WHY WRITE ABOUT LITERATURE

Many people write about literature for the same reason that they read it: simply for the love of a good story about characters or events that they are interested in. These individuals find writing about literature enjoyable because it allows them to explore the ideas presented in a literary work more thoroughly and to further develop their appreciation for a work through research. However, students often find writing about literature to be a challenging process. There are several reasons why, as a college student, you may find reading literature and writing about it easy and enjoyable.

English or non-English majors can benefit from writing about literature. Every student has personal experiences that influence his or her reading of a text, making each new work of literature approached a new opportunity for increased understanding of cultural differences based on contrasting life experiences. As with all assignments for students in composition courses, one of the primary goals of writing about literature is to teach students to articulate their ideas in response to many different types of situations and texts in a clear and succinct way.

- Increasing, broadening, and deepening your understanding about people and cultures different from your own experiences. Since we live in a global marketplace of ideas, anyone entering today’s business world must have at least a cursory understanding of the social diversity in the world today. Reading and responding to literature can help you increase this sort of cultural awareness.

- Encouraging your own literary creativity by reading quality examples of good writing. Many individuals who are already avid readers find that writing creatively provides them with an outlet for thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Although anyone can benefit from artistic expression, this is not the only reason to develop creative writing skills. People working in any field that regularly communicates with the public in print, audio, or visual media can benefit from learning how to tell an engaging anecdote to attract and hold audience attention.

- Developing writing skills for almost any situation. One good way to learn how to write well is to read well-written examples from other authors. Reading widely helps you learn which techniques are the most effective in communicating ideas and feelings; it also provides a frame of reference for how to adapt such effective techniques for use in your own work.

Literature is a constantly changing and evolving concept. In generations past, the word “literature” meant only one thing: the written word in printed media. However, today’s definition of literature means so much more than just printed novels, short stories, and poems. As authors continue to find new ways
to express themselves, literary genres (see below for definition) are invented, expanded, and blended. New types of literature are also being brought into the composition classroom; instructors might not use works from traditional genres, but instead may ask you to read and/or write about a number of different types of literature including graphic novels (novels in comic book form), creative non-fiction (a hybrid of factual and imaginative information), comics, films, television, song lyrics, and popular culture phenomena of all sorts, even video games.

This new widening of the concept of “what literature is” has also led to an expansion of the meaning of the term “reading,” to include viewing and watching of visual media as well. Although the technical language used to describe the specifics of visual media is different, most of the same organizational techniques described here in regards to writing about traditional literature can also be used to write about these new forms of literature as well. In short, any well-written work that uses words to tell a story or express a feeling can be read as literature for discussion.

#### BASIC ELEMENTS OF WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE

**Literary Genres**

*Genres* (from the French word for “kind” or “type”) are classifications of the many forms of media, including movies, music, and for our purposes here, literature. These categories, based on factors such as form and content, help us group and discuss literary works. Generally speaking, literature can be divided into four broad genres: fiction, non-fiction, drama, and poetry. Additionally, each of these genres can be broken down into a variety of sub-genres. It’s important to know what kind of text you’re dealing with before you begin to read, analyze, and write about the work.

- **Fiction:** In this kind of prose, content is produced by the imagination and is not necessarily based on fact. Fiction may take a long form, the novel, or may be written in the short story form. The fiction genre includes everything from “literary” works (such as *Moby Dick* or *Great Expectations*) to “pop” works (like *Bridget Jones’s Diary* or the latest John Grisham novel). There are many sub-genres of fiction, including historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

- **Non-Fiction:** A work of non-fiction prose is a kind of informational text dealing with an actual, real-life subject. Sub-genres include long works like biography, autobiography, and memoir and shorter works such as personal essays and speeches. Non-fiction prose can vary in content, scope, and purpose. For example, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is a long autobiography dealing with the serious subject of slavery. But non-fiction also includes texts like the short, humorous essays of David Sedaris.

- **Poetry:** This genre comprises works of literature that are different from prose, in that they contain language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through images, sound, and rhythm. Poetry can be easily distinguished from prose by the way it looks on the page. Poems often contain figures of speech, such as similes and metaphors. Poetry ranges in length and scope from the ancient epics like *The Iliad* to short lyrics about single images like William Carlos Williams’s “The Red Wheelbarrow.”

- **Drama:** Drama, which is usually intended to be performed on stage, is composed in verse or prose. The dialogue and action of plays work together to convey conflict and emotion. Drama may come in full-length form, one-act form, or monologue form. Examples of drama include Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*. Plays are often read in class, and instructors may add to the experience of drama by having students watch stage or movie versions.
Elements of Fiction

Terms & Elements

General Elements
- Plot—pattern or series of connected incidents in the story.
- Setting—time (historical, season, day), geographic location, scenery, atmosphere, and environment of the work.
- Conflict—a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills. It may be mental, moral, physical, or any combination of the three that the protagonist (main character) undergoes. Conflict is either internal or external.
  - Man vs. Man
  - Man vs. Society
  - Man vs. Circumstance
  - Man vs. Ideas
  - Man vs. Himself
  - Man vs. Nature
- Tone—author’s attitude toward the events and characters
- Theme—main idea, moral, or truth about life presented in the work. Theme should be stated in a general way, not specific to the story or its characters and should not be confused with the subject of the work.

Plot & Structure—planned framework of the story
- Exposition—background information introducing characters, scene, time, and situation
- Rising Action—series of events where complications occur and conflict arises
- Climax—high point in the conflict, moment of highest tension
- Falling Action—after the climax, tension diminishes, leads to resolution
- Resolution/Denouement—conflict is resolved
- Foreshadowing—presentation of material so the reader is prepared for later events
- Flashback—presentation of material that occurred prior to the opening scene
- Suspense—anxiety about the fate of some sympathetic character
- Dilemma—position in which a character must choose between two or more courses of action

Point of View—position from which the story is told
- First-person/Participant—told by a character in the story, major or minor
- Third-person/Non-participant—told by a narrator outside the story
  - Omniscient—all-knowing, sees thoughts of all
  - Limited-omniscient—relates thoughts of one character (usually protagonist)
- Objective/Dramatic—only reports what characters say and do

Character—person(s) involved in the story
- Protagonist—central character in conflict, may be sympathetic or unsympathetic
- Antagonist—forces that work against a protagonist, could be people, things, ideas, etc.
- Round—multi-dimensional, complex character
- Flat—simple, undeveloped character
- Dynamic—learns from mistakes, matures, gains knowledge
- Static—stays the same, gains nothing
- Stock—stereotyped personality
- Motivation—why a character does what he/she does
GUIDE TO FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

■ Revelation—how a character is revealed
  Direct—reader is told
  Indirect—reader is shown and has to infer

Figurative Language—wording intended to be understood in a way other than literal
  ■ Symbol—a person, object, action, or situation that suggests something else
    Conventional/traditional—understood by those with similar cultural backgrounds (dove, cross, laurel)
    Archetypal—universally understood (journey, snake, initiation)
    Literary—contextual, specific to individual work (pink ribbons in “Young Goodman Brown”)
  ■ Irony—verbal, situational, or dramatic
    Verbal—discrepancy between what is said and what is meant
    Situational—discrepancy between what is expected to happen and what actually happens
    Dramatic—discrepancy between what the character understands and what the audience knows
  ■ Personification—human characteristics given to animals, objects, or ideas
  ■ Allusion—a brief, unexplained reference to a person, place, work, event, or thing that conveys its meaning compactly. Can be literary, historical, classical, or biblical.
  ■ Metaphor—an implied comparison, doesn’t use “like” or “as”
  ■ Simile—a comparison using “like,” “as,” “seems,” “than,” etc.

Questions for Analyzing Elements of Fiction

Plot—
  1. What are the major events/actions?
  2. What conflict is most important? What type of conflict is it?
  3. What is the climax and what leads to it?
  4. How is the conflict resolved? Does any conflict remain unresolved?
  5. Is the ending appropriate? Any suspense? Any clues to the ending (foreshadowing)?
  6. Are the events arranged in chronological order? If not, how are they arranged? What does this arrangement achieve?

Point of View—
  1. From what point of view is the story told?
  2. If the narrator is first person/participant, is the narrator reliable or unreliable?
  3. If the narrator is third person/non-participant, is he or she omniscient, limited-omniscient, or objective?
  4. How does the point of view affect the reader’s perception of the events? The characters?
  5. How would another point of view change the story?

Setting—
  1. What are the details? Time, place, season? What are the historical, social, political, and economic contexts of the work?
  2. What significance does setting have in relation to plot? To character? To theme?
  3. What mood or atmosphere is created by the setting? Does the atmosphere change? Is the change significant?
Character—
1. Who are the characters and which are most important?
2. How are the major characters affected by their backgrounds and personal experiences?
3. How are the major characters revealed, directly or indirectly?
4. Are the characters believable? Are they reliable sources of information?
5. Are the characters round or flat?
6. Are they dynamic or static? How are the changes significant in the dynamic characters, if any?
7. What insights into human nature are revealed by the characters? Are these connected to the theme?

Symbol—
1. What are the predominant symbols in this work? Are they conventional/traditional, archetypal, or literary?
2. What meaning does each suggest?
3. Does the work contain allegory? How does it work in the story?

Style, Tone & Language—
1. How does the dialogue develop the characters? What do the speech patterns/diction reveal?
2. Does the work contain simile, metaphor, personification, or allusion? What do they contribute to the story?
3. Are there any unusual word choices or sentence structures? What effect do these have?
4. How does imagery affect the story?
5. What is the author’s attitude/tone toward the characters? The subject? The theme?
6. Does the work contain irony? How does this contribute to the tone? What type of irony is used (verbal, situational, dramatic)?

Theme—
1. What insight about life does the work contain? Is there more than one?
2. Does the title suggest a theme?
3. How do other elements such as plot, setting, character, conflict, symbol, or point of view contribute to theme?
4. Does it present an optimistic or pessimistic view?

Elements of Poetry

Terms & Elements

Imagery—word or phrase describing/representing a sensory experience
■ Visual—sight
■ Auditory—sound
■ Olfactory—smell
■ Gustatory—taste
■ Tactile—touch
Organic—internal (nausea, etc.)
Kinesthetic—movement

Figurative Language—words used in a creative/imaginary sense rather than the literal.
Symbol/Irony/Personification/Allusion/Metaphor/Simile—refer to Elements of Fiction
Hyperbole—extravagant exaggeration or overstatement
Paradox—contradictory statement with some truth
Oxymoron—self-contradictory combination of words
Understatement/Litotes—literal sense of words falls short of what is meant

Sound Qualities—
Alliteration—repetition of initial consonant sounds (rifle’s rapid rattle)
Consonance—repetition of internal or final consonant sounds (torn/burn)
Assonance—repetition of vowel sounds in non-rhyming words (lazy/fate)
Onomatopoeia—sound echoes meaning (clang, buzz)

Questions for Analyzing Elements of Poetry
Speaker & Voice—
1. Who is the speaker? Is the speaker anonymous, or does he or she have a personality?
2. What can you tell about the speaker? Age, gender, personality, occupation, etc.?
3. When is the speaker revealed?
4. Whom does the speaker address, if anyone? If no one is addressed, who is the intended audience?
5. What is the poet’s attitude/tone? Speaker’s attitude/tone? Does the tone change?
6. Is irony used in this work? If so, what type? What effect does it have on the reader’s perception of the work and its theme?

Content—
1. Does the poem tell a story? If so, what are the plot, setting, characters, and conflict?
2. Does the poem express a thought/feeling? Paint a picture? Do these change?
3. If feelings are expressed, are they consistent? Is the pairing odd (humor & death)?
4. Are there any allusions (literary, historical, biblical, classical)? What effect do they have on the meaning?

Language & Diction—
1. What words and phrases are striking or unusual? Are any of these repeated?
2. What are the connotations of these words/phrases?
3. What type of language is used (slang, archaic, elevated, etc.)? Why do you think the author chose this level of diction?
4. Is there anything unusual about word order? If so, what effect does this have?
5. What mood is created by the author’s use of language? Does the mood or language change?
6. What similes and metaphors are used? What effect do these create?
7. What other figures of speech are used (hyperbole, understatement, personification, etc.)?
8. Are symbols used? If so, what do they mean?
9. What type of sound devices are used (alliteration, consonance, assonance, onomatopoeia)?

