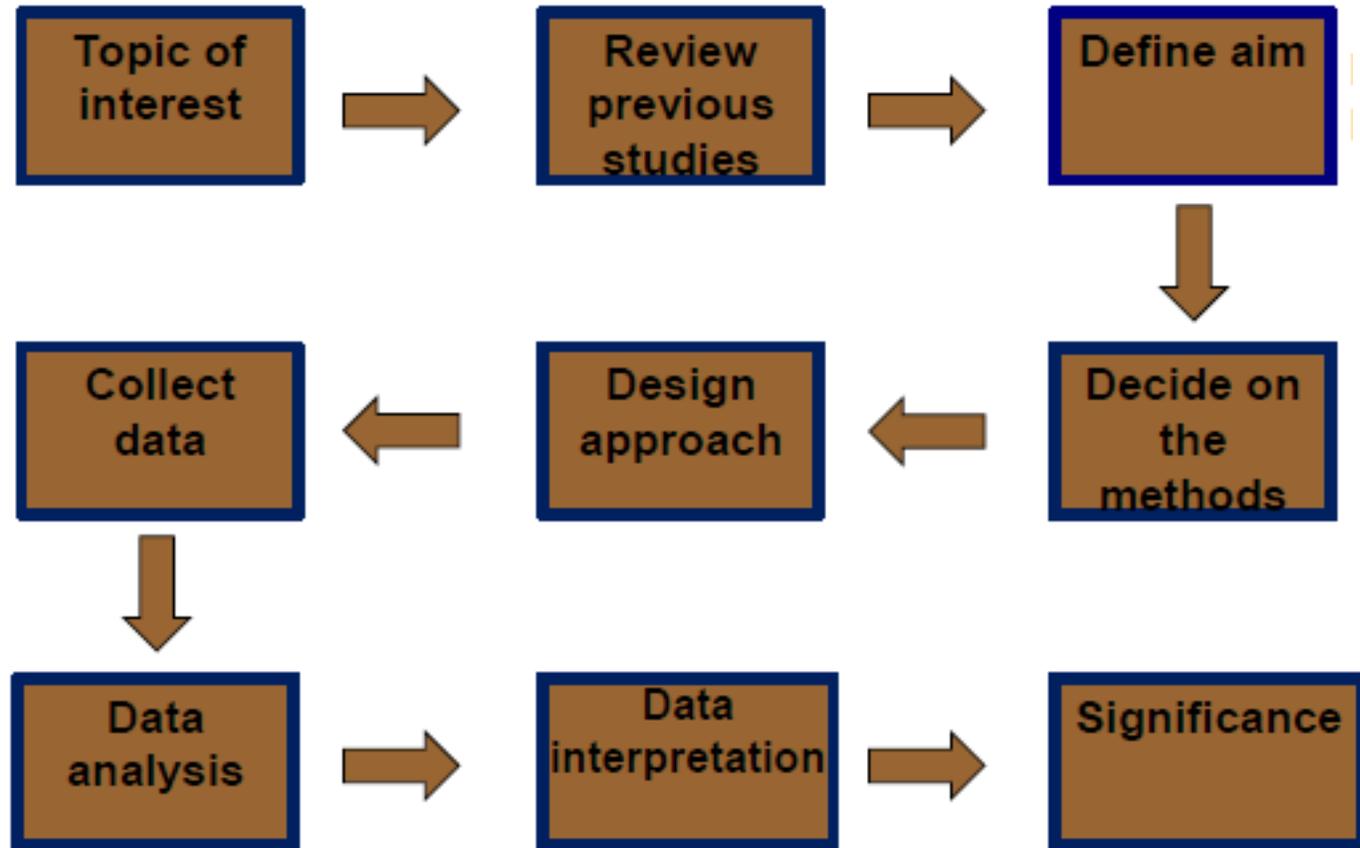
- raw text (for your eyes only)
- draft text (for feedback during the process)
- reader text (the end product)

**All are necessary in the
writing process**

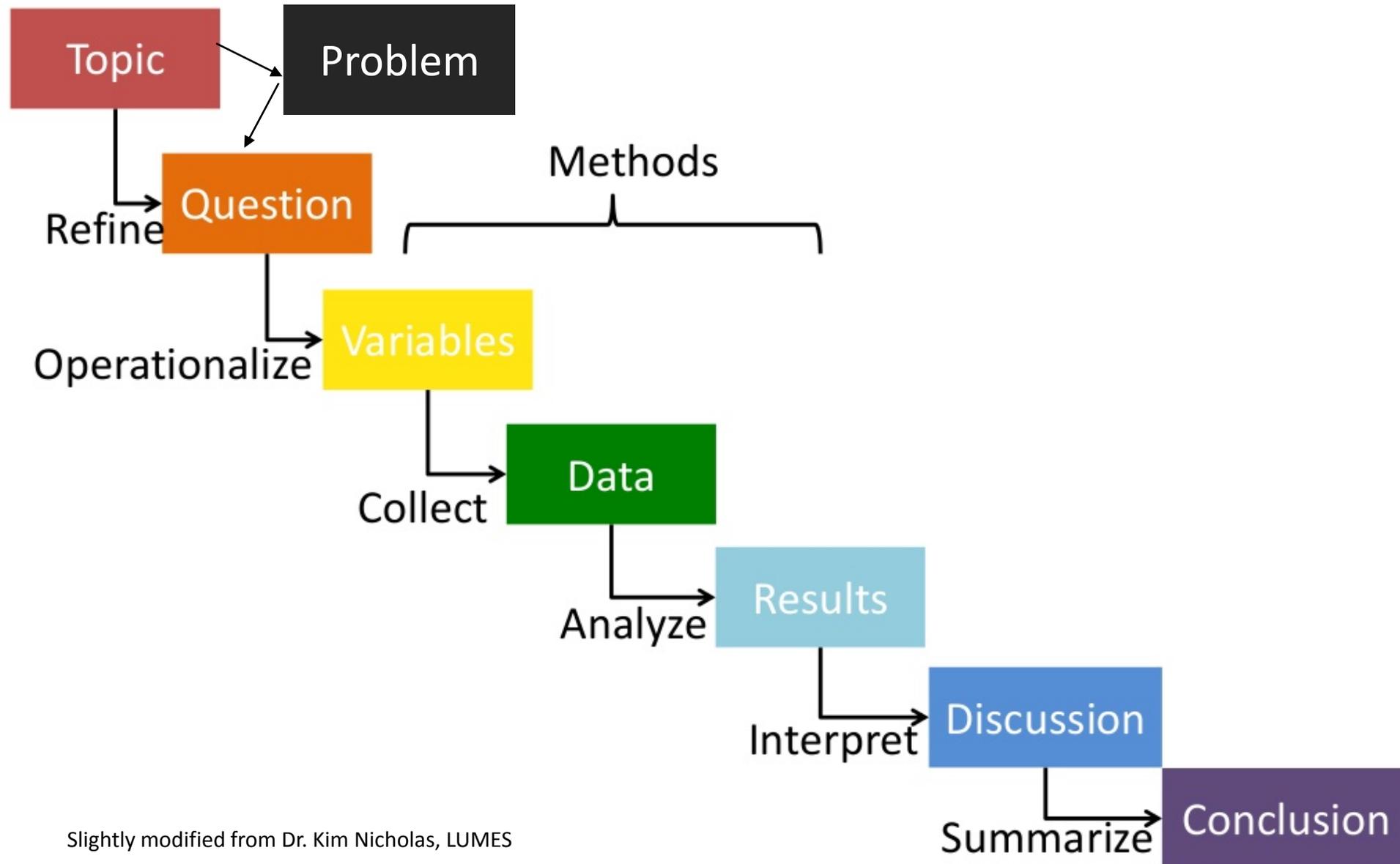
How to plan an academic essay

From your
“Written
Communication”
lecture:

Where is the
writing here?

