



APSU Writing Center

Analytical Essay

Analytical Essay

Resources: Website of Mrs. Maio and Cynthia Clumneck Muchnik's "Base Five Paragraph Structure"

An **analytical essay**

- Begins with a main object, such as a poem, novel, short story, or play.
- Should examine how the selection establishes itself.
- Referred to as a five-paragraph essay
- Attempts to explain the significance of a selection from a literary work.
- Proves some point based on evidence from the text, which may focus on characterization, plot, theme, style, or other literary concerns
 - Note: The point you are trying to make is often the answer to a prompt that your professor has given you for the written assignment (thesis statement).

Introduction

- (~1 paragraph): Other titles may or may not occur with a definition.
 - State the purpose and/or significance of the analysis.
 - Discuss the author in terms of the literary work.
 - Provide the title of the literary work being analyzed.
 - Give necessary background information about the story (very little).
 - End the paragraph with the thesis statement.

Main Body

- (~3 paragraphs): The main body should answer the question, "Why?" or explain "How?" Each paragraph should discuss and analyze one key point at a time.
 - State the topic sentence, which will clarify the paragraph and reflect the thesis statement.
 - Provide specific examples—quotations, passages, descriptions, or comparisons—to support the topic statement.
 - Analyze how the examples fit with the main idea (thesis) and how the analysis is appropriate for the essay.
 - Avoid retelling the story or interpreting the plot unless this is needed to support a particular claim.
 - Note: You must continually explain why and how your examples clarify your thesis, so readers can follow along with your opinion.

Conclusion

- (~1 paragraph): The conclusion restates the argument and reveals a deeper understanding of the work. Just as your introduction leads the reader into the thesis, the conclusion leads out from it.
 - Restate the thesis to emphasize the purpose of the essay.
 - Provide an analytical summary of the main points.
 - Conclude why the main points are significant.
 - Close the essay with how the audience should ultimately be affected by the work. (Why should the audience care about your points?)