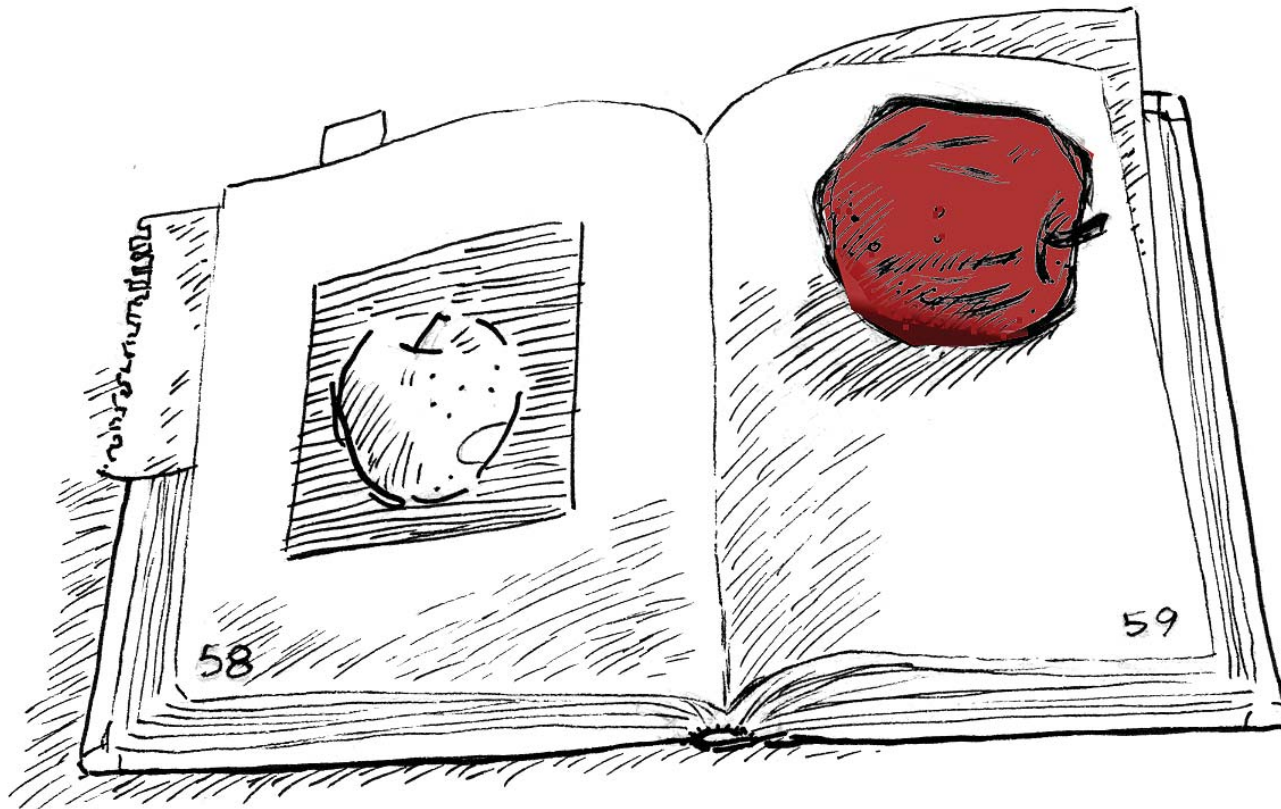


# Literary Criticism Overview

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# *Six Types of Analysis*

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[See *Portable Legacies*, page 42-48 “Forms of the Essay about Literature” for more info.]

1. Response Essay—emotional reaction to work
2. Explication Essay—primarily for poetry analysis; break the poem apart line by line
3. Historical/Social/Cultural Analysis Essay—explore the background developments from a perspective of history, society, or culture of the times
4. Comparison-Contrast Essay—take two characters or two themes and compare and/or contrast them
5. Critical Analysis Essay—analyze a literary work according to a single principle or element within the story: characterization, theme, style, or technique
  - judge its effectiveness
6. Research Essay—a writing assignment which researches beyond the text itself
  - expands your understanding of the story
  - use library databases to find critics; show how their opinions fit your observations
  - paper should include elements of:
    - Historical/Social/Cultural Analysis, Comparison-Contrast, and Critical Analysis



