

Prewriting: Literary Analysis Writing Prompts

Choose your own issue for your literary analysis of a novel, or use one of the following prompts.

WORKPLACE

Think of a novel in which the main character's profession is integral to the story. What is the author trying to tell you about the character through the character's profession? How would the story change if you put the character in another, very different profession? Write a literary analysis explaining what the character's work says about him or her. Present your analysis to a group of career-minded students.

SCHOOL

Select a novel that centers around events at a school. Write a literary analysis explaining how the setting affects the tone and the point of view of the story. Share your analysis with fellow students.

PSYCHOLOGY

Select a character such as Huck Finn, Reverend Dimmesdale from *The Scarlet Letter*, or another character from a novel you know. List in chronological order the actions of the character. What do the actions reveal about the character? Do the character's actions fit together, or do they contradict each other? Write an analysis of the character; be sure to include paraphrases or quotations from the text to support your analysis. Present your findings to a group of students interested in psychology.

SCIENCE

Physicists think of time as a fourth dimension, coloring how we perceive the world around us. Similarly, the way time is manipulated in novels affects our perceptions of the present moment of the story. Think of a novel in which time is manipulated: Scenes may be rushed or elongated (for example, an entire novel that takes place over the course of a few hours or a battle scene that seems to flash by in mere moments), or the writer may use flashbacks to take us back in time. Write a literary analysis about how time is manipulated in a novel. Share your analysis with a science class.

HISTORY

Most novels are set in specific places and historical periods that are central to the theme of the novel—for example, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and countless others. Select a novel that is set in a historical period familiar to you. Identify the important historical details that the writer includes to bring the novel to life, and write a literary analysis explaining how those details relate to the theme. Present your analysis to a history class.

Prewriting: Read and Analyze a Literary Work

Use the charts on these two pages to help you organize your literary analysis. Answer the questions, and jot down notes about specific passages. Use additional paper if necessary.

Title and author of novel: _____

LITERARY ELEMENTS

<p>Character: How do the important characters think, talk, and act? In what ways do their actions or attitudes change over time?</p>	
<p>Setting: What are the time and place of the novel? How does the setting affect the mood or the development of the plot?</p>	
<p>Plot: What is the central conflict, or problem, of the story? How does the outcome of the conflict relate to the theme of the story?</p>	
<p>Point of view: Is the story told by a first-person or a third-person narrator? What does the narrator think about the characters and the events?</p>	

STYLISTIC DEVICES

<p>Theme: What universal truth does the novel express about human nature, experiences, problems, or relationships? What details reflect this theme?</p>	
<p>Symbolism: Do any objects or elements show up repeatedly? Which (if any) person, place, or thing seems to represent an abstract idea? If so, what?</p>	
<p>Imagery: What feelings do sensory descriptions of people, places, events, and ideas suggest? What effects are created through the use of imagery?</p>	
<p>Diction: Is the author's word choice straightforward, or is the language connotative? What is the novel's tone? How does the word choice affect the tone of the story?</p>	
<p>Figurative language: Does the author use similes and metaphors? If so, what effects do these comparisons create?</p>	

Prewriting: Thesis, Evidence, and Order

Use the following graphic organizer to help you write your thesis, gather evidence to support your thesis, and plan your analysis. Use additional paper if necessary.

THESIS STATEMENT

GATHER EVIDENCE

Major point:	Major point:	Major point:
Evidence:	Evidence:	Evidence:
Elaboration:	Elaboration:	Elaboration:
Arrange your ideas (circle the best way to order your information): <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> Chronological order Order of importance </div>		

Drafting: Organizing and Writing Your Analysis

Complete the graphic organizer below, and use it to help you write your first draft. Use additional paper if necessary.

INTRODUCTION

The novel's author and title:

Relevant background information:

Thesis statement:

BODY

Outline:

CONCLUSION

Restatement of thesis and summary of main points:

Memorable statement:

Evaluating: Student Model Think Sheet

Answer the questions below to get a better understanding of the structure of a literary analysis. Use additional paper if necessary.

- Re-read “Dysfunctional Communication.” The notes in the margin will help you identify important elements of a literary analysis paper.
- As you respond to the questions, think about the use of language, the organization of information, and the strategies used for developing ideas and elaborating on them.

