McGinn Five Paragraph Expository Essay Format  Third Person, NOT First Person “I”

A good way to approach an essay is to envision it as a Five Part project. An essay is made up of the Introduction with a one sentence Thesis, Three main points (the body), and the Conclusion. Here is an outline:

I. Introduction with Thesis Hook your reader and tell the reader in three main points, exactly what your paper will be about.
   II. Point One
   III. Point Two
   IV. Point Three
   V. Conclusion  Much like the Introduction. You want to end strong and in re-stating your Thesis you are reminding the reader what your paper was about.

Do not write: “In this essay I will tell you…” OR “As you can tell by reading my essay…” OR “In conclusion…”

Of course depending on the length and breadth of your paper you may have more than three main points. However by using this structure it will make envisioning your paper easier.

The Introduction

An Introduction should answer three questions
1. What am I talking about in this paper?
   By answering this question you let the reader know what the subject of the paper is in three main points. For example, if your paper were about a particular book, your answer to this question would give the title, author, and any other necessary information as well.
2. How am I going to talk about it?
   This is where you let the reader know how your paper is organized. Here you very briefly introduce your main points or the evidence that will prove your point.
3. What am I going to prove in this paper?
   This is the THESIS STATEMENT. The thesis is usually the last sentence in the first paragraph and it clearly states the argument or point you are making in your paper.

The Body

The Body consists of everything between your introduction and conclusion and it is where you discuss in very specific and detailed pragraphs — your three main points. A good starting place is to envision that each point is a separate paragraph (or in a long paper each point might be a section). In each paragraph you:
· Introduce your point
· Explain your point
· Give supporting evidence (this is where quotes go.)
· Explain how the point and evidence relate to your thesis

The whole point of each paragraph is to relate your point to your thesis, but it helps to spell it out clearly in at least one sentence of the paragraph.

The Conclusion

Basically, the conclusion restates the introduction. So just reiterate questions 1, 2, and 3. It is also helpful to trace your argument as you made it within the essay. A good way to do this is to create a proof that might look something like this:

POINT ONE + POINT TWO + POINT THREE = THESIS
OR
POINT ONE leads to POINT TWO which leads to POINT THREE therefore
THESIS is true/accurate and well supported.

So, when planning your essay consider this format:

I. Introduction
   A. Subject
   B. Main Points
   C. THESIS
II. Point One
   A. Intro and explanation of point
   B. Evidence
   C. How point relates to thesis
III. Point Two
   A. Intro and explanation of point
   B. Evidence
   C. How point relates to thesis
IV. Point Three
   A. Intro and explanation of point
   B. Evidence
   C. How point relates to thesis
V. Conclusion
   A. Restate subject
   B. Summarize Main Points
   C. Restate THESIS
   (B and C can be combined in your concluding paragraph.)

Organization in a paper is important not only because it makes the paper easier to write, it also guides the reader through the paper. A clearly organized paper will better hold the reader's interest and convince them that your thesis is valid.