

Author Papers

First Essay: Your first essay will treat one of your three novels and will take the form of a traditional literary analysis that offers an original interpretation of the text. Because of the focus of this paper, you may want to choose the novel that best lends itself to a character analysis. This essay should be around 1500 words (6-8 pgs).

Second Essay: The scope of your second essay is the most challenging since you will not only offer interpretations of two novels but also assertive commentary on your author and their works as a whole. You are certainly permitted to incorporate secondary sources and outside research into this second essay, but it is not necessary. In fact, one goal of this assignment is to get you to come up with your own observations and conclusions about an author's body of work and his or her development of style, character, and theme. This essay should be 2500-3000 words (9-11 pgs).

Character or Theme?

This is one of the first questions you need to ask yourself: which of your novels will work better for a thematic analysis and which of your novels will work better for a character analysis? At this point, you should be very familiar with how to approach a thematic argument. A character analysis may be a little more confusing. Take heart: they are not so different. Thematic analyses necessarily use characters as evidence to support the paper's exploration of theme. Character analyses necessarily use thematic points to support the paper's exploration of character. As you can see, there is not a stark difference between the two approaches; it's really a matter of emphasis. A quick example of the subtle difference from *Hamlet*:

- The question "Is Hamlet insane?" is an example of a character analysis.
- The question "How does Shakespeare treat the issue of female virtue in *Hamlet*?" is a thematic analysis.

For the character analysis, you would obviously include thematic issues, such as does Shakespeare believe one can be so tainted by the sins of the world that it can drive a person mad? Or does Shakespeare seem to believe there's really a clear boundary between sanity and insanity.

For the thematic analysis, you would obviously use character, such as Ophelia and Gertrude, to explore issues such as does Shakespeare actually seem to agree with Hamlet when he says, "frailty thy name is woman!"?

Therefore, you need to ask yourself: are there strong, complex characters in my novels that seem to beg to be analyzed? If this is the case, you should probably use them in a character analysis. Also ask yourself: do the characters in my novels seem somewhat less important than the major point that the author is trying to make? Are there lots of important characters, but no one character really stands out? In this case, your novels may be better suited to a thematic analysis. Most novels can go either way. You just need to choose and commit.

Since you are probably less familiar with character analyses, here are a couple of universal character analysis questions to get you started:

- Is the character you're analyzing a hero? Why?
- Is the character you're analyzing a villain? Why?
- What motivates your character?
- What is the evolution of your character? Who are they in the beginning, who are they in the end, and how did they get there?

Of course, you want to make these questions very specific to your particular text, and these questions are more interesting when you are arguing against type. For example,

Gertrude is the true hero of *Hamlet* because she is the only one who truly loves fully, she is caught in the most difficult situation, and she manages to avoid betraying either of the most important men in her life, Hamlet and Claudius. Therefore, through the character of Gertrude, Shakespeare argues that heroism does not have to pertain to domination; in fact, submission to the force of love requires the kind of character and courage a true hero holds.

While these kinds of controversial arguments are the most interesting, make sure you aren't stretching too hard. Always remember, you need to provide evidence. On the other hand, you do want to stretch a bit: For example, arguing that Lady Macbeth is a villain is not only a boring argument, but it will also not require any analysis to support. As with the first paper, you want to build your paper to a climax, and avoid the standard recap conclusion.

First Essay: Single-novel Analysis

You should be quite familiar with the general form of this paper from previous experiences with literary analysis at St. Stephen's, although this assignment will require you to sift through and provide more evidence from a single text than any previous assignment. Furthermore, in an assignment of this depth, even though you are only writing on one novel, you may need more than a single-sentence thesis to intelligently communicate your argument.

Even though you are writing on a single novel, it will probably still be helpful to think of your argument in sections because the model of the five-paragraph essay will probably still be too simple and basic for a six-page paper. As a general rule of thumb, unless you have a compelling reason, a single paragraph should not be longer than a page. In most cases where it is longer, there is a natural paragraph break that you're ignoring.

Conclusions

Most people blow off conclusions in their author papers. Don't do it! We plan to give your conclusion more weight than any other single paragraph besides your introduction.

At all costs, avoid simply recapping the points you've made in your paper! We know you've been taught to do this, but it's time to move on. If you truly need to revisit the major points of your paper, do it in a sentence or two. Here are some suggestions to create an interesting conclusion: (1) If you were going to write a master's thesis, not just a short paper, on your novels, what other related issues would you explore that you don't have time or space for in this paper? (2) Is there an important historical event that was happening around the time your novels were being published that you could tie into this novel? (3) Is there another novel (or even movie) that relates to these novels in a way that illuminates something more about them? (4) Is there a current social or political event or phenomena that these novels could teach us something about? (5) Do you have an extremely relatable, appropriate, and interesting personal narrative that you could tie into these novels?

Second Essay: Two-Novel Analysis

Although this essay will obviously be longer than one-novel analysis, it is simply the same type of literary analysis, except that it deals with two texts instead of one.

Thesis and Introduction

Your goal is to analyze and offer an argument on theme or character shared by your two novels (obviously, your two novels will not share the same character, but the main characters in the two novels may be similar types or share similar motivations or serve similar roles.) The most important thing you need to do in your introduction is create an argument which encompasses both novels. This means that it may take more than one sentence to communicate your thesis. Furthermore, since you are dealing with two texts, you may also want to address how they also differ from one another within the context of your argument. Here is an example:

Although they seem as different as two plays by the same playwright could be, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet* both depict love as an unreliable and dangerous force. In each play, love is an emotion not to be trusted because, although we believe ourselves to be the arbiters of human passion, this is not the case at all: love is, in fact, a force outside of our control. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare reveals all of the comic implications of love's dominance over humanity, but even though things turn out happy in the end, the play still holds its darker moments. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare instead illustrates the tragedy that comes from love's power over human nature, but, still, the play certainly has its comic passages. Ultimately, in both of these plays, Shakespeare asserts that while humans have absolutely no control over the force of love, we do have the free will to choose whether our own lives will end in weddings or funerals.

3) Decide on the organization of your paper. The first thing you should decide is which novel you feel more strongly about. Hopefully, your paper should build to a climax,

so you want to do the more controversial or provocative novel second. Also, you will want to pay attention to the dates your novels were published. You might want to put the later one second in order to show how the author has changed/evolved on an issue. Once you have decided upon the order in which you will analyze your novels, you are ready to begin supporting your argument. We suggest thinking about your papers in sections (this is especially true since the model of the five paragraph essay won't really work for a paper of this depth or magnitude).

The first section will exclusively deal with the first novel, which in a paper of this size will probably take you about four pages. In treating the first novel first, and not mentioning the second novel in this section, you are establishing a basis of comparison or contrast. Then, after making a dramatic, clear transition to your next paper (which could be several bold sentences or a paragraph on its own), you will begin to analyze the second novel. As you analyze the second novel, you will also briefly compare it or contrast it to the first. As a general rule, you should probably have at least four explicit comparisons or contrasts in the second sections. This second section of the paper will probably be about four or five pages. Again, do not forget about the power of your conclusion.

A word about using evidence in both sections: don't choose quotes that merely establish plot points (e.g. Hamlet said he was going to act really "crazy" (I.4.53)!) Choose evidence that forces you to actually interpret it in a way that makes your argument about the text.

Good luck. Remember, you do have an audience. You want to convince them you're smart (which you are) and entertain them.