



Writing a Literary Analysis

Analysis is simply to break down a subject to simple components which involve few basic steps like:

1. Multiple reading of the work (essay/poem/novella/novel/short-story/drama)
2. Trying to find out the intention of the author through the theme, character, and setting of the work.
3. Forming personal opinion in context of the work which is relevant to discuss further.
4. Concluding your opinion with a strong argument which adds meaning to the work (may/ may not go with the author's view point.)

Step 1: Identify the Author's Purpose

Try to find out the messages which the author is trying to convey through his character or the settings which will act as a backbone to your thesis. Decode the meaning hidden between the lines. Concentrate on that element/s that is running throughout the work which is also called the theme in literary terms.

Examples of Purpose:

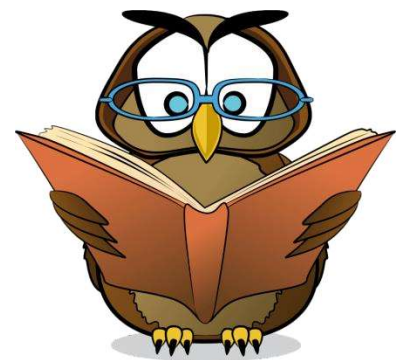
- Oscar Wilde's famous story "The Nightingale and the Rose" has the theme of selfless love.
- George Orwell's "Animal Farm" has the main theme of corruption.

Helpful Questions for Identifying Purpose:

- What main idea did the author want the reader to understand or take away from their work?
- What idea do you, as a reader, feel is most prevalent? Look for something which you can actually relate to.

Step 2: Analyze Key Elements

After a purpose is identified, the next step is to figure out how the author portrays this theme and why you came to the conclusion that this theme is both important and prevalent. The elements to be analyzed are **plot**, **setting**, **characters**, **point of view**, **figurative language**, and **style**. This will serve as the evidence/support throughout your paper.



Plot:

- What main conflicts occurred throughout the story? This can be a statement or the action of any character which basically leads to the entire events, forming the story.
- What are the main events of the story? What is the order of these events? Does the order have significance to the purpose?

Setting:

- Does any particular time of the day play an important role in the story?
- Does the location or changing of location make any difference or add meaning to the purpose?
- Does the author intentionally highlight/raise any social or cultural contexts to support his purpose?

Characters:

- What changes did you notice in the character/s throughout the story and what reason do you feel, lead to these changes?
- Who are the main characters/ protagonists/ hero(es) and the antagonists/villains?

Point of View:

- From whose point of view is the story delivered?
- What is your opinion in author's selection of that particular view?
- What does this specific perspective add to the meaning of the story?



Style:

- What is the format of the text and how does it affect the overall work?
- Did you feel that author had any particular word choice and did it interpret any specific thing?
- Was it a very simple/colloquial language or highly elevated.

Figurative Language:

- Notice the figures of speech like metaphors, similes, symbols, personification, irony, etc. as where and how are they used in the story? What purpose does it serve?
- Why did the author choose to use these figure of speeches?

Step 3: Connect Ideas

- Once you have discovered the key elements and the purpose, try to connect both of them.
- While connecting both, key elements and the purpose, you need to keep in mind what you are trying to focus on or highlight in the story. You need to frame your content accordingly.

Example:

The below example demonstrates the steps taken before beginning to write a literary analysis paper. The example is taken from Oscar Wilde's "The Nightingale and the Rose".

Purpose: Oscar Wilde portrays the theme of love and sacrifice in the story.

Plot: "The Nightingale and the Rose" is about the sacrifice of the nightingale for the student, who is completely unaware of her efforts and attributes finding the rose for a chance to dance with a girl who doesn't care for true love. At the end, he is rejected by the girl in spite of all his efforts, causing him to throw away the rose and give up on love.

Setting: The setting of the story is in the whimsical garden which is the characteristic of a fairy tale. It is unbound by any specific time or place.

Characters: The boy changes drastically by the end of the story. His blind love towards the girl ends when he is rejected by her even after fulfilling her condition. His faith in love dies as he walks away throwing the red rose.