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

1. What background information provides the best context for the analysis?

2. Which major point best supports the thesis? Why?

3. Which is the best piece of elaboration? Why?

4. What is the restatement of the thesis in the conclusion?

5. Does anything else catch your interest or seem important? In what way?

Evaluating: Literary Analyses

Use the following questions to evaluate your literary analysis or that of one of your classmates.

- Make brief notes to answer the questions.
- Rate the parts of the literary analysis. The lowest score is **1**, and the highest is **4**.
- Make at least three suggestions for improving the literary analysis.

1. Does the introduction include background information? Are the title and author of the novel included?

Rating: 1 2 3 4

Suggestion: _____

2. Does the thesis statement present a conclusion about the novel based on a literary element or stylistic device?

Rating: 1 2 3 4

Suggestion: _____

3. Do the body paragraphs develop main ideas to support the thesis statement?

Rating: 1 2 3 4

Suggestion: _____

4. Are the main ideas supported by evidence from the novel?

Rating: 1 2 3 4

Suggestion: _____

5. Are the main ideas organized effectively?

Rating: 1 2 3 4

Suggestion: _____

6. Does the conclusion restate the thesis, summarize the main ideas, and include a memorable statement?

Rating: 1 2 3 4

Suggestion: _____

Revising: Improve Your Literary Analysis

Use the rubric in this chart to help you improve your literary analysis of a novel.

Questions	Do This	Changes You Made
1. Does the introduction include background information? Are the title and author of the novel included?	<p>_____ Draw a box around the relevant background information.</p> <p>_____ Underline the title and author of the novel.</p>	
2. Does the thesis statement present a conclusion about the novel based on a literary element or stylistic device?	<p>_____ Circle the literary element or the stylistic device identified in the thesis.</p>	
3. Do the body paragraphs develop main ideas to support the thesis statement?	<p>_____ Label each main idea that supports the thesis in the margin.</p>	
4. Are the main ideas supported by evidence from the novel?	<p>_____ Highlight each piece of relevant evidence. If any evidence does not clearly support the main idea, revise.</p>	
5. Are the main ideas organized effectively?	<p>_____ Chronological order: number the main ideas in sequence.</p> <p>_____ Order of importance: put a star next to the most important point.</p>	
6. Does the conclusion restate the thesis, summarize the main ideas, and include a memorable statement?	<p>_____ Circle the restatement of the thesis and the summary of the main ideas.</p> <p>_____ Bracket the memorable thought.</p>	

Proofreading Checklist

GUIDELINES FOR PROOFREADING			
	Yes	No	Needs Work
Is every sentence complete, not a fragment or a run-on?			
Are punctuation marks—such as end marks, commas, semicolons, colons, dashes, and quotation marks—used correctly?			
Are proper nouns, proper adjectives, and the first words of sentences capitalized?			
Does every verb agree in number with its subject?			
Are verbs and tenses used correctly?			
Are subject and object forms of personal pronouns used correctly?			
Does every pronoun agree with its antecedent in number and in gender? Are pronoun references clear?			
Are frequently confused words (such as <i>fewer</i> and <i>less</i> , <i>affect</i> and <i>effect</i>) used correctly?			
Are all words spelled correctly? Are the plural forms of words correct?			
Is the paper neat and correct in form?			

Framework for Literary Analyses

Use the following framework to help you evaluate your own writing and the models on the following pages.

- Shows a grasp of the most **significant ideas** in a literary work
- Focuses on a **clear, logical conclusion** about the work based on the author's use of **literary elements** and **stylistic devices**
- **Supports** viewpoints and conclusions with **textual evidence** and **elaboration**
- Demonstrates effective **organization** throughout
- **Restates thesis** in concluding paragraph

Literary Analysis: Score Point 4

Read the student model below. With the Framework as a guide, write an evaluation of the model in the commentary box, explaining why the model received the score shown above.

