

Format for Formal Literary Analysis Rubinstein

When submitting a literary analysis for a college or university class, a formal, academic tone should be employed. Consider the following as strong academic practice:

- Double space; 12pt. standard font (i.e. Times New Roman), indent a paragraph five spaces and no extra space between paragraphs. Use standard or default margins.
- In the introduction use the full name of the author and the full name of the primary source or sources. Refer to the author by his or her last name any time thereafter. Short stories and poem titles receive quotation marks; book titles are underlined.
- Spell out contractions (don't = do not).
- Do not use exclamation marks, (!), slang, or any conversational tone that addresses the reader as if in a conversation. (You can see that Faulkner uses some great symbolism...).
- Write the essay from the third person perspective. (Hemingway describes a conversation between two people) not (You can see Hemingway...) or (I think Hemingway...).
- Use the literary present tense. (Hemingway describes a conversation) not (Hemingway described a conversation) or write (Miss Emily poisons Homer) not (Miss Emily poisoned Homer).
- Avoid plot summary and biographical information.
- Maintain a strong thesis that is stated clearly in the introduction and rephrased for the conclusion.
- Introduce, incorporate, and analyze primary and secondary quotes, but do not depend on them to fill the essay.
- Avoid complimenting authors and their work. If we are studying these writers, it is already assumed that they do a great job at what they do.
- Do not title the essay the same as the primary source.
- Proofread closely to avoid simple typos, as well as grammar, punctuation, format, and proofreading errors.

Long Quote Form: A long quote is any primary or secondary quotation that exists on five or more lines (including parenthetical reference info), not necessarily four sentences. When including a long quote, indent ten spaces, maintain double spacing and keep the right margin the same. Quotation marks around the quotation are no longer necessary, unless dialogue is being quoted. In which case, single quotes inside double or long quote format. Parenthetical reference info is still required. For example,

Analyzing the worth of the unnamed narrator, one critic points out that

In keeping with the town's invasive aesthetic of observation, the narrator/detective's willingness to pass judgment on all he witnesses so completely overturns the illusion of objectivity that he speaks, if you will, not as the detached soloist of a Greek chorus, but as a prime participant in the tragic drama he relates. (Rodgers 546)

Short Quote Form: A short quote is any primary or secondary quotation that exists on four or less lines. Use quotation marks for short quotes; parenthetical reference info is placed after the quote; end punctuation is placed after the end parenthesis. For example,

One critic points out that "Emily, like Georgiana, is a man-made object" (Fetterly 35).

The Works Cited Page: The final page of the essay will be the Works Cited page to alphabetically list the primary source(s) and the secondary sources referenced. The heading is either all caps or just the first letter of the two word heading is capitalized. Do not increase the size of the heading, make it bold, italicize, underline, or alter the font. Center the heading and use a normal return. Do not skip extra space between citations, and double space the entire Works Cited page.

Check the example of the properly formatted Works Cited page in our text on page 2114.