

Literary Analysis Assignment Sheet

Purpose: A good analysis shows not only a student's skill in composition, but also his/her depth of explaining and understanding the impact of literature. An analysis is a specific form of essay writing in which a piece of literature is explained in a way that leads to a deeper understanding of the story or unfolds the theme.

- * Focus strictly on the text of the passage.
- * Background information about the author or the work itself, while often interesting and enlightening, should not be a part of an analysis.
- * Examine the literary devices the author uses to communicate the theme, characters, etc.

Therefore, the heart of the essay should be a discussion of the literary devices used by the author to express that character, convention or theme. This should be done by a close examination of specific examples from the text.

Task: In a five-paragraph (or more) essay, students will complete either of the following analyses based on explicit whole-class instruction:

- A. Theme-based or Conflict-based analysis
- B. Character-driven analysis

Format:

A. Introduction: The first paragraph in the essay begins creatively in order to catch the reader's interest, provides essential background about the literary work, and prepares the reader for the major thesis. The introduction must include the *author and title* of the work as well as an explanation of the *theme* to be discussed or the *dominant characteristics* or *motivations* of the character analyzed. Other essential background may include *setting*, *brief plot summary*, *an introduction of main characters*, and *definition of terms*. The *major thesis* goes in this paragraph usually at the end. Because the major thesis sometimes sounds tacked on, make special attempts to link it to the sentence that precedes it by building on a key word or idea.

B. Body Paragraphs: Two or more body paragraphs to support the thesis. These paragraphs contain supporting examples (concrete detail) and analysis/explanation (commentary) for the topic sentences/support theses. Each paragraph in the body includes (1) a topic sentence/support thesis, (2) integrated concrete detail and commentary, and (3) a concluding sentence. **Each paragraph should discuss a literary element related to the thesis.** In its simplest form, each body paragraph is organized as follows:

1. topic sentence / support thesis
2. lead-in to concrete detail
3. concrete detail
4. commentary
5. transition and lead-in to next concrete detail
6. concrete detail
7. commentary
8. wrap-up or clincher sentence

1. Concrete Details: a specific example from the work used to provide evidence for the topic sentence/support thesis. Concrete detail can be a combination of paraphrase and direct quotation from the work.

2. Commentary: student explanation and interpretation of the concrete detail. Commentary tells the reader what the author of the text means or how the concrete detail proves the topic sentence/support thesis. Commentary may include interpretation, analysis, argument, insight, and/or reflection.

3. Transitions: words or phrases that connect or “hook” one idea to the next, both between and within paragraphs. Transition devices include using connecting words as well as repeating key words or using synonyms.

4. Clincher/Wrap-up Sentence: last sentence of the body paragraph. It concludes the paragraph by tying the concrete details and commentary back to the major thesis.

C. Conclusion: The last paragraph in the essay should begin by echoing the major thesis without repeating the words verbatim. Then, the conclusion should broaden from the thesis statements to answer the “so what?” question your reader may have after reading your essay. The conclusion should do one or more of the following:

- 1) Reflect on how the essay topic relates to the book as a whole
- 2) Evaluate how successful the author is in achieving his or her goal or message
- 3) Give a personal statement about the topic
- 4) Connect back to the creative opening
- 5) Give an opinion of the novel’s value or significance

D. MLA Format: The Bethlehem Area School District has adopted the Modern Language Association (MLA) format as the accepted final draft format for essays and research papers. While there are many style manuals, MLA has been widely used in liberal arts and humanities programs of colleges and universities.

Grading: Use Literary Analysis rubric (*attached*) when writing essay.