Model	Commentary
<p>One dreary November evening in Austria, a research scientist is engaged in some grisly work in his laboratory. On this night the scientist, Dr. Victor Frankenstein, succeeds in bringing to life a human body he has put together from many parts. This creature is the basis of the novel <u>Frankenstein</u>, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Shelley’s novel, published in 1818, exhibits elements of both Gothic and Romantic literature. Romantic literature focuses on human emotions, the supernatural, and morbid occurrences. Gothics include dark, intense emotions and, especially, use weather to show characters’ feelings. These elements recur throughout Frankenstein, particularly in the images of nature that reflect the emotions and moods of the protagonist, Doctor Frankenstein.</p> <p><u>Frankenstein</u>—the story of a “monster” who goes on a rampage against his creator—has all of these. The “miserable monster” (43) has dull yellow eyes, yellow skin, a “shriveled complexion and straight black lips” (35). Dr. Frankenstein’s horror at his creation floods him with hideous images and intense emotions. “I felt the bitterness of disappointment” (235), he says.</p> <p>Throughout the novel, descriptions of nature reflect the dark subject matter and extreme inner states of Frankenstein. Fleeing his creation, the doctor hurries on, “although drenched by the rain which poured from a black and comfortless sky” (44).</p> <p>In a time of contentment, the imagery again reflects Dr. Frankenstein’s mood. Shelley writes that there was a “light breeze; the soft air just ruffled the water... and the most delightful scent of flowers and hay...” (187). But after the monster murders again, the doctor retreats to a mountain glacier. This scenery parallels Dr. Frankenstein’s own feelings of desolation, brokenness, and a coldness of heart.</p> <p>Mary Shelley used many elements of both Gothic and Romantic fiction throughout her novel, the impact intensified by the constant link between inner, psychological landscapes, and the outer world. All of nature seems to mirror the demons haunting Dr. Frankenstein and the storm that has fallen upon him.</p>	Empty grid for student commentary

Literary Analysis: Score Point 3

Read the student model below. With the Framework as a guide, write an evaluation of the model in the commentary box, explaining why the model received the score shown above.

Model	Commentary
<p>One dreary November evening in Austria, a research scientist finally succeeds in a horrible experiment. Dr. Victor Frankenstein, the scientist, brings to life a human body made of many different parts. This monster is the focus of Mary Wollstonecraft’s Gothic novel <u>Frankenstein</u>. The story of Dr. Frankenstein’s troubles with the monster contains elements of Romanticism and also of Gothic novels. Some of these features include intense, dark emotions, supernatural things, and using nature to show what characters are feeling and what their moods are. The novel Frankenstein has all these things. It shows the moods of the main character, Dr. Frankenstein, in many scenes of nature especially.</p> <p>Today, most people think the name “Frankenstein” is the name of the monster. But in the book, this creature never has a name. It’s the doctor who has this name. Some of the monster’s feelings are described but the book is mainly about Dr. Frankenstein. For example, after the monster comes alive, Frankenstein says, “Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment” (235) because the monster was a failure. When Frankenstein runs away from it, he becomes soaked from rain.</p> <p>Even later in the book, Frankenstein climbs a glacier after the monster has killed some people. Upset, he describes the scenery like his own mood: “a scene terrifically desolate... where trees lie broken and... the path... is intersected by ravines of snow” (124). Dr. Frankenstein is obviously feeling desolate and broken, too. But during a good moment, the scenery and weather are good too because there was a “light breeze; the soft air just ruffled the water... and the most delightful scent of flowers and hay...” (187).</p> <p>All in all, whatever Victor Frankenstein is feeling shows up clearly on the environment and weather also. This clearly shows that this is a Gothic and Romantic novel. Victor is defeated in the end and just wants to die. The author says the wind is rising “with great violence... the clouds swept across [the moon] swifter than the flight of a vulture... Suddenly a heavy storm, descended” (135). The storm is like the storm inside the main character, who doesn’t have a happy ending.</p>	Empty grid for commentary

Literary Analysis: Score Point 2

Read the student model below. With the Framework as a guide, write an evaluation of the model in the commentary box, explaining why the model received the score shown above.