Theme—
1. What is the subject matter of the poem?
2. What is the central idea relating to the subject? Is this theme explicitly stated or implied?
3. Is the title related to the theme?
4. What is your reaction to the theme?

Quoting Lines of Poetry

One line—
The aging speaker advises, “To love that well which thou must leave ere long” (line 14).

Two or Three lines—
After vividly describing the effects of the gas attack, Owen’s speaker warns, “My friend, you would not tell with such high zest / To children ardent for some desperate glory / The old Lie: […]” (lines 25-27).

Four or More lines—rare in short papers
This works like a block quote for prose. Double-space all. Indent 10 spaces on left, no change to right margin. No quotation marks. Place period before parenthetical. Keep the poem’s structure/line spacing intact.

Note: The first time you cite a poem, include the word “line” or “lines” before the line number(s), as you see in the above examples; after that, include only the number(s). For example, if the quotations above were not first references to the works, the citations would be (14), not (line 14), and (25-27), not (lines 25-27).

Critical Approaches to Literature*

There are different “schools” of literary criticism. This means that literary critics pay special attention to specific elements of the literary works when writing about them, according to what school or criticism they use. Below is a general list with brief definitions of the different schools of literary criticism. Before you decide to use one of these approaches, you’ll probably need to do further research.

■ Formalist Strategy: Focuses on formal elements, such as language, tone, voice and structure. Formalists see literature as independent works that aren’t informed by the author’s life .
■ Biographical: Uses author’s life and experiences to inform the creation, content, and form of a work .
■ Psychological: Applies psychological principles and psychoanalytic theory to the work. Freud and Jung are the dominant sources .
■ Historical: Studies the work from the context of the time period it was written in; often compared to other literature of the same time period.
■ Feminist/Gender: Examines the social (and otherwise) ideas of how men and women (and masculine/ feminine traits) are viewed and implemented in a work.

---

*Some material in this section was adapted from Prof. Holly Tipton’s handout.
- Mythological: Examines underlying patterns (called archetypes) that are found repeatedly throughout literature and which reflect universal human experiences.
- Reader-Response Criticism: Focuses on the reader’s own experience of a literary work instead of on the author or the context of the work.

You can think of each different school as looking at works of literature through a different “lens.” In essays on literature you may choose to look at the work through one specific school or lens from the above list, or you may combine different critical approaches to literature in order to help you prove your own thesis about the text. Not every work of literature can be examined through each lens, and each writer must choose his or her own approach to literary analysis based on personal observations/beliefs/style and what is actually in the text.

MLA Reminder
Unless your instructor gives you other directions, you should always use MLA style when quoting from a work of literature. You should also use MLA style to document quotations from secondary sources that you use to support your ideas about the primary text. All the examples on quoting from texts in this chapter use MLA style.

You also need to punctuate the titles of texts correctly. Shorter works, like short stories, poems, and essays, are enclosed in quotation marks (“The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Raven,” and “The Philosophy of Composition”), and longer works, like novels, biographies, and full-length plays, should be italicized (The Scarlet Letter, The Autobiography of Malcolm X, A Raisin in the Sun).

Style Tips
Refer to characters, titles, and authors in a standard, simple, and consistent manner.
As a general rule, characters in a literary works should be referred to by the name that they are most commonly called by the author of the text. For example, since F. Scott Fitzgerald refers to Daisy in The Great Gatsby continually by her first name, it would be incorrect to refer to her as Mrs. Buchanan. Also, all titles of novels, plays, films, long poems, and non-fiction texts should be put in italics. In contrast, all short stories, essays, and short poems should be put in quotation marks when named in your essay. It is permissible to use a short form of a work’s title in your essay after you have used the full title once. For instance, if you refer to the whole title of The Great Gatsby once in the essay, you may refer to it simply as Gatsby afterward. Last, when you refer to the authors, their entire name under which the title was published should be used upon first reference. However, in subsequent references, only use their last name. For example, you would say “William Shakespeare” in the first reference, but only “Shakespeare” in every subsequent reference to the playwright in the same essay.

Fictional events should be described in the present tense.
Within the world of a novel, short story, poem, or visual text, all events are occurring in the continuous present. Thus, the literary convention is to refer to fictional events in the present tense. For example, if you were writing about 1984 and are describing something that Winston sees on the telescreen, you should refer to what he is viewing in the present tense as if you are watching him view it in that very moment, not as if he had seen it before, or if you had read about him seeing it before. You may need to revise your essay at the end just to make verb tenses reconcile, since many beginning writers have the tendency to shift tenses as they write. Also, you may need to change the verb tense within a quotation from the text that you have integrated into your essay if the tense is inconsistent with the tense used in that section of your paper.
Plot Summary vs. Literary Analysis**

**Plot Summary:** As a general rule, you should avoid relying on plot summary in essays about works of literature. Plot summary does not focus on specific elements of the text. It is more concerned with the overall text itself and comprises a brief retelling of the story. Plot summary gives no insight into the significance of a text; instead, it has the feel of a book report.

**Literary Analysis:** In English 1113, you need to combine argumentative writing with writing about literature. This kind of writing is called literary analysis. Literary analysis persuasively argues ideas (a thesis) on some aspect of a text and uses evidence from the text to support those ideas. Using quotes, summaries and paraphrases, literary analysis takes evidence from the text and discusses its implications. Quotes, summaries, and paraphrases should not be superfluous; instead, they should be used to support your argument (thesis).

**Example of plot summary:**
The creature’s reading of *Paradise Lost* gives him someone that he can compare himself to. He tells Frankenstein, “I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence,’ but his state was far different from mine in every other respect” (87). The creature continues his comparison with the fact that Adam was created perfect, happy, and prosperous and that Adam had a relationship with his creator, God. Finally, the creature says that he is more like Satan than Adam: “[F]or often, like [Satan], when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me” (87).

**Example of analysis:**
The creature’s reading of *Paradise Lost* gives him someone that he can compare himself to,’ furthermore, this comparison allows the creature to chastise Frankenstein for the kind of creator he has been. In Adam, the creature finds someone, like himself, who has “no link to any other being in existence” (87). This similarity gives the creature comfort because his experience in the world has been with humans who have contact with others like themselves. Even though this similarity to Adam gives the creature some peace, the fact that Adam has a relationship with his creator makes the creature envious because Adam is “perfect ... , happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature; but I was wretched, helpless, and alone” (87). The creature’s words here not only reveal the estimation of his own character and state, they also reveal the creature’s awareness of the role his creator was supposed to play in the life of his creation but did not. The argument that the creature makes, then, is that had Frankenstein been the loving, caring, giving creator that God was to Adam, the creature would be as “happy and prosperous” as Adam instead of as miserable as Satan, about whom the creature relates as “the fitter emblem of my condition” (87).

Using the Text and Secondary Sources for Support

As with any assertion, you must use evidence to prove your point. You will find this evidence within the primary text and/or secondary texts. When using quoted material, always lead into and follow up the quote; it cannot stand alone. You will make your point, use the quote as evidence, and then explain how the quote proves your statement. You will never begin or end a body paragraph with quoted material. Your voice, your opinion, should be strongest.

The work(s) of literature you analyze in your essay are the “primary” sources. Your primary source is the work on which you are doing your analysis. Use this text as the assignment requires. If your instructor

**This section was adapted from University Writing Center handout WID 1 b.
GUIDE TO FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

asks you to use evidence from the text, make sure that you use it to support your point with specific examples from the text rather than generalizations and plot summary.

Your “secondary” sources are just that, secondary. What matters first is your own argument about the primary source. Secondary sources (such as articles about your chosen literary work by professional literary scholars) support your argument and are only to be used as an aid. Develop your own ideas first, then use secondary sources to back up your own observations, which should make up most of the essay.

For example, let’s say you are writing an essay on Kate Chopin’s short story “The Story of an Hour.” Your basic argument is that though the story is realistic and easy for readers to follow, its climax is problematic for some, including you, and seems supernatural. First, you’d give evidence from the story (your primary source) that supports this argument:

When Louise is “drinking the elixir of life” and her eyes are “feverish,” she seems possessed by some outside supernatural force (12).

Then, after exploring the text and your own assertions about it, you might want to support your textual evidence and your own analysis with a paraphrase from a secondary source. Remember to introduce outside sources, like this:

According to Daniel P. Deneau, Louise seems to draw on a supernatural force at the end of the story (211).

If the author of your secondary source states an idea connected to your thesis in an important and memorable way, you might consider using a quote, like this:

At the end of the story, “Louise does indeed receive an infusion of knowledge from a source that seems beyond human understanding or even naming” (Deneau 211).

Whichever way you use the secondary source, you need to make sure you do two things: 1) connect what the critic says to your own argument, and 2) include the source on your works cited page:


Tips on Using Quotes

Create a context for quotations from literary works. Don’t expect quotations to be self-explanatory.

Although you may know exactly what you intend for a quotation from a text to mean, you must set it up in a way that will explain the quotation’s context for your readers. Otherwise, the person reading your essay may not be able to follow your line of analysis. For example, if you were using the quote from John Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” that reads “Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know” (lines 49-50), you should explain how or why Keats might have made this statement in the context of his poem, and also how or why you have chosen this particular quotation to illustrate your point. Do not simply drop a quotation into your essay and expect that your readers will simply derive the beauty of its truth and easily understand your argument.

If you change a quotation, indicate the words you have changed by enclosing them in brackets. If you omit words within a quotation, use an ellipsis.

Sometimes, you might have to add or change words to clarify the meaning of the quotation you have selected for your readers. For example, in the Keats quotation referred to above, you might decide that Keats’ use of the word “ye” for “you” is an antiquated form of usage that might confuse some of your readers.
If you decide to modernize the word by using “you” for “ye,” the “you” should be enclosed in brackets, so that the quotation would read: “[You] know on earth, all [you] need to know” (line 50).

If you decide to omit unnecessary words from a quotation, then you should indicate their absence by using an ellipsis. To use the Keats quotation one last time, if you choose to omit the first half of line 50, so that the phrase reads continuously, you would indicate the absent words in the following manner: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all / ... ye need to know” (lines 49–50). If you wanted to combine this example with the use of brackets to omit the antiquated use of “ye” for “you,” as already described, the finished Keats quotation would look like this: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all / ... [you] need to know” (lines 49–50).

Indicate quotations from one source embedded within another by using single quotation marks.

Very often in your reading, you will encounter passages in literary texts in which certain material, particularly dialogue among characters, is already enclosed in quotations. In those situations, you should indicate where the quotation marks were used in the actual text by using single quotation marks to enclose the material inside the double quotation marks that surround the entire quoted portion. For example, if you had a short story about a couple having an argument, the passage from the text might read as follows:

Roxanne looked at John with a peculiar smile. “Really,” she said, “I had no idea at all that you cared.” From the smile, John knew not only that Roxanne had an idea that he cared, but that she took exquisite pleasure from knowing that he cared desperately.

If you decided to quote the entire passage, including the quotation within the quotation, it would read:

“Roxanne looked at John with a peculiar smile. ‘Really,’ she said, ‘I had no idea at all that you cared.’ From the smile, John knew not only that Roxanne had an idea that he cared, but that she took exquisite pleasure from knowing that he cared desperately” (Author 1).

Note: The sample passage in this example is the author’s own.

■ ACTIVITIES FOR WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE

In addition to completing in-class activities and following assignment guidelines, the following activities can be used to help you get started on a literary analysis.

Reading Strategies

When you engage in a literary analysis, you need to learn how to perform a “close reading.” That requires more than just having your eyes pass over the words. You need to be an active reader. Here are some strategies on how to conduct an active reading.

Read the work one time for comprehension. That means the first time through, just let the story work on you and absorb as much of the plot, characters, and theme as you can. You’ll always want to read a text multiple times when you are going to write about it. You might want to use the following active reader strategies to yield a richer understanding of the text and lay a solid groundwork for your thesis.

1. Use a highlighter or pen to mark as you read. The point of highlighting at this stage is to note key passages, phrases, turning points in the story. Be careful not to highlight too much, and make sure you also take notes in the margins.

