

To deepen your study of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, you will be writing a critical analysis paper. In this paper, you will analyze one aspect of the book, using direct quotations from the text to support your ideas.

Step 1 Choose a thesis. (Refer to the Ideas for Literary Analysis handout.)

A thesis statement is one arguable sentence that explains the main idea of your paper. The thesis should include the title of the book, the author's name and the slant/opinion you are expressing. The thesis statement is best placed at the end of the introductory paragraph. The potential topics are endless. For this critical analysis, you can analyze themes, characters, structure, symbolism, relevance, etc. Think over our class discussions. What stands out as important or significant?

Possible Topics: Twain's satire

the settings of land v. water

various themes (ie. Family may take many forms.)

Huck's moral development

controversial aspects (ie. the novel as required reading)

Step 2 Select supporting quotations to develop your thesis.

Think about your thesis. What ideas support it? You should have at least three major ideas that develop/support/defend your thesis. For each idea, you will need to find direct textual support from the novel (ie. direct quotes). The best quotes are relatively brief, one to three sentences. When looking for quotes to support your ideas, use the chapter titles to help locate specific scenes in the book.

Step 3 Organize your essay.

Use the attached outline to order your ideas. When completing the outline, organize by chronological order, most important to least important, etc.

Step 4 Write your rough draft. (Refer to the Tips for Writing Analysis handout.)

Paragraph 1 (Introduction)

- Begin with a broad statement.
- Include your thesis and your three supporting ideas.

Paragraphs 2, 3, 4 (Body)

- Begin each body paragraph with a clear topic sentence that directly relates to the thesis.
- Include direct quotes with MLA citations.
- Make sure you anchor the quotes into the body paragraphs.
- Clearly explain how the support proves your thesis.
- Use transitions to move from one idea to the next.

Paragraph 5 (Conclusion)

- Restate the thesis.
- Reiterate points made in the body paragraphs.
- Draw any conclusions about the thesis.

Works Cited Page

Step 5 Peer edit and revise.

Take the feedback from the peer edits to revise and polish your paper.

Papers must be a minimum of 2.5 typed pages, double-spaced in a 12-pt. font (ie. Times-Roman).

Due Dates: Thesis _____ Outline _____ Rough Draft _____ Final Copy _____

Ideas for Literary Analysis

Theme

1. Does the author seem to be saying something about ambition . . . courage . . . greed . . . jealousy . . . happiness?
2. Does the selection show you what it is like to experience racism, loneliness, and so on?
3. Does the author have a point to make about a specific historical event?

Characters

4. How does the main character change from the beginning to the end?
5. What forces or circumstances make one of the characters act in a certain way? (Consider the setting, the conflict, other characters, etc.)
6. What are the most revealing aspects of one of the characters? (Consider his or her thoughts, words, and actions.)
7. Do the characters' actions seem believable within the story?
8. Does the main character have a confidant, someone he or she relies on? (How important or reliable is this person?)

Plot

9. What external or internal conflict affects the main character?
10. How is suspense built into the story?
11. How does the climax change the story?
12. Are there any twists in the plot? (What do they add to the story?)
13. Does the plot follow a basic pattern of fiction? (See page 169.)

Setting

14. What effect does the setting have on the characters?
15. Does the setting expand your understanding of a specific time and place?
16. Is the setting new and thought provoking?

Style

17. How does the writing—descriptive phrases, images, and so on—create an overall feeling or tone in the selection?
18. Is dialogue or description used effectively? (Give examples.)
19. Is there an important symbol that adds meaning to the selection? (How is this symbol represented in different parts of the story?)
20. Are there key figures of speech such as metaphors and similes? (What do these add to the writing?)

TIPS for Writing an Analysis

Writing the Opening

Your opening paragraph should gain your reader's attention and identify the thesis of your analysis. Use the suggestions listed below to help you get started.

1. Summarize your subject very briefly. Include the title, author, and the type of book (or other literary form). This can be done with a statement of "what and how" about the book.
In his novel *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding writes about a group of young boys who are marooned on a deserted island.
2. Start with a quotation from the book and then comment on its importance (think in terms of the focus of your analysis).
3. Begin with an explanation of the author's purpose and how well you think he or she achieves this purpose.
4. Open with a few general statements about life that relate to the focus of your analysis.

There comes a time when everyone has to . . .

5. Begin with a general statement about the type of literature you are analyzing. Then discuss your subject within this context.
The best science fiction always seems believable and logical within the context of the story line. This certainly is true in . . .

Writing the Body

Develop or support your focus in the body, or main part, of the analysis. To make sure that you effectively explain each main point, follow these three steps:

1. State each main point so that it clearly relates to the thesis of your analysis.
2. Support each main point with specific details or direct quotations from the text you are analyzing.
3. Explain how these specific details prove your point.

Writing the Closing

In the final paragraph, tie the important points together and restate the focus of your analysis. Leave your readers with a final thought that will keep this piece of literature on their minds for some time.

Huckleberry's Women

From as far back as the time of Homer's epic tales up through modern works, female characters have shaped the course of literature. Whether they are the title character or an easily forgotten subplot, each adds a different view to the storyline. Female characters also provide a glimpse of the way real women were generally seen during the time period of their literature. Although the main characters in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn are men, Mark Twain introduces several females, such as Widow Douglas, Aunt Sally, Mary Jane, and Judith Loftus to illustrate the different roles and common conceptions of 19th century women.