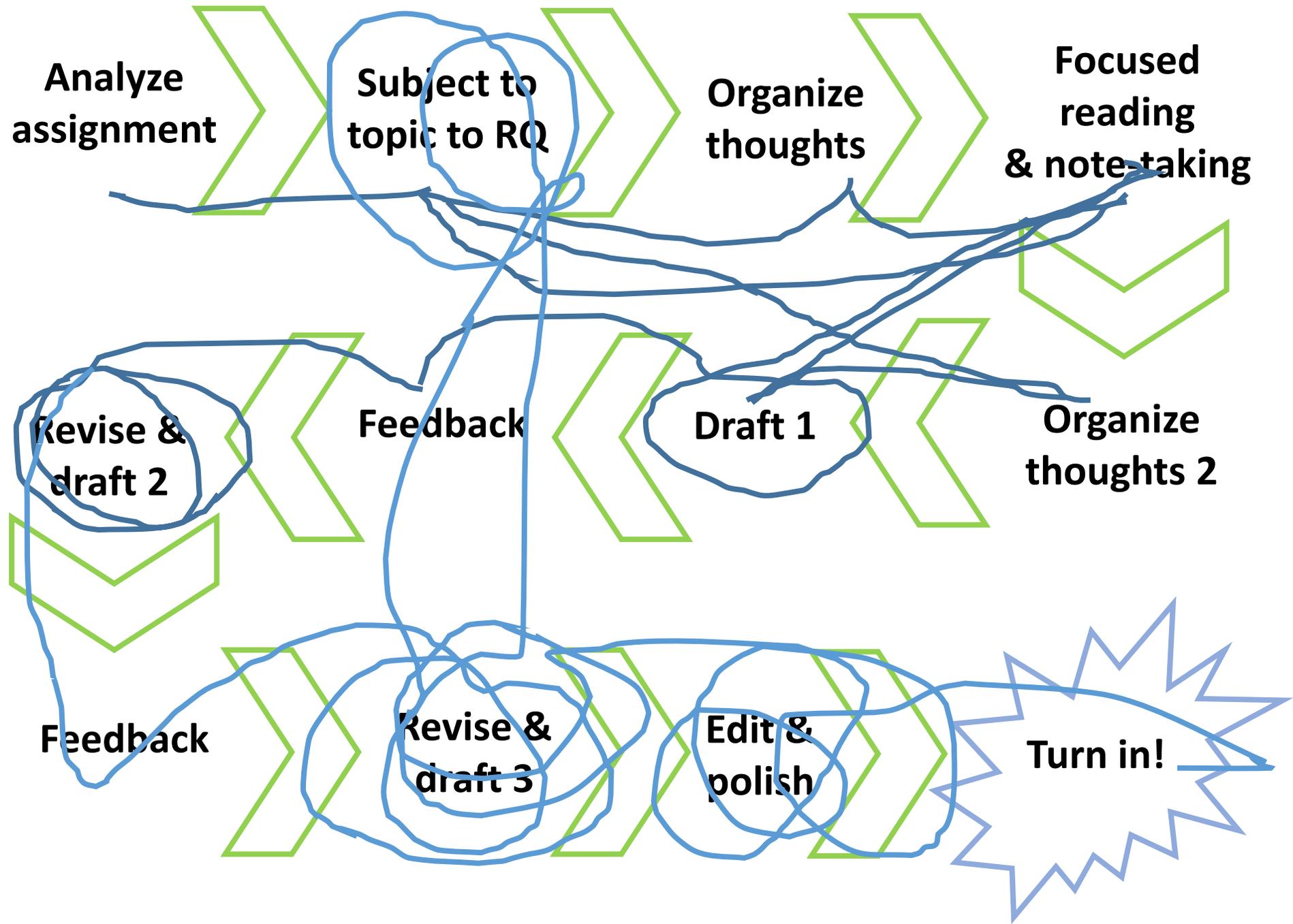


Research Design



Slightly modified from Dr. Kim Nicholas, LUMES

An example writing process



Analyze assignment

Subject to topic to RQ

Organize thoughts

Focused reading & note-taking

Revise & draft 2

Feedback

Draft 1

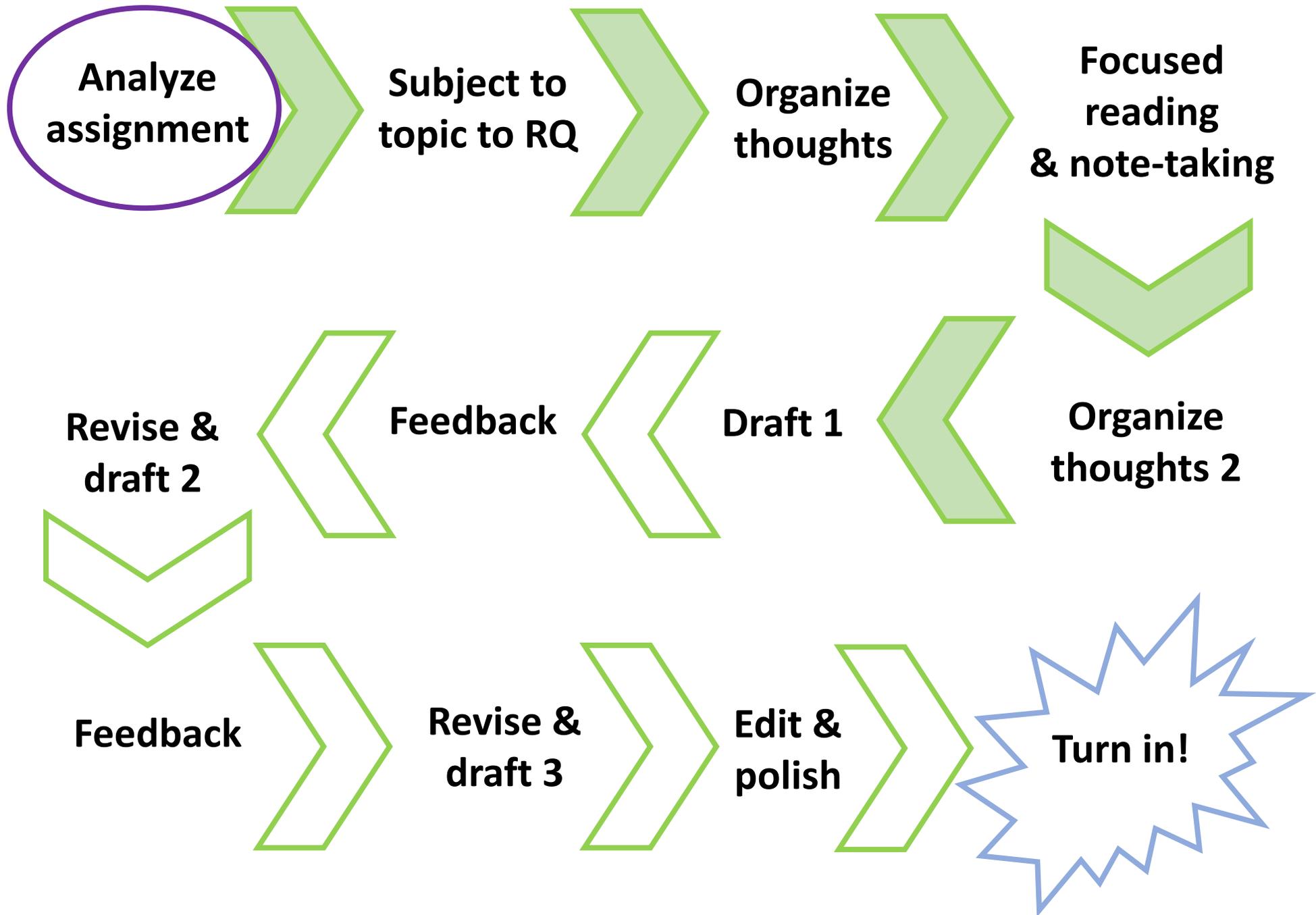
Organize thoughts 2

Feedback

Revise & draft 3

Edit & polish

Turn in!



