

Mason's Shiloh

Learning the 5 paragraph essay

“ I can support my argument with evidence.”

Read the introduction to this essay

- ▶ Many critics have observed that minimalists get more "bang for the buck." Simply put, to understand minimalist fiction, the reader must examine every detail closely, both by itself and in relation to other details. As we have observed elsewhere, in her story "Shiloh" Bobbie Ann Mason packs significance into bird references, allusions to war and the Grail myth, and even the characters' very names. One hitherto unanalyzed set of allusions in the story is musical. Throughout "Shiloh" Mason refers to classical rock songs from the 1960s to aid her readers in understanding the dissolution of Norma Jean Moffett's marriage.

Function of the Introduction

- ▶ Background information- including summary of plot, discussion of terms, other topics that have previous been discussed
- ▶ Broad discussion which narrows with each sentence
- ▶ Brings the reader through the authors thought process which leads to the thesis statement.

Addresses/defines Terms

- ▶ Term- Defines

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Parts and function of an introduction

- ▶ Thoroughly defines term
- ▶ Many critics have observed that minimalists get more "bang for the buck." Simply put, to understand minimalist fiction, the reader must examine every detail closely, both by itself and in relation to other details. As we have observed elsewhere, in her story "Shiloh" Bobbie Ann Mason packs significance into bird references, allusions to war and the Grail myth, and even the characters' very names. One hitherto unanalyzed set of allusions in the story is musical. Throughout "Shiloh" Mason refers to classical rock songs from the 1960s to aid her readers in understanding the dissolution of Norma Jean Moffett's marriage.

Introduction: parts and function

- ▶ Discusses Other topics discussed in other research
- ▶ Many critics have observed that minimalists get more "bang for the buck." Simply put, to understand minimalist fiction, the reader must examine every detail closely, both by itself and in relation to other details. As we have observed elsewhere, in her story "Shiloh" Bobbie Ann Mason packs significance into bird references, allusions to war and the Grail myth, and even the characters' very names. One hitherto unanalyzed set of allusions in the story is musical. Throughout "Shiloh" Mason refers to classical rock songs from the 1960s to aid her readers in understanding the dissolution of Norma Jean Moffett's marriage.

Introduction: Builds to the thesis naturally

- ▶ Segue into a new academic discussion, clearly leading into the thesis statement (joins the academic dialogue) explains what has not been addressed yet
- ▶ Many critics have observed that minimalists get more "bang for the buck." Simply put, to understand minimalist fiction, the reader must examine every detail closely, both by itself and in relation to other details. As we have observed elsewhere, in her story "Shiloh" Bobbie Ann Mason packs significance into bird references, allusions to war and the Grail myth, and even the characters' very names. One hitherto unanalyzed set of allusions in the story is musical. Throughout "Shiloh" Mason refers to classical rock songs from the 1960s to aid her readers in understanding the dissolution of Norma Jean Moffett's marriage.

THESIS STATEMENT - always ends the introductory paragraph

- ▶ Many critics have observed that minimalists get more "bang for the buck." Simply put, to understand minimalist fiction, the reader must examine every detail closely, both by itself and in relation to other details. As we have observed elsewhere, in her story "Shiloh" Bobbie Ann Mason packs significance into bird references, allusions to war and the Grail myth, and even the characters' very names. One hitherto unanalyzed set of allusions in the story is musical. Throughout "Shiloh" Mason refers to classical rock songs from the 1960s to aid her readers in understanding the dissolution of Norma Jean Moffett's marriage.
- ▶ Notice that this statement is VERY specific.

Body Paragraph One

- ▶ Early in the story Mason forces the reader to associate Norma Jean with music. At Christmas Leroy buys his wife an electric organ because "[s]he used to play the piano when she was in high school" (3). To emphasize that music is a part of Norma Jean's personality, Mason has her protagonist comment, "It don't leave you. [. . .] It's like riding a bicycle" (3). "Bewildered [. . .] at first" by her "new instrument," Norma Jean is nonetheless delighted and masters it "almost immediately" (3). She especially likes to play songs from the '60s, because "I didn't like these old songs back then. [. . .] But I have this crazy feeling I missed something" (3). At one point in the story, Norma Jean writes a composition entitled "Why Music Is Important to Me" (11).
- ▶ Topic Sentence
- ▶ Examples from the text
- ▶ Follow up each citation with an explanation about how each example proves the original idea

Topic Sentence

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Examples

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Follow Up

- ▶ This is a bit tricky because the follow up is addressed in the same sentences as the citation.
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Body Paragraph 2

- ▶ Mason uses specific song references to comment on Norma Jean's personal growth. In the beginning of the story, when her protagonist is just starting to change by lifting weights, Mason emphasizes Norma Jean's embryonic status by having her master on piano the very easy "Chopsticks" (3). As she matures, Norma Jean buys The Sixties Songbook and learns every tune in it. Rather than simply revealing her protagonist's reliving of a past she missed the first time, Mason stresses Norma Jean's growth by noting that she is "adding variations to each" (3) song.

