

**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
ANTH 101-011 & ANTH101-081
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HOW TO WRITE A LITERARY ANALYSIS

A Literary Analysis is neither a book review nor a book report. A good analysis shows not only a student's skill in composition, but also his or her depth of explaining and understands the impact of literature. An analysis is a specific form of essay writing in which literature is explained by unfolding the major themes which comprise the story that is told. Therefore, the heart of the essay should be a discussion of themes central to the book and the literary devices (plot, character, setting, time, point of view of author, point of view of character, conflicts, historical setting and context, social norms, values and attitudes – something that has an impact on the themes of the work. Literary devices are used by the author to express particular themes. There is no need to retell the story or summarize the story. For the books assigned for this course, colonialism and its effects on society, culture, the colonized and the colonizer provides the framework for the novels. Colonialism is the answer to the core question what is this novel really about. The themes of the stories and the literary devices are different

STEPS IN COMPOSITION

- **You can assume that I have read the assigned books. In the beginning of your paper, you should give minimum information about the plot, and themes – just enough to orient the reader.**
- **Recall that colonialism constitutes the primary story line/frame work of the novel**
- **Demonstrate the centrality of colonialism in the novel.**
- **Explore literary devices until you have identified a theme about colonialism**
- **Construct three themes about colonialism**
- **Write a provisional interpretation of the novel based on the three themes**
- **Support what you claim about whichever literary devices you select to work with by using quotes from the text**
- **Write a thesis statement which is a summary statement of your argument.**
- **Write your paper developing your argument**

WHAT IS A LITERARY ANALYSIS?

The goal of a literary analysis is to broaden and deepen your understanding of a work of literature. Writing a literary analysis is writing an interpretation. An interpretation is an individual response that addresses meaning – what is the meaning of the piece of literature to you and why this particular meaning?

To identify your point of view and interpretation, ask yourself the following questions: What is the geographical, historical and social setting of the story? How do these things affect the story? Who are the main characters? Who are the secondary characters? How do these characters move the plot forward? What is the master plot and what are the subplots. Do the characters change? If so, how and why? If not, why not? What are the conflicts about and what is the purpose of the conflicts as a literary device? Who is telling the story? How does this influence the story? How does colonialism shape the story? What are the social values and norms of the colonizer? What does the author do to create a particular image of the colonizer? What are the characteristics of the colonized as perceived by the colonizer? Summarize the author's point of view in three sentences?

To uncover deeper meaning that will lead you to an interpretation see if you can do the following: Can you summarize the author's meaning in one paragraph. Can you state three themes of the work in three separate sentences? Having identified the three major themes that are significant to you and which you feel are central to the story, select three literary devices to explore i.e. something that shapes the theme you have selected to work with. Next step is to comb the text and mark passages that prove your claim about the literary device and the theme you have selected to work with. Identify and mark passages that relate to the theme and/or literary device. In the text of your paper, be sure to explain why you have included the quoted text. Remember that quotes are indented, single spaced, given a citation and quotation marks are used.

THESIS

Your thesis makes a statement about the author's use of literary devices in relation to the themes of the work you have determined to be central to the novel. The purpose of your essay will be to support, explore, demonstrate and/or illustrate the validity of the claim you have made about the text. In other words, your paper is an argument in support of your these.

INTERPRETATION

You prove your interpretation by finding a pattern of examples in the text that supports your idea (theme). You find this pattern in the literary devices already discussed. Because your interpretation must be supported, the strength or weakness of your interpretation rests on the strength or weakness of your argument. You must organize your discussion so that it convinces the reader that your point of view is astute.