Analyze assignment

Topic instructions

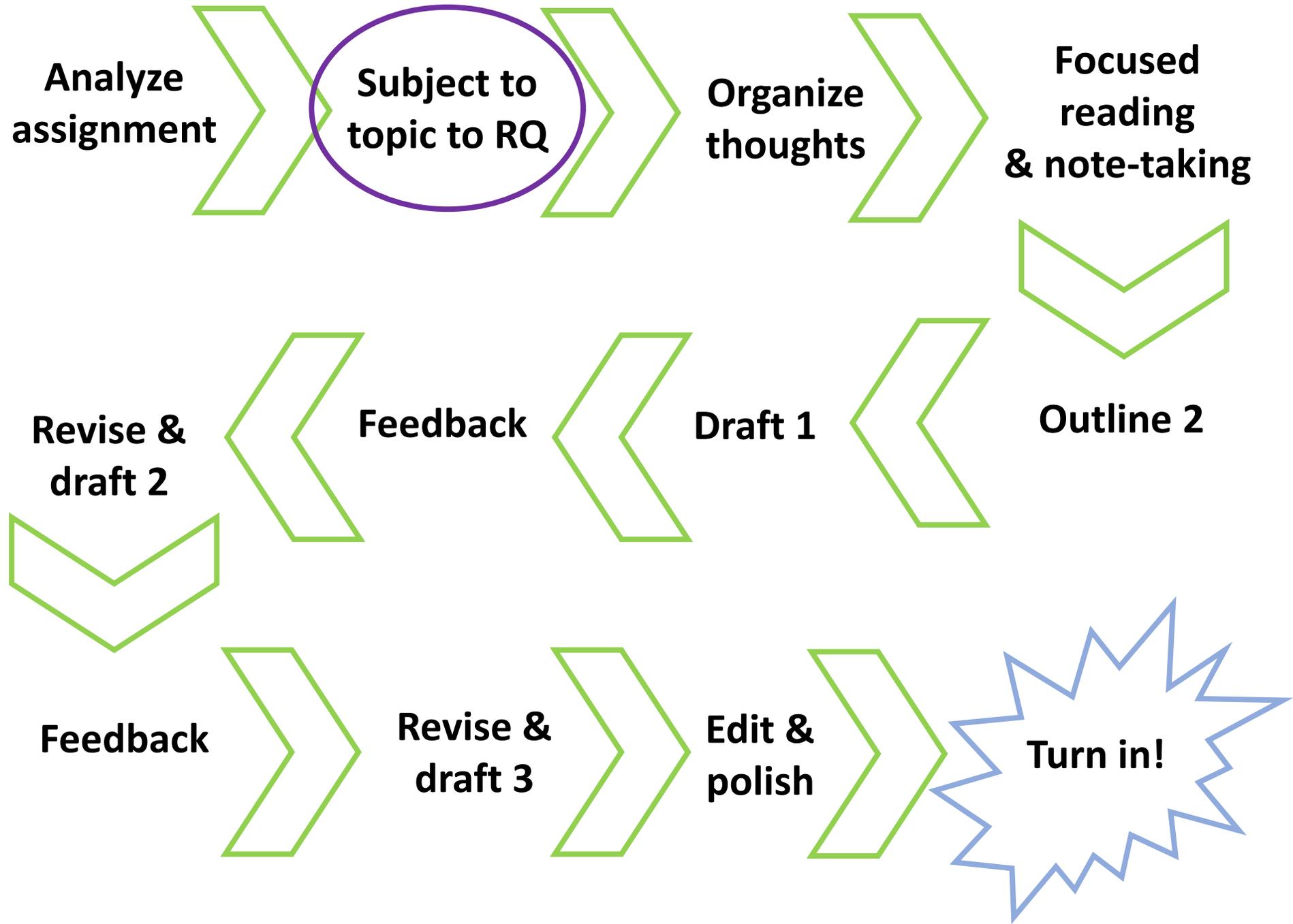
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Action word

*(discuss, compare, evaluate,
analyze, describe, review...)*

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Formalities



Topic: noun

Can't research a noun.

“...beginner’s mistakes: start plowing through all the sources they can find on a topic, taking notes on everything they read.”

“...the best way to begin working on your specific topic is not to find all the data you can on your general topic, but to formulate questions that point you just those data that you need to answer them.”

**Subject to
topic to RQ**

**Temperate deciduous forest →
tree diseases**

(Subjects)

Topic

- **Dutch Elm Disease in Dalby Söderskog (a specific context)**

Subject to topic to RQ

Types of questions to ask:

Ask about the history:

How does (topic) fit into a larger historical context?

What is (topic's) internal history?

Ask about its structure and composition:

How does (topic) fit into the context of a larger structure or function as part of a larger system?

How do (topic's) parts fit together as a system?

Subject to topic to RQ

Types of questions to ask:

Ask how your topic is categorized?

How can (topic) be grouped into kinds?

How does (topic) compare to and contrast with others like it?

Turn positive questions into negative ones.

What has not contributed to...?

How does (topic) not differ from...?

Ask “what if?” and other speculative questions.

How would things be different if (topic) didn't happen/never existed?

**Subject to
topic to RQ**

Tree diseases

(Subjects)

Topic

- Dutch Elm Disease in Dalby Söderskog (a specific context)

Question

- How is Dutch Elm Disease currently treated in Dalby Söderskog?
- What does the current condition of the elms in Dalby Söderskog suggest about their future?

Subject to topic to RQ

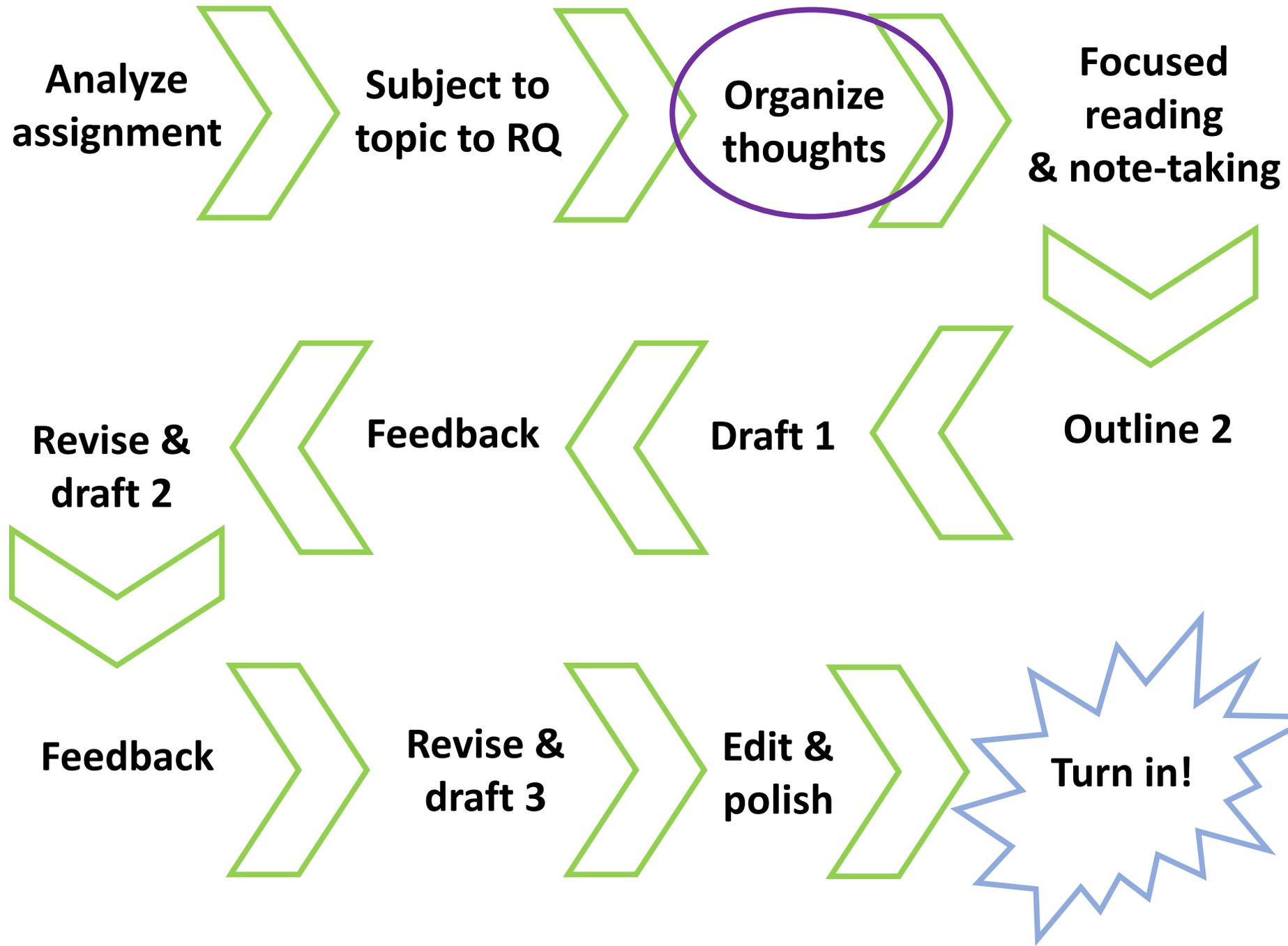
From Ana's PPT: see how these aims could be the product of this type of brainstorming?

