

# HOW TO...

## write a thesis statement for literary analysis

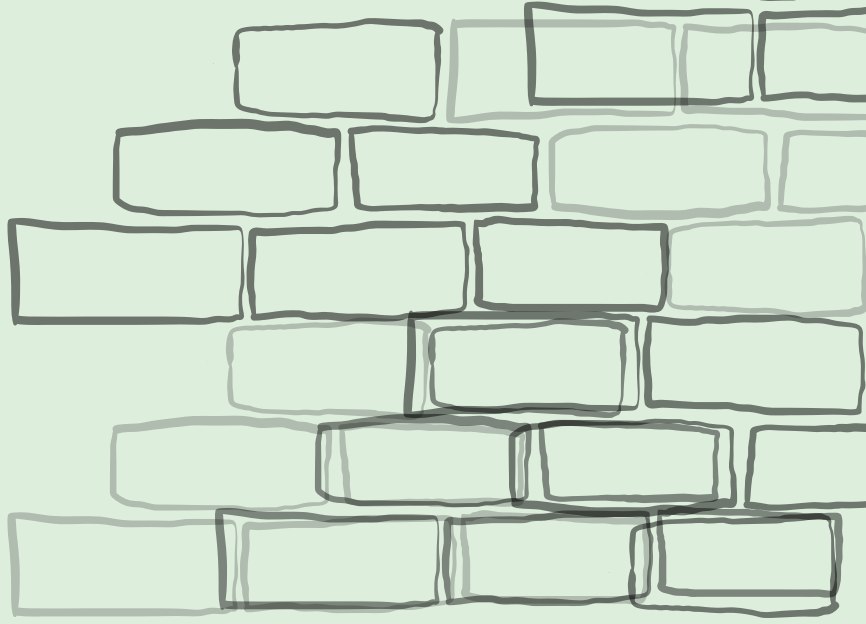
IN GENERAL, A  
THESIS STATEMENT  
IS...

a focused and controlled statement of the essay's main idea;  
a specific claim stated about a subject.

LITERARY ANALYSIS  
MEANS...

to break a text into its individual parts and explain how those parts contribute to the work as a whole--its themes, its messages.

- "Parts" of a text
- symbols
  - characters
  - settings
  - images
  - language
  - conflict
  - metaphor
  - irony
  - rhyme
  - point of view
  - narration
  - foreshadowing



## PHRASES THAT ASSIST WHEN STATING A THESIS FOR LITERARY ANALYSIS

- **Not only but**--is a correlative conjunction used to connect two related, often surprising ideas, emphasizing that both are true or important.

*not only but*

The setting in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" is relevant not only to stage the actions of the plot, but also to reveal the psychology of Mrs. Mallard's character.

- **Upon closer analysis**-- is a phrase used to indicate that a deeper examination or revised understanding of a text will reveal new details or something unexpected.

*upon closer analysis*

The final scene in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" seems to be the most disturbing part of the narrative, but upon closer analysis, it is the lingering question of being able to trust our perceptions that is so haunting.

- **Only because**--is a phrase that sets a strict, necessary condition for an action to occur; in other words, an interpretation of a theme can only occur when a specific reading or understanding is met, and not otherwise.

*only because*

The ending of Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" is surprisingly horrific only because the third-person narrator so successfully achieves a tone of detachment.

# HOW TO...

# Study for Literature Exams



ESSAY PROMPTS FROM ASSIGNMENTS THROUGHOUT THE TERM ARE EXCELLENT "STUDY" GUIDES FOR LITERARY COURSES.

Of course, the same questions won't be re-issued, but assignment questions will tell you what the course's priorities are in terms of discussion subjects, critical reading, themes, and theories.

## Some general literary essay prompts and questions:

1. Provide a close reading of one scene from a play studied in class.
2. Present an analysis of any literary element used in a short story studied in class.
3. Compare the themes of any two poems. One poem must be from the reading list and the other chosen by you and approved by your instructor.
4. Discuss the effect of narrative point of view in a novel.
5. Interpret three symbols from a narrative and explain their relationship to the work as a whole.
6. How does setting affect the telling of a story? Choose any two stories to illustrate your points.
7. Identify two different methods of characterization in a novel and discuss their effect on themes.

# "ANCHOR MOMENTS"

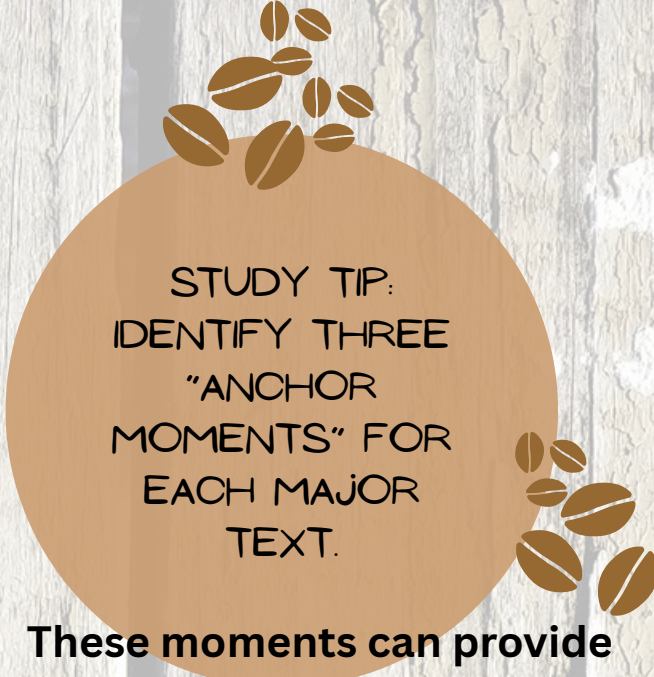
- scenes, actions, or speeches that pull together prominent themes or ideas.
- moments that help stabilize our understanding of what is happening.
- formative passages in character development and plot events that are rich for interpretation.

## PRACTICE HANDWRITING RESPONSES AND EXPLANATIONS



specifically:

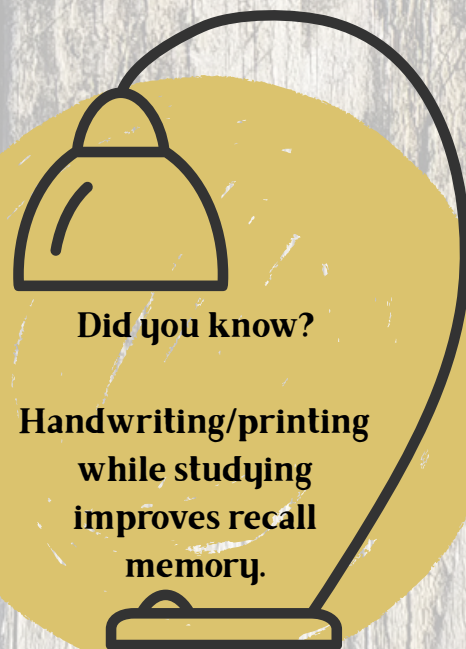
- essay outlines that link specific details to broader themes
- explanations of significant terms, theories, or concepts covered in class
- sentences that compare or contrast elements from two works
- sentences that signal an introduction
- sentences that signal a conclusion.



STUDY TIP:  
IDENTIFY THREE  
"ANCHOR  
MOMENTS" FOR  
EACH MAJOR  
TEXT.

These moments can provide details for:

- close analysis
- identifying how a theme is developed
- describing specific narrative strategies



Did you know?

Handwriting/printing while studying improves recall memory.