The prevailing stereotype of women throughout Twain's novel is that they belong in the home, working to keep their family civilized, clean, and scrupulous. The very first female described is congruent with the beliefs of the historic cult of domesticity. Huck starts out by saying, "The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the same house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways" (11). The Widow saw to it that Huck went to school and wore clean clothes, rather than his usual rags. Furthermore, she prohibited Huck from smoking, a "mean" practice that "wasn't clean" by her standards. Thus, she sought to ensure proper cleanliness and hygiene in her household. Widow Douglas also embodies the 19th century belief that women should pass on morals from previous generations to their children. One of the first practices mentioned is the Widow saying grace before dinner. To Huck, this prayer is an irksome delay and nothing more. As part of Huck's education in morals, the Widow tries to impart some knowledge of Bible stories in order to give him a religious and proper

The River: A Free Friendly Foe

Ernest Hemmingway once stated: "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since." Some critics would disagree, stating that the novel is full of racism and prejudice and should not be taught in schools. However, the novel is a masterful creation resulting from his days as a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi – where Samuel Clemens picked up the penname Mark Twain (signifying two fathoms). On the river, Twain learned that the current of the river never stops - it always moves onward, deeper and deeper into the heart of the American South. No matter how steep the bend or how confounding the channel, the water flows onward. Realizing that this statement could be applied to the plot of a novel, he utilized the river as a plot device to the utmost extent. In Mark Twain's novel The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, the river becomes the third main character and is used to portray freedom, friend, and foe.

The most important symbol portrayed by the river is freedom. Specifically, this means freedom from the dark side of society that Twain focuses on heavily as Huck and Jim proceed further and further into the heart of slavery. Were they to travel on land, there is no way that Jim could remain free. So they travel exclusively by water, and whenever trouble arises they have only to go out, on their raft, to the middle of the river in order to avoid all contact with humans. "I never felt easy till the raft was two mile

Critical Analysis outline

Name _____

I. Introduction:

a. General opening idea: _____

b. Thesis: _____

II. Claim: _____

a. Evidence: _____

_____ ()

b. Warrant _____

III. Claim: _____

a. Evidence: _____

_____ ()

b. Warrant _____

IV. Claim: _____

a. Evidence: _____

_____ ()

b. Warrant _____

V. Conclusion:

a. Restated Thesis: _____

b. Closing ideas: _____

Peer Editing – Critical Analysis

Editor _____

Author _____

Part One: To be completed by author.

Editors should give suggestions on the following:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Part Two: To be completed by the editor.

1. Is the thesis of this essay clearly stated? If so, what is it? Underline it in the paper.
2. What is the focus for the second paragraph?

Are page numbers given with every quotation?
Are the quotes punctuated correctly?
Does this paragraph directly relate to the thesis?

3. What is the focus for the third paragraph?

Are page numbers given with every quotation?
Are the quotes punctuated correctly?
Does this paragraph directly relate to the thesis?

4. What is the focus for the fourth paragraph?

Are page numbers given with every quotation?
Are the quotes punctuated correctly?
Does this paragraph directly relate to the thesis?

5. Does the author use transitional words and phrases effectively? Circle one.
6. Where can the author expand ideas to make the point stronger or more clear?
7. What, if any, are the awkward or confusing parts of the essay?
8. What problems do you find with punctuation, spelling, or grammar?

9. Give a few suggestions in order of priority, to the author for improving this piece of writing in finished draft.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Peer Editing – Critical Analysis

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Are the quotes punctuated correctly?
Does this paragraph directly relate to the thesis?

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6. Where can the author expand ideas to make the point stronger or more clear?

7. What, if any, are the awkward or confusing parts of the essay?

8. What problems do you find with punctuation, spelling, or grammar?

9. Give a few suggestions in order of priority, to the author for improving this piece of writing in polished draft.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Critical Analysis Rubric

_____ This is an A level writing. The thesis of the essay is clear, worthwhile and specific. The thesis is supported successfully by various examples from the text. Each example is clearly explained and connected to the thesis. The essay is well organized. The language has been chosen carefully and used effectively to produce a pleasant, consistent progression of thought. Transitions are used effectively to help the progression of ideas. The use of mechanics is logical and does not undermine the reader's interpretation. Spelling is immaculate.

_____ This is an B level writing. The thesis of the essay is apparent, but it is underdeveloped or simplistic. Organizationally, one of two situations probably exists: the essay may have a clear, worthwhile thesis whose support falters, or it may have a vague controlling idea with strong support. Most, but not all, examples are clearly explained and connected to the thesis. Language usage is not crafted as logically or creatively as an A writing. Ideas may not consistently flow into each other. The mechanics of the paper may not be consistent, but that does not seriously interfere with the reader's interpretation.

_____ This is an C level writing. Although a thesis is present, it is not fully developed. The author may have some good examples or ideas, but overall fail to make his/her point. At least one part of the essay – introduction, body, or conclusion – is not fully developed or is unrelated to the thesis. The supporting ideas do not all make connections to the thesis. Ideas do not flow logically into each other. Language usage is inconsistent, being confusing and muddled in places. The mechanics of the paper are not consistent and at times interfere with the reader's interpretations.

_____ This is an D level writing. The thesis of the essay is confusing and inconsistent. There seems to be no controlling idea. The support of ideas is weak and incomplete. Support is not explained and not relevant. The mechanics, grammar, and spelling are distracting throughout the paper. It is obvious that little time, effort, and thought were put into this writing.

_____ This paper needs a rewrite. It does not meet the minimum requirements of the assignment.