Biome: Savannas

Aim: How does the African savanna differ from savannas in South America with respect to the abundance of large animal grazers? What are the causes?

Biome: Tropical forests

Aim: How have humans affected the biodiversity of tropical forests in South and Central America during the past 100 years? What similarities and differences exist between the two regions? Possible causes?



Analyze assignment

Subject to topic to RQ

Organize thoughts

Focused reading & note-taking

Revise & draft 2

Feedback

Draft 1

Outline 2

Feedback

Revise & draft 3

Edit & polish

Turn in!

**Organize
thoughts**

Variety of methods...

IMRaD outline

1. Introduction
2. Methods
3. Results
4. Discussion

IMRAD outline

- I. Introduction
 - A. Context
 - B. Problem (What we don't know or that doesn't work)
 - C. Why we should care about the problem
 - D. Aim (that is, the approach to solving the problem)
- II. Methods
 - A. Design
 - B. Data collection
- III. Results
- IV. Discussion

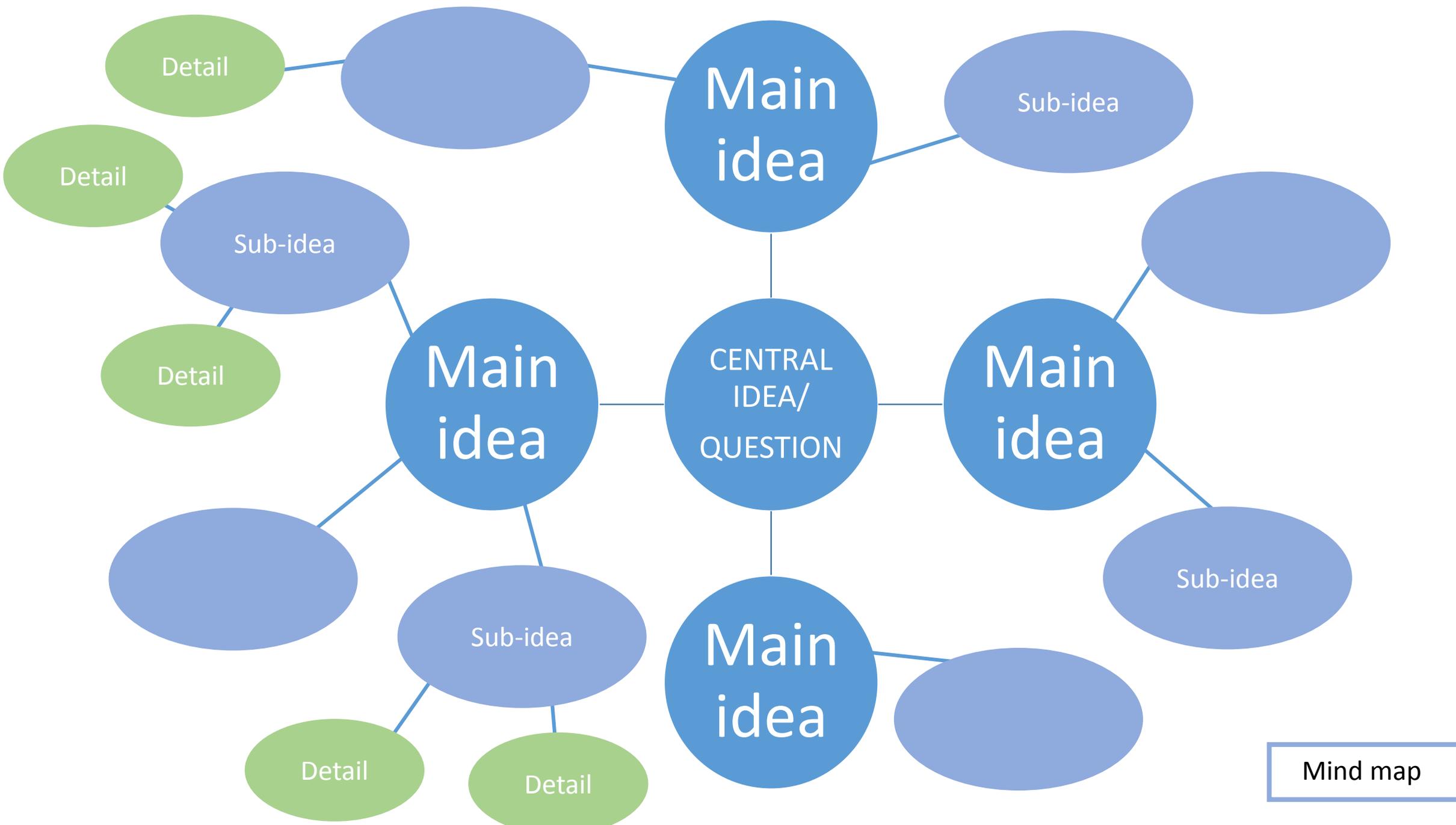
IMRAD outline

**Organize
thoughts**

Variety of methods...

IMRAD outline

Mind map



Mind map

Organize thoughts

Variety of methods...

IMRAD outline

Mind map

Free write

Free write

- To warm up your writing muscles
- To turn off your inner critic or editor
- To quickly generate raw text
- To break through writer's block

1. Choose a time frame and a theme or starting sentence
2. Write without stopping! (No backspace, no eraser)
3. Continue to write without thinking about what you're writing, even if you don't have anything to write about

If you free write on the computer, turn off the monitor!

How to free write: starting sentences

It's a problem that...*(starting point)*

It's a problem especially for....This could be used by....to....*(whom does it concern?)*

The problem is caused by.... *(causes)*

I want to....*(your aim)*

To study the problem, I will.... *(method)*

To understand the problem, you have to understand how X works....*(background)*

Some keywords and concepts are...

I will only deal with...because...*(delimitations)*

For now, I'll work as if this section will have the following structure...*(content & organization)*

Try it! Free write for 3 min. on:

- If you have selected a biome, start with:
→ I have chosen _____ biome and I know.....but I'm still not sure about.....
- If you haven't selected a biome, start with this sentence:
→ I'm not sure which biome to choose yet because...but I'm interested in....

Think about these areas (from Ana's PPT) as you write:

- geographic distribution
- climatic conditions
- soil type
- vegetation types
- fauna and flora

Biomes:

Equatorial tropical forests

Subtropical forests

Temperate forests

deciduous and

coniferous

Savannas

Grasslands

Continental deserts

Coastal deserts

Taiga

Tundra

Antartica

Marine biomes - Coral reefs

Marine biomes - Estuaries

Marine biomes - Oceans

Urban areas

Etc.



From free write to draft

- **Find gaps in what you know to guide further reading**
 - note questions or uncertainties in your text
 - formulate as questions to ask to other literature
 - group and prioritize the questions according to kind
- **Find a starting point for a new free write**
 - underline good ideas and formulations
 - write the best bits on a new page and free write from there
 - repeat until you have developed a working draft
- **Find keywords and make a preliminary structure**
 - note keywords and write them on a separate page
 - structure the keywords in a logical order → paper structure?
 - write additional comments on each point

Organize thoughts

Variety of methods...

