Writing a Literary Analysis
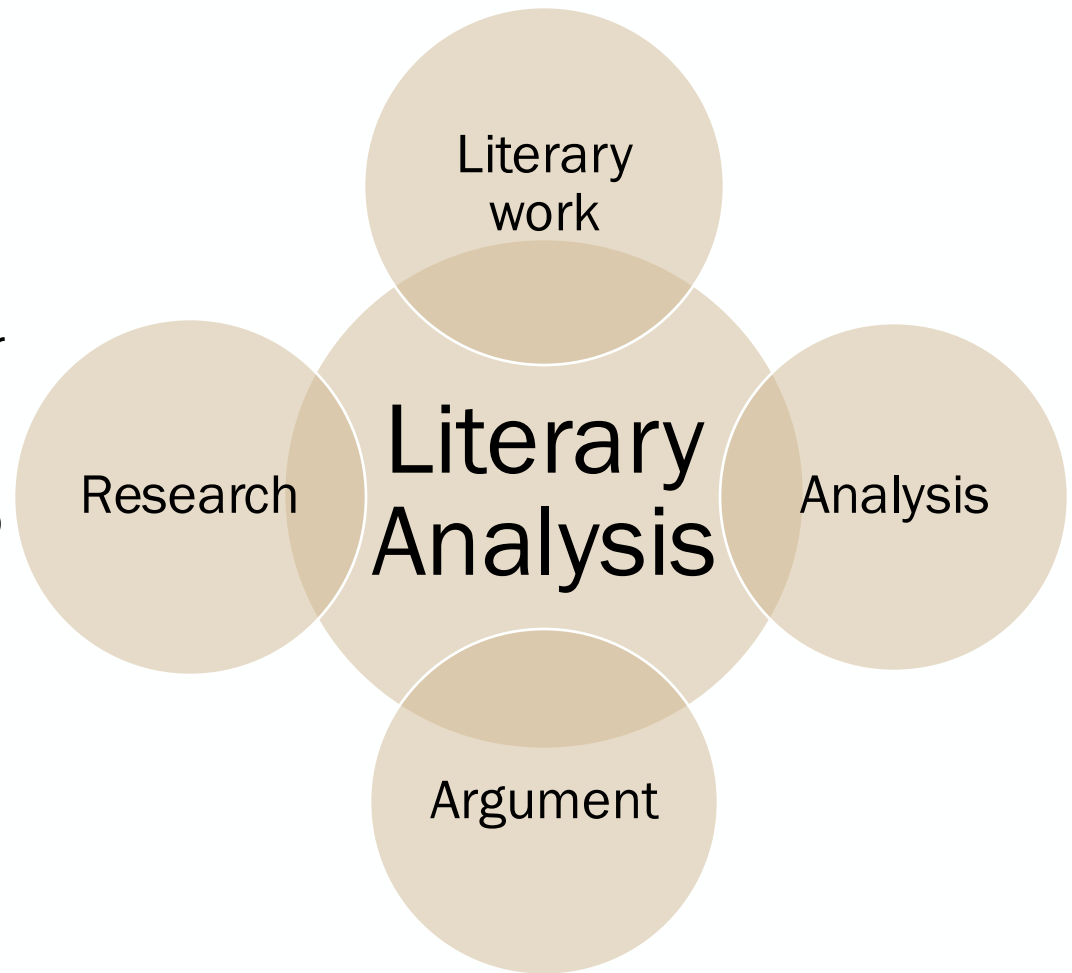
This presentation will cover :

Literary Analysis

1. What is a literary analysis?
2. What are some important literary concepts?
3. How is a literary analysis an argument?
4. What are thesis statements?
5. How are thesis statements supported?
6. What is a secondary source?
7. How do I integrate second sources?

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What is a Literary Analysis?

1. An **argument** about a literary work, not just summary.

2. a **clear, debatable thesis** about meaning, themes, or techniques.

3. A persuasive text written to convince the reader of your interpretation of a literary work.

4. A process of critical thinking

Literary work

Research

Literary Analysis

Analysis

Argument

What does a Literary Analysis Involve?

Usually, a literary analysis will involve a **discussion of a text as writing**, thus the term literary, which means "having to do with letters."

This will involve the use of certain concepts that are specifically associated with literature.

Example: Metaphor, Setting

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What are some important literary concepts?