Topic Sentence

- ▶ Topic Sentence indicates that the paragraph will only address how music shows personal growth
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- ▶ In summary: Notice how the discussion about the music is completely explained. The author is making a clear connection between music and what he wants the reader to get out of the example. The information is more merely presented.
- ▶ chopstick= immaturity; learns Sixties songbook = maturing; variations = further personal growth

Follow Up

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Body Paragraph 3

- ▶ Topic Sentence indicates that music shows how she is disconnecting with her husband.
- ▶ Mason further emphasizes the divergent paths of Norma Jean and her husband through music. Leroy likes to kick back with a joint and listen to two typical romantic ballads of the 1960s, "Can't Take My Eyes off of You" and the Beatles' "I'll Be Back" (3). The former song contains juvenile cliches such as "You're just too good to be true" and expresses Leroy's fear that Norma Jean will leave ("now that I've found you, stay"). Later, Mason says of Norma Jean's anxious husband, "He knows he is going to lose her" (11). And although the latter song expresses Leroy's hopes that his wife will "be back again" and their marriage saved, it ironically echoes Norma Jean's desire to move on with lyrics such as "I want to go, but I hate to leave you." In fact, later at Shiloh Norma Jean echoes those lyrics quite bluntly, saying, "I want to leave you" (14).

Examples

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Follow up

- ▶ Summary: The lyrics of the sound are strung together as though Norma Jean and Leroy are having a conversation with each other. Leroy prefers the “juvenile clichés” while Norma Jean is moving to lyrics explain how she will leave. The songs become a hidden dialogue.
- ▶ Mason further emphasizes the divergent paths of Norma Jean and her husband through music. Leroy likes to kick back with a joint and listen to two typical romantic ballads of the 1960s, “Can’t Take My Eyes off of You” and the Beatles’ “I’ll Be Back” (3). The former song contains juvenile clichés such as “You’re just too good to be true” and expresses Leroy’s fear that Norma Jean will leave (“now that I’ve found you, stay”). Later, Mason says of Norma Jean’s anxious husband, “He knows he is going to lose her” (11). And although the latter song expresses Leroy’s hopes that his wife will “be back again” and their marriage saved, it ironically echoes Norma Jean’s desire to move on with lyrics such as “I want to go, but I hate to leave you.” In fact, later at Shiloh Norma Jean echoes those lyrics quite bluntly, saying, “I want to leave you” (14).

Body Paragraph 4

- ▶ Topic Sentence focuses on independence and strength.
- ▶ By the middle of the story Norma Jean has grown more independent and physically stronger. Once again, Mason employs a rock song to underscore her protagonist's status: After playing a hard-rock number, Norma Jean "switches to a Latin-rhythm version of 'Sunshine Superman'" (9). While Leroy has been mastering more traditionally feminine pursuits such as needlepoint, Norma Jean has been lifting weights. The choice of Donovan's classic '60s hit emphasizes this gender role switch because in the story's first paragraph Norma Jean reminded Leroy of Wonder Woman; the song suggests she has transformed herself from superheroine to superhero. Even the detail that Norma Jean refuses to play the song the way it was written but changes it to a "Latin-rhythm version" suggests her refusal to embrace the traditional

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Summary:

Latin-rhythm = shows Norma Jean's unwilling to embrace her traditional role

Gender role switch = Donovan's classic '60's hit

Body Paragraph 5

Topic Sentence address the last part of the story, focusing on one specific example for the entire paragraph.

Mason employs one last rock reference at this point. When Leroy wants to know "what she really thought about--about them," Norma Jean answers in part by playing "Who'll Be the Next in Line." The Kinks' hit, essentially about two lovers parting, foreshadows the story's conclusion. Prominent in the repeated lyrics is "One day you'll find out when I'm gone / I was the best one you had." Obviously Norma Jean is contemplating here what Leroy fears the most: her leaving.

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Follow Up

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- ▶ Summary: Notice how after each example, the reader follows up with what to take from the example.

Kinks hit= foreshadowing of conclusion

Lyrics "I'm gone"= Norma Jean is planning to leave

Body Paragraph 6

- ▶ Interestingly, two-thirds of the way through "Shiloh," Mason informs us that Norma Jean "doesn't play the organ anymore" (11). At that point all musical references disappear from the rest of the story. How appropriate! Norma Jean has successfully completed her transformation from traditional wife to liberated woman, and what the allusions have foreshadowed has come to pass.
- ▶ This next paragraph reshapes the traditional essay format simply to address the lack of music in the story. Topic Sentence and example are together.
- ▶ Addresses what it means for Norma Jean to not have music anymore, not to play the organ specifically

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- ▶ Interprets the meaning of not having music anymore
- ▶ Explains and interprets the ending

Conclusion

- ▶ The musical allusions, then, are an integral part of this minimalist text and consistently relate to Mason's prominent theme of Norma Jean's growth toward independence.
- ▶ Summarizes what has already been proven in the essay
- ▶ Does not introduce new ideas or give a final personal thought on the subject.
- ▶ Does not give citations or new examples.
- ▶ Does not ask new questions to consider.
- ▶ Returns to the term addressed at the beginning of the discussion.

Quiz

- ▶ What could be included in your introduction?
- ▶ What three parts must be included in a body paragraph?
- ▶ What is and is not included in a conclusion?

- ▶ 30 points possible.