IMRAD outline

Mind map

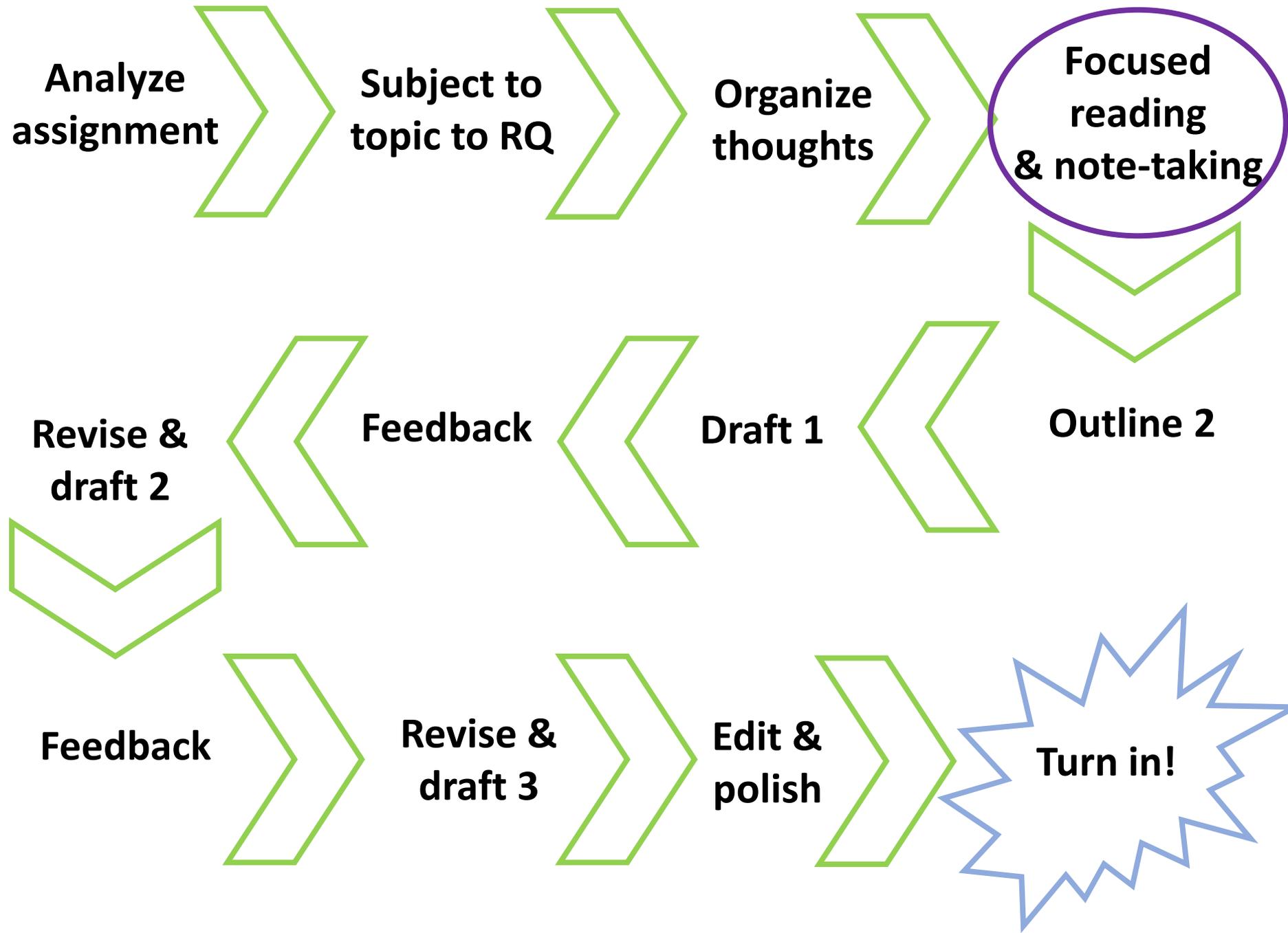
Free write

Tell a friend

Tell a friend

...and get feedback

1. What stuck out to me the most was...
2. I'd like to know more about...
3. I didn't quite understand...



Before reading a text:

Scan the text

→ Title, author & publication info, abstract or back cover, table of contents

Start associating, asking questions, and building expectations for the text to answer:

- 1. What type of text is this?**
2. What is my purpose for reading it?

1. What type of text is this? Examples:

TEXTBOOKS: to teach concepts, facts, and information to students.

ACADEMIC BOOK: to disseminate a large portion of scholarly knowledge on a particular subject, often to university libraries and academics in the field. Sometimes written to reach academics in other fields.

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE: to talk with colleagues, meant to add something new to the conversation. Problem-solution text? Question-answer text? Claim driven?

- **EMPIRICAL STUDY:** to test a hypothesis or answer a question by collecting primary data/doing an experiment.
- **THEORETICAL STUDY:** to interpret a phenomenon through a selective lens. To generalize relationships and concepts.
- **LITERATURE REVIEW:** to provide an overview about the state of research in the field (what is known and not known).
- **DEBATE REVIEW:** to provide an overview of an overarching, ongoing debate within the field, often to critique each side and offer an alternative way to view the issue.

1. What type of text is this? Examples:

What are some other types of texts you've come across in your studies?

Before reading a text:

Scan the text = start associating, asking questions, and building expectations for the text

→ Title, author & publication info, abstract or back cover, table of contents

To answer:

1. What type of text is this?
- 2. What is my purpose for reading it?**

2. What is my purpose for reading this text?

For example:

- To understand basic concepts and definitions
- To understand the background to an environmental problem
- To understand the current state of research generally or on a certain topic
- To understand how this text's data fulfils the aim (because it's closely related to your project)
- To understand the way a theory interprets the relationship between X and Y
- To understand how method choice affected the results
- To understand how to design a certain type of study
- ...?

Reading strategies

SKIM: for the gist and logic in sections and paragraphs. To understand how the text is organized and often to find parts you can skip and those to read more carefully.

NORMAL: for an overall view of the content. To understand the author's argument, problem formulation, and results.

INTENSIVE: for detailed knowledge, precise information. To learn the material deeply and be able to reproduce and analyze the nuances of the text.

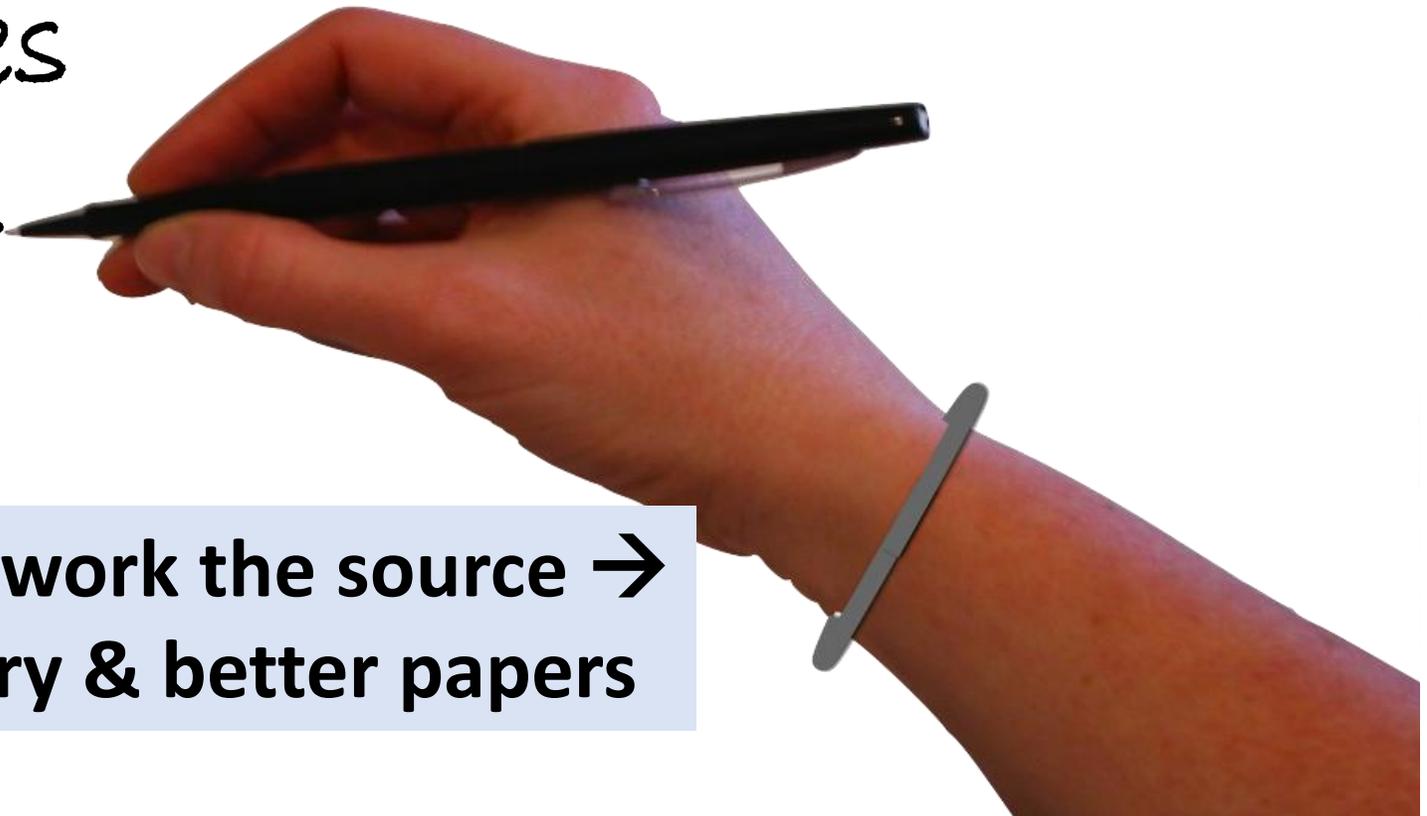
SELECTIVE: to interpret the text from a specific point of view. To use the text in a specific context.

