

Response Paper 2 - Literary Analysis

Select a piece of literature from the Norton Anthology of African American Literature, and follow the guidelines below:

This assignment requires you to use both primary and secondary sources to support your critical analysis of one of the literary works listed on the reading list. Sources other than literary ones may be acceptable. Choose a topic that you can cover in depth within approximately **3-5 pages** (excludes quotations from both primary and secondary sources).

The researched essay calls upon your skills of analysis, interpretation and synthesis. The primary text (the work you choose to research) will be the focal point of your analysis. You will also be using secondary sources to substantiate and support your evaluation. This component allows you to use your skills developed in your freshman year English Composition courses. Those skills are: paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting and correctly documenting sources.

Although you must incorporate secondary critical commentary into your essay, the focal point is your own interpretation and evaluation of the primary work that you are analyzing. You should also feel free to analyze and evaluate the critical commentary provided by the critics; don't be afraid to disagree.

Primarily, though, your task is to present your own interpretation on some aspect of the work in such a way that your presentation reveals your understanding of the piece. The general purpose is to increase our understanding and appreciation of the work that you are analyzing. The audience for this essay consists of your classmates and me.

Be sure that your essay contains a clear statement that makes a central point about the literary work that you are discussing, and be sure that each paragraph in your essay provides evidence supporting the main idea expressed in your thesis.

SOURCES

You must refer to a minimum of 3 sources

1. The primary work you are analyzing.
2. Four secondary sources (critical commentary or interpretation about the primary work).

The cited works for your essay must include scholarly, academic sources.

Lecture notes, student papers and other internet material may not be counted as a secondary source. Electronic sources should be evaluated carefully. Your best option is to use databases provided by the Leonard Lief library, or some other institution whose databases are reliable sources of information. Internet sources are NOT the same as databases found at college and university libraries. See Library webpage for help in compiling MLA Works cited pages.

Depending on your choice of topic, you may want to consider expanding your research to include different disciplines, i.e., history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, etc. Remember, however, this assignment is a **LITERARY ANALYSIS**, not a biography of the writers, a historical essay, or other non-literary related subject. Textbooks **MAY NOT** be used as secondary sources.

ESSAY CRITERIA

The essay must:

1. Be a minimum of 4 pages, which excludes quotations from both primary and secondary sources.
2. Include an MLA Works Cited page.
3. Include at least 4 parenthetical references (in-text citations) quoting roughly from each source.

ESSAY GUIDELINES

One strategy you might consider would be to explicate the theme of the piece. An essay on theme could include discussion about the characters, setting and symbolism, or any other elements that are particularly relevant to the author's development of theme. In discussing each element, you should demonstrate how that element worked to develop the work's theme.

Do not simply summarize the plot, describe characters or outline the theme. Remember that this is a critical analysis: how or why is the plot effective, how do the characters (atmosphere, setting, local color) contribute to the work's theme, what is the theme and how does the author develop the theme effectively? These are the kinds of questions you should consider in an analysis. Keep in mind that the audience is familiar with the work, so you don't need to include much discussion or summary about the piece itself. Instead, concentrate and make some critical statement on the element(s) that make the work lively, sad, funny, scary, etc.

Additionally, this assignment is **not** meant to be a biography of the writer's life, an historical, political, social or religious commentary; a forum for current issues or problems; or finally, a summary of the work. Your goal is to analyze some aspect(s) of the literature. All discussion in your analysis must somehow be relevant to the piece you have selected.

IMPORTANT POINTS

1. Confirmed cases of plagiarism on the research paper will result in failing the course.
2. Keep a copy of all documents related to this assignment, especially the final copy.
3. Essay must be submitted on the due date.
4. No late research papers will be accepted.
5. A paper that does not include appropriate documentation will not be evaluated and instead will earn an "F."