

Literary Response and Analysis Essay Assignment

Rough draft due Monday, November 19, 2007

Write a 600+ word analysis of a literary text (poem, song, story, or novel) according to the following outline:

- I. Introduction with a catchy opening and then your thesis statement, which states what you believe to be the central theme, or author's message**
- II. Short summary or description of the poem, song, story or novel**
- III. Analysis of one literary device (see *Menu of Literary Devices*)**
- IV. Analysis of another literary device (see *Menu of Literary Devices*)**
- V. Analysis of another literary device (see *Menu of Literary Devices*)**
- VI. Relate the poem, song, story or novel to your life, to another text or to the world**
- VII. Conclusion, which either restates in a slightly different way your thesis OR ties it all together in a poetic way**

Following is a 611-word example from a middle school student. Yours should follow the same structure but should be more sophisticated in terms of: topic sentences, word choice, supporting details and insight. Do not underestimate yourself or your abilities to analyze literature. Choose a text that fascinates you.

The Raven by Rachel Samayoa

In 1845, Edgar Allen Poe, the famous poet, wrote the classic poem "The Raven." He had written poems, such as "The Bells," "Annabelle Lee" and "To Annie," but I chose to discuss "The Raven" because it is my favorite. The message in "The Raven" is: Never run away from sorrow. You need to face it and move on.

It all starts on one stormy night inside the mansion of a lonely man. The man is mourning over the loss of his beloved Lenore when suddenly he is interrupted by a knock on his door. He looks back and sees nothing. Then he hears the tapping again coming from his window. The man walks over to the window and sees a raven just sitting there. At first, the raven seems harmless, but later on the man gets frustrated by the bird's irritating way of saying, "Nevermore...nevermore...nevermore..." over and over again. The bird never leaves; it sits there for all of eternity. The bird is like the man's sorrow.

A key element to this story is point of view. The point of view is first person. From the man's point of view, everything is a little bit scary. The raven seems inescapable. If the poem were written from the second person point of view, the fear and mystery would get a little too intense.

From the third person it would be distant and the man would seem cowardly. The first person point of view gives the story just the right interesting and twisting effect.

Another key element that affects the poem is rhythm. The poem rhymes and follows a pattern, which means it has rhythm. The rhythm makes the reader want to follow along with the story. It makes the reader not get bored. The fact that this tale is in poem form and has rhythm gives the story a friendly but mysterious tone, which keeps the reader interested.

'But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping;
And faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you' -
Here I opened wide the door;
Darkness and nothing more.'

As you follow along this melodic pattern you begin to feel more curious and more engaged. You want to see where it all leads.

The setting is also an important element in this poem. The way it's described gives you the idea it is somewhere in another century in England in a mansion, and mansions are usually depicted as creepy and haunted. The windy and stormy weather gives the atmosphere an eerie effect as if the man really is unsafe and the raven really did fly out of hell.

This poem relates to my life in two ways. The first way is that sometimes, even in my own home, just like the man in the poem, I don't feel safe. I hear noises. I like to tell myself it's nothing. Sometimes, I think that one day a raven will start to appear at my window. The second way the poem relates to me is that I know some very annoying people. Some stop being annoying when I say to stop, but others, just like the raven, continue, and like the man in the poem, I go crazy.

The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe was written in 1845. The message is "Never run away from sorrow. Either be haunted by sorrow or move on." The author uses key elements like first person point of view, rhythm and setting to capture his readers' attention. All this is why I think The Raven is the best poem I have ever read.