Note-taking

Ditch the
computer;
take notes
by hand.

How do you know
what is noteworthy?

***Notes that rework the source →
better memory & better papers**



Notes to include: content + reflections

- Problem-solution?
- Main idea and evidence?
- Description of a process?
- Timeline of events?
- Keywords
- Examples (that were especially clarifying)
- Quotes only sparingly
- Page numbers and reference info

- Questions
- Associations, reactions, ideas
- Concrete examples of abstract thoughts

Questions by article section

TITLE

- What is the main idea/are the main concepts?
- Who does it concern?
- What type of study?

ABSTRACT

- What concepts/ideas were discussed/analyzed/compared?
- How?
- Main results and conclusions?

INTRODUCTION

- What is the purpose of the article? (new data, new theory, literature review, etc.)
- What is the problem/question being solved or answered?
- Why should we care about this problem?
- What is the solution/hypothesis?
- **What can I expect in the rest of the article?**

Questions by article section

METHOD (if relevant)

- What data collection method(s) is (are) used?
- Is this method a valid choice? What other ways could the study have been conducted?
- Do similar studies use similar methods?
- Any potential bias? Is it accounted for?

RESULTS

- How do the results relate to the RQ or solution in the intro? (Does the evidence fit?)
- Are the results reported clearly and objectively?

Questions by article section

DISCUSSION

- Why were the results achieved?
- How does this article contribute to the ongoing conversation in the field?
- What do the findings help us understand better?
- What can we do to change/improve the relevant situation with these findings?

CONCLUSION

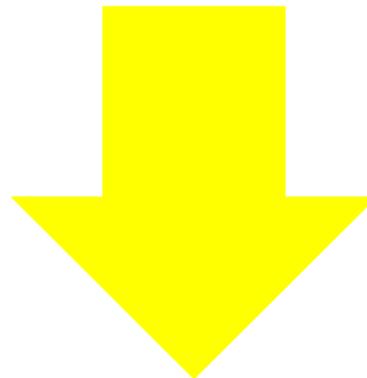
- What is the overall summary of this text?
- Is the significance the same as in the introduction or expanded?
- Any future research recommended?
- **Were my expectations met?**