2. Write marginal notes in the text. These should be questions, comments, dialogue with the text itself.
Example: This paragraph from Kate Chopin’s short story “The Story of an Hour” serves as an example. It could have a reader’s note like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marginal Notes</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is something blocking the character’s vitality. What’s the root cause behind the repression and dull stare?</td>
<td>She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Keep a notebook for freewrite summaries and response entries. Write quickly after reading the text or a portion of the text. Break your reading into manageable chunks and take freewriting breaks. Ask questions, attempt answers and make comments about whatever catches your attention.

4. Step back. After close reading and note-taking, try to make a statement about the story’s meaning. You might want to ask yourself the following questions in order to arrive at a thesis statement: What is the author trying to say? What kind of person or situation is the author commenting on? How does the author complicate the issue at hand?

Pre-Writing Activities

After your close reading and note-taking and before you write your essay, you’ll need to do some pre-writing activities. Here’s a sample prewriting plan you could try.

1. Freewrite: Without referring to the text or your notes, write for 5-10 minutes on all the images, plot points, or character traits that relate to your main point of investigation. Turn this freewrite into an initial list of evidence for your thesis.

2. Review: Look back through the text and your notes to further identify evidence, keeping focused on the particular device you want to discuss. Draft a thesis, thinking about what you are going to argue and how you are going to support it.

3. Research: Once you’ve identified enough textual evidence to support your thesis, you may want to see what other writers have had to say about your topic. This kind of appeal to other authorities helps you back up and interpret your reading of the work. Always follow assignment guidelines on using outside sources. Evaluate your sources before you use them in your essay, deciding which evidence offers the best, most illustrative examples you can find.

Developing an Argument/Thesis Statement

An argument: When you write an extended literary analysis, you are essentially making an argument. You will argue that your perspective is a valid and important one.

A debatable thesis statement: Like any argument paper written for English 1113, you must have a specific, detailed thesis statement that reveals your perspective, and, like any good argument, your perspective must be one which is debatable.

Example:
You would not want to make an argument such as this:
Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” tells the story of the last hour before the main character dies of heart disease.

That doesn’t say anything about the story and is basically just a summary—hardly debatable at all. A better, more debatable thesis might be something like this:

Though Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” has a clear, realistic beginning that carries the reader comfortably, the story concludes with supernatural elements which serve to befuddle the reader, complicating the overall meaning.

The rest of a paper with this argument as its thesis will be an attempt to show, using specific examples from the story and secondary sources, (1) how the beginning of the story is clear and realistic, (2) how, when, and why the supernatural elements enter the story, and (3) how and why the change in reading experience complicates the meaning of the story.

Outlining/Drafting
After your close reading and prewriting activities, you’ll begin outlining and drafting. You may wish to write an outline before you begin drafting. Others work better drafting without an outline. You might want to make a “reverse outline” after you draft and refine your organization from there. The following example of the basic structure of a literary analysis essay should serve as a good basic skeleton to use for organizing your essay. (Of course, not everyone follows this approach rigidly; this is merely an organizational suggestion. Each writer must determine the approach that works best for him or her.)

Title: Your title should relate directly to the thesis and its development.

Introductory Paragraphs:
Opening lead
Author’s Full Name
Title of Work
Brief plot summary (3–4 sentences) and narrowing focus
Thesis statement: what you intend to prove in the essay, with some suggestion of the organization to be followed in the body of the essay.

Body Paragraphs:
Develop the sequential parts of the thesis statement in separate paragraphs. Overall pattern for each body paragraph:
Topic sentence
Introductory information for the quotations and supporting details which follow
Quotation/paraphrase and details from the work to prove the topic sentence
Analysis—explanation of the relevance, significance, and meaning of the quote
Transition to additional support
Introductory information to lead into a second supporting quotation
Quotation/paraphrase to support the topic sentence
Analysis to show how and why the quotation proves the topic sentence

This basic literary analysis pattern can be adapted to include multiple quotations.

Concluding Paragraph:
Speed or tempo changes without using expressions like “In conclusion,” “In summary,” and “To conclude.” Summary of key points of the essay without simply repeating the thesis or topic sentences. Discusses the significance of the ideas, reveals the implications of your discussion, or leaves the reader with something to consider.
Revision/Editing
As with any kind of essay, be sure to leave ample time for editing and revision.

■ TYPES OF ASSIGNMENTS
Depending on your instructor’s use of a particular work of literature, he or she may ask you to write about that work in many different ways. The most important thing to remember, when writing about literature in a classroom setting, is to follow your professor’s assigned instructions. Basically, college-level assignments in writing about literature come in three different forms: analytical essays, reaction/reflection essays and response essays.

To understand the differences among these three types of writing about literature, see the definitions that are provided below.

Analytical Essays
Literary analysis is one of the most common assignments for writing about literature. Analysis of a literary work requires a writer to study a text carefully, make critical judgments about its interpretation based on independent ideas as well as research of other possible interpretations, and support claims made about the work with evidence from the text. Often, the most difficult part of writing about literature is deciding where to begin.

Although every writer must develop his or her own method for deriving meaning from a text, the following series of steps can help essayists learn to develop their ideas about a text into a thesis and then a full analysis.

Step 1: Read the text actively, and then discuss your views on it with others.
As you read a text, make notes either in the margins or on a separate piece of paper. Although you do not have to write down every observation, it will help you formulate your ideas if you make notes (including page numbers from the text) of your thoughts concerning any concept, word, or passage that is particularly interesting. Most literary analysis begins with these sorts of natural observations that pique a reader’s interest or curiosity. Then, bring your ideas to class with you for discussion with your peers and instructor at the proper time. Chances are, if you were interested in a particular issue, others will be too, and their input can offer added insights that will help you flesh out the idea.

Step 2: Form an opinion about your observations that help answer “So What?” questions.
After you have developed a better understanding about your initial observation through discussion with others and quiet contemplation, develop an opinion about the issue. The most important question you should ask yourself when developing your observations into a provable thesis statement is “So What?” What could your opinion, and later thesis, about this particular matter within a text add to other readers’ understanding of the work? Many times, rereading a text looking for patterns will help answer “so what” questions about a prevalent theme in the work that is important for readers to comprehend.

Sometimes, cultural or historical references in the text warrant further research to explain a concept known to the author but foreign to his or her readers. The best literary analysis essays are ones in which the essayist discovers something that helps other readers of the text find new or additional meaning that has been overlooked.

Step 3: Create a WORKING thesis statement and outline to help direct your research.
After you have developed a well-reasoned opinion about an issue in the text that answers the all-important “So What” question, the next step is to develop that opinion into a thesis statement that you believe can be supported by further research.
Your thesis statement should be narrow enough to ensure complete coverage of the concept within the number of pages required by your instructor, but also broad enough to include three to five major points under the umbrella of the thesis statement. As a general rule, it is unwise to attempt to cover more than five major points within any paper of average freshman composition class length (4-5 pages for shorter essays or 8-10 pages for longer ones), because the depth of exploration of so many ideas in such a small space is likely too shallow for quality college-level work. In contrast, using fewer than three major points is not likely to provide enough information to fill the pages in a thought-provoking way without adding too much filler.

Let rereading of the text and your research continually evolve and refine the thesis statement and outline as you work. Remember, they are still WORKING concepts that must be supported. Don’t become hastily and irrationally attached to an idea that later proves to be untenable, too broad, or simply wrong. Stay open-minded!

Step 4: Conduct research focused around the thesis and outline of major points.
Researching a work of literature can be fun, if you enjoy the issue that you are writing about. Discovering new facts and insights about an interesting idea is the joy of anyone with an inquisitive mind. Always remember to jot down notes (including page numbers) about your opinions regarding outside sources as you read them. This will help you broaden your outline into a full essay during the drafting stage without wasting time rereading materials and trying to remember what you thought the first time. Unfortunately, you may soon find that you fall into one of two groups of students: those who over-research and those who over-limit their research.

In contrast, if you find that you have too little information to fill the required length of the assignment, you are most likely limiting your research too narrowly. Remember, not only literary critics have something to say about a work of literature that might help audiences understand that work better. Non-fiction research in history, psychology, sociology, the arts, and even engineering and the sciences can add to interpretations of a text for those unfamiliar with that particular field, if it is discussed in the text that you are writing about. There should always be enough information about any idea that answers a “so what” question to fill average freshman composition class length requirements.

Step 5: Draft your essay.
After you have refined your outline and reviewed the text comparatively with your research to determine how best to organize your ideas to answer the “so what” questions, it is time to begin drafting your essay. Although this may seem like a lot of pre-writing before the actual task, following this process actually makes the writing of an analytical essay much easier. If you have continually refined your outline and included both the quotations from the text that you plan to discuss and the quotations and concepts from outside sources that you plan to use to support your opinions, your essay should almost write itself. All that remains is to connect the ideas in a cohesive way with good transitions and then proofread.

Remember—Analysis is not the same thing as observation, plot summary, or paraphrase. If you cite a specific incident from the text, EXPLAIN why it is significant, rather than merely noting it and thinking that the person reading your essay will make the connection on his or her own. The main point of literary analysis is providing answers to questions brought up by literature that the original work does not specifically state, not restating what the original work already makes explicit.
Reaction/Reflection and Response Essays
Reaction/Response and Reflection/Response essays are the next type of essay that you may be asked to write in a freshman composition classroom. The two categories are alike in that both require you to write in **Response** to an existing work of literature as a whole, without using outside research. However, these two types of essays also have some differences:

**Reaction/Response Essays:**
This type of essay requires a student to respond to a text as a whole by focusing on an overall message or issue contained within the text. To make a thorough analysis of a work of literature in a reaction/response essay, you must read and often re-read, a text critically while taking notes and discussing important themes with the instructor and classmates. Reaction/Response Essays often require you to agree or disagree with a viewpoint presented in the text, to critique some aspect of the text, or to relate it to a current social issue.

Remember—The instructor will inform you in the assignment sheet as to how he or she wants you to use evidence from the text to support your point. Always follow the directions as given in the assignment in regards to form and content.

**Reflection/Response Essays:**
These assignments ask students to link a work to their own life experiences, whether events they know personally or cultural practices they have observed. Students are then to reflect on—or contemplate—the significance of the work to their own lives or to the lives of others within the culture described.

Remember—Again, follow the directions given to you by your instructor specifically about any rhetorical devices or models that you are supposed to follow in the essay.

The more you read and write about literature, the more comfortable you will become with the process. Each essay assignment will present you with new challenges which will help you grow as a writer and learn to discuss literature in meaningful ways. All it takes is practice!
Student Model Essay

The Caged Bird in “The Story of an Hour”

In “The Story of an Hour,” Kate Chopin utilizes symbols and language to emphasize her feminist ideas and address the limitations placed on women by society. In this brief tale, Mrs. Louise Mallard appears to embody a bird trapped inside the cage of marriage and then dies when she realizes she will never be truly free. Mrs. Mallard’s character is developed from her realization of the birds around her and the cage she is in, her acceptance of her new life as she spreads her wings, and her devastation that leads to her death when she sees the cage doors of domestic life once again closing in on her.

After hearing of her husband’s death, Mrs. Mallard comes to life as she embraces the world around her, including the sparrows outside her window. Alone in her upstairs room, she sits in a “comfortable, roomy armchair” (465) and stares out the open window at the scene below. This open window symbolically releases her from the cage of marriage she has been trapped in for years. Looking out, she gains a bird’s eye view of the “tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life” (465). She is entranced by the visual sights of activity in “the open square before her house” (465), especially the “countless sparrows . . . twittering in the eaves” (465). This immersion in nature gives her new life and also symbolically allows her to be reborn as a bird in spring. Embracing her new identity, she fixes her gaze “off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky” (465). Although this realization at first seems to be inconsequential, it is actually Mrs. Mallard’s initial understanding of her true self as an uncaged bird. In fact, her surname Mallard, a breed of duck, reiterates the bird imagery sprinkled throughout the story.

Now that Mrs. Mallard is free from her cage of marriage, she must learn to embrace her new position in life.

