

Literary Analysis DOs and DON'Ts

Passages

Passages are essential to your analysis; however, they should not take over the entire paper. Here are some things to consider when you incorporate passages into your analysis:

- Limit passage to 1-2 sentences in length. If you found a longer passage to use, sift out the most important part.
- Oftentimes it is a word or series of words that are the more powerful to quote in your papers
- Include the passage within the grammatical structure of the sentence:
 - Montressor uses verbal irony when he says “My friend, no, I must not impose”(2).
 - The setting’s mood is enhanced with the description of “rainbow of shades” (226) and “vibrant” walls along with the “dancing light” (227).
- Do not write “This passage shows” - be sure the passage fits naturally
- Use the passage as a supporting detail – never alone
- Include page number(s) in parenthesis *after* the quotation mark but *before* the period
- Don’t forget the quotation marks!

Formal Voice

When writing a literary analysis, your audience is a formal evaluator who is familiar with the story. Keep this in mind as you write. The following are rules to follow for formal papers:

- No first or second person pronouns (I, you, we, etc) Use “the reader” instead of you or me
- No contractions – use “do not” instead of “don’t”
- Use proper literary terminology (review your literary terms)
 - For example, use “protagonist” instead of “main character”

More DO NOTS!

DO NOT summarize the plot. Rather, use specific events within the novel/play/story to support your analysis.

DO NOT start your analysis half way down the paper or use obnoxiously large font size. Include your heading on the right and the title in the center. There is no need to make either of these large.

DO NOT EVER write, “In this essay”, “This paragraph will” or anything that says what you are going to say – just say it!

DO NOT write “obviously” or “obvious”. If it is obvious, there is no need to state it is obvious...right?

DO NOT address your author by his/her first name. You don’t know them...and if you did, this isn’t the right place to demonstrate that.

DO NOT include qualifiers that show how well or how poorly an author did something. An analysis is *not* a review or an opinion piece. Don’t say “the author did a great job portraying character”. Rather, say what was done without the qualifier. “Shakespeare’s Juliet was a dynamic character who...”