Model	Commentary
<p><u>Frankenstein</u>, by Mary Shelley, the wife of the poet Percy Shelley, is a famous horror novel that starts out in a laboratory in Austria. There, the scientist Dr. Victor Frankenstein, is making a monster come to life. He used the parts of different human bodies to carry out his experiment. Frankenstein, which is the name of the doctor and not of the monster, whose never named, is horrified by what he’s make. How the doctor feels about his monster and the fact that this is mostly a lot of dark scenes shows this is a Gothic novel, which have this kind of theme. But Mary Shelley also wrote a Romantic litature novel in the same book. Romantic novels have a lot of emotions and weird things to.</p> <p>During the book, the monster starts killing people one after the another. When Mary Shelley started writing this, which was published in 1921, she was spending a rainy summer in Italy with her husband Percy and Lord Byron, the famous poet. Because they didn’t have anything better to do, they started writing horror stories. So Frankenstein turned into a Gothic novel as time went on. The nature descriptions are often, and seem to match how the doctor is feeling. For instance: He became “drenched by the rain which poured from a black and comfortless sky” when he tried to run away from the monster.</p> <p>The monster is described especially frightening. It had yellow eyes and skin and a black line of a mouth. This is a good Gothic traight. But there are also some lighter scenes. When Victor Frankenstein is happy in one scene, it says there was a light breeze and soft air, and he could smell “delightful flowers and hay.”</p> <p>In the end the story goes back to the dark side. After all the murders the monster committed, Victor tries to chase it down. He even chases him to the icy north pole, which seems a little unrealistic. But the descriptions make it sound totally realistic. This shows in the part where “a tumultuous sea rolled…” and he was “left drifting on a piece of ice.” It also says he was preparing “for a hideous death.” With all these things, this is obviously a Gothic and Romantic novel with a lot of nature included.</p>	Empty space for student commentary

Practice with Conventions

Circle the letter of the best answer to each of the following items.
(40 points; 4 points each)

- 1. Paula used *A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens, for her response to literature paper. Which sentence shows how to correctly cite this book?**
 - A) "...tell wind and fire where to stop" (*A Tale of Two Cities* 344).
 - B) "...tell wind and fire where to stop" (Dickens: *A Tale of Two Cities* 344).
 - C) "...tell wind and fire where to stop" (Dickens 344).
 - D) "...tell wind and fire where to stop" (344).
- 2. Which version of the sentence shows correct punctuation?**
 - A) As womens clubs become more popular, authors groups are declining.
 - B) As womens' clubs become more popular, author's groups are declining.
 - C) As women's clubs become more popular, authors' groups are declining.
 - D) As womens's clubs become more popular, authors's groups are declining.
- 3. Which word is spelled incorrectly?**
 - A) permissible
 - B) realize
 - C) restarant
 - D) tournament
- 4. Which sentence is grammatically correct?**
 - A) Its way too cold out now for Steve and Gary to start their hike.
 - B) When she told me its real name, I almost laughed out loud.
 - C) If you ask me, its going to be a long, hard journey.
 - D) He believes it's charger should also work for the other phone.
- 5. Which version of the sentence shows correct capitalization?**
 - A) Which New York City bridge is older, the Pulaski Bridge or the Pelham Bridge?
 - B) Which New York City Bridge is older, the Pulaski Bridge or the Pelham Bridge?
 - C) Which New York City bridge is older, the Pulaski bridge or the Pelham bridge?
 - D) Which New York city bridge is older, the Pulaski bridge or the Pelham bridge?
- 6. Which word is spelled correctly?**
 - A) complection
 - B) eligible
 - C) lonliness
 - D) reccomend

7. Read this sentence.

Marshall plans to cut the grass,
the garage will be organized,
and wash the windows.

How should the underlined portion be written?

- A) garage will be organized
- B) the garage organized
- C) organize the garage
- D) organization of the garage

8. Which version of the sentence shows correct punctuation?

- A) Was it Dan Nabors who wrote the song “Lonesome Child?”
- B) Was it Dan Nabors who wrote the song, “Lonesome Child”?
- C) Was it Dan Nabors who wrote the song, “Lonesome Child?”
- D) Was it Dan Nabors who wrote the song “Lonesome Child”?

9. Which word is spelled incorrectly?

- A) backround
- B) ceremony
- C) definitely
- D) indispensable

10. Which version of the sentence shows correct capitalization?

- A) The Roman rockets basketball team has Greek, Italian, and German players.
- B) The Roman Rockets Basketball Team has greek, italian, and german players.
- C) The Roman rockets basketball team has Greek, Italian, and German Players.
- D) The Roman Rockets basketball team has Greek, Italian, and German players.