

LITERARY ANALYSIS

A *literary analysis* discusses certain key points of a book, article, or poem. When writing a literary analysis, **you should make an argument about the text, not summarize it.** A literary analysis may examine the concepts within a single work, compare the concepts of multiple works, or discuss how a work's concepts relate to a greater context.

If you use secondary sources, don't overuse them! Your literary analysis should mostly be made up of your own original thoughts.

POSSIBLE CONCEPTS TO DISCUSS IN A LITERARY ANALYSIS

- Character development
- Themes
- Plot devices
- Symbolism
- Historical context
- Genre
- Author's message
- Religious motifs
- Writing style/tone
- Setting

STEPS TO CREATING A LITERARY ANALYSIS

1. Do Your Research

- Examine the text itself to find evidence that supports the points you want to make.
- Peruse the Regent databases for scholarly articles to see other perspectives about the text.

2. Write Your Introductory Paragraph

- Begin with your hook: a catchy or intriguing first thought that makes your audience want to keep reading.
 - A hook can be a quotation, response to a misconception, or dramatic detail that you want to highlight.*
- Discuss any relevant background information about the work, such as the work's author, historical context, style, or purpose.
 - If these are especially important or lengthy, consider discussing them in your body paragraphs.*
- End the paragraph with an arguable thesis statement that addresses your views.
 - Sample thesis: The book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* serves the purpose of reconciling good and evil through its *discussions of nature's brutality*, its *historical comparisons to the Eskimos*, and its *symbolism of water*.*

3. Develop Your Body Paragraphs

- Discuss each of your topics in one or more paragraphs. Open each paragraph with a topic sentence that refers to a point from your thesis statement.
 - Sample topic sentence: Dillard uses *historical comparisons of the Eskimo people* as she questions whether nature is inherently good or evil.*
- Provide plenty of textual evidence to support your points.

4. Finish with a Conclusion

- a. Begin your conclusion by restating your thesis statement
 - i. *Do not copy-paste your thesis! Rewrite it so that it flows nicely from the previous paragraph.*
- b. The goal of your conclusion is to put your literary analysis into the book's context as a whole.
 - i. *Consider how your analysis reflects the author's purpose for writing their work.*
 - ii. *Explain how your analysis is important for understanding key aspects of the work.*

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