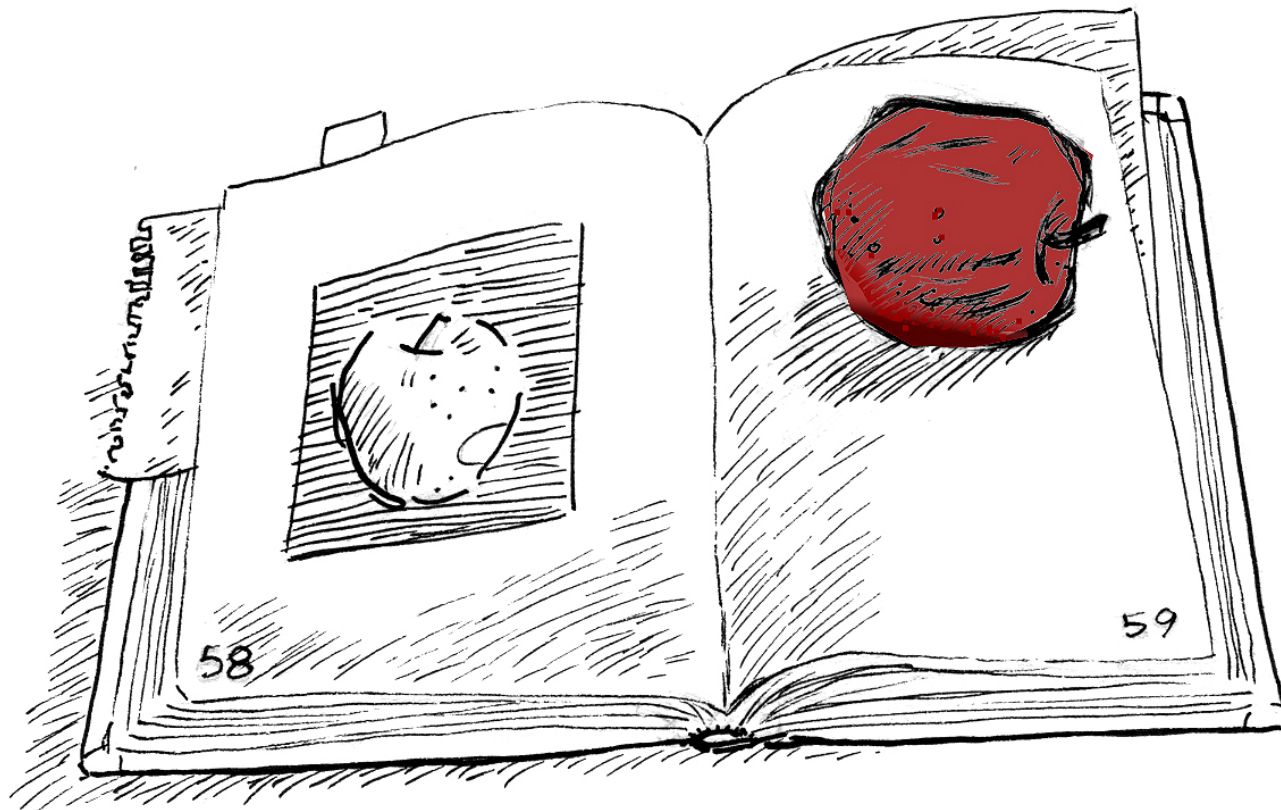


Literary Criticism Overview



Principles for Analyzing

- The paper must offer a thesis which shows a basic observation about the text.
- Every paragraph must offer a topic sentence relating back to thesis.
- Every paragraph must quote the primary source showing evidence
- Discuss what happens in the plot
—and why it is significant to the work as a whole.

- Explain *why* a character is motivated to act in the manner depicted -or- explain *how* their motivations/actions are relevant to the plot itself:
For instance, why does Montresor entomb Fortunato alive, rather than just kill him?

- Consider what is said, particularly subtleties of the imagery and the ideas expressed; are there any hidden meanings in the text?

Principles for Analyzing

- Assess how scenes are laid out:
 - > consider the word choice
 - > the ordering of ideas
 - > sentence structure
- How do these elements contribute to the theme of the story?
- Explain what the elements mean, tying your analysis of the plot back to the importance of the text as a whole.

In other words you are not **summarizing** plot.

In addition, your material will **not** relate **personal responses**.
These are not reviews, nor are they book reports.

Principles for Analyzing

There are three levels of literary appraisals.

01. Paraphrase: helps clarify the meaning of the work when you quickly write out the intentions of the story or poem in your own words. This is a good technique as well to use after reading a story to make sure you understand the author's strategies. However, use it carefully. A full story can be paraphrased into two sentences.

Principles for Analyzing

There are three levels of literary appraisals.

01. Paraphrase

02. Explicate: you deconstruct the work scene by scene, analyzing each set of images and word choice. You check for symbols, characters, narrator, and tones. Decide how these factor together.

Principles for Analyzing

There are three levels of literary appraisals.

01. Paraphrase

02. Explicate

03. A critical analysis you delve deeper into the text through the explication process. You focus on a specific image or word or symbol and then compare it to the meaning of the entire work as a whole. For instance again to use Poe's "Cask of Amontillado" the word *impunity* is used frequently throughout the piece.

Does this imply Montresor is trying to convince himself that he has no feelings of remorse for getting away with his crime?

Defense

Remember to always **back up your statements** with examples from the text itself **or** from another critic.

- Always cite evidence from primary source.

In this manner:

1. you are proving your argument sound and defending your point

2. you are showing others agree with you

or (on the flip side) you can argue against another critic's opinion and show contradictory evidence.

Critical Analysis papers

Literary Analysis uses both persuasive & argumentative purposes:

- papers must show a clear, concise thesis statement
- paper must defend the thesis utilizing evidence from primary source
 - > story itself is primary source
 - > critical, outside opinion (research) is secondary source
- always use present tense when discussing the action within a story or poem— even if the action is related to you by a narrator in past tense, *you always use present tense when discussing action in a story in your paper*

present tense

- When referring to a past author creating a work, always use present tense, even if the writer is deceased.

example:

Homer traditionally invokes a muse at the beginning of his epic *The Odyssey*.

- As well, whenever describing action in the text, or paraphrasing the text, use present tense, even if the information is told you in past tense.

example:

The scarlet letter is a punishment placed upon Hester's breast by the community and yet it is an extremely imaginative product of Hester's own needlework.

Principles for Analyzing

Creative Responses to Literature

In Chapter 2 of *Portable Legacies* the editors have a section devoted to help students brainstorm and seek alternative measures for analytical thought.

Jan Schmidt and Lynne Crockett suggest using creative responses to problems which will offer options for further speculation on fiction and poetry.

See page 23.

Some strong ideas to help generate analytical theories include:

- write a letter to one of the characters
- write a prequel or sequel to a story
- compose a parody of a poem
- compose a response to a poem