Synthesis matrix for an overview of the literature

AKA
Literature
Review

Topic: _____

	Source #1	Source #2	Source #3	Source
Main Idea A				
Main Idea B				



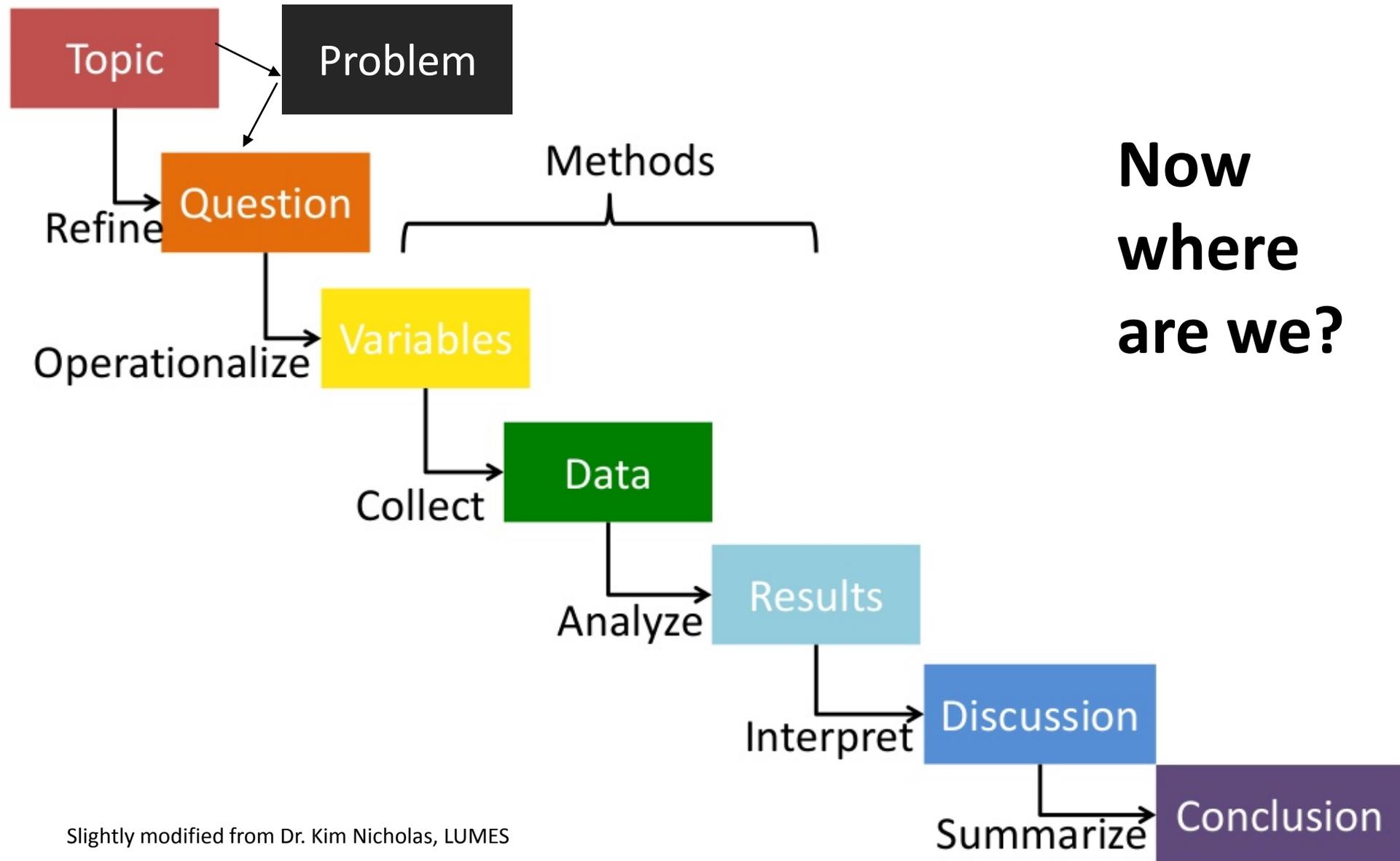
Topic: Women in WWII

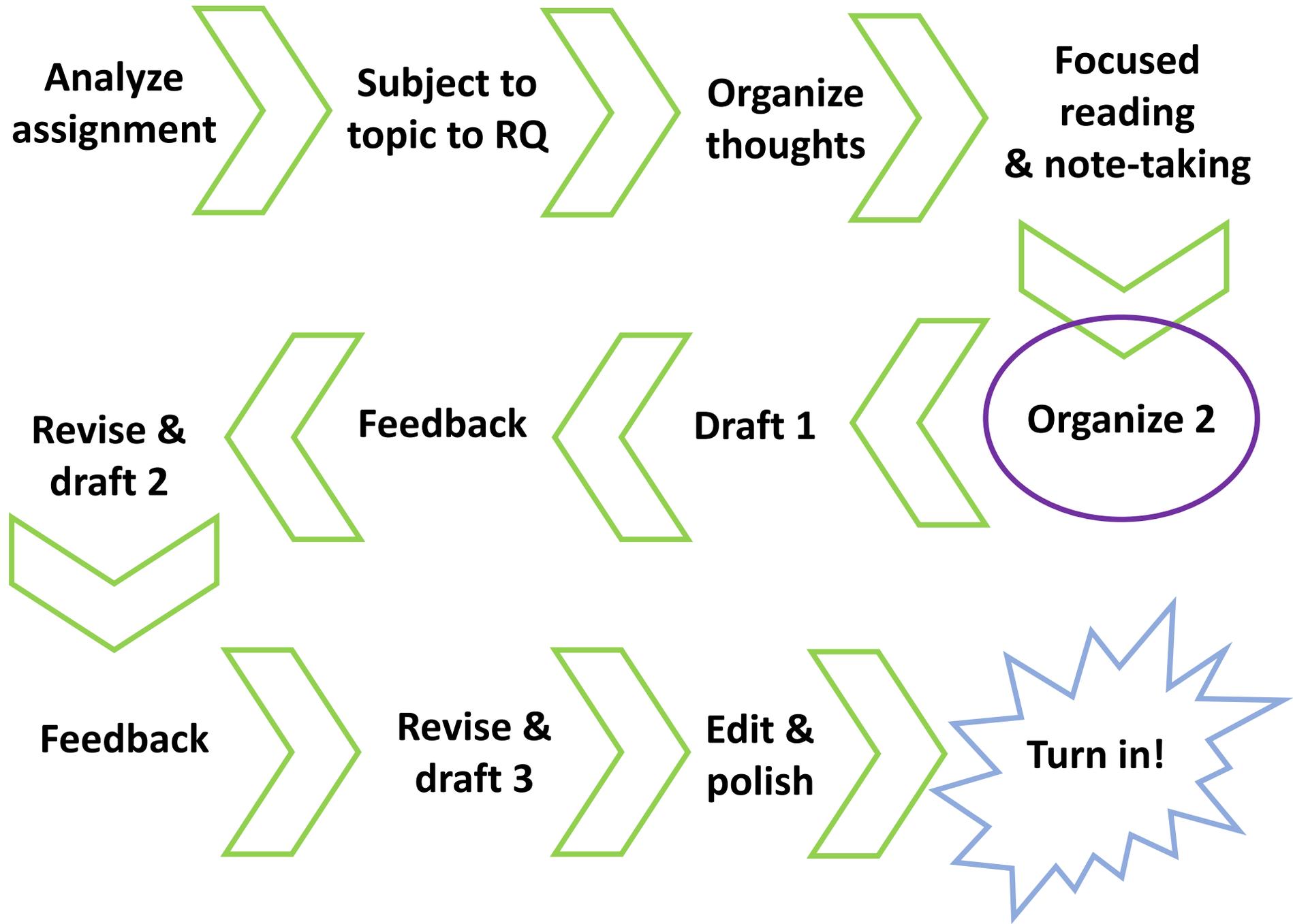
	Cornelsen	Stewart	Bruley	Scott
Alteration of women's roles because of WWII	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women accredited the WASP program for opening new doors, challenging stereotypes, and proving that women were as capable as men (p. 113) - Women could compete with men as equals in the sky because of their exemplary performance (p. 116) - WASP created opportunities for women that had never previously existed (p. 112) - Women's success at flying aircrafts "marked a pivotal step towards breaking the existing gender barrier" (p. 112) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WAAC (Women's Army Auxiliary Corp) was 1st chance for women to serve in army, given full army status in 1943 as WAC (p. 28) - Needs of the war were so great that women's traditional social roles were ignored (p. 30) - Military women paid well for the time period and given benefits if they became pregnant (p. 32) - The 1940's brought more opportunities to women than ever before (p. 26) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women given equal opportunities (p. 223) - Women joined workforce as a break from the ordinary to help the war (p. 220) - Unconscious decision to cross into male-dominated roles (p. 221) - Seized these new opportunities to bring about change (p. 230) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women born in the 1920's found new doors open to them where they once would have encountered brick walls (p. 526) - Even women not directly involved in the war were changing mentally by being challenged to expand their horizons because of the changing world around them (p. 562) - War also brought intellectual expansion to many people (p. 557)
Hardships and oppositions women faced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "From the outset male pilots resented women's presence in a traditionally male military setting" (p. 1113-4) - "The WASP were routinely assigned inferior planes that were later found to have been improperly maintained" (p. 114) - discrimination against WASP at every level of military service, women were only paid 2/3 of what men were for doing identical tasks (p. 114) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women in the military given extensive physical and mental tests, but still discriminated against, ridiculed, and considered inferior to men (p. 29) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women given unskilled labor positions by government because only seen as temporary workers, therefore no reason to train them (p. 221-2) - Women given less significant work and viewed as less intelligent and physically able (p. 224) - "The Church-Bliss diary reveals how dilution arrangements... ensured that women working in male preserves were prevented 	

Ask:

- Are there differences in the scope of these texts' main ideas?
- Any degree of disagreements between them?
- Do they use similar methods to tackle similar problems?
- Do they engage with each other? How?
- Do they cover different aspects of my topic? How many different aspects? Any left out?
- How detailed/deep is each analysis?
- Any ideas in one text that you could reasonably expect to see in another, but don't?

Research Design





Use metatext to organize your thoughts

Can start as process text for the writer and become product text for the reader. Forces the writer to think about the relationship between parts.

Version 1 (for the writer)

AKA the red thread

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the background to my topic. With that background in place, I will turn to an evaluation of the relevant literature on this topic. The next step will be a re-interpretation of my problem in light of this literature. I will conclude by considering the implication of my topic for the broader field.

Use metatext to organize your thoughts

Can start as process text for the writer and become product text for the reader. Forces the writer to think about the relationship between parts.

