

Literary Analysis Essay Notes:

Analytic Discussion (content)

Thesis

Assertion of interpretation; concise statement of analysis (overall essay discussion).

Analytic thesis must “say something about,” rather than simply *describe* the text.

tip: avoid *opinion-based* or *reactive* descriptions (*i.e.* reader’s emotional response)

- instead, phrase how the text *functions* instead of what it “is” or what it “means.”

- thesis must be interpretive, yet also “arguable”—for readers to **recognize** through your support.

For example, beyond simply stating what a text expresses,

discuss *how* the form and content relate and the *effects, significance, consequence*

by focusing specifically on literary techniques and textual aspects.

tip: remember, **not** author’s *intended* meaning, nor emotional effects **on** audience; also, not *deciphering* “hidden meaning.”

Roland Barthes: “Everything is to be disentangled and yet nothing deciphered” (*Image-Music-Text* 147).

Analytic strategy / approach:

– “close reading” using **class approach and topics** (*narrative discourse, experience, expression*)

– review class notes and methodology, especially how we’ve been *using* narrative concepts (beyond simply identifying).

Remember: we have been discussing **Narrative** in terms of both **modes of thinking** and **expression**.

Abbott: Narratives “don’t tell us what to think but cause us to think. Narrative...is a ‘machine to think with’.” (*Cambridge* 63)

Review Abbott *Cambridge Narrative*, relevant chapters / references (relative to your topic).

Review our key concepts and oppositions, to keep in mind when analyzing:

e.g. Experience (subjective/objective, verb/noun); Expression (forms, discourse); Narrative Discourse; History, Memory, Time

tip: Interpretation becomes analytic **thesis** statement in essay, rephrased (*see below*)

Analysis and Composition Notes

Do not “narrate” or include your interpretive **process** (this is **prior** to essay; *implicit* in discussion)

- **entire** essay is *support* discussion of *analytic* thesis
 - when revising: **cut** any element / discussion not directly supporting your points
- **exclude** any mention of interpretive process; *e.g.* “from Abbott, I/we can see that...” *e.g.* “I analyze this figure as...”
 - tip*: effective style = precise & concise
- instead, **switch** perspective (of phrasing) from your reading to the text’s functioning:
(use *verbs*) “This example {*demonstrates, illustrates, challenges/subverts, reinforces, diverges, disrupts*}”

Intrinsic literary analysis and support (“close reading”) - *exclusively intrinsic, except Cambridge/Narrative.*

Do not consult or use any secondary (“outside”) sources, scholarly or otherwise.

* *Note*: websites like Wikipedia and Sparknotes **are not acceptable** “sources” for college classes. (**Do not** consult these!)

- Exclude **Biographical, Historical, and Inter-textual** information (which does not appear in text)
- Avoid “authorial intention” fallacy, as well as stating (your) emotional or judgmental response.
- Assume reader’s (my) familiarity with text
 - **do not summarize** (“discuss analysis” = write *about* text)

Analysis / Thesis Support

Provide textual “evidence” of your interpretation by illustration.

objective: another reader could recognize your analysis “at work” in the literary selection)

Support all analysis, commentary, insights, etc. with effective example(s).

Use to **illustrate** your points; *tip*: present example first and then comment.

–remember “subsequent” and “subordinate” for organization.

Use both direct **quotations** and paraphrases, using MLA style for **citations**. (*Essential / required*)

Balance discussion with your points and textual examples — avoid disproportionate paragraphs, either way (*see Comp Notes*)