

Essay #1: Analyzing Personal Relationships

Analysis

An analysis of a piece of literature is a “reading” focused on explaining how parts function in relation to the whole, or how key components (plot, character, setting, etc.) develop a theme in the larger work. Analyses are never complete descriptions of everything going on within a work but offer a single, carefully argued approach that makes the work meaningful to others.

“Analysis helps us address complex problems and find possible solutions by breaking things apart so that we may examine them more carefully. In one sense, analysis is like working on a puzzle; it takes a problem and spreads its pieces out so we can make sense of them,” from Ch. 2, *Writing about Literature in a Media Age*.

In this unit, we will learn about several components of literature: plot, character, setting, and theme. We will not study them as isolated chunks of text, but consider them as they help readers grasp the larger meaning and significance of the work.

Assignment

So much of our lives (and the story of our faith) center on relationship– from the parent/child relationship (Jacob and Joseph; Mary and Jesus) to enduring friendships (Ruth and Naomi; David and Jonathan). Yet these relationships are not always healthy or life giving. Sometimes, like Cain and Abel or David and Saul, they destroy us. Because of humanity’s dependence on relationship, writers have continued to share the impact relationships have on us.

Choose a selection from the Personal Relationships section of our anthology that details the effect a relationship has on the persona. Then write a 4-5 page essay that analyzes the importance of that relationship to the text. You will need to (1) create a context for your reading of the relationship, (2) summarize the key principle that will form the basis for your reading of the relationship, (3) analyze the relationship, and (4) clearly state the significance of your understanding of the relationship and its purpose in the text.

Reading

The Conscious Reader, Section IV, Personal Relationships (210-309);
“Parker’s Back” by Flannery O’Connor – see link to e-text on Class Blog;
A Sequence for Academic Writing, Ch. 1 “Quotations” (44-53), Ch. 1
“Avoiding Plagiarism” (53-55), Ch. 2 “Critical Reading and Critique” (58-86),
and Ch. 5 “Analysis” (188-222).
