

## Writing a Literary Analysis\*: PARCC Prep 2015

**Definition of Literary Analysis:** a piece of writing that interprets one or more types of literature: poetry, drama, short story, and a novel excerpt

- The writer supports his/her interpretation of the literary work by citing evidence from the text, such as quotations, details and examples.
- A literary analysis sometimes includes facts and information from other sources, such as a biography of the author(s) or historical works about events that are mentioned in the literature.

### ELEMENTS OF A LITERARY ANALYSIS

#### **Definitions of Literary Elements**

#### **A prompt may ask you to analyze how**

**Characterization:** describe characters

characters develop and change

characters advance the plot

characters develop theme

**Plot:** events in story

events in story influence characters

author uses events to create mystery, suspense

**Structure:** arrange of lines of poetry

structure supports theme

Or order in which ideas presented

**Setting:** where and when

the setting influences (changes) plot and the characters' choices

**Tone:** author's attitude toward writing

the author's choice of words creates tone

**Point of View:** who is narrating events

point of view influences story or poem

\*taken from Common Core Writing Companion Grade 8, Perfection Learning, 2013

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### Definitions of Literary Elements

**Theme:** lesson or moral

**Figurative Language:**

similes, metaphors, onomatopoeia

Imagery, personification, hyperbole

**Allusion**( a reference to a well known piece of literature, historical event)

**EX. Cupid, Garden of Eden, Trojan War**

### A prompt may ask you to analyze how...

the theme is developed shaped by specific details

Two passages on the same topic or with the same theme are similar or different

imagery or sound devices convey meaning

**\*Definition of analysis (noun):** separation of any material into its elements, or features; process of studying the nature of something. EX. "The paper published an **analysis** of the political situation." OR The paper published a literary **analysis** of the new novel by Rick Riordan.

**Definition of analyze (verb):** to separate into parts or elements; determine elements or essential features; to examine critically EX. "Your task is to **analyze** a poem."

Synonyms: to break down, explain, interpret, explicate

Antonym: synthesize, or form by combining parts or elements

## Writing a Literary Analysis, page 3

### Understanding Literary Devices:

Choose a work of literature you have recently read. Complete the following tasks to help you analyze the piece of writing. NO sentences! Words and phrases only for prewriting.

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Author** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Describe the main characters:**

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**2. Summarize the plot (main events only): Think about conflict, climax, resolution**

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**3. Describe the setting: time, place**

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**4. Describe the tone: (think about author's choices of words)**

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**5. Identify the point of view (If 1<sup>st</sup> person, name the narrator):**

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**6. Explain the theme:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Give 2 examples of figurative language the author used, and label: (use back of paper)**

## How to Write a Literary Analysis, page 4

**Step 1:** Understand the prompt, or the directions for writing an essay. The **VERBS** in the prompt will tell you what to do. EX: “**Analyze** the character of Joan of Arc in the scene from the play, *Saint Joan*. **Compare** and **contrast** the reactions of Robert and the steward to Joan and her mission. **Support** your ideas with evidence from the text: details, examples, “quotations”.

**Step 2:** Take notes on the texts

**When you return to the text, keep the prompt in mind.**

- Look for clues that reveal Joan’s character
- Find specific examples of how the steward and Robert react to Joan
- Organize your notes, by writing words/phrases(only), or using a graphic organizers, such as Venn Diagram: compare/contrast, flowchart: sequence of events, summarize plot, web diagram: infer theme, describe character(s), 2 column or T-chart: analyze characters, tone or word choice

**Step 3:** Write a thesis statement: You need to clearly state the main idea of your essay, so it relates to BOTH the prompt and your notes.

**Step 4:** Organize your ideas into 3 main parts:

- **Introduction:** includes the title and author of the literary text. Summarize the work in one or two sentences, and **INCLUDE** your thesis statement.
- **Body:** develop your thesis statement by explaining your ideas or conclusions about the written work. You can organize your ideas by using **COMPARISON/ CONTRAST**, discussing the similarities and differences; you can also use **SUMMARIES, PLOT ANALYSIS, CHARACTER ANALYSIS**, or give examples in **SEQUENCE**, or time order.
- **Conclusion:** Include some final thoughts, details, evidence from the text (details, quotations), and end by **restating the thesis statement** by using **DIFFERENT WORDS**, or **SYNONYMS**. Do not just copy your thesis statement in the conclusion.

**Step 5:** Develop an outline to organize your main ideas and supporting details.

- The body of your outline should include textual evidence, including direct quotations, using quotation marks, and details and examples.
- Be sure to **PARAPHRASE** and use your own words; do **NOT** copy from the text, unless you put the author’s words in quotation marks.

**Step 6:** Write the essay, **using transition words** to help the reader follow your ideas.

**Step 7:** Revise your essay, after proofreading carefully.