Louise Mallard is hesitant to embrace a new stage in life, but like a bird learning to spread its wings, she must try to fly. Mrs. Mallard appears fearful of her self-realization, but she quickly accepts and embraces it. She gradually feels “something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air” (465). Once she “abandon[s] herself” to this realization, she is possessed by a new sense of freedom. Mrs. Mallard repeats the word “Free” several times throughout the rest of the story. Her acceptance of this new mantra for herself is demonstrated when “she opened and spread her arms out . . . in welcome” (466). This not only shows her embracing the world and her future but also mimics the movements of a bird preparing to take flight. Certain birds connote images of freedom and escape, themes that epitomize her new stage of life. With the death of her husband, Mrs. Mallard is no longer a caged bird, and she relishes that new situation. Simultaneously, she seems somewhat frightened by her transformation. She transitions from a “monstrous joy” emphasizing her uneasiness to embracing her new “clean and exalted perception” (466). Despite this reluctance, she accepts the freedom she now has; however, this freedom will be short lived.

Moments after Mrs. Mallard has embraced her new persona, her husband’s return devastates her and traps her back into her previous life in a cage of marriage. Feeling a “feverish triumph” (466) as she walks down the stairs with her sister, Mrs. Mallard is shocked when the front door opens and her husband enters. Brently Mallard’s return forces her to revert back to her old self and surrender the freedom and symbolic wings she had embraced just moments before. The “opening of the front door with a latchkey” represents the closing of her cage door (466). Having just imagined a free life “that would belong to her absolutely” (466), she cannot return to the caged existence she had lived in for so many years.

Bird imagery, interwoven throughout the story, symbolizes both Mrs. Mallard’s newfound freedom as well as her caged existence. Throughout the story she comes to embody a bird released from its cage and about to take flight, only to find the cage door once again slammed shut. The caged bird motif
follows Mrs. Mallard through the realization of her husband’s death, the acceptance of her new life, and the devastation of her husband’s return.

Work Cited

Brittany Fiester
In “A Rose for Emily,” William Faulkner creates a number of distinct images, with death and decay being the most noticeable and analyzed ones. However, Faulkner’s more subtle, less recognized images are just as important. One of them is the door. Faulkner mentions a door a total of ten times within the story. Surely, then, the appearance of the doors is more than incidental and is worth examination. The doors—the kitchen door, the cellar door, the bedroom door, and the front door—are a significant part in Emily’s (and her father’s) attempt to prevent the passage of time and the process of change. The doors serve as barriers between two social classes and between the old and the new. Despite Emily’s efforts to separate herself from the outside world, the barriers are weakened and become penetrable by the natural progressions of time and death and by the changing of generations.

When the story is rearranged to read chronologically, Faulkner’s first reference to the front door pertains to Emily and her father. The narrator explains:

We had long thought of them as a tableau; Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horse whip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door. (292)

The door represents a barrier imposed by Emily’s father that separates the aristocracy of the Griersons from any man not suitable for Emily. It represents one of the “social boundaries between those who are ‘good enough’ and those who are not rendered concrete by the physical boundaries of the house itself” (Allen 689). Allowing a social underclassman to cross the threshold of that barrier would be an invasion of the aristocratic ideal held by the “high and mighty Griersons” (Faulkner 292). The door is a separation of two worlds, of two social classes. At this point in the story the barriers are still strong and efficient in dividing past ideals from the up and coming ones.

Faulkner’s second reference to the door arises after the death of Emily’s father. When the townspeople come to Emily’s house after her father has died, she meets “them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She [tells] them that her father [is] not dead” (293). Emily meets the ladies, the ministers, and the doctors at the door, yet does not allow them to enter. Again the door serves as a barrier between Emily’s world and the outside world. In this incident, the door is also a separation between the real and the unreal. The townspeople are there to take away her dead father, a truth that Emily wishes not to acknowledge. After three days, Emily finally breaks down and allows the removal of her father. This is the first sign of weakening in the barrier.

The third and fourth references to doors appear in relation to Homer Barron, a Yankee construction foreman who is also Miss Emily’s lover. The narrator notes:

And, as we had expected all along, within three days Homer Barron was back in town. A neighbor saw the Negro man admit him at the kitchen door at dusk one evening. And that was the last we saw of Homer Barron. And of Miss Emily for some time. The Negro man went in and out with the market basket, but the front door remained closed. (295)

Here, the reference to the door is slightly different from the previous two. Instead of entering the front door, Homer enters the kitchen door. The kitchen door is not the primary entrance into the house. The Negro servant, who is, in the eyes of Emily’s generation, inferior, mainly uses the back or kitchen door. Had Emily’s father been alive, Homer Barron too would have been considered inferior and “unworthy” of entering through the front door. The fact that Homer enters through the kitchen door and not the front alludes to the continuing power of Emily’s dead father, a power the narrator describes as a “quality… which had thwarted her woman’s life so many times” and which was “too virulent and too furious to die” (295). There is still a distinct separation of social classes, and the door again serves as the wall between the two. But if Homer is the “new order taking over from the old,” then the fact that Homer is allowed to enter, even through the back door, is yet another sign of the weakening of Emily’s barriers (Littler 84).
The fifth door that Faulkner writes of is the cellar door. When the putrid odor emits from Emily's home, four men—“three graybeards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation” (Faulkner 292)—go to Emily's home, break through the cellar door, and sprinkle lime. The presence of the younger man is vitally significant. Just as there is a continual attempt by Emily to prevent the influx of social reform and change, there is also a counter attempt of the next generation to bring in the young and oust the old. Here is a man, a representative of change and new ideals, penetrating the barriers between the two social classes and the two generations. However, like Homer Barron's invasion of merely the kitchen door, this young man is successful in invading only the cellar door and not the front door. The young man only weakens the barriers as Homer does, yet does not completely destroy them. At this point, time and change are not totally successful in eliminating the old.

The sixth and seventh references to the front door come during Emily's china-painting lessons. Faulkner states:

From that time on her front door remained closed, save for a period of six or seven years, when she was about forty, during which she gave lessons in china-painting. She fitted up a studio in one of the downstairs rooms, where the daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris’ contemporaries were sent to her…. (295)

Emily opens her front door—she lifts the barriers between herself and the outside world. This act seems to suggest that perhaps Emily has given up her struggle to preserve the ideals of her days. This is not so. Look at those whom Emily allows to enter the front door. They are “daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris' contemporaries” (295). Colonel Sartoris was a man of her father's generation, with familiar ideals, and familiar convictions. In allowing the girls into her home, Emily is attempting to hold on to the past vicariously through the relatives of a man whom she holds in esteem and considers one of her own; she has not remitted her desire to divide herself from the world outside her door. When “the newer generation became the backbone and the spirit of the town…[t]he front door closed upon the last one and remained closed for good” (295). Thus, Emily rebuilds the wall between herself and the upcoming generation.

Faulkner's eighth and ninth references to the doors of Emily's house occur during the meeting between Emily and the new Board of Aldermen concerning her taxes:

A deputation waited upon her, knocked at the door through which no visitor has passed since…eight or ten years earlier. They were admitted by the old Negro. […] She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door. (291)

Here is the first time Emily has allowed anyone through her front door since she discontinued her lessons. Her visitors are not the relatives of an esteemed colleague, but rather the men of the newer generation with the newer ideas from which she has tried for so long to protect herself. The admission of the gentlemen through the front door is another major weakening point in the barriers between Emily's world and the outside world. The men are there to discuss the remittance of her taxes. The Aldermen wish to change what Colonel Sartoris had done in the past. Requiring Emily to pay taxes is an imposition of the ideas of the new world on that of the old. Although Emily is not receptive to the ideas of the younger men, the men have successfully crossed the barrier that Emily has created. Emily stands in the doorway in an attempt to reinforce her wall, which she sees is failing to distance herself from the intruders.

The tenth and final reference Faulkner makes to a door is to the upstairs bedroom door: “The violence of breaking down the door seemed to fill this room with pervading dust” (296). After Emily's death and burial, the townspeople enter her home. The town's presence at Emily's house signifies the degradation of her world by the invasion of another. Once inside the house, the town forces open a room which has been closed for forty years. This door is the core of Emily's home—it is the center of her world. The breaking open of this last barrier is the ultimate and final act of invasion of the townspeople with their new generation of modern ideas. The natural progression of time and change has at last succeeded in overcoming the old.
For most of her life, Emily closes herself behind the doors of her house in an attempt to preserve the way of life known to her generation. She creates barriers between herself and all others. But in her death (a natural product of time and change), her struggle becomes futile. Ray B. West writes that “[s]uch retreat, the story implies, is hopeless since everyone (even Emily) is finally subjected to death and the invasion of his world by the clamorous and curious inhabitants of the world of the present” (196). Emily’s doors are tightly closed in the beginning of the story, yet with the pressures of time, change, and social reform, the doors begin to open. By the end of the story, the doors are completely demolished and Emily’s world of the past is taken over by the world of the present.

Works Cited

Devin Hardin

This essay originally appeared in Winning Essays, a publication of the English Department at Mississippi State University.
Student Model Essay

“The Yellow Wallpaper” and “The Story of an Hour”:
Freedom Within Despite External Captivity

Any dictionary provides multiple specific definitions of freedom. Although each one focuses on a specific aspect of the word, they all claim that it is “the condition of being free from restraints.” When defining captivity, however, dictionaries generally present a single meaning: “the state of being imprisoned, confined or enslaved.” It seems, therefore, that while most people can clearly define their restraints, few can truly pinpoint complete freedom. In “The Story of an Hour,” written by Kate Chopin, and “The Yellow Wallpaper,” written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the desire for freedom is explored. Despite the two main characters’ struggle to achieve independence, neither reaches a true state of freedom by the end of the story as they both are captured by their own thoughts rather than outside forces.

Since the nature of captivity can be explained by one definition instead of many, as in the case of freedom, it appears that humans are better at identifying what is holding them back than they are at explaining what would truly liberate them. Each protagonist struggles when attempting to grasp her individual concept of freedom, but she knows from the beginning what is holding her captive. In “The Story of an Hour” it becomes clear form the beginning that Mrs. Mallard’s reaction to her husband’s death is not what one would expect of most wives. The “physical exhaustion that haunted her body” was not due to grief, but rather the effect of a long period of captivity (465). For Mrs. Mallard, captivity means having a “powerful will bending her” to her husband’s will (Chopin 466). Mrs. Mallard seems to believe her captivity, therefore, comes from an outside force, in other words, her husband. In “The Yellow Wallpaper,” the main character, Jane, also feels held back from freedom by her husband, who represents pressure from society. Pressure from society is a problem for Jane since she feels as though she is forced to pretend to be normal despite her “nervous depression” (Gilman 413). Jane points out what seems to be ironic: that her husband being a “physician” may be one of the reasons she is not “get[ting] well faster” (413). Her husband’s efforts at control only make the matter worse and cause Jane to feel like a captive in her own house. This suggests that the problem is not a physical one at all; instead, the real problem is her mental state. For the two women, captivity appears to come from the people one would expect to be their support, in other words, their husbands. The constant efforts by outside forces to control them cause the main characters to see no other alternative than to break away physically and mentally.

The main characters seem quite certain that attaining freedom means a break from the outside world and all the chains that bind them in marriage. For Mrs. Mallard, liberty is characterized by having “no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself” (Chopin 466). Without even knowing it, having such independence is something she had wanted for many years but did not quite have the opportunity or bravery to attain. Being “body and soul free” could happen only if her husband were dead (466). In “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Jane initially believes her only chance of freedom is to break away from her husband since he appears to be the obstacle to her liberation. Wanting to visit with friends and spend her days writing, Jane imagines a freer life only if she breaks away from her husband because he forbids her from doing these things and treats her like a child. He isolates her from human interaction, believing this to be the path to restored health. Freedom in Jane’s case, however, can only be attained by treatment for her mental state, which in the end takes control over her.

