


Module 2: Self-Discovery Through Change and Rebirth

Topic 5 Content: Writing a Literary Analysis

Introduction

Writing a Literary Analysis

Introduction



There are certain steps you must follow in order to write a literary analysis. In this interactivity, use the previous and next buttons to learn about what it takes to write an effective analysis essay.

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Topic 5 Content: Writing a Literary Analysis

Determine the Purpose

Writing a Literary Analysis

Determine the Purpose

First, you need to determine why you are writing the literary analysis. What is your purpose? Why are you analyzing the literary work? Most of the time, your instructor will choose the purpose for you; however, if you ever need to determine the purpose by yourself, you might want to consider a few questions.

- Are you going to discuss the theme?
- Are you comparing and contrasting the protagonist to the antagonist, to a protagonist from a different work, or to a person from history?
- Are you examining the use of figurative language?

There are many possible topics, or purposes, for a literary analysis. Make sure you know the purpose of the writing before you start reading. Review the literary elements in the image. All of these elements could be analyzed in a literary analysis essay.

Review of Literary Elements	
Plot	A. Exposition B. Conflict – Internal C. Conflict – External D. Flashback and foreshadowing E. Climax F. Resolution
Characterization	A. Direct versus indirect B. Protagonist versus antagonist C. Static versus dynamic D. Flat versus round E. Foil character
Setting	A. Time and place B. Mood/atmosphere
Theme	A. Stated B. Implied
Point of View	A. First person B. Second person C. Third person limited D. Third person omniscient
Other Main Points	A. Irony B. Narrator's reliability C. Author's purpose (theme versus moral) D. Diction E. Stylistic choices
Figurative Language	A. Simile B. Metaphor C. Personification D. Imagery
Literary Devices	A. Symbolism B. Foreshadowing C. Flashback D. Allusion
Archetypes	A. Character Archetypes B. Situational Archetypes C. Archetypal Stories

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Read

Writing a Literary Analysis

Read

Even if you have already read the literary work before, it is always a good idea to read it again before writing your analysis essay. As you read, keep the purpose for your essay in mind.



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Examine and Annotate

Writing a Literary Analysis

Examine and Annotate

How to read and analyze prose writing

1. Make sure to understand what you are reading
2. Examine the conflict, how it is resolved, and which characters change
3. Determine the theme
4. Note the author's style through use of literary elements
5. Observe images and symbols
6. Determine the cultural and historical context of the work
7. Outline plot development
8. Make a note of the structure and format of the work

Take notes as you read. Look up definitions of unfamiliar words or phrases. Highlight quotes and examples that relate the purpose of your analysis. Write down any questions that you have as you read. Go back later and write in the answers.

For example, if the purpose of your Literary Analysis is to compare and contrast the protagonist and antagonist, then you will want to highlight passages that provide characterization for each character. You may want to write questions regarding the characters' motivations for their actions, or make comments about sections that show distinct differences in the characters' actions, thoughts, words, and emotions.

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Do you still need help with this step in the process? View the image to gain an understanding of what you should analyze when reading a literary work.


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Author's Purpose

Writing a Literary Analysis

Author's Purpose



What is the Author's Purpose?

Why did the author write this literary work, and how does that tie into your purpose for the literary review? What is the author's overall message to his or her readers?

For example, if the purpose of your Literary Analysis is to discuss the work's theme, you will want to do some research to discover the author's motivation. Was the writer making a political statement, exposing a social injustice, or commenting on the inconsistency of humankind? Is this evident in the story? How does it affect the theme?

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Craft a Thesis Statement

Writing a Literary Analysis

Craft a Thesis Statement



Once you have read the literary work, taken notes, and examined the author's purpose, you are ready to craft your thesis statement for your literary analysis. Revisit the original assignment or your purpose. How does everything fit together?

1. ***If you were given the purpose*** - Your thesis statement should answer the question posed in the original assignment, and provide some basic support.
 - For example, if your instructor asked you to compare and contrast the characters of Antony and Brutus in Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* and explain how they are character foils, your thesis might be:

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- For example, if your instructor asked you to compare and contrast the characters of Antony and Brutus in Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* and explain how they are character foils, your thesis might be:

The traits deception and ambition that define Antony contrast sharply with the honesty and naiveté of Brutus, with each man serving as a character foil for the other.

2. ***If you created the purpose*** - Your thesis statement should express your supported and arguable opinion about a specific area or component of the literary work.

- For example, if you brainstormed and researched, you may decide to analyze the symbolism and allegorical meaning of the novel, *The Lord of the Flies*. Your thesis

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statement needs to specifically address the symbolism and allegory. Your thesis might be:

The *Lord of the Flies* is an allegory for the real world political structures in which Jack represents an autocracy, Ralph and the conch symbolize democracy, and Simon represents a theocracy.


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Analysis and Evidence

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Analysis and Evidence



Use examples and quotes from the text to support your argument, but the interpretation and explanation needs to be yours; it needs to be original. Remember, a literary analysis is not a summary of the literary work. It is a detailed look at pieces of the work and how those pieces affect the overall message or meaning of the literary work.

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Draft your essay

Writing a Literary Analysis

Analysis and Evidence

Use Examples and Quotes



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Now that you have learned all of the skills required to write a literary analysis, you are ready to draft your essay.