

ASC Peer Tutor

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### Writing a Literary Analysis Paper

In a literary analysis paper, the first paragraph acts as your **introduction**. You are beginning to build your argument and set a foundation for the direction of your paper. Try to **hook** your reader. At some point in this paragraph, you will want to supply the name of the author and literary work you are examining. Oftentimes, you will supply these details in your first sentence or thesis statement. Finally, the last sentence of this first paragraph should be your **thesis statement**, which states your main argument for the paper as a whole. The **thesis** is the “anchor” of the paper.

Your first **body paragraph** should start with a **topic sentence**. With every succeeding sentence in the paragraph, make sure to link back to your topic sentence, which should also link back to your thesis. If you start going on to something unrelated to your topic sentence, start a new paragraph for your new idea.

Your second **body paragraph** should have its own **topic sentence**, which will direct the content of the paragraph and link the paragraph back to the thesis. It is helpful for your reader if you include a **transitional phrase** to move from your first body paragraph to your second. Throughout your body paragraphs, support your argument with evidence and quotations from the literary text. If you are using research, your sources will also provide support for your argument (remember to cite your sources). Also, if you are telling the reader about, for example, the author’s use of symbolism, do not simply list symbols present in the story. Tell the readers *how*

the symbols function, what they *mean*, and *why* the author has chosen to include them in his story when there are many things he chose not to include.

After a few more body paragraphs, it is time to wrap up your argument and write a **conclusion paragraph**. Here you want to sum up the main points of your argument and connect them back to your original thesis in order to show how you have supported and developed your argument throughout the paper. This is your chance to say your final words on the subject and leave your reader with an interesting thought. Finally, end your paper with a strong closing sentence.