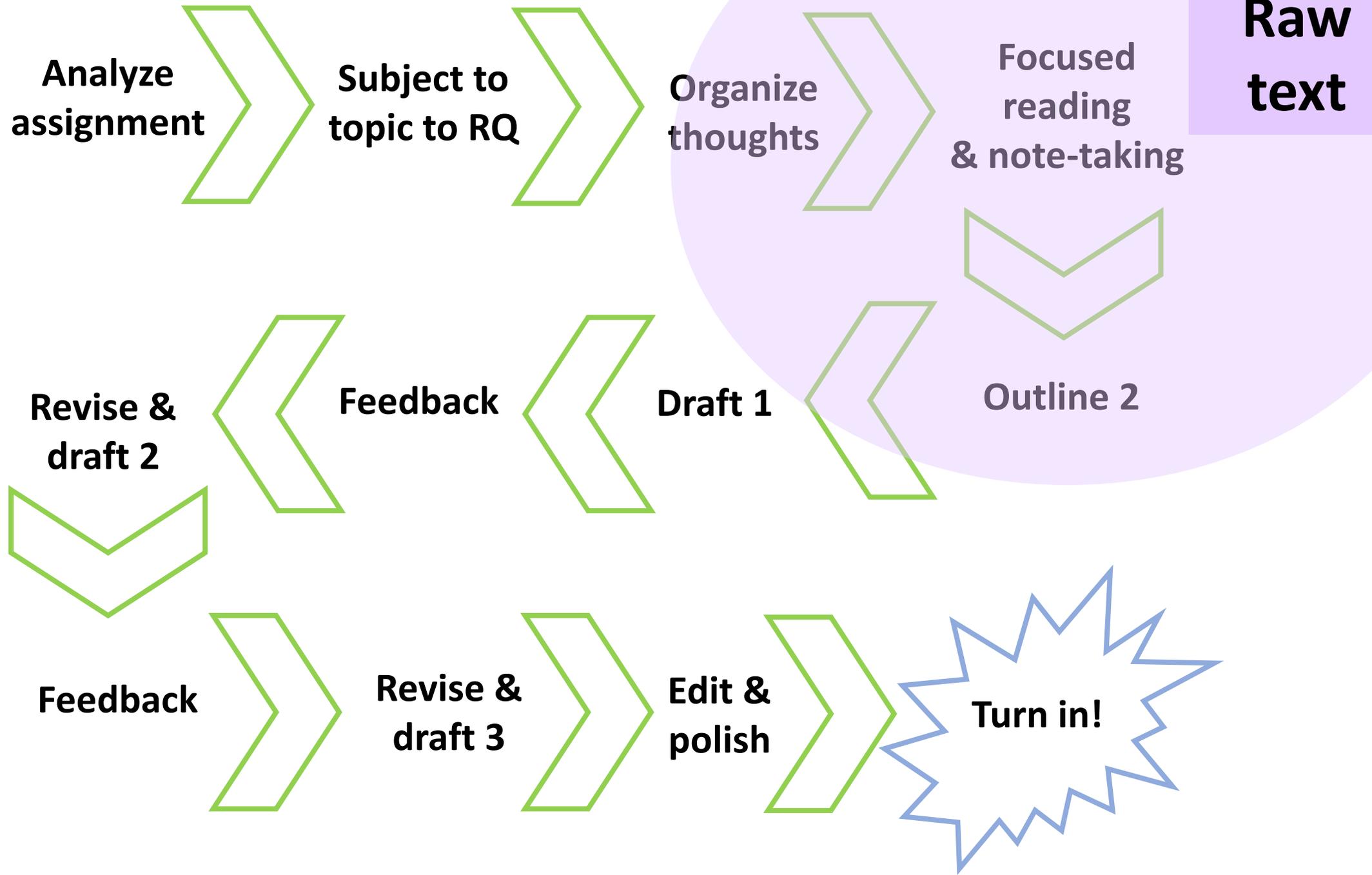
Version 2

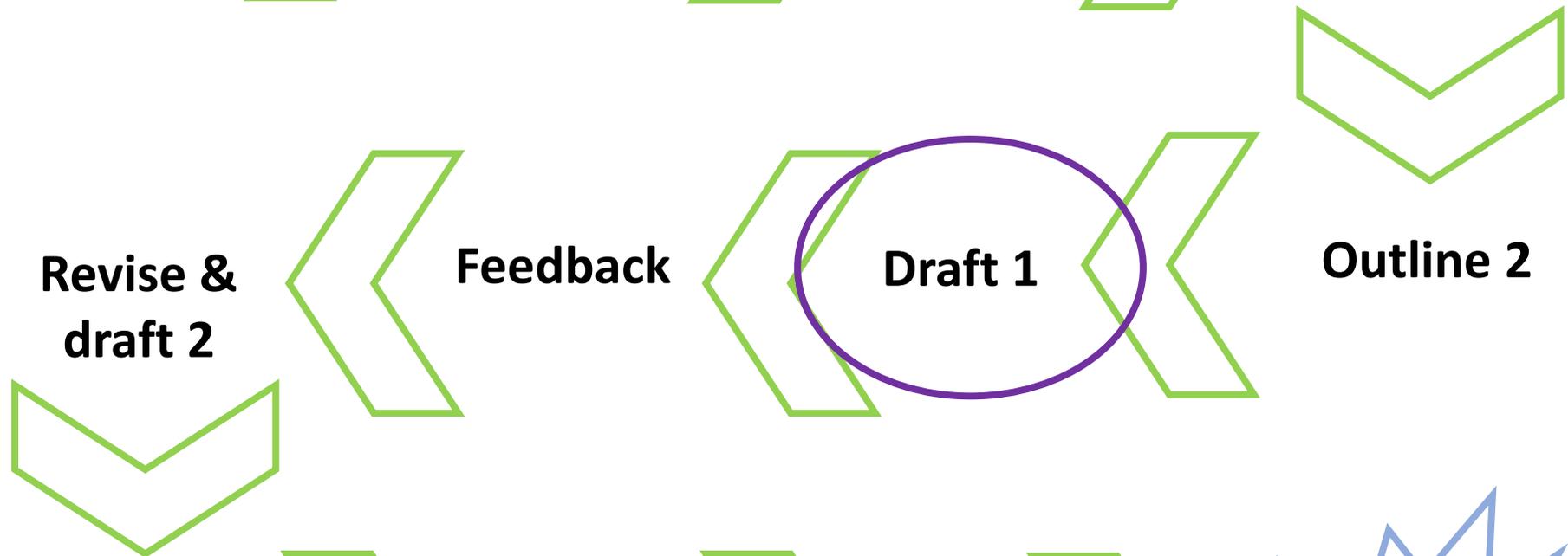
In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the background to [my topic]. With that background in place, I will turn to an evaluation of the relevant literature on [my topic]. The next step will be a re-interpretation of [my topic] in light of this literature. I will conclude by considering the implications of [my topic] for [my field].

Use metatext to organize your thoughts

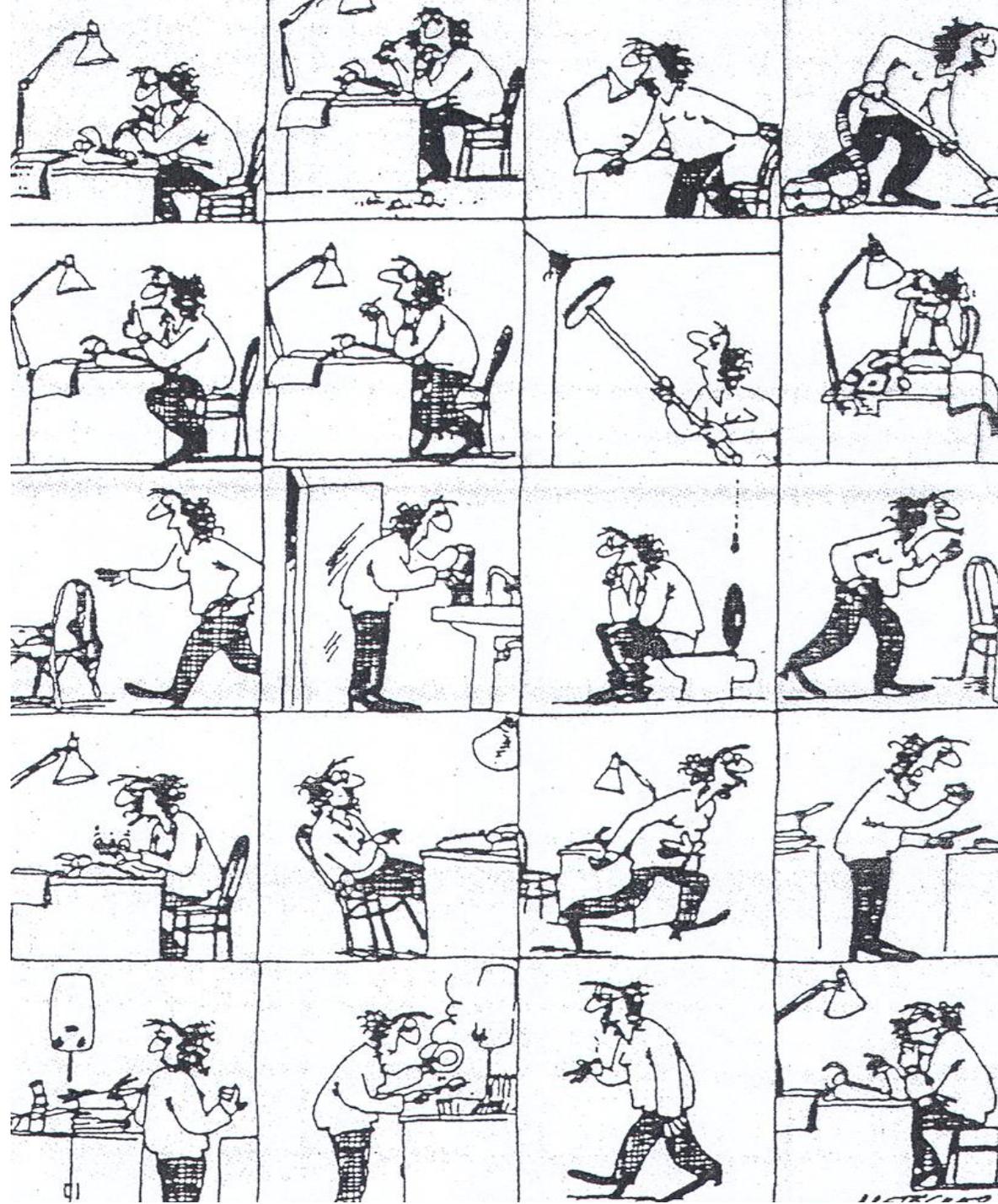
Version 3 (for the reader)

The first step in discussing [something] must be a consideration of [some sort of background issue]. To get a better feel for [this issue], we will need to look at [a particular aspect of the literature]. The synthesis of results from [literature in field X] and [literature in field Y] will provide a new way to understand the [current topic]. It is only when we see [this topic] in this new way that we can grasp its implications for the broader project of understanding [some issue facing the field as a whole].





What if...



Pomodoro Technique

1. Choose a (concrete, realistic) task
2. Work with intense focus for 25 minutes
3. Quickly note distractions on paper
4. After 25 minutes, note what you have done
5. You've earned a 5-minute pause
6. Work for another 25 minutes
7. After 4 pomodori, take a longer break (30-45 min)



Your Writing Process

What from today can you imagine trying during this writing process?

Academic Support Centre



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Academic
writing

Presenting

Study skills