# *What is a Thesis?*

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## **The thesis statement is:**

- is the unifying force in the paper
- it is the point you are arguing; the thesis defines your position on a subject;  
your paper will provide convincing evidence to support the thesis
- a declarative statement, composed of one to two sentences

A thesis states a fact about your topic and your point of view on the topic:

**topic** + **opinion** + **fact** = thesis

**Both Edgar Allan Poe and Charlotte Gilman** **successfully**  
**utilize common Gothic elements in their writing.**

# What is Evidence?

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- Direct quotations from the material. (35%)

The majority of the paper is observing how a story operates *and then defending your views with quoted examples from the story. Each body paragraph must show a quote or paraphrase from primary or secondary resources.*

- Other critics' opinions and theories. (35%)

*These back up your observations and opinions.*

- Brief paraphrasing of action and details in story. (15%)

One or two sentences maximum of paraphrasing

- Brief summary. (10%)

*Only one or two sentences are needed to summarize the full story or to explain a critic's opinion on the story.*

- Historical facts and events from the time period the piece was written. (5%)

*Sometimes, short details of an author's life may provide information. However, the paper revolves around the story **not** the author.*

# *Literary Criticism Overview*

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## **Components for Analysis**

### 1. Interpretation of the Story

[see “The Critical Thinking/Critical Reading Connection” *Portable Legacies*, page 4-5]

### 2. Basic Elements that Develop Fiction

### 3. Rhetorical Elements *or* Literary Devices

[see the Glossary of *Portable Legacies*, G-1 to G-12]

### 4. Structure of the Story

# 1. Interpretation

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- **Interpretation:** determine the theme of the story  
(in other words, *not the topic* of the story).
- **Explain/show** how the plot developments contribute to the theme.
- **Identify** the literary devices at work within the story.

## *2. Basic Elements that Develop Fiction*

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- **Theme:** main idea; focus of story
- **Plot:** basic patterns of unfolding events (see structure of story-below).
- **Characters:** actors within the story-line which include the narrator of a story
- **Point of View:** Narration or Voice
- **Setting:** landscape of story

# Characters

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## **Important to determine how the characters are presented:**

- Round: three-dimensional personality-well developed and fleshed out
- Flat: limited qualities-one dimensional-all bad or all good-
- Dynamic: Grows and progresses to a higher level of understanding
- Static: Remains unchanged throughout the story

## **Examine:**

How does the author present a character to the reader?

How does the character view him/herself?

How does he/she act in the story?

How does he/she view other characters in the story?

How is he/she viewed by other characters?

How do other characters act in the story?

How does the author present other characters in the story?

*Answers to these questions will show the characterizations within the story.*

# Setting

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## **Determine if the following basic elements exist:**

- Time period
- Geographical location
- Historical and cultural influences
- Social
- Political
- Spiritual

*If any are not determinable, ask yourself why.*

*Make sure you are not overlooking something essential.*

Essential for establishing mood

May symbolize the emotional/mental state of characters

Impacts characters' motivations and/or options

### *3. Rhetorical Elements*

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*Also referred to as Literary Devices; some of these we already covered*

- Every author utilizes these elements in an unique manner.
- Seeking the strategy used by an author helps develop your paper.
- Be able to identify the rhetorical elements in your reading to develop your paper.

### 3. *Rhetorical Elements*

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- **foreshadowing:** a clue or hint which suggests a plausible ending to story. The more obvious images help build suspense and can create a sense of irony.
- **tone:** controlled by the author's words choice and phrases, the tone supplies a sense of the writer's attitude towards a given situation or person.
- **mood:** similar to tone, mood is the atmosphere the author intends the work to offer the reader.
- **symbolism:** abstract ideas. These exist in plenty throughout any story or poem. As already mentioned, if you see a symbol, defend it with correct evidence.
- **irony:** multiple forms of irony. Poe uses this as a means of creating suspense.
- **figurative language:** descriptive phrasing and literary devices which embellish a work of fiction and poetry.

## 4. *Structure of the Story*

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- how the plot develops within the beginning, middle and end of story
- important that you notice how the plot develops and transforms from the stages
- watch what *changes*, and what elements remain *constant*
- notice the types of conflict which appear throughout the story
- notice how characters *transform* or remain *static*