During the process of liberation, both the main characters realize that freedom is a state of mind and thus needs to be internalized. For Mrs. Mallard, freedom “warm[s] relax[e]s every inch of her body,” and this “monstrous joy” finally allows her to picture a brighter future (Chopin 466). Although the realization of ultimate freedom in Mrs. Mallard’s case is facilitated by believing her husband is dead, it can be argued that this state of freedom could have been achieved while her husband was alive (466). Mrs. Mallard’s view of marriage, that it claims to “have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-
creature,” suggests this is an accepted norm rather than a lifestyle forced upon her by her husband (466). Therefore, Mrs. Mallard might be able to live the life she imagines for herself despite her husband being alive. During Mrs. Mallard’s enlightenment, which for a moment brings a “feverish triumph,” she has locked herself in her bedroom and created a physical boundary between herself and the outside world (466). Creating a physical boundary enables her to drink “in the very elixir of life” (466). For Jane, on the other hand, being locked away and separated from the outside world creates an unstable mindset. Jane’s perception of the yellow wallpaper symbolizes her attempt to seem normal to the world while there is much more going on under the surface. Just as wallpaper covers the reality and imperfections of walls, the yellow wallpaper in the story refers to Jane’s thoughts which she tries to hide from the world. Once Jane begins to notice “things on the wallpaper that nobody knows about,” she is determined to figure herself out (Gilman 418). During her liberation process, Jane becomes much less focused on breaking with the outside world, although she wishes her husband would leave her alone as he is keeping her from “giv[ing] way to such fancies” in her own mind (415). During this process, Jane is so determined to free the woman within that she begins to peel the wallpaper off. After peeling off yards of wallpaper, Jane experiences a state of triumph as she relates to the woman she has just freed, referring to her as “we” (423). Although both the characters reach their targeted state of mind, neither story ends happily due to the actual reality of their captivity.

Even though the two women believe they are prisoners of their husbands, they eventually learn that freedom may sometimes come from within. For Mrs. Mallard, the shock of having her husband reappear is so great that she neither embraces her newfound state of freedom, which she has come to almost internalize, nor manages to go back to her old life. Mrs. Mallard’s point-of-no-return, therefore, causes her death. Having “abandoned herself” once within the hour, Mrs. Mallard is incapable of settling for her past lifestyle and dies “of heart disease” (Chopin 466). For Jane, on the other hand, the ending is rather ironic as well. Although Jane does not physically die, she seems so far gone into insanity that she refers to herself in third person. While she seeks to control her inner thoughts, it appears the rope is “securely fastened” around her neck instead of the woman’s neck in the wallpaper (Gilman 424). In the very end, the speaker claims to be “out at last,” and although this sounds like freedom, the speaker adds that she cannot be put back into the wallpaper (425). It appears as though Jane is now controlled by the woman from the wallpaper while also uniting with her. The result of this liberation does not have a happy ending, as Jane has gone from being controlled by her husband to being held a captive of her own mind.

Overall, the two stories point out both the importance of determining the true source of captivity and but also finding out what true, ideal freedom means. Mrs. Mallard welcomes a new side of herself and imagines a better life, making death seem preferable to continuing to live her old life. Jane, on the other hand, manages to separate herself mentally from controlling forces, but the result of her separation eventually consumes her to the point of insanity. In life, although one may sometimes wish to stand free from the outside world, ultimate freedom comes from a liberated state of mind.

Works Cited


Linda Konde
Loneliness creates most of the conflict for the protagonists in Katherine Mansfield’s “Miss Brill” and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Both women wrestle with separation from the rest of society, and by the end of each story, neither of the protagonists overcome the effects of loneliness in her life. The main reason for this failure is how they are forced to deal with loneliness in the first place.

Miss Brill attempts to cope with loneliness by approaching her own thoughts and feelings from a third-person perspective. She seems to dissociate from herself, fearing that she will get hurt if she actually allows herself to experience life. In fact, she occasionally associates all of her sadness with her fur. For example, after returning from her devastating experience in the park, Miss Brill “unclasp[s] the necklace quickly; quickly without looking, [lays] it inside” (Mansfield 71) its box. After placing the lid on the box, Miss Brill thinks that she hears “something crying” (Mansfield 71). She hears herself, though she thinks that it is actually the fur. Miss Brill is confined to this somewhat neurotic state of mind because she does not know how to handle the feeling of being isolated and unwelcome. She sits in the park and watches families having a merry time, but she cannot partake in their revelries because she has no family. As the name of the story itself clearly shows, she has never had a husband and children of her own. This lack of everyday interaction is perhaps the reason for her skewed outlook on the world. For example, she sees “[t]wo young girls in red… and two young soldiers” (Mansfield 69) meet in the park and go off together. She views them as normal, happy young couples, painting a picture in her mind of a world where young people can just happen to meet and fall in love in an instant. However, it is very likely that the two young women are actually prostitutes, and that the young men have just hired their services, rather than fallen in love with them.

Ultimately, Miss Brill is a static character. At the end of the story she seems no closer to understanding her problems than when the story began. In the beginning of the story she sits in the park where “the air [is] motionless” (Mansfield 67) and chilly. In other words, she is not progressing towards the ultimate goal of finding her role “on the stage” (Mansfield 70) of life. She denies truth by dancing around the fact that she is sad. By the end of the story, Miss Brill is still unable to admit to herself that she is brokenhearted because she has been isolated and ridiculed by the local townspeople. Some of the fault for her static attitude rests in her, however, not just in her surroundings. For example, as she is returning home from the park, she deprives herself of her one luxury: “a slice of honey-cake at the baker’s” (Mansfield 71). This approach to her life is almost self-destructive. Miss Brill abstains from one thing which brings her pleasure and gives meaning to her life. Because she will not face her fears, she cannot be Miss Brill, but must be a fur which lives in a box in the cupboard and cannot have any cake.

Although she does not experience the same sort of isolation as Miss Brill, the wife in “The Yellow Wallpaper” is also afflicted by loneliness. However, she deals with her solitude in a different way from Miss Brill. Instead of observing herself from the perspective of someone else, she sees herself as several different people entirely. For example, late in the story she tries to understand the strange woman she has been seeing in the wall. The wife claims to see this woman outside of the house “under the trees, creeping along” (Gilman 281). She finds out later, in a manner of speaking, that she is the one whom she sees creeping. At this point it is too late for her to reconcile her alternate personalities, and she becomes lost within them.

One of the primary causes of her insanity is her constant seclusion. Unlike Miss Brill, she is trapped by her family. Her husband and his sister keep the wife in the highest elevated, farthest removed room in the entire house. They will not let her leave to see anyone, and they will seldom allow any visitors to come see her. Their motives are good, for they are trying to help her recover from a “temporary nervous depression” (Gilman 272), but their prison-like techniques do nothing but exacerbate her illness. Her bizarre imaginings are not allowed to be tempered by the sentiments of normal people other than
her husband and sister-in-law, and she does not trust or confide in either of them.

Ultimately, the wife is a dynamic character, for she does change during the story, but she does not change for the better. Her mental state continually degenerates as the story progresses. She is no longer able to distinguish reality from hallucination and has not recovered from her “temporary nervous depression” (Gilman 272).

Both women experience hardship and deal with it as best they can. Neither woman succeeds in her endeavor to understand or conquer her loneliness. There is no resolution to the conflict both protagonists face; when the stories end, they are sad and broken individuals, torn apart by a loneliness that they could neither control nor fight.

Works Cited

Josiah Meints
Student Model Essay

Not Just a “Girl”

In Ernest Hemingway’s famous story “Hills Like White Elephants,” a couple, “the American and the girl with him,” talk and drink while waiting for a train to Madrid (Hemingway 69). Most readers agree that the subject of their discussion is whether “the girl,” called Jig, should have an abortion. Most of the story is told through dialogue, and although the word abortion is never mentioned, most readers agree that her pregnancy is the source of the tension between them. However, there are other aspects of the story about which readers do not agree. For example, some critics believe that Hemingway’s portrayal of “the girl” is unfair or sexist. More specifically, some see in her the qualities of “the typically submissive Hemingway woman” (Nolan 19). However, a close reading of the story reveals the opposite to be true: “the girl” is not a one-dimensional stereotype but a complex, sympathetically drawn character.

Most critics who see Hemingway’s portrayal of Jig as sexist base their interpretation on Hemingway’s reputation and not on the story itself. For example, feminist critic Katherine M. Rogers points out that because Hemingway himself “openly expressed fear of and hostility to women” (263), it “seems fair” to see his male characters “as representative of Hemingway himself” (248). However, although “the American” in this story may see Jig as just “a pleasant pastime,” it would be an oversimplification to confuse the character’s opinion of her with the writer’s as Rogers would encourage us to do (251). For example, one could argue (as many critics have done) that because the name “Jig” has sexual connotations, it reveals the author’s sexism (Renner 38). However, as critic Howard Hannum points out, she is referred to by this name only twice in the story, both times by the male character himself, not by the narrator (qtd. in Renner 38). Critic Stanley Renner agrees with Hannum, rejecting the idea that Hemingway’s choice to refer to the character as “the girl” is equally “belittling” (38). Renner argues that this use of the word girl is necessary to show how the character changes and matures in this story. In fact, he sees “her achievement of mature self-knowledge and assertion [as] the main line of development in the story” (39). All in all, the evidence suggests that “the girl,” not “the American,” is actually the story’s protagonist. Given this central focus on “the girl” and the complexity of her character, the accusations that Hemingway’s sexism has led him to create a stereotype do not seem justified.

When students who are not familiar with Hemingway’s reputation as a misogynist read “Hills Like White Elephants,” they tend to sympathize more often with “the girl” than with “the American” (Bauer 126) and to see the character’s thoughtfulness and depth. Although “the American” refers to the abortion as “really an awfully simple operation” (Hemingway 72), downplaying its seriousness, “the girl” has a “more mature understanding” of what her decision might mean (Bauer 130). She recognizes that it is not so “simple,” and she is not naive enough to think that having the baby will save the relationship. In fact, she responds to his own naive comments with sarcasm. He claims that they will be “all right and happy” if she goes through with the operation; he says he’s “known lots of people who have done it.” “So have I,” said the girl. ‘And afterward they were all so happy’” (Hemingway 73). Despite her sarcasm and her resistance to his suggestions, the man continues to insist, that this problem will be easy to fix. Finally, the girl becomes irritated with him and, as readers can see by the dashes that end his lines midsentence, cuts him off, finishing his lines for him as he tries to tell her again how “perfectly simple” the operation is (Hemingway 76). Readers understand her pain and frustration when she finally says, “Would you please please please please please please please please stop talking?” (Hemingway 76).

The argument that “the girl” is a flat, stereotypical character portrayed in sexist terms is hard to support. In fact, a stronger argument could be made that it is the man, “the American,” who is the stereotype. As critic Charles J. Nolan Jr. points out, “Hemingway highlights Jig’s maturity and superiority as he excoriates the selfishness and insensitivity of her companion” (19). Moreover, “the girl” is certainly the central character in this story—the one in conflict, the one who must make the final decision, and the one who grows over the course of the story. At times, she seems willing to listen to the man, even going as far as
to say, “Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me” (Hemingway 74). However, soon after, she responds defiantly to his comment, “You mustn't feel that way” with “I don't feel any way” (Hemingway 75). Thus, as Renner notes, Hemingway’s dialogue reveals “the self-centered motives of his male character” while at the same time dramatizing the female character’s complex inner struggle (38). By the end of the story, the shallow “American” still expects things to be all right between them. But when the man asks, “Do you feel better?” Hemingway shows the girl’s quiet power—and her transformation—by giving her the final understated words of the story: “I feel fine .... There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine” (Hemingway 77). Though we do not learn what her decision is, we can see that she is now in control: she has decided to shut down the conversation, and what the man has to say no longer matters.

In “Hills Like White Elephants,” “the girl” proves herself to be neither “weak in character” nor “weak as character” as some have described Hemingway’s female characters (Bauer 126). Far from being weak in character, she constantly questions and pushes against the male character’s suggestions. And far from being weak as a character, she acts as the protagonist in this story, winning the reader’s sympathies. A stereotypically drawn female character would not be able to carry off either of these feats. Although Hemingway may convey sexism in his other stories—and demonstrate it in his own life—readers who evaluate this story will discover a complex, conflicted, sympathetic female character.

Works Cited

Loren Martinez

Name: _____________________________

Title: _______________________________

Author: _____________________________

Include page numbers for all references to elements or events in the story.

What questions or points of interest attracted you to this work?

Write a summary of what happens in the story, in the order in which the author presents it. Emphasize any conflicts in the story that interest you.
Identify the following elements of character and point of view in the story:

- Who is the protagonist?
- Who is the antagonist?
- What is the point of view?

List all:
- Static characters -
- Dynamic characters -
- Flat characters -
- Round characters –

What insights into human nature are revealed by the characters? Are these insights connected to the theme?

