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.

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

2. Write Your Introductory Paragraph
   a. Begin with your hook: a catchy or intriguing first thought that makes your audience want to keep reading.
      i. A hook can be a quotation, response to a misconception, or dramatic detail that you want to highlight.
   b. Discuss any relevant background information about the work, such as the work’s author, historical context, style, or purpose.
      i. If these are especially important or lengthy, consider discussing them in your body paragraphs.
   c. End the paragraph with an arguable thesis statement that addresses your views.
      i. 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
   a. 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.
      i. Sample topic sentence: Dillard uses historical comparisons of the Eskimo people as she questions whether nature is inherently good or evil.
   b. 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.*