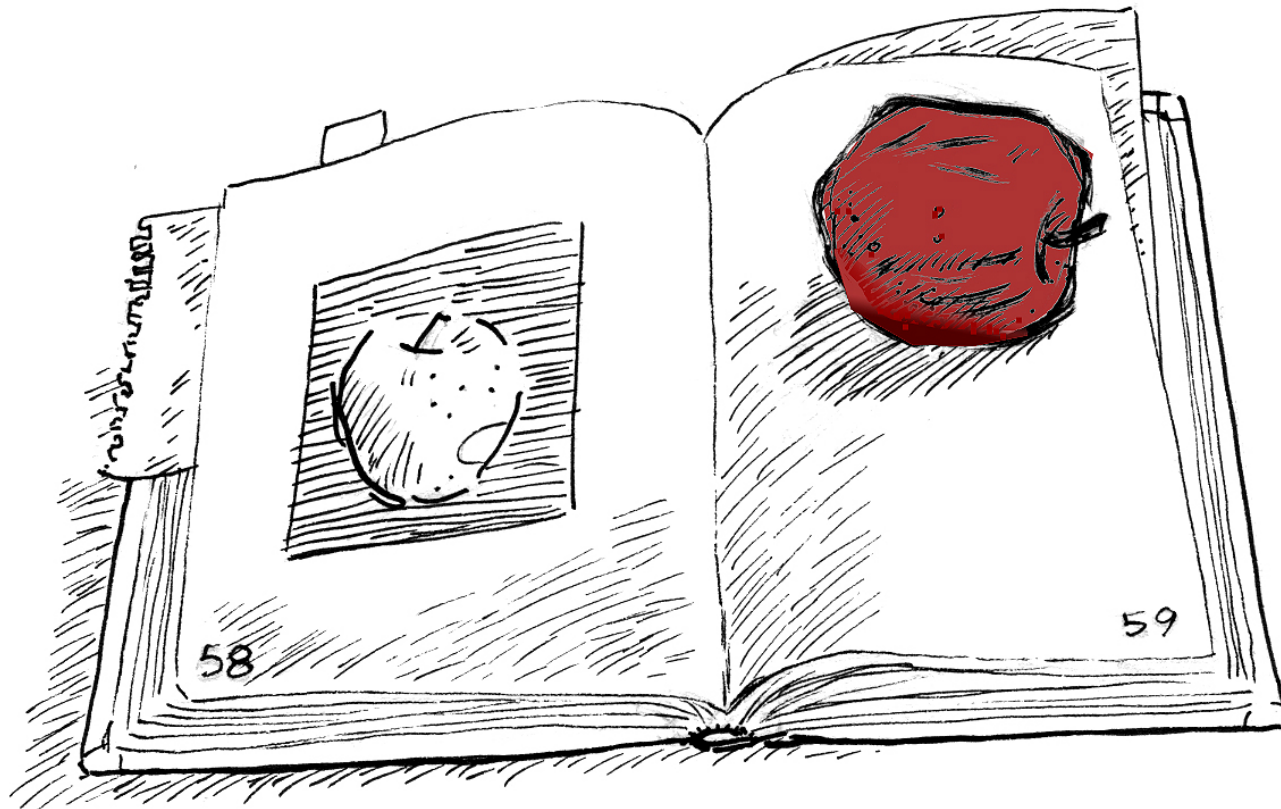


# Literary Criticism Overview

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# *Principles for Analyzing*

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

# *Principles for Analyzing*

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- Assess how scenes are laid out:
  - > consider the word choice, image selection
  - > the order of ideas as expressed by the narration
  - > sentence structure and verb tenses
- 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.
- Every paragraph must connect to your main point.

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. (No first person pronouns.)

# *Defense*

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

- always quote evidence from the primary source itself to explain in detail your observations and reactions to plot developments

## **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*

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**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

# *Principles for Analyzing*

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## **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.

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