

# ESSAY WRITING IN ENGLISH

## LITERARY ESSAY

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Analysis of literary work

# What is *ANALYSIS or INTERPRETATION* *of literary work?*

**ANALYSIS**: a detailed splitting up and examination of parts of a work of literature with an emphasis on synthesis: critiquing how the parts work together to form meaning in a work.

# DO NOT

- Write about the author or the book or the time period in general
- Retell the story
- Talk about who the character is (Lady Chiltern is Sir Robert's wife.)
- Describe a character (She is tall, slim.) unless this is really necessary (Squealer a very convincing orator. Napoleon is smart/cunning.)

# FOCUS ON

- The title
- The the character, his/her attitude to others
- The details relevant to your interpretation/analysis

# POINT OF VIEW

Use third person pronouns at all times (except in quotations): he, she, it, they . . .

\* remember to amend pronouns when you incorporate quoted material into the text of your own sentences

Do not use first person (I, me, we)

Never write “in my opinion” or “I believe” etc.

Do not use 2<sup>nd</sup> person (you) point of view

Never mention “this paper will show” or “the focus of this essay will be” etc.

# VERB TENSE

- Write about literature in the present tense:
- Literature is *timeless*—if it exists in the printed word it is always in the present. Every time you read it, it exists in the present, so write about it in the present tense.
- **incorrect** → When Leggatt *came* out of the water he *was* naked.
- **correct** → When Leggatt ***comes*** out of the water he ***is*** naked.
- **incorrect** → Macbeth had a guilty conscience after he killed Duncan.
- **correct** → Macbeth has a guilty conscience after he kills Duncan.

# Use **QUOTATIONS** properly and effectively

Incorporate quotations into your sentences and cite them properly:

A quotation should never appear in your writing *by itself* without any words of your own to introduce, lead-in, or otherwise set it up.

Do not leave a quotation dangling without reference to who is speaking or the context in which it is said or used.

Every sentence must have a subject and a verb and be grammatically correct. If what you are quoting is a fragment, construct a sentence around it (use it in the content of your sentence).

(Citations for plays should include the act, scene, and line numbers—in that order—separated by periods. Thus (2.3.45) means act 2, scene 3, line 45.)

Your analysis of quoted material should not include statements like the following:

*This quote shows . . .*

*This quotation shows . . .*

*This means . . .*

and so forth.

These are very basic, heavy-handed ways of dealing with the text. You should strive to be more natural and subtle in your approach:

*Macbeth is “afraid to think what [he has] done” after murdering Duncan (2.2.61). His fear is a product of his guilty conscience, and he is beginning to separate himself from the basic rational thought of which all men are capable.*

**Advanced writers** tend to be good builders. They introduce a clear point and then allow the examples to build upon one another to show how that point is true or significant. Their structure is dictated more by the needs of a particular paragraph rather than a pre-set pattern, and the examples tend to combine or work in conjunction to develop the point.

They focus on developing an ORIGINAL IDEA about what exists in a text—and their emphasis is on the relationships (synthesis) between the examples and the point.

# ESSAY STRUCTURE

The basic writer's model is the 4-paragraph essay:

an introduction with the thesis, two body paragraphs on two aspects of the thesis, and a conclusion.

(The advanced writer assesses the writing situation before deciding on a format, and he or she avoids any prescribed, phony format. The advanced writer knows an essay begins with a point—unique yet debatable—and follows it with support to show how, in fact, it is true. It may take three paragraphs or thirteen.)

