

How To Create A Literary Analysis Paragraph

How to analyze text

1. Read the text with the question or questions in mind.
2. Assemble basic ideas, events, and names. This may take a rereading of the text.
3. Denote your personal reactions to the book whether positive or negative. Why is the book garnering this reaction?
4. Identify and consider the most important ideas.
5. Return to the text to locate specific evidence and passages related to the ideas.

How to analyze text within a passage

1. Your topic sentence is first. This sentence will tell your basic assertion on the text.
 - a. For Example: The Misfit and Arnold Friend are similar because they both control their victims in a polite manner.
2. Offer a context to the quote or passage you will use to prove your topic sentence.
 - a. In "A Good Man is Hard to Find," The Misfit calmly asks Bailey if he would like to step into the woods to die.
3. Quote the passage you have chosen to prove your point. Place the page number
 - a. "Would you mind stepping back in them woods there with them" (7).
4. Explain the quote! You cannot just stick a quote on the paper and leave it. Analyze the quote and offer suggestions as to what it means in reference to your topic sentence. You must spend two to three sentences explaining the quote.
 - a. This question seems odd because The Misfit is politely asking another man to step into his own grave. Bailey knows that he will not return from the woods because his mother has identified The Misfit. But, instead of demanding action, The Misfit coaxes the family to comply using manners. Bailey walks to his death.
5. REPEAT THIS PROCESS AT LEAST TWO TIMES! Provide a transition sentence in between ideas.
6. End your paragraph with a clincher or summary of your thoughts. Your ending sentence must be natural within the paragraph, and it must convey your overall thoughts.

Your work should result in a paragraph similar to the following:

The Misfit and Arnold Friend are similar because they both control their victims in a polite manner. In "A Good Man is Hard to Find," The Misfit calmly asks Bailey if he would like to step into the woods to die. "Would you mind stepping back in them woods there with them" (7). This question seems odd because The Misfit is politely asking another man to step into his own grave. Bailey knows that he will not return from the woods because his mother has identified The Misfit. But, instead of demanding action, The Misfit coaxes the family to comply using manners. Bailey walks to his death. And even after the gunshots were heard from the woods, The Misfit maintains control with manners. "Lady...would you and that little girl like to step off yonder with Bobby Lee and Hiram and join your husband" (8). This quote shows that he uses another polite question to control the situation because the mother swiftly answers and even thanks him for asking. It seems that this family, who is used to demands and commands, folds under the first pretense of politeness. But, it is not only this family that willingly walks into graves. In "Where are You Going? Where have You Been," Connie willingly walks out of her house to face a certain death in the hands of Arnold Friend. "She watched herself push the door slowly open as if she were back safe somewhere in the other doorway, watching this body and this head of long hair moving out into the sunlight where Arnold Friend waited" (13). Connie seems like she is under a spell when she leaves the safety of her home to face her own demise. Oates even calls Arnold's courteous and harrowing instructions a spell. "The incantation was kindly. "Now come out through the kitchen to me, honey, and let's see a smile, try it, you re a brave, sweet little girl'..." (13). This quotes shows that he controlled Connie with manners and compliments. He is polite and calm in his commands, which confuses Connie to the point that she gives into him. As one can see, both men use manners to kill.