Identify the following elements of setting and symbol in the story:

- Time—
- Place—

Considering time and place, what socioeconomic, political, or historical events coincide with the work?
Identify any details of character that could be symbolic: physical characteristics, possessions, profession, etc.

Also, consider how setting (location, time of year, time of day, and historical period) may be symbolic or symbolically represented.

Identify the following elements of language, style, and tone in the story:

List any significant examples of metaphor, simile, personification, or allusion. Briefly explain the significance of each.

Note and list any examples of unusual word choice or sentence structure.
Describe the tone of the story. Be sure to note the author's attitude toward characters and the subject.

If the story contains irony, relate how it contributes to the tone. Be sure to include if the examples are verbal, situational, or dramatic.

Identify the following elements of theme:

Review your responses up to this point; based on the information and supporting evidence you have compiled, write 2–3 sentences that describe the story’s primary theme.

List any additional insights about life that the story offers:

Does the title of the story correspond with the theme(s)? How so?
Name: _____________________________  Fiction Research Exercise

Answer the following questions in order to find sources that you may use in the fiction essay. Access materials through the *MLA International Bibliography* database via the MSU library website.

1. Create a bibliography for one source that examines the relationship between biographical elements and the author's work:

   ■ Bibliography:

   ■ Summary:

2. Create a bibliography for one source that examines the cultural or historical elements of the work:

   ■ Bibliography:

   ■ Summary:

3. Create a bibliography for one *critical* source that analyzes the author’s work excluding cultural, historical, or biographical approaches:

   ■ Bibliography:

   ■ Summary:

Score: _____ out of 25
Fiction Essay Plan Sheet

Title: __________________________________________________________

Author: _________________________________________________________

After reflecting on your close reading of the short story and the question(s) it generated, rely on your Fiction Exercise and Fiction Research Exercise to generate a working plan for the essay.

Introduction—Remember to include the title and author in the introduction.

General Ideas and Background Information: _______________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Thesis: ______________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Body—You might have more body paragraphs and/or supporting points than indicated on this template; adjust accordingly. Your supporting points should come from both primary and secondary sources.

Topic Sentence: ____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Supporting Point ___________________________________________________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph ____________

Supporting Point ___________________________________________________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph ____________

Name: _____________________________ EN 1113 / _____
Supporting Point ________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph _________

Topic Sentence: _______________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Supporting Point ________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph _________

Supporting Point ________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph _________

Supporting Point ________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph _________

Supporting Point ________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph _________

Supporting Point ________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph _________

Topic Sentence: _______________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
Supporting Point

 Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph ___________

Supporting Point

 Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph ___________

Supporting Point

 Supporting Quotation: Page _________ Paragraph ___________

Concluding Points:

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
Writing about Literature

Writer: _____________________________                                    Fiction Peer Response

Reviewer: _____________________________

Provide thorough and thoughtful responses to the following questions. **Yes and No answers are insufficient**, so comment, explain, or offer suggestions for all responses. You may also write on the draft and mark grammar and punctuation mistakes.

1. How does the title grab your interest? In what way does it suggest the essay’s content?

2. Does the introduction contain the name of the author, title of the work, and a brief summary of the story? Is the theme of the work indicated?

3. Underline the thesis. Is it strong? Does it narrow the subject? Based on the introduction, what aspects of the work (or issues related to the work) will the writer analyze?

4. Does each body paragraph have a clear topic sentence? Detailed support? Concluding sentence? What is missing?

5. Does each body paragraph analyze an aspect of the thesis? Does each paragraph avoid unnecessary plot summary?

6. Does the writer use quotations, paraphrases, and summaries correctly (lead-ins, quotation marks, changed wording)?
7. Are parenthetical citations used correctly, when needed, and with proper information?

8. In what way is the conclusion more than just a restatement of the thesis?

9. Look back through the essay: has the writer handled verb tense appropriately? Mark any verbs that are presented in the wrong tense.

10. Is the Works Cited page in appropriate format? Are the secondary sources credible?

11. Is the essay’s organization appropriate and effective?

12. Does the writer have appropriate transitional words, phrases, and sentences? Mark all transitions on the draft. Note any place that needs a transition or has an inappropriate or ineffective one.

13. Does the writer follow MLA format? Consider margins, spacing, headers, and font size.

14. Discuss the strongest and weakest aspects of this essay with the writer.
Writer: _______________________________
Reviewer: _______________________________

Provide thorough and thoughtful responses to the following questions. **Yes and No answers are insufficient**, so comment, explain, or offer suggestions for all responses. You may also write on the draft and mark grammar and punctuation mistakes.

1. How does the title grab your interest? In what way does it suggest the essay’s content?

2. Does the introduction contain the name of the author, title of the work, and a brief summary of the story? Is the theme of the work indicated?

3. Underline the thesis. Is it strong? Does it narrow the subject? Based on the introduction, what aspects of the work (or issues related to the work) will the writer analyze?

4. Does each body paragraph have a clear topic sentence? Detailed support? Concluding sentence? What is missing?

5. Does each body paragraph analyze an aspect of the thesis? Does each paragraph avoid unnecessary plot summary?

6. Does the writer use quotations, paraphrases, and summaries correctly (lead-ins, quotation marks, changed wording)?
7. Are parenthetical citations used correctly, when needed, and with proper information?

8. In what way is the conclusion more than just a restatement of the thesis?

9. Look back through the essay: has the writer handled verb tense appropriately? Mark any verbs that are presented in the wrong tense.

10. Is the Works Cited page in appropriate format? Are the secondary sources credible?

11. Is the essay’s organization appropriate and effective?

12. Does the writer have appropriate transitional words, phrases, and sentences? Mark all transitions on the draft. Note any place that needs a transition or has an inappropriate or ineffective one.

13. Does the writer follow MLA format? Consider margins, spacing, headers, and font size.

14. Discuss the strongest and weakest aspects of this essay with the writer.
Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun  (c. 1863)

My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—
In Corners—till a Day
The Owner passed—identified—
And carried Me away—

And now We roam in Sovereign Woods—
And now We hunt the Doe—
And every time I speak for Him—
The Mountains straight reply—

And do I smile, such cordial light
Upon the Valley glow—
It is as a Vesuvian face
Had let its pleasure through—

And when at Night—Our good Day done—
I guard My Master's Head—
'Tis better than the Eider-Duck's
Deep Pillow—to have shared—

To foe of His—I'm deadly foe—
None stir the second time—
On whom I lay a Yellow Eye—
Or an emphatic Thumb—

Though I than He—may longer live
He longer must—than I—
For I have but the power to kill,
Without—the power to die—
Student Model Essay

A Gun’s Perspective

Power is arguably one of the most driving forces in a person’s life. To have complete control over a situation or circumstance is very satisfying to most people. However, there can be times when people hold too much power. Additionally, situations exist when there is immense potential for power but no one to make it a reality. That is the case in Emily Dickinson’s “My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun.” In this poem, Dickinson personifies a gun and gives an account of what life for a gun might be. The poem revolves around how the gun possesses so much power, yet if something happens to the owner the gun becomes powerless. That is the same scenario many times in people’s lives. They have so much power, but if no one is there to support them they may become powerless and virtually nothing. Dickinson relays this message of power through the use of a unique point of view, direct symbolism, and surprising paradox.

The point of view from which the poem is told is the major element that holds the piece together. For it is through Dickinson’s personification of the gun that the poem is told. The gun is the perfect object to choose when talking of power because it holds so much. Through the gun telling the story, the audience can see that even though it possesses so much power, it is essentially at the disposal of man. When the gun says phrases like, “The owner passed-identified-/And carried Me away-” (lines 3–4), the readers realize that the gun truly is powerless until wielded by man. However, once given support, the gun becomes extremely powerful, much the way humans do when friends or colleagues begin backing them in their positions. The gun goes on to say, “And when at Night-Our good Day done-/ I guard My Master’s Head-” (13–14). This is another example of the gun being the protector and in charge. However, if the man were not there to protect or oversee, the gun would be useless and have no job. The gun as speaker gives the reader more of a feel for what it is like to go from a position of power to powerlessness almost instantly.

Furthermore, Dickinson uses symbolism to illustrate the gun’s purpose of power to the owner. She especially utilizes symbols when talking of the actions that the gun goes through to perform the ultimate violent act of power for man, the power to kill. Dickinson symbolizes the echoes that the gun makes when it goes off: “And every time I speak for Him-/ The Mountains straight reply-” (7–8). When the gun speaks, it is being fired by the owner. Additionally, the image of the gun about to be fired is described by the gun itself: “On whom I lay a Yellow Eye-/ Or an emphatic Thumb-” (18–19). The yellow eye symbolizes the scope of the gun, while the emphatic thumb represents the cocking of the gun in preparation to fire. All of the symbols relate to the gun’s power because they illustrate how, with man by his side, the gun possesses tremendous control.

Lastly, an interesting paradox is included in the poem to establish the difference between the man and the gun. The paradox lies at the end: “Though I than He – may longer live/ He longer must-than I-” (21–22). These lines can have more than one thing to the reader. First, the audience can note that obviously the man will experience an afterlife, and the gun will not. However, more importantly the gun might as well be dead when the man is because it will no longer have a man to make that power a reality. Without this capability, the gun is as good as dead. Whereas the man will go on and get to experience more things after death, the gun will not. The gun goes on further to say: “For I have but the power to kill, / Without – the power to die-” (23–24). This again states that the gun has so much control and power, but only if the man is alive to give it support. Also, this shows that the gun does not have as much power as it is perceived to possess because it does not have complete control; if it did, it would have the power to die. So despite its power, without man, it is completely powerless.

The perspective from which the poem is told, the distinct symbols, and the somewhat saddening paradox all together convey Dickinson’s view on the struggle of power and control. Telling the poem through the point of view of the gun makes the readers see just how much power someone can possess but still be completely powerless. The situation with the gun is one that many people face in their lives. Some people may have immense control, yet if they have no one aiding them what good are they? They, like the gun without the man, are ineffective. Also, many people are like the gun in that they have so much power, but in the one situation they want most they are useless. Regardless what type of power struggle, Dickinson conveys a piece that challenges readers to see that sometimes all the potential power in the world can still be nothing, if people are not willing to give support.
Rupert Brooke (1887-1915)

The Soldier (1915)

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

Anthem for Doomed Youth (1917?)

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.
Is the Soldier a Doomed Youth?

In his poem “The Soldier,” Rupert Brooke suggests that fighting and dying for one’s country is admirable; however, in Wilfred Owen’s poem “Anthem for Doomed Youth,” Owen suggests war is brutal, pointless, and degrading. These two poems view World War I in very different ways. Brooke wrote “The Soldier” at the beginning of the war, while patriotism for Britain was still elevated. Owen wrote “Anthem for Doomed Youth” at the end of the war when British patriotism was declining, and people were wondering why they were still in war. The themes in these poems, although completely opposite, are both portrayed through the use of tone and language.

Throughout “The Soldier,” the speaker’s tone is accepting and honorable. Through the speaker’s tone, the reader notices that the soldier is proud to fight for his country, and he accepts and embraces the idea that he may die for England. The speaker states, “If I should die, think only this of me; / That there’s some corner of a foreign field / That is forever England” (Brooke lines 1-3). The speaker feels that England is a major part of his life and body, and he believes that if he dies in another country while fighting for England, that spot will always have a piece of England embedded in the soil. The speaker is honored to fight and die for England because England made him the man he is. He wants to repay England for everything she did for him. Because of the speaker’s tone of honor, the reader is able to recognize the theme and realize that “The Soldier” is about the pride a soldier has in his country during a time of war.

Unlike the speaker’s tone of acceptance in “The Soldier,” the speaker’s tone in “Anthem for Doomed Youth” is angry and then sad. In the first stanza, the reader notices that the speaker is mad about the morbid costs of war. The speaker asks, “What passing-bells for those who die as cattle? / Only the monstrous anger of the guns” (Owen 1-2). He shows his anger by describing how the soldiers die in war. Cattle are killed without mercy and are never given a burial. Owen says the soldiers in war die in the same way, and the war continues. No one rings bells in his honor. The men continue firing at the enemy. The reader can tell the speaker is outraged by the way the soldiers are treated after death. In the second stanza, the reader notices the speaker’s tone becomes sad. He asks, “What candles may be held to speed them all? / Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes / Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes” (Owen 9-11). The speaker moves past his anger about the war and turns his thoughts to the boys who have died in vain. Through these tones, the reader uncovers the theme and realizes that war is brutal, and it is not admirable to die for one’s country.

