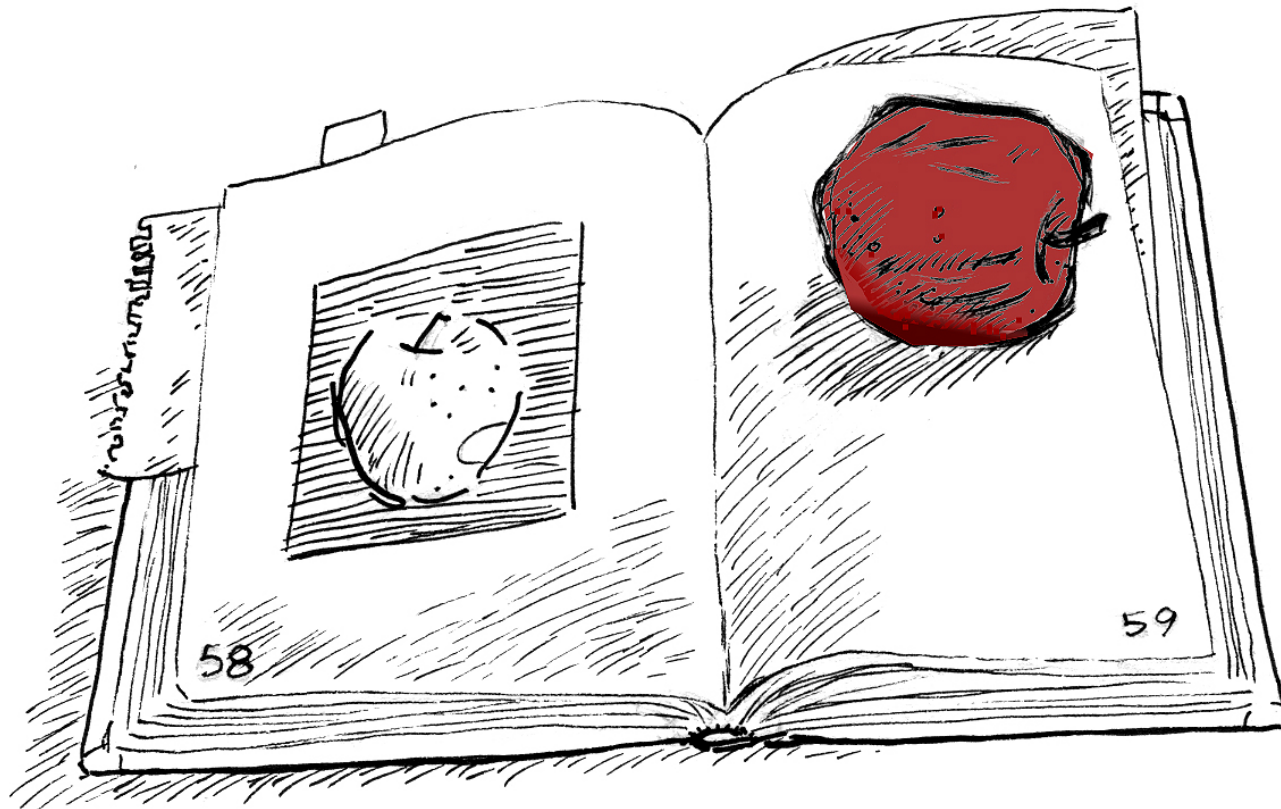


Literary Criticism Overview



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.

Six Types of Analysis

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



For further commentary see *Legacies*:

- Chapter 1 “Critical Thinking and Critical Analysis of Literature” pp 3-11
- from Chapter 3 “Special Requirements for Writing About Literature” pp 42-48

What is a Thesis?

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?

- 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.

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

- *Brief* paraphrasing of action and details in story.

One or two sentences maximum of paraphrasing (15%)

- *Brief* summary. One or two sentences maximum of summary. (10%)

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

Literary Criticism Overview

Components for Analysis

1. Interpretation of the Story (*see slide #14*)
2. Basic Elements that Develop Fiction (*see slide #15*)
3. Rhetorical Elements (*see slide #18-19*)
4. Structure of the Story (*see slide #20*)

1. Interpretation

- **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*

- **Theme:** main idea; focus of story
- **Plot:** basic patterns of unfolding events (see structure of story-below).
- **Point of View:** Narration or Voice
- **Characters:** actors within the story-line which include the narrator of a story
(see slide #16)
- **Setting:** landscape of story
(see slide #17)

> *Characters*

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*

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*

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*

- **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*

- 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