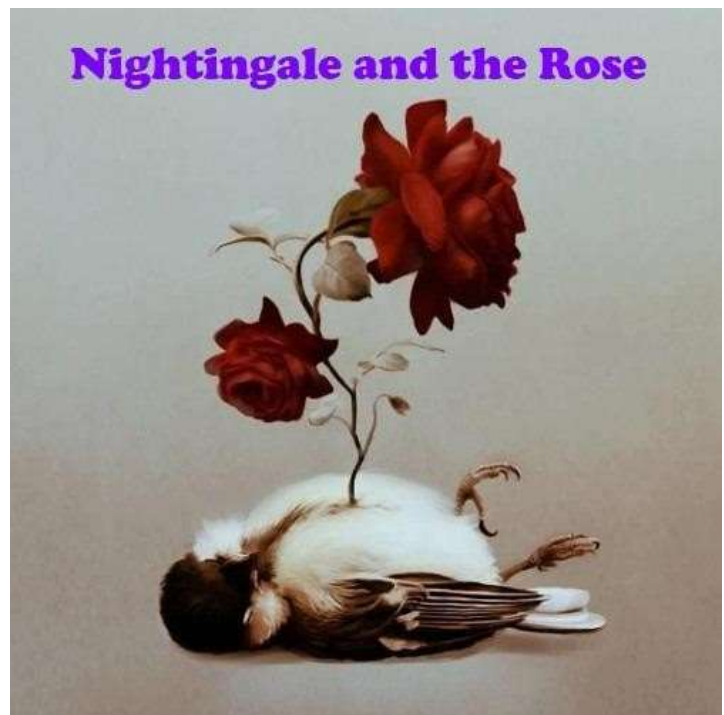
Point of View: Author uses the third person narrative to narrate the story which is called Omniscient narrator and he doesn't share his opinion. The entire story is narrated as facts.

Style: The language used is very simple and descriptive but has many figures of speech.

Figurative Language: Natural things are personified with human traits like rose and they speak, feeling for the boy, they are wise. Imagery can be seen when the Rose-tree says that "my roses are as white as foam of the sea and whiter than the snow upon the mountain".

Connect Ideas: After you have identified a purpose and the key elements in the story, you need to create a thesis that shows how these two connect. In other words, you need to show how these key elements play a role in the argument that the text is making about a specific theme. It is important to keep this thesis in mind while analyzing the text because your analysis of the element(s) should *always tie back to the author's purpose*.

- Example: With the help of this figurative language, particularly imagery and metaphors, Oscar Wilde portrays nature of love. Nightingale's love towards rose and the Rose-garden is portrayed through the song which the bird sings and the love of the Rose-trees and the Nightingale for the boy as they too are worried along with him.



APA Citation Examples:

Wilde, O. (1888). The Nightingale and the Rose by Heather Ringo & Athena Kashyap. *The LibreTexts libraries* [https://human.libretexts.org/Courses/Oxnard_College/Introduction_to_Literature_and_Critical_Thinking/03%3A_Fiction_Readings/3.11%3A_Additional_Readings/3.11.05%3A_Oscar_Wilde's_The_Nightingale_and_the_Rose_\(1888\)](https://human.libretexts.org/Courses/Oxnard_College/Introduction_to_Literature_and_Critical_Thinking/03%3A_Fiction_Readings/3.11%3A_Additional_Readings/3.11.05%3A_Oscar_Wilde's_The_Nightingale_and_the_Rose_(1888))

Quote- When we quote anything, the quoted lines should always be written within double quote and the

citation format should be the author's last name, year of publication, and page number/paragraph number like:

“And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn.” (Wilde, 1888, p. 2)

Sometimes the page numbers are not available then please write the paragraph numbers by counting them. If no publication dates are available in the document referred, please write the acronym of no date “n.d.”

Paraphrase- When we paraphrase, we only write author's last name and the year of publication like (Wilde, 1888).

Reference- Reference is very important in any part of any academic writing. We need to mention both the primary as well as the secondary sources at the end. Primary sources are those sources from which we are directly dealing with while secondary sources are all those sources from where you or the author has taken the ideas.

For more help on **APA citation** please visit:

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