**Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Class\_\_\_#\_\_\_**

**Literary Analysis Essays**

**Part 1: What does a literary analysis essay ask you to do?**

Most literary analysis essays give you a **prompt** with a question to answer or an idea to explore. Many of them can be boiled down into this general format:

* **How does [the author] use [a literary technique] to develop [a theme] of [the text]?**
* ***Same question in different words: What is the author’s message in the text, and how does she create that message using language?***

Literary Analysis essays are Language Arts/English essays. They are different from History essays.

**Part 2: What are the requirements of a literary analysis essay?**

Any time you write an analytical, argumentative essay in the Skyline Humanities department, you need to…

[**Thesis**] Directly answer the question of the prompt.

[**Evidence**] Find and use quotes that support your answer

[**Analysis**] Explain how each quote supports your answer.

[**Organization**] Organize all of these into formal essay structure in MLA format.

[**Language**] Do all of that with correct spelling/grammar/punctuation, appropriate tone and vocabulary, etc.

* **The Humanities Department Rubric** is broken down into those five categories. They are weighted differently at each grade level.
* All literary analysis essays must be typed in **MLA format** with an **MLA Works Cited page** and must be submitted to **Turnitin.com**.
* The **length** requirements depend on the essay.

**Part 3: What is a thesis statement?**

A thesis statement is an **arguable answer to a prompt**. Sometimes we say it’s “an argument” or “a claim.”

* *Arguable* means that you can support it with evidence, but also that it’s not a true/false question.
* “*House on Mango Street* is about a girl named Esperanza” is not arguable; it’s just true!

**A thesis statement has three parts: WHAT, HOW, and SO WHAT.**

In a literary analysis essay, these are broken down as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **WHAT** | **What** is the author writing about? What is the subject that your essay focuses on? |
| **HOW** | **How** does the author write about their subject? That is—what **literary elements or techniques** do they use to create their message? |
| **SO WHAT** | Answer the question: ***So What****?* Why does this matter? What was the author trying to do by using that What and How? **What is the author’s message?**  Sometimes this is called your ‘argument depth.’ |

(History essays also have a *what, how*, and *so what*, but they obviously look different, because you’re focusing on research and history, not language. )

**Part 4: What are the steps to writing of a literary analysis essay?**

Although the steps of each essay may vary slightly, generally we follow a pattern like this…

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Read the Text** | **Evidence Gathering**  **+ Thesis Drafting** | **Outline** | **Rough Draft** | **Final Draft** |
| You need to be very familiar with the text to be sure you gather the best evidence and create a strong thesis. | Pull out strong evidence, and create a strong answer to the essay prompt (thesis).  These steps go together, because your thesis needs to be based on evidence, and your evidence needs to support a thesis. | Organize your thesis, evidence, and analysis in an easy-to-read way that lets you focus on ideas, before you look at language.  At this point, you might need to revise your thesis and/or find stronger evidence. | Convert the ideas in your outline into a rough draft, in paragraphs.  Add an introduction and conclusion.  Sometimes you will submit more than one rough draft. | Polish your rough draft into a final draft (check for language errors, work on sentence fluency, rearrange to a stronger organization, etc). |

**Part 5: How does the teacher help during the literary analysis essay writing process?**

Every teacher is different, but here are some common things teachers do to help during the process:

1. Teach you about literary techniques so you can find them in the text.
2. Guide your reading of the text to make sure you notice important techniques and themes.
3. Help you organize your evidence by giving you graphic organizers.
4. Help you find a way to turn your ideas into a thesis statement.
5. Give feedback on your thesis to make sure it has a strong argument and a WHAT, HOW and SO WHAT.
6. Check your evidence to make sure it connects well to your thesis. (If it doesn’t, you either need to modify your evidence, or modify your thesis! They need to match.)
7. Check your analysis to make sure it supports your thesis and proves your argument.
8. Check your drafts for formatting and language errors (sometimes—teachers do this less and less the older you get.)
9. Have a conference with you so you can ask them questions, and they can give you advice.
10. Set up peer review sessions so you can get even more feedback from your peers.

**Part 6: Why do we need to know this? ☺**

Although you may think, “Essay writing won’t help me in the real world,” here are the skills you are working on:

* Organizing your thoughts in a way that makes others agree with you.
* Using formal English, like you would in a professional setting.
* Thinking critically about a text and showing your understanding of it.
* Having original ideas—not just memorizing the ideas of others.
* Understanding the power that language has—HOW someone says/writes something is just as important as WHAT they write.