# INTRODUCTION

- **interesting** and **appealing**
  - quotes from the work
  - a meaningful, well-known quote
  - a recognizable metaphor
- it gives general factual information: it identifies the **work**, the **author** and the **theme** in **short** (in passing)
- includes the **thesis**

# THESIS

- the **LAST** sentence of the introduction AND the “focal point” of the essay
- a **short, clear, specific**
- it provides the overall **subject** of the essay
- suggests how the author – you – will tackle the topic (outlines the **essay structure**)

*While both main characters, John T. Unger and Holden Caulfield, have somewhat traditional views on love and sexuality, they differ in the way these views change and evolve.*

# MAIN BODY

- **2 or 3 support paragraphs** (=they support the major thesis)
- **identical structure** of each MB paragraph
  - paragraph **topic sentence** (link to part of the thesis)
  - **examples** from the text (=specific examples that support your support thesis; do not retell the plot)
  - your own **commentaries** (=explanation/**interpretation** of the concrete detail)

# CONCLUSION

- it sums up the contents of the essay
- repeats the thesis
- may give a personal note on the topic



**SYNONYMS,  
PARAPHRASES**

# USE COMPLEX LANGUAGE

## **CONDITIONALS** (possibly inverted)

- If John T. Unger \_\_\_\_\_ (not go) to the Washingtons' estate, he \_\_\_\_\_ (never, meet) Kismine.
- Had...

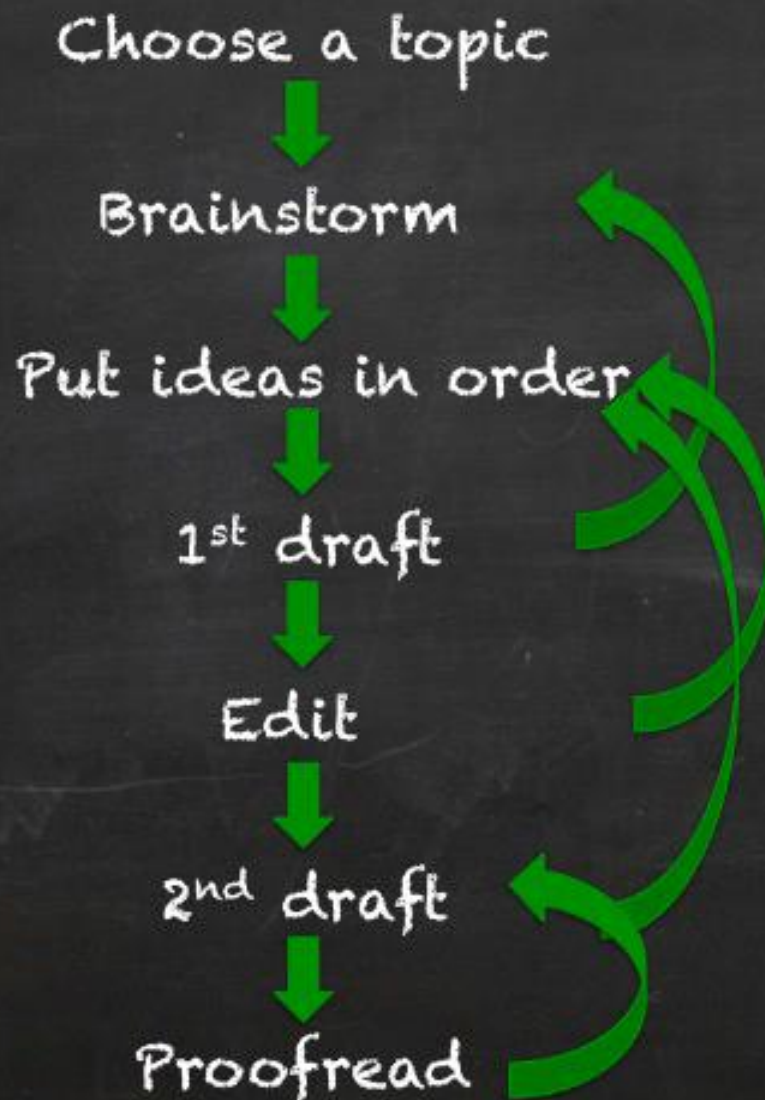
## **GERUNDS**

- \_\_\_\_\_ (travel) the entire day, Percy and John were exhausted.

## **RELATIVE CLAUSES**

- Percy, who harbors a strong dislike for other rich families, seems to care only about protecting his family's wealth.

# The Writing Process



## Vocabulary

- brainstorm (v, n)
- proofread (v)