Throughout “The Soldier,” the use of language helps the reader discover the theme. The speaker uses personification to show how much he loves England. He states, “A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware” (Brooke 5). The speaker loves England so much that he gives the country very important human characteristics. He believes England gave birth to him, made him into the man he is, and made him aware of his true inner self. Because the speaker says England bore him, he implies that England is his mother. People usually have a deep, compassionate love for their mothers, and they are willing to do anything for their mothers because mothers do so much for their children. Because England gave the speaker his life, he is willing to repay England by dying while fighting to protect her in war. Through the use of his language, the reader recognizes that the speaker loves his country and views his country as a person, and dying for a loved one is an admirable way to commemorate that person.

The use of language in “Anthem for Doomed Youth” expresses the speaker’s negative feelings about the war and allows the reader to understand the theme. The speaker uses alliteration to describe his feelings about the war. He says that the soldiers do not get a proper funeral with prayers and a choir singing songs. Instead, the soldiers only hear the “rifles’ rapid rattle” (Owen 3). By using alliteration, the speaker shows the repetition and monotony of war. People fight and die, and then more people join and
fight and die. It is a cycle that does not end until the war is over. No one stops to give a funeral service for the fallen soldiers. The soldiers must pick up their guns and continue fighting. The alliteration imitates the sound of continuous gunfire in a war. The speaker’s use of language allows the reader to recognize the theme by showing his frustration with the repetitiveness and brutality of war.

Although “The Soldier” and “Anthem for Doomed Youth” are written about the same war, they have completely different views of that war. In “The Soldier,” the speaker shows his patriotism for England and his willingness to die for England through his accepting and honorable tone and through his use of language by personifying England. In “Anthem for Doomed Youth,” the speaker shows the brutality and monotony of war through his angry and sad tones and through his use of language by using alliteration. The theme in “The Soldier” allows the reader to feel peaceful and content. It makes the reader think that fighting in a war is something to be proud of. The theme in “Anthem for Doomed Youth” gives the reader a terrible view of war. Owen tries to show the reader the negative aspects of war and why war is not a good solution to problems.

Works Cited

Sarah Gasparrini
Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

**The Man He Killed** (1902)

“Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperrkin!

“But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

“I shot him dead because—
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That’s clear enough; although

“He thought he’d ’list, perhaps,
Off-hand like—just as I—
Was out of work—had sold his traps—
No other reason why.

“Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You’d treat, if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.”

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

**An Irish Airman Foresees His Death** (1919)

I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above;
Those that I fight I do not hate,
Those that I guard I do not love;
My country is Kiltartan Cross
My countrymen Kiltartan’s poor,
No likely end could bring them loss
Or leave them happier than before.
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,
A lonely impulse of delight
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death.
Student Model Essay

War: The Game Where No One Wins

War is a curious thing. Its denotative meaning as defined by the *Oxford American Dictionary* is “strife (especially between countries) involving military or naval attacks” (“war”). This is such a short definition for what is often a lengthy slaughtering. But like war, there are two sides to depict. One side glorifies war and encourages young people to defend their country no matter the cost, while the other side reflects the bitter and often pointless loss of young life for unclear motives. In Thomas Hardy’s, “The Man He Killed” and William Butler Yeats’ “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death,” the soldiers that fight in the war see themselves as pawns in a game; they fight and die not for themselves but for the countries that wield them. Yeats and Hardy both explore speakers that are dispassionate and detached from the war in which they fight not for glory, not honor, but for lack of purpose.

The format of Yeats’ poem, “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death” reflects the feelings expressed by the speaker. The methodical tone of the poem is exemplified by the A, B, A, B rhyme scheme that repeats four times throughout the poem without any spaces. None of the lines have more than eight syllables, such as in the first line, “I know that I shall meet my fate.” The whole poem seems to run together without purpose or defining characteristics supporting the unexcited and level-headed state of the speaker who “balanced all brought all to mind” (line 13).

Even though he avoids violent and disturbing war imagery, the speaker subtly reveals his feelings toward war by his use of negative words. Yeats makes the speaker’s feelings on his participation in war very pronounced when he parallels the two ideas, “Those that I fight I do not hate, / Those that I guard I do not love” (3–4). Further repetition throughout the poem is used to draw attention to the lines. The speaker repeats the word “nor” in another series of parallel statements when explaining his reason to drive “this tumult in the clouds” (12). In line 8, he uses the word “or” at the beginning of the line, yet he does not use the word “or” in lines 9 and 10. The speaker insists on the word “nor” because it carries a negative connotation towards the reasons expressed, “Nor law, nor duty bade me fight, / Nor public men, nor cheering crowds” (9–10). The repeated use of “not” and “nor” reflect the speaker’s negative opinion of war.

Although the speaker’s tone seems distant from the subject matter in the beginning, his choice of diction reveals more about his feelings towards the end through repetition. The last three lines hint at the speaker’s disappointment with life, “The years to come seemed waste of breath, / A waste of breath the years behind / In balance with this life, this death” (14–16). The use of the word “breath” accompanied by a comma at the end of the fourteenth line physically forces the reader to breathe. Consonant sounds such as “th” slow the reader’s speech and emphasize the act of breathing. Perhaps most importantly, he repeats the word “breath,” an act that only living people can do. This quietly forces the speaker and reader to contrast the living and the dead, as the speaker contemplates how war wastes life by leaving so many breathless. The sounding of the word “breath” mimics the sigh of the speaker so that the readers can hear the sigh beyond the seemingly calm lines and understand the speaker’s masked feelings of failure, sadness, and disappointment because of war.

Unlike in “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death,” the tone in Hardy’s “The Man He Killed” is immediately inclusive by using dialogue to make the speaker interactive. The use of quotation marks conveys a sense of conversation. The odd quality about Hardy’s use of quotation marks in the poem is that, with the exception of the last stanza, they do not appear at the end of the stanzas:

“But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot him as he at me,
And killed him in his place. (5–9)

Perhaps the poet’s use of quotations only at the beginning of the first four stanzas reflects a self-dialogue, whereas the last stanza is actually spoken. The rhyme scheme is an A, B, A, B format with spaces in
between the five stanzas. The speaker’s repetition and uncertain diction in the third stanza reflect his confusion about war. He is only able to explain the murder of the stranger by the fact that this foe had been deemed a foe. A person cannot define a word by using the same word, just as the speaker cannot explain why he killed the man by restating that he was a foe, “Because he was my foe, / Just so: my foe of course he was; / That’s clear enough; although” (10-12). By stating that this thought is “clear,” the speaker is attempting to convince and comfort himself about war, but he reveals only that war is bound in circular logic that can never be clear.

The poem’s structure is modeled after the speaker’s change of feelings towards the war. The first two stanzas are “smooth and unbroken, establishing the speaker’s matter-of-fact tone and reflecting his confidence that he has done what he had to do” (Kirszner 613). There are no hyphens to mark a pause in thought or speech throughout the first two stanzas. The speaker’s statements are blunt and confident: “And staring face to face, / I shot at him as he at me, / And killed him in his place” (Hardy 6-8). The first sign of wavering confidence is a hyphen in the first line of the third stanza, “I shot him dead because—” (9). When the speaker has to explain what he has done he becomes very uncertain; “in the third and fourth stanzas, broken syntax reflects the narrator’s increasingly disturbed state of mind” (Kirszner 613). During the fourth stanza there are no phrases more than four words, and the speaker tends to stop mid-thought:

“He thought he’d list, perhaps,
Off-hand-like — just as I—
Was out of work— had sold his traps—
No other reason why. (Hardy 13-16)

The last stanza returns to a sure comical relief where war is transformed into a “quaint and curious” affair (17). Unable to express his misgivings about war, he hides his feelings behind a nervous laugh that shows his continuing uneasiness about not only war but mostly his participation in it.

Both Yeats’ “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death,” and Hardy’s “The Man He Killed” address the futility of war. In Yeats’ poem the speaker goes knowingly to his death in search of a balance with his life. He feels as though he has accomplished nothing, so he turns to war to establish his purpose. In Hardy’s poem, an older man struggles with the situation that he was put in and the actions elicited. He searches for answers and finds that there are none available. Both poems reflect soldiers who did not go to war to fight that glorious battle. The two speakers do not portray the passionate and courageous men who fought in righteous wars. They represent the common men who fought real wars, and if they were lucky, came back different men.

Works Cited

Cassondre Man-Bourdon
Many civilians envision wartime battles to be glorious, patriotic, even surrounded by an aura of honor and integrity. Numerous idealistic adjectives are used to portray the necessity of fighting and dying for a cause; and what cause is more necessary than the existence of one’s own country, town, family, and way of life? Brave soldiers travel far from home, across oceans and continents, to battle enemies who threaten the precious ideals they hold dear. The sacrifices of military service are described as worthy and just, and in a sense, almost beautiful and romantic. However, there is an aspect of war that only veterans know: the brutality, gruesomeness, chaos, disgust, and stark awareness of killing and of watching others die. With brutal autobiographical honesty, Wilfred Owen focused on this aspect of war in “Dulce et Decorum Est.” The falsified, romanticized version of war the public recognizes is depicted as an “old lie” (line 27) through Owen’s graphic description of the death of one soldier.

In film and on stage, the media often depict death during a battle as quiet and serene, tender music playing in the background while a dying soldier utters some meaningful last words. These are moments which display a fallen hero who sacrificed his own life to aid his comrades. However, these battle scenes do not portray the horrific deaths that occur, the ones too inappropriate for the big screen. A dying hero does not stumble up to a fellow soldier, “guttering, choking, drowning” (Owen 16) when there is an audience. Spectators do not hear “blood / Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs” (22) of a suffering soldier or see “white eyes writhing in his face” (19). No, the audience instead sees a man running back into enemy fire to save a friend, dying a noble, heroic death. Or they see a man leading a charge, bravely waving an American flag through a field stained red and yet still alive with the presence of the enemy. The audience sees a fallen hero honored and buried at a solemn memorial, not thrown into a “wagon” other soldiers “flung him in” (18). This false portrayal of heroism continues to be displayed to the millions of people who watch for entertainment but do not actually fight in the brutal scenes described.

As a World War I soldier, Wilfred Owen recognized “the need to represent the horror” of war “with unflinching realism” (Saunders 62) to prevent such a massive distortion of the truth. However, there is a purpose behind ignoring “outrageous” examples “of man’s inhumanity to man” (62) in their recounts of war. For who in his right mind would volunteer for the possibilities of “appalling injuries, including blindness, lung-damage, and gruesome lingering death?” (62). World War I was not the only time a country has somewhat glossed over the idea of the military and the duties it entails. This is simply a necessary recruiting tactic. Most wars are essential: they can encourage both political and fundamental progress in third world countries or those that are somewhat isolated from the evolving societies around them. Wars can benefit popular ideas and laws that improve the human condition. However, these attempts to improve and secure mankind come at a high price: the lives of many young men and women who volunteer to serve.

The military is always in need of recruits, and in order to attain these future soldiers, the entire truth of war cannot be disclosed. Instead, the military uses more appealing ideals to recruit soldiers. Television commercials portray an atmosphere much like the latest video game or an adventure unlike any other that can be attained only through military involvement. The military is now marketed in a way that is more directed to individual involvement and personal advantages. The idea of fighting is not mentioned at all. Rather than showing images of soldiers in training or in action, commercials display regular men and women in the average work force. Studies have shown that “educational benefits for military veterans have become a prime recruiting tool in the All-Volunteer Military Force” (Simon 1008). Advantages such as free or almost free education will attract more people to the armed forces. This type of recruiting is especially popular in hard economic times, such as now. Not only does an offer of college tuition bring bodies that can perform simple military tasks, but it also attracts “more highly qualified youth” (Simon 1009), thus strengthening all branches of the military.
The popular representation of life in the military is slanted in a way that makes it appealing to young people, and most advertisements intentionally leave out the basic requirements and duties of a soldier in combat. It is clear how the idea of war is glossed over, but Owen was one of many who tried to scrape away such a cover to expose the truth. For what sane man would risk a “grotesque death, which” is “humiliating to its victim who” is “robbed of any human dignity” (Saunders 63)? And what honest man would “tell with such high zest / To children ardent for some desperate glory, / The old lie” (Owen 25–27) that death in battle is a beautiful thing?

