



Writing About Literature

By: Olivia Johns and Sean Powers

Why Write About Literature?

- *Practice in writing clearly and persuasively*
- *Deepen your understanding*
- *Enlighten others besides yourself*

For Whom Do You Write?

- ★ The audience for whom you write will dictate content, organization, and style of the paper.
- ★ Need to know something about the readers' backgrounds.
- ★ Your audience will generally be your instructor or classmates

Choosing a Topic

- *Papers that focus on a single literary work*
- *Papers of comparison and contrast*
- *Papers on a number of works by a single author*
- *Papers on a number of works having some feature other than authorship in common.*

1. Papers That Focus on a Single Literary Work

- ❑ Read the selection carefully
- ❑ Decide upon your answer
- ❑ Support your answer with evidence from the text and account for contrary evidence
- ❑ Your essay will either be an explication or an analysis

- ❑ Explication: Thorough examination of a work (point of view, images, allusions, form structure, etc)
- ❑ Explication works best with shorter works and especially poems
- ❑ Analysis: Chooses one element of a work and examines it in relation to its whole
- ❑ Better approach to longer work than explication (provided the chosen element can be related to the whole)

2. Papers of Comparison and Contrast

- ❖ Compares two works that have at least one similarity and contrasts their differences
- ❖ The similarities and differences highlight each other, leading to a better understanding of both works



3. PAPERS ON A NUMBER OF WORKS BY A SINGLE AUTHOR

- **IDENTIFY WHAT MAKES THIS AUTHOR DIFFERENT FROM OTHER AUTHORS (SUBJECTS, SETTINGS, THEMES)**
- **MAY ALSO LOOK FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ATTITUDES OR JUDGEMENTS**
- **YOU MAY INCLUDE BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION IF IT SERVES YOUR EXAMINATION (BUT NOT AS FILLER)**

4. PAPERS ON A NUMBER OF WORKS WITH SOME FEATURE OTHER THAN AUTHORSHIP IN COMMON

- *Most familiar type has works involving similar thematic concerns (love, war, death, old age, social injustice)*
- *Could also compare aspects in common such as literary devices or subject matter*
- *Could choose specific forms of literature like satires or of a time period like the Vietnam War*

Proving Your Point

- 1. YOU NEED TO SHOW HOW THE WORK DOES WHAT YOU CLAIM IT DOES**
- 2. YOU CANNOT PROVE A POINT BY HYPOTHESIZING ABOUT WHAT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN IF IT DID NOT CONTAIN WHAT IT DID**
- 3. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WILL RARELY HELP YOUR READERS' UNDERSTANDING**
- 4. DEMONSTRATE THAT YOUR ANALYSIS IS VALID BY PROVIDING PERSUASIVE PROOF OF YOUR MAJOR POINT OR POINTS**

Writing the Paper

★ *Should be done as an Eight Step Process*

- 1. Read over the required materials (more than once) mull over the problem, write down some notes*
- 2. Allow your subconscious mind to think over your notes and materials before you begin writing*
- 3. Create a rough outline and write the first draft as quickly as possible without stopping*
- 4. Review the essay and modify your thesis and paragraphs to provide you with a convincing argument*

5. Ensure that your stance is firm and that you do not sound unsure of yourself
6. Revise your paper for effectiveness (punctuation, agreeing verbs, consistent tenses, spelling)
7. Write your final draft
8. Read over the final draft slowly to eliminate any lingering errors

Introducing Quotations

1. Quotations are used as supporting evidence for your argument as well as present to the reader a passage you plan to examine
2. There are no concrete rules for quotations though influence from the Modern Language Association of America, a set of principles have been widely adopted
3. If a quote is longer than 4 typed lines, begin it on a new line and indent it twice as far from the left margin. Do not enclose it in quotation marks! This is known as a “set-off” or “block” quotation.
4. Preserve line arrangement from verse. If the verse is “run in”, separate each line with a diagonal slash.

3. Aside from excluding punctuation before a quotation, sentences that contain a quotation are punctuated as if there were no quotation

4. All quotations must connect with its introduction so as to create a grammatically correct sentence

5. Provide ample context when introducing a quotation

6. Quotations must match the original text EXACTLY

7. Brackets are used to indicate words that you have altered or inserted into the quotation for clarification

8. You may omit words from a quotation if you use an ellipsis

9. Single quotation marks are used for quotations within quotations

10. Commas and periods are placed within quotation marks, semicolons and colons are placed outside. Question marks and exclamation marks are placed inside if they belong to the quotation and outside if they belong to your sentence

CONGRATULATIONS!

YOU MADE IT TO THE END!

**NOW IT'S TIME TO DO SOME WORK TO PROVE
THAT YOU WERE ACTUALLY LISTENING! YEAH,
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET OFF THAT EASILY.**