

Summary, Analysis, and Response

Choose an essay (critical analysis of a literary work) to respond to

Choose one of the essays which analyzes the short literary works we read. They are listed in the handout “Literature & Criticism: Short Works of Literature with Contrasting Critical Interpretations.” You may be able to acquire a copy through the college library, or your instructor will provide a copy at your request. If you want to respond to a critical essay which is not listed, ask your instructor for permission well in advance.

(Bear in mind that you have the option to write all four of your research essays in this class about the same literary work and the criticism on it, giving you the opportunity to reuse some of your work each time. Try to choose a literary work that interests you and that you will want to spend a considerable amount of time analyzing and researching.)

Write a summary, analysis, and response

Write a **4-5 page** Summary, Analysis, and Response paper (this means that the words must at least reach the bottom of the fourth page).

Your essay has three parts

Summary of the critical essay. Should be no longer than 1 page, identifying the context (how the essay responds to other researchers), main claim, and main points of the argument. Assume your reader has read the literary work, but has NOT read this critical essay. The summary should be clear, concise, and accurate. The summary will act as the introduction to your paper, so you do not need to write another introduction.

Analysis of the critical essay. Should be around 1 page in length. Should examine *how* the writer makes the argument, addressing issues like the following.

- the organization of the essay (order in which background, thesis/claim, arguments, counterarguments, etc. appear)
- types of arguments/evidence/support used: logic (logos), authority (ethos), and appeals to emotion (pathos)
- what makes the support adequate/inadequate, and the argument effective/ineffective

Response to the critical essay. Include an **original thesis** which

- either **disagrees** with the critical essay or **recontextualizes** it (applies its claim or its methods to a new context—either a different literary work which we have read, or a different aspect of the literary work the critical essay overlooked)
- says something about the significance or meaning (**theme and message**) of the literary work

Prove your original thesis with **textual evidence** from the literary work—specific examples (details and quotations) that support your interpretation. Do not emphasize your own confidence or opinion—“I believe the story/poem means X”—but your argument and evidence—“Y in the story/poem shows that it is making X point.” You will need to cite the literary work and the critical essay you are responding to; using and citing other sources is optional.

Format

Your essay must be in MLA format.