

[Analysis](#) is the process of breaking a complex topic or substance into smaller parts in order to gain a better understanding of it. You'll be asked to do a great deal of analysis in college and your professional life in order to better understand what you're learning and the concepts you work with. The simple act of analysis is also a method of discovery and learning.

One type of analysis you may be asked to write in college is the critical analysis of literature—whether it's of prose, poetry, or non-fiction, including articles you read in your field. This deep reading is a critical skill that applies to all disciplines and fields. You'll be expected to be able to look between the lines and examine parts for their meaning and significance in your professional practice.

Analyzing literature also hones your skill at analyzing people—something you need in your packet of professional skills. Stories are, after all, about our basic humanity even when they're set in fictional worlds among non-human creatures and imagined spaces. We are all unique and different; however, we are also all the same. We laugh, we cry, we hurt, we worry, we rejoice. All the emotions, feeling, and experiences you've had and will have, someone else has experienced too. Yes, you do it in your unique way and based on your specific experience, but none of us are alone in being human.

If you understand the tools authors use to paint their ideas—the elements of literature, and you understand that stories, poems, plays, movies, and series are telling us something about what it means to be human, then you can develop a better understanding of both deeper messages and people.

Making an Argument

A literary analysis is a basic argument, so beyond learning to read more deeply and the human experience, it trains you to develop a strong argument. A good argument relies on using evidence from the source you're analyzing, discussing that evidence, interpreting it, and explaining what you see as the underlying message. In essence, what is this work saying between the lines?

Most arguments follow that basic structure: thesis or main point, reasons, evidence, discussion and interpretation. A basic outline of a literary argument—whether you're analyzing a story, a poem, a play, a movie, or any other kind of storytelling—will look something like this.

- Introduction
 - An opening that gets readers into the topic. Discuss the overall subject in general, provide some history or background, or use narrative to set the scene.
 - In the introduction, you also need to mention the author and the title, making sure to properly treat the title.
 - A clear thesis. Your thesis (main point) should be expressed in one clear sentence.
 - If you are provided with a question to answer, your thesis is the answer to the question. DO NOT include the question in the essay unless instructed to do so. Instead, clearly answer the question in a well-developed sentence that makes clear which question you're addressing as well as the point you're making about the question.

- No matter what the case is, your thesis must go beyond a basic fact or easy conclusion to draw from the work. It needs to go deeper than the surface:
 - It should be arguable (not a fact), and state your position clearly
 - It should bear further explanation
 - It should be supportable with quotes and examples from the work.
- Body
 - Reasons for belief in your thesis (subtopic). Articulate reasons for the answer or point you've come up with in clear topic sentences.
 - For each reason you should:
 - Provide evidence through using quotes and examples from the work you're analyzing.
 - Explain and interpret how the evidence fits into or illuminates the thesis, and
 - Connect the evidence to your position on your thesis.
- Conclusion options include:
 - Discussion of how all of the points you've given in your essay add up to illustrate something bigger about the issue focused on in your thesis.
 - Discussion of what these things show about being human.

Beginning Considerations

- Style: A formal essay should be written in your voice and from your perspective, but will use a higher level of diction and language. However, it should not be forced.
- Formal essays are written in the objective tone and do not use personal pronouns unless they appear in quotes from your source.
 - Instead you should use the specific noun or group you're referring to.
 - I.e.: audiences, readers, advertisers, consumers, teens, adults, men, women, children, etc.
 - Instead of "when I use my phone," make your example general:
 - When people use their phones...
- Purpose: The purpose of this essay is to learn how to analyze more deeply in order to answer a focused question and develop an argument around it while using MLA documentation.
- Do not try to convince or preach to your readers. Simply explain your analysis and the conclusions you draw based on it.
- Audience: The audience for this essay is a general audience. Assume the audience has read the work. DO NOT RETELL THE STORY! The audience also has a general knowledge of the elements of literature and critical theories.
- Limitations: You will write about a story I assign in class. We will do the prewritings before developing the draft.
- You must use quotes from and specific examples from the work to support your point.
- You should have a works cited page with the citation for the work you analyze.
- You **may not** use other sources (except of course your own experience and observation).

Prewriting Assignments

Prewritings should be turned in where directed. See your schedule for more details.

Prewriting 1

To begin, go through and read each [question](#) carefully. Which ones do you think you might want to answer? Keep those in mind as you re-read the story.

For your prewriting, [use this form](#) and cite the source, choose your question, and lay out the evidence you'll use and brainstorm ideas about what that evidence means or shows you between the lines.

Prewriting 2

For this prewriting, you will be working on your conclusion and introduction along with your thesis. Review the slideshow or video for tips on those. [Use this form](#).

General Requirements

The essay should:

- Be correctly formatted in MLA format, typed in a standard 12-point font, double-spaced, with the correct heading and running header, and a Work Cited page.
- Be **at least** 2 pages long, but **no more than** 3 pages long—exclusive of your Work Cited page. (That means you need *at least 2 full* pages of text which does not count your Work Cited page.)
- Utilize and correctly cite the [story](#) we are writing about in MLA style.
- Clearly be in response to one of the [questions](#) provided.

Turning your essay in:

(See your schedule for where and how to turn things in)

- Turn in the cover letter to the Cover Letter 2 Assignment Draft
 - PLEASE review the [cover letter assignment](#). Make sure you are following instructions and including all required information and have re-read my feedback on your earlier letters to use that advice as you do this one! (Review a [sample](#).)
- Turn in the essay to the Essay 2 Assignment Draft
 - With each, turn in the Grammarly report, and if you went, documentation for your writing center visit.
- The date for the final versions will appear on the schedule and/or be announced by me.

Critical Analysis Essay Grading Criteria

Your essay will be evaluated based on the following standards. Make sure to review them as you work on your final draft. Also, review the comments on your previous writings, and apply any relevant feedback as you work on this one, as well as the [sample essays](#) we studied in preparing for this.

Format and Professionalism

- The paper is correctly formatted
- The paper is turned in on time
- The paper is developed to the required minimum length/does not exceed maximum length
- The paper has a work(s) cited page (does not count toward minimum/maximum page length)

The Introduction

- Sets the context by sharing the general topic. I.e: something specific about the human condition, character, certain situations, or an element of literature
- Provides the name of the author and title of the work, properly formatted.
- Provides a clear thesis in response to one of the questions provided.

The Body

Gives specific examples or quotes from the story to support your thesis

Explains why those things support or illustrate your thesis.

- Are there specific reasons why you believe your thesis? (Topic Sentences)
- Are those reasons supported with direct quotes or *very* specific examples from the text?
- Is the evidence integrated into sentences, reflecting a smooth writing style?
- Is the evidence interpreted and connected to the thesis? (Do you explain how the quotes or examples support or prove your thesis?)

The Conclusion

- Discusses how the specific examples add up to illustrate something more about the general topic set up in the introduction.

OR

- Discusses how the work gives us a deeper understanding of the human condition, character, or situations through the author's use of the particular element.

Style and Clarity

- Conventions for literature for authors' names, titles, and verb tense are followed
- Style and level of formality meet the expectations of this type of writing
- Grammar and Mechanics meet expectations for writing at this level
- Works Cited page is formatted correctly, and citations for all works used are listed and correct