

Tips For Successful Literary Analysis Commentary

1. Consider the author's diction (also known as word choice). Why does he or she use this word? Does the word have a connotation that is more appropriate than another word would have had? How does this choice of word more accurately reflect the author's message?
2. What is *not* stated in the quote, but is implied?
3. When it helps to further your argument, connect to literary terms whenever possible. Consider how one event foreshadows another, or how a metaphor's meaning is particularly relevant to the message the author is conveying.
4. Analyze cause and effect relationships when it appropriately relates to your thesis.
5. Don't just analyze what characters say; analyze how they *interact* with each other.
6. All concrete details in the same paragraph should support the same topic sentence, but they should not be interchangeable, or your commentary will grow stale quickly. That is to say, there should be a progression of ideas within each paragraph as well as the essay as a whole in order to keep moving forward toward the next level of insight.
7. ALWAYS, ALWAYS, address the author's message. He or she wrote the literature for a reason greater than the work itself – what is that reason?