Works Cited

Morganne Grimes
Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

I never saw a Moor—

I never saw a Moor—
I never saw the Sea—
Yet know I how the Heather looks
And what a Billow be.

I never spoke with God
Nor visited in Heaven—
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the Checks were given—

“Faith” is a fine invention

“Faith” is a fine invention
When Gentlemen can see—
But Microscopes are prudent
In an Emergency.

I know that He exists

I know that He exists.
Somewhere—in Silence—
He has hid his rare life
From our gross eyes.
’Tis an instant’s play.
’Tis a fond Ambush—
Just to make Bliss
Earn her own surprise!

But—should the play
Prove piercing earnest—
Should the glee-glaze—
In Death’s—stiff—stare—

Would not the fun
Look too expensive!
Would not the jest—
Have crawled too far!

Appareently with no surprise

Appareently with no surprise
To any happy Flower
The Frost beheads it at its play—
In accidental power—
The blond Assassin passes on—
The Sun proceeds unmoved
To measure off another Day
For an Approving God.
Throughout much of her poetry, Emily Dickinson wrestles with complex notions of God, faith, and religious devotion. She adheres to no consistent view of religion; rather, her poetry reveals a vision of God and faith that is constantly evolving. Dickinson’s gods range from the strict and powerful Old Testament father to a loving spiritual guide to an irrational and ridiculous imaginary figure. Through these varying images of God, Dickinson portrays contrasting images of the meaning and validity of religious faith. Her work reveals competing attitudes toward religious devotion as conventional religious piety struggles with a more cynical perception of God and religious worship.

Dickinson’s “I never saw a Moor—” reveals a vision of traditional religious sensibilities. Although the speaker readily admits that “I never spoke with God / Nor visited in Heaven,” her devout faith in a supreme being does not waver. The poem appears to be a straightforward profession of true faith stemming from the argument that the proof of God’s existence is the universe’s existence. Dickinson’s imagery therefore evolves from the natural to the supernatural, first establishing her convictions that Moors and Seas exist, in spite of her lack of personal contact with either. This leads to the foundation of her religious faith, again based not on physical experience but on intellectual convictions. The speaker professes that she believes in the existence of Heaven even without conclusive evidence: “Yet certain am I of the spot / As if the Checks were given—” But the appearance of such idealistic views of God and faith in “I never saw a Moor—” are transformed in Dickinson’s other poems into a much more skeptical vision of the validity of religious piety.

While faith is portrayed as an authentic and deeply important quality in “I never saw a Moor—,” Dickinson’s “‘Faith’ is a fine invention” portrays faith as much less essential. Faith is defined in the poem as “a fine invention” suggesting that it is created by man for man and therefore is not a crucial aspect of the natural universe. Thus the strong idealistic faith of “I never saw a Moor—” becomes discredited in the face of scientific rationalism. The speaker compares religious faith with actual microscopes, both of which are meant to enhance one’s vision in some way. But “Faith” is useful only “When Gentlemen can see—” already; “In an Emergency,” when one ostensibly cannot see, “Microscopes are prudent.” Dickinson pits religion against science, suggesting that science, with its tangible evidence and rational attitude, is a more reliable lens through which to view the world. Faith is irreverently reduced to a mere invention and one that is ultimately less useful than microscopes or other scientific instruments.

Rational, scientific observations are not the only contributing factor to the portrayal of religious skepticism in Dickinson’s poems; nature itself is seen to be incompatible in some ways with conventional religious ideology. In “Apparently with no surprise,” the speaker recognizes the inexorable cycle of natural life and death as a morning frost kills a flower. But the tension in this poem stems not from the “happy Flower” struck down by the frost’s “accidental power” but from the apparent indifference of the “Approving God” who condones this seemingly cruel and unnecessary death. God is seen as remote and uncompromising, and it is this perceived distance between the speaker and God that reveals the increasing absurdity of traditional religious faith. The speaker understands that praying to God or believing in religion cannot change the course of nature, and as a result feels so helplessly distanced from God that religious faith becomes virtually meaningless.

Dickinson’s religious skepticism becomes even more explicit in “I know that He exists,” in which the speaker attempts to understand the connection between seeing God and facing death. In this poem Dickinson characterizes God as a remote and mysterious figure; the speaker mockingly asserts, “I know that He exists,” even though “He has hid his rare life / From our gross eyes.” The skepticism toward religious faith revealed in this poem stems from the speaker’s recognition of the paradoxical quest that people undertake to know and to see God. A successful attempt to see God, to win the game of hide-and-seek that He apparently is orchestrating, results inevitably in death. With this recognition the speaker
comes to view religion as an absurd and reckless game in which the prize may be “Bliss” but more likely is “Death’s—stiff—stare—” For to see God and to meet one’s death as a result certainly suggests that the game of trying to see God (the so-called “fun”) is much “too expensive” and that religion itself is a “jest” that, like the serpent in Genesis, has “crawled too far.”

Ultimately, the vision of religious faith that Dickinson describes in her poems is one of suspicion and cynicism. She cannot reconcile the physical world to the spiritual existence that Christian doctrine teaches, and as a result the traditional perception of God becomes ludicrous. “I neyer saw a Moor—” does attempt to sustain a conventional vision of religious devotion, but Dickinson’s poems overall are far more likely to suggest that God is elusive, indifferent, and often cruel, thus undermining the traditional vision of God as a loving father worthy of devout worship. Thus, not only religious faith but also those who are religiously faithful become targets for Dickinson’s irreverent criticism of conventional belief.

*Michael Weitz*

Poetry Exercise

Name: _____________________________

For a poem approved by your instructor, complete the following.

POEM: ____________________________________________________________________________

Poet: _________________________________________ Page #: _______________________________

PARAPHRASE: _______________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Consider all of the points listed below, but be aware that not all of them will apply to your poem. For each poetic element that does exist in your poem, cite at least one example in the space provided. If an element does not exist in the poem you selected, leave the space blank.

SPEAKER: ____________________________ AUDIENCE: _________________________

TONE: ____________________________________________________________________________

IMAGERY:

Visual: ___________________________________________________________________________

Auditory: _________________________________________________________________________

Gustatory: _______________________________________________________________________

Olfactory: _______________________________________________________________________

Tactile: _________________________________________________________________________
GUIDE TO FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

Organic: ________________________________________________________________

Kinesthetic: _____________________________________________________________

SOUND QUALITIES:

Alliteration: _____________________________________________________________

Assonance: ______________________________________________________________

Consonance: _____________________________________________________________

Onomatopoeia: __________________________________________________________

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:

Simile: _________________________________________________________________

Metaphor: ______________________________________________________________

Personification: __________________________________________________________

Paradox: ________________________________________________________________

Oxymoron: ______________________________________________________________

Hyperbole: ______________________________________________________________

Understatement/Litotes: _________________________________________________

SYMBOL:

Conventional/Traditional: ______________________________________________

Archetypal: _____________________________________________________________

Literary/Contextual: _____________________________________________________

IRONY:

Verbal: _________________________________________________________________

Situational: _____________________________________________________________

Dramatic: ______________________________________________________________
Since you have now done multiple close readings of your poem, respond to the following:

What aspects of the poem interest you? What would you like to know more about each aspect?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

What types of sources, biographical, historical/cultural, critical, would help you better understand these aspects?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Using the work you’ve done on this poem, narrow your focus to one exploratory question that you are interested in pursuing for your poetry essay.

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Score: ________/50
Poetry Research Exercise

Answer the following questions in order to find sources for the Poetry Project. Access materials through the MLA International Bibliography database via the MSU library website.

1. Create a bibliography for one source that examines the relationship between biographical elements and the poet’s work:

   ■ Bibliography:

   ■ Summary:

2. Create a bibliography for one source that examines the cultural or historical elements of the work:

   ■ Bibliography:

   ■ Summary:

3. Create a bibliography for one critical source that analyzes the poet’s work excluding cultural, historical, or biographical approaches:

   ■ Bibliography:

   ■ Summary:

Score: _____ out of 25
Poetry Essay Plan Sheet

Title: _____________________________ Poet: _____________________________

After reflecting on your close reading of the short story and the question(s) it generated, rely on your Poetry Exercise and Poetry Research Exercise to generate a working plan for the essay.

Introduction—Remember to include the title and poet in the introduction.

General Ideas and Background Information: ______________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Thesis: _____________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Body—You might have more body paragraphs and/or supporting points than indicated on this template; adjust accordingly. Your supporting points should come from both primary and secondary sources.

Topic Sentence: ______________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Supporting Point: ____________________________________________________________________
Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) ________

Supporting Point: ____________________________________________________________________
Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) ________

Supporting Point: ____________________________________________________________________
Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) ________
Topic Sentence: _________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Supporting Point ________________________________________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) _______

Supporting Point ________________________________________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) _______

Supporting Point ________________________________________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) _______

Topic Sentence: _________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Supporting Point ________________________________________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) _______

Supporting Point ________________________________________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) _______

Supporting Point ________________________________________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) _______

Topic Sentence: _________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Supporting Point ________________________________________________________________

Supporting Quotation: Page _______ Paragraph _______ or Line(s) _______
Poetry Project Cover Sheet

Poem: _______________________________
Poet: ________________________________

Poetry Exercise:  
■ The paraphrase of the poem is substantive and detailed
■ Provides MLA parenthetical citations for all elements identified
■ Answers each question clearly and thoroughly

Score: ____ out of 50

Instructor’s Comments:

Poetry Research Exercise:  
■ Contains three bibliographies
■ Uses MLA style for each bibliography
■ Contains detailed summaries of each bibliography

Score: ____ out of 25

Instructor’s Comments:

Poetry Essay Plan Sheet:  
■ Presents a clear thesis
■ Presents a clear structure for the paper
■ Shows source integration (if applicable)
■ Contains bibliographies for all sources, including the poem

Score: ____ out of 25

Instructor’s Comments:
POETRY PROJECT ITEMS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Not Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Exercise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Research Exercise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Essay Plan Sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After reviewing the Poetry Essay Plan Sheet, respond to the following questions:

1. Does the plan for the introduction include the name of the poem and poet?

2. Is there enough information to predict what each paragraph will cover? Write a prediction for what each body paragraph will include.

3. How does each topic sentence relate to the thesis?

4. Does the source material include MLA citations?

5. Looking at the organization of the body paragraphs, evaluate the effectiveness of the organizational model.

6. Do all sources have bibliographies? Are the secondary sources credible?

7. Does the outline provide a clear model of the essay’s organization and development?
Poetry Project Cover Sheet

Poem: _______________________________
Poet: ________________________________

Poetry Exercise: Score: ____ out of 50

- The paraphrase of the poem is substantive and detailed
- Provides MLA parenthetical citations for all elements identified
- Answers each question clearly and thoroughly

Instructor’s Comments:

Poetry Research Exercise: Score: ____ out of 25

- Contains three bibliographies
- Uses MLA style for each bibliography
- Contains detailed summaries of each bibliography

Instructor’s Comments:

Poetry Essay Plan Sheet: Score: ____ out of 25

- Presents a clear thesis
- Presents a clear structure for the paper
- Shows source integration (if applicable)
- Contains bibliographies for all sources, including the poem

Instructor’s Comments:
Poetry Project Self-Review Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POETRY PROJECT ITEMS:</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Not Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Exercise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Research Exercise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Essay Plan Sheet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After reviewing the Poetry Essay Plan Sheet, respond to the following questions:

1. Does the plan for the introduction include the name of the poem and poet?

2. Is there enough information to predict what each paragraph will cover? Write a prediction for what each body paragraph will include.

3. How does each topic sentence relate to the thesis?

4. Does the source material include MLA citations?

5. Looking at the organization of the body paragraphs, evaluate the effectiveness of the organizational model.

6. Do all sources have bibliographies? Are the secondary sources credible?

7. Does the outline provide a clear model of the essay’s organization and development?