

Literary Analysis *is* Critical Thinking

Rubric

To demonstrate their prowess as critical thinkers, literary critics must be able to:

- Understand how context affects the purpose, tone, meaning, and categorization of a written or spoken statement
- Determine and summarize the main point, theme, or thesis of a written or spoken message
- Understand how context, origin, and adaptation shape the purpose, tone, meaning, and categorization of a text
- Identify key passages, characters, images, or symbols
- Relate the meaning of key passages, character, images, or symbols to the meaning of an entire work
- Relate the purpose, tone, meaning, and style of a work to a relevant movement, genre, philosophy, or socio-historical context
- Consider the provinciality of universality of a given theme or image
- Identify knowledge gaps, assumptions, myopia, and other logical flaws in a written or spoken statement (applies to primary and secondary sources, including student analyses of primary sources)
- Support arguments with clear and cohesive evidence
- Anticipate, recognize, and address relevant counterarguments
- Synthesize a variety of sources, approaches, or concepts into a cogent analytical or argumentative framework

A – The Critical Inquirer

Consistently achieves all of the above, excelling in the development of synthetic and generally applicable theories and interpretive frameworks

B – The Explicator

Consistently achieves most of the above, excelling in the careful consideration of a text's finer details and implications

C – Revise and resubmit

Occasionally achieves some of the above, grasping some details while forsaking or misconstruing others

D/F – Phoning it in

Routinely achieves none of the above, neglecting to read closely and thoughtfully

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Questions

- 1) Identify the genre with which the work is associated. How do the formal characteristics affect the content of the piece?
- 2) Where is the story set? How do the geographical and historical features of the setting affect certain elements of the work such as vocabulary, characterization, behaviors, customs, visual elements, and motifs?
- 3) Identify a theme or themes present in the literature. How and why are these themes presented?
- 4) Are the piece's themes provincial (relevant only to a certain time and place) or universal (relevant to nearly all times and places well beyond the text's publication origin)?
- 5) Pinpoint significant details such key passages, character, images, symbols, or motifs. How and why are these details significant?
- 6) Does the protagonist reflect, modify, or reject the dominant values of the intended audience's society and culture? Does this stance compel the reader to empathize with, condemn, or feel indifferent toward the main character?
- 7) Do characters, narrators, or speakers commit logical fallacies? Are these gaps in knowledge and wisdom an intentional aspect of the literary work? How/why?
- 8) How might the piece relate to a movement, philosophy, or socio-historical context that was relevant to the author's time and interests?
- 9) Consider the provenance (origin and "ownership") of the text. How might the text's origin and distribution across time and space relate to its appearance in this anthology?