

Literary Analysis Essay

Objective:

- Analyze a work of literature (short story, poem, novel, play, etc).
- Create a thesis that conveys a unique or interesting idea about the work, and then prove your thesis using evidence from the piece.
- Be sure to keep in mind uses of literary techniques (setting, tone, imagery, etc) and devices (simile, metaphor, etc) to help prove your thesis.
- Be sure to use **specific** quotes and examples from the piece to prove your point, and make sure you cite them! (For test essays you only need examples and you will not have to cite.)
- Remember, begin with an introductory paragraph that has a clear thesis statement and briefly touches on the points you plan to discuss on your essay, and end with a concluding paragraph that extends your thesis into the real (or philosophical) world.
- You DO NOT need any outside sources for this essay besides your chosen piece of literature. These are *your* ideas about the work.

Thesis help:

1. Your thesis statement should be specific—it should cover only what you will discuss in your paper and should be supported with specific evidence.
2. The thesis statement usually appears at the end of the first paragraph of a paper.
3. Your topic may change as you write, so you may need to revise your thesis statement to reflect exactly what you have discussed in the paper.
4. A thesis statement without the opinion part results in plot summary. A complete thesis discusses how the writer used the text and provides commentary to support the opinion (thesis).

Sample thesis statement for a literature analysis paper.

In "If you Were Coming in the Fall," Emily Dickinson uses simile, diction, and syntax to describe how people wait, hoping to fall in love.

Thesis statement formulas

Directions: Remember, a thesis is an ANSWER to a specific question. A thesis statement makes a claim or proposition that reflects a specific POV. The thesis statement should recognize BOTH sides of a question, yet focus on two to three specific points (discussion points) sometimes called points of analyses.

A thesis statement MUST be controversial (provocative), thoughtful (not TRITE, banal, or hackneyed), and reasonable (able to be proved with specific EVIDENCE).

A thesis statement is the roadmap for an entire essay. The placement of the thesis statement should be the LAST sentence in the introductory paragraph. FIRST begin with a hook. Then using transition, end with the thesis statement, including the author and title of the work if necessary. Do not place evidence/quotations in the introductory paragraph.

* Please, NO beginning rhetorical questions, and NEVER begin a paragraph with just a quotation...always begin with a transition before a specific quotation.

* Remember that what follows below are "recipes" or templates for different thesis statements...if you don't like "onions" in your recipe...leave them out! Always modify the recipe to fit the occasion. These templates provide a beginning structure for your argument. "Tweak" the template to fit a specific purpose.

* At any time, a writer may deviate from this plan in order to take a creative path. Feel free to do that at any time.

Template ONE:

The general argument made by author _____ in his/her work _____ is that _____. More specifically, _____ argues that _____.

Template TWO:

_____ is wrong/right because _____. More specifically, _____ believes/demonstrates, argues that _____.

Template THREE:

Although _____ (believes, demonstrates, argues) that _____, I suggest that _____. (Always be cautious about using I)

Template FOUR:

In _____ (title), _____ (author) uses _____, _____, and _____ in order to convey _____. (*classic three part thesis - make sure essay follows formula).

Template FIVE:

By looking at _____ by _____ one can see _____ which is important because _____ (something not obvious and others may not see—the opinion part).

*This thesis statement will need to be revised. It creates a wordy thesis, but once you have it down, you can easily see how to "firm it up." Example: "By looking at *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck one can see the American Dream as a major theme which is important because through the characters of Candy, Crooks, and Curley's wife Steinbeck reveals that the dream is often a myth." --- "In *Of Mice and Men* John Steinbeck shows the fallacy of the American Dream through the characters of Candy, Crooks, and Curley's wife."

Template SIX: ATT&T

_____ (author) in his/her work _____ (title) _____ analysis verb (creates, argues, demonstrates, etc) _____ (topic) conclusion verb (reveals, shows, proves, etc) _____ (theme) [topic and theme can be reversed]

Topic Sentence Formula

Adjective

Lit. Term

VERB

Adjective

Lit. Term

The morbid imagery CREATES a frightening tone.

Body Paragraph

If all you do in one body paragraph is give a few examples of irony from the text and simply identify them as irony, then you haven't *analyzed* anything. The analysis part involves explaining *how* those examples are irony **and** *how* they help to communicate the theme of the passage. But to be sophisticated in your analysis, you must have ideas that are "in-depth" - not just the superficial facts of what you see on the page. You must *interpret* what the author has given you to work with and show that you understand the theme.

Body Paragraph Formula

TS (topic sentence) use the formula

CD (concrete detail) specific quote from the text

CM (commentary) comment on your interpretation of the CD

CM (commentary) answer the questions, "So what? Who cares?"

CS (closing sentence) transition into next paragraph