Narrative Elements	Language & Style	Contexts	Theoretical & Critical Approaches
• Plot • Setting • Characterization • Narration / Point of view • Multiple voices • Theme	• Metaphor • Symbol • Irony / Ambiguity • Style / Diction	• Historical context • Social, political, economic contexts • Ideology	• Critical orientations • Literary theory • Genre

How is Literary Analysis an Argument?

Writing an Argument
• When writing a literary analysis, you will focus on specific attribute(s) of the text(s).
• When discussing these attributes, you will want to make sure that you are making a specific, arguable point (thesis) about these attributes.
• When developing your thesis, you will defend this point with reasons and evidence drawn from the text.

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What does an Analysis Discuss?

An **analysis** of a literary work may discuss:

How the various components of an individual work relate to each other.

How two separate literary works deal with similar concepts or forms.

How concepts and forms in literary works relate to larger aesthetic, political, social, economic, or religious contexts.

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What are thesis statements?

Choose the most complete and arguable idea

Moby-Dick is about the problem of evil.

Moby-Dick is boring and pointless.

Moby-Dick is about a big, white whale.

The use of "whiteness" in *Moby-Dick* illustrates the uncertainty of the meaning of life that Ishmael expresses throughout the novel.

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How are Thesis Statements Supported ?

Evidence and Support:

- Include examples **from the text:**

    o Direct quotations

    o Summaries of scenes

    o Paraphrasing

- Cite other **critics' opinions**

- Discuss the text's **historical and social context**

- Always remember to read carefully and highlight useful passages and quotes

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What is a Secondary Source?

A book or article that discusses the text you are discussing.

A book or article that discusses a theory related to the argument you are making.

A book or article that discusses the social and historical context of the text you are discussing.

Example: In discussing Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*, Lee Patterson argues that "direct quote."

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How do I Find Secondary Sources?

You might consult:

- Academic databases
  - Example: *The MLA International Bibliography*
- The Dictionary of Literary Biography
- Discipline-specific sources
  - Example: America: History and Life for American Literature
- Other search engines
- A bibliography that is part of your text
- Your instructor

How do I integrate Secondary Sources?

When you use secondary sources, be sure to show how they relate to your thesis.

Don't overuse any one secondary source, or for that matter, secondary sources in general.
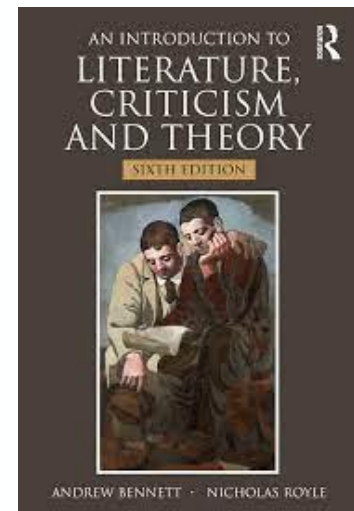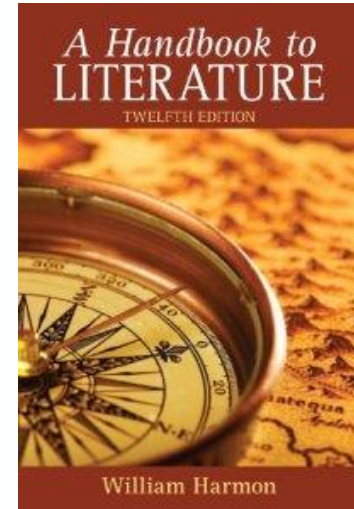
Remember that this is your paper, your argument—the secondary sources are just helping you out.

Never plagiarize. See the OWL handout on plagiarism for more information.

How Can I Learn More?

Check your library for:

- Various handbooks of literary terms.

  o Example: *A Handbook to Literature*, Harmon/Holman

- Numerous introductions to literary criticism and the theory

  o Example: *Literary Theory: An Introduction* by Terry Eagleton; *Beginning Theory* by Peter Barry

- Annotated anthologies and collections of essays

  o Example: The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism

- Specialized handbooks on genres or periods

- Consult instructors and tutors for help when needed

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Recap: Literary Analysis

When writing a literary analysis:

1. • Be familiar with literary terms.

2. • Analyze specific items.

3. • Make an argument.

4. • Make appropriate use of secondary sources.

5. • Consult instructors and tutors for help when needed.

Thank You

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