

Writing a Literary Essay

- Try to write about something about the play that you find interesting.
 - Look through your list of topics and choose one of them that you can examine further in essay form.

- Remember, your topic should also address the discussions surrounding our play.
 - Again, read the front and back matter of your play, check out [sparknotes](#) and [cliffnotes](#) and discuss with peers.

Writing a Literary Essay

- Give your essay an interesting title that leaves no doubt about the position you are taking.

- Assume a very intelligent (and bald) reader will be looking over the work, but...
 - Which means he'll catch on quickly.

- Assume he's read the play, but he has NEVER examined the theme. That's your job.

Writing a Literary Essay

- Keep your tone straightforward and your explanations concise.
 - Which means don't waste words – be clear without being overly-verbose.

- Write as directly and clearly as you can, but remember that "simple" does not mean "simplistic."
 - In this case, simple means clear and to the point.

Writing a Literary Essay

- Don't retell the story. A re-telling of the plot is of limited value in literary essays and is usually used only to set up the context of the quotations you plan to analyze.

- Instead, express an opinion about what you've read.
 - Don't be afraid to take risks to interpret. Aim for a thesis that not everyone would agree with.

Writing a Literary Essay

- Don't assume there's one correct view; in literary study there isn't.
 - This does not mean that ANY position you take about the text is correct; some arguments fit the evidence better than others, so be careful about the argument you make.

- Make sure any argument you present is supported by text evidence (lines from the play).

- Explain your arguments thoroughly and patiently. Don't expect the handsome reader to grasp your claims easily.

Organizing a Literary Essay

- Organize your paragraphs according to the development of your argument, not according to the chronological order of a text.
- Cover one aspect of your argument per paragraph or section (if more than one paragraph is necessary) of your essay.
- Use transitions to show how sections are logically connected to each other and to your thesis.

Organizing a Literary Essay

- In this examination, you shall be required to use HEADINGS for each section of your essay:
 - Introduction (but give it a creative, catchy title)
 - Paragraph 1 Title (catchy title)
 - Paragraph 2 Title (catchy title)
 - Paragraph 3 Title; and so on (catchy title[s])
 - Conclusion (again, use a catchy title)

Organizing a Literary Essay

- Don't try to say everything you've figured out about the readings in one essay.
- Select only those quotations that advance and support your particular thesis.
 - Set up quotations with a brief reminder to readers of what is happening in the text at that point (but don't summarize plot).
- Integrate quotations into your essay so that everything reads as coherent sentences.
 - Keep quotations as brief as you can.

Final Thoughts

- When quoting the play, make certain to use proper MLA in-text quotation:
 - Act. Scene. Line.
 - Roman Numerals must be used for act/scene.
- For example:
 - It is clear that Dogberry is an uneducated man when he states that he and Verges are 'the malefactors.' (III. iv. 81-82)



More Final Thoughts

- Use present tense to show that literary works and the issues they raise are still alive. Not "Don John was..." but "Don John is...."
- Show that you care about your work by proofreading carefully for small errors.

Great Essays Will:

- have a strong introduction that clearly states an integrated thesis that is thoughtful, argumentative, and specific;
 - Strong introductions 'hook' the reader. How will you hook?
- integrate supporting details, examples, and quotes with insightful, on topic information to support analysis;
 - This shows the handsome reader that you - as a Shakespeare reader - have fully understood the play and the essay you choose.
- use well-selected textual evidence & create substantial proof of thesis;
 - Which means students will use actual lines from the play in order to support any claims they make about the play.

Great Essays Will Also...

- analyze how the evidence supports the main idea of the paragraph;
 - Don't just insert a line from the play without telling the reader how it supports your thesis.

- insightfully connects analysis to the thesis;
 - Remember, the entire essay is being written to support a thesis statement.
 - If you wander in another direction during the writing of your essay, then you aren't staying on topic.

Great Essays Will Also

- select the most effective organizational pattern in support of the thesis;
 - What is the best way to set up this essay?
 - This is where the outline is KEY.

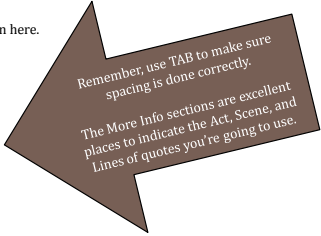
- adheres to essay conventions:
 - use transitions to effectively link ideas;
 - avoid slang and saying "you" or "I";
 - show maturity through precise word choices, sentence variety, and paragraph development;
 - be free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors;
 - keep a consistent tense

The Outline

- Must be typed or neatly-handwritten on a single page.
- Must follow the rules:
 - Your name in the top right corner (no number necessary)
 - Parallelism is still very important
 - Must include the following elements/headings:
 - Title of your essay (centered at the top of the page)
 - Introduction (but use the catchy one you created)
 - Under the Introduction, write out your eventual thesis statement.
 - Section One (but use your catchy name)
 - Section Two (but use your catchy name)
 - Section Three (you MUST have at least three – you may have many more)
 - Conclusion (again, use a catchy phrase for the conclusion)
 - Under Conclusion, write out another version of your thesis statement.

More Outline Stuff

- No line in your outline may exceed eight words.
- Outlines follow this format:
 - I Introduction
 - Thesis Statement written here.
 - II Section One
 - A. Supporting Detail
 - B. Supporting Detail
 - 1. More Info
 - 2. (IV. vi. 11-12)
 - C. Supporting Detail
 - III Section Two



General Rules for this Exam Essay

- You will be required to stay for 1.5 hours.
 - Might as well use it wisely and take your time.
- Essays must be double-spaced.
 - Gives the handsome reader a chance to correct/comment.
- You **MUST** arrive with your outline prepared or it shall receive **NO CREDIT**.
 - Don't try to write it up during the exam.

More General Rules:

- Essays must be within the 1000-1500 word range.
 - Since you have the topics already, you have lots of time to prepare.
- If you use quotes **LONGER** than four lines, then the quote must be indented on both sides **AND** single-spaced.
- If you still have books (Echoes 12, Elements of Essays, and Hamlet) you will be given an incomplete.
