

Literature Essay

* Introduction: Be Brief; give some suggestion of the direction you intend to take in your essay. Indicate the aspects of the book you intend to deal with.

* Paragraphing: In your plan you should identify very clearly around six distinct points you intend to make and the specific parts of the text that you intend to examine in some detail. When [college homework help sites](#) writing your homework should devote one or two paragraphs to each point. Try to make smooth links between paragraphs.

* Evidence: When you make a point - you must prove it. Just as a lawyer in court must produce evidence to support his case, so you must produce evidence to prove the comments you make about characters, relationships, themes, style etc. When you make a point, refer to the text. give an example to support what you say. Better still, use a quote.



Quotes: Remember to lay out quotes correctly. Start a new line and indent like this:

“quote quote”

Remember to introduce the quote with a colon and use quotation marks. It is important to lay out quotes correctly because it shows you are professional about what you are doing. Keep them short - no more than three or four lines each.

* Selection: Avoid the trap of just re-telling the story. The important thing is to be selective in the way you use the text. Only refer to those parts of the book that help you to answer the question.

* Answer the question: it sounds obvious, but it's so easy to forget the question and go off at a tangent. When you have finished a paragraph read it through and ask yourself. “How does this contribute to answering the question?” If it doesn't, change it so that it does address the question directly.

* Conclusion: At the end, try to draw all the strands of your various points together. This should be the part of your essay, which answers the question most directly and forcefully.

* Style: Keep it formal. Try to avoid making it chatty. If you imagine you are a lawyer in court trying to prove your point of view about a book, that might help to set the right tone.

* Be creative: Remember you do not have to agree with other people's points of view about literature. If your ideas are original or different, so long as you develop them clearly, use evidence intelligently and argue persuasively, your point of view will be respected. We want literature to touch you personally and it will often affect different people in different ways. Be creative.



Checklist after writing your essay

Have you:

1. Put the full title of the question and the date at the top?
2. Written in clear paragraphs?
3. Produced evidence to prove all your points?
4. Used at least five quotes?
5. Answered the question?

Novel essay

Theme, plot, setting, characters, style; fair divisions for any essay. Order and emphasis will depend on bias of question.

If the question is about theme, talk about it in the introduction, then discuss, one per paragraph, how the other aspects contribute to it, and conclude by talking about the success or otherwise of the author in communicating his/her theme.

Drama essay

Theme, plot, setting, characters, technique.

If the question is about technique, talk about how it affects the others-one per paragraph.

Poetry essay

Theme, style, technique (include such aspects as alliteration, assonance, versification, rhyme, rhythm, where appropriate).

THE TITLES OF PLAYS, NOVELS, MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, JOURNALS (things that can stand by themselves) are underlined or italicized. Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* don't seem to have much in common at first. If you're using a word processor or you have a fancy typewriter, use italics, but do not use both underlines and italics. (Some instructors have adopted rules about using italics that go back to a time when italics on a word processor could be hard to read, so you should ask your instructor if you can use italics. Underlines are always correct.) The titles of poems, short stories, and articles (things that do not generally stand by themselves) require quotation marks.



Tools of the Trade: Subjects and Verbs

Whenever possible, use strong subjects and active constructions, rather than weak verbal nouns or abstractions and weak passive or linking verbs: instead of "Petruchio's denial of Kate of her basic necessities would seem cruel and harsh...," try "By denying Kate the basic necessities of life, Petruchio appears cruel and harsh—but he says that he is just putting on an act." Don't forget that words and even phrases can serve as strong sentence subjects: "Petruchio's 'I'll buckler thee against a million' injects an unexpectedly chivalric note, especially since it follows hard on the heels of his seemingly un-gentlemanly behavior." And remember—use regular quotation marks unless you're quoting material that contains a quotation itself.

In General, Avoid the Swamp of Published Criticism

Do not try to sift through the many hundreds of pounds of critical inquiry about the scene or the play. I am most interested in what you bring to the plays, not the ways in which you try to spew back your versions of what "experts" have written to get tenure or score points with other tweed-jacketed types.

Honest confusion and honest mistaking are part of the learning process, so don't try to seek out some other "authority" for your proof.