A Guide to Writing the Literary Analysis Essay

I. INTRODUCTION:

A) *Creative Opening/Hook*

1) **A startling fact or bit of information**

2) **A snatch of dialogue between two characters**

3) **A meaningful quotation (from the book you are analyzing or another source)**

4) **A universal idea**

5) **A rich, vivid description of the setting**

B) *Thesis*: a statement that provides the subject and overall opinion of your essay. For a literary analysis your major thesis must
(1) relate to the theme of the work and
(2) suggest how this theme is revealed by the author (a plan of development or POD) A good thesis also suggests the organization of the paper.

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II. BODY PARAGRAPHS (use this pattern for each body paragraph)

1) **Topic Sentence**: the first sentence of a body or support paragraph. It identifies one aspect of the major thesis and states a primary reason why the major thesis is true.

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2) **Textual Evidence #1**: a specific example from the work used to provide evidence for your topic sentence. Textual evidence can be a combination of paraphrase and direct quotation from the work.

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3) **Commentary (2-3 sentences)**:

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4) **Transitions**: words or phrases that connect or "hook" one idea to the next, both between and within paragraphs. Transition devices include using connecting words as well as repeating key words or using synonyms.

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5) **Lead-In**: phrase or sentence that prepares the reader for textual evidence by introducing the speaker, setting, and/or situation.

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6) **Textual Evidence #2**

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7) **Commentary on TE #2 (2-3 sentences):**

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8) **Clincher/Concluding Sentence:** last sentence of the body paragraph. It concludes the paragraph by tying the textual evidence and commentary back to the thesis.

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9) **Topic Sentence**: the first sentence of a body or support paragraph. It identifies one aspect of the major thesis and states a primary reason why the major thesis is true.

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10) **Textual Evidence #1**: a specific example from the work used to provide evidence for your topic sentence. Textual evidence can be a combination of paraphrase and direct quotation from the work.

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11) **Commentary (2-3 sentences)**:

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12) **Transitions**: words or phrases that connect or "hook" one idea to the next, both between and within paragraphs. Transition devices include using connecting words as well as repeating key words or using synonyms.

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13) **Lead-In**: phrase or sentence that prepares the reader for textual evidence by introducing the speaker, setting, and/or situation.

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14) **Textual Evidence #2**

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15) **Commentary on TE #2 (2-3 sentences):**

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16)   **Clincher/Concluding Sentence:** last sentence of the body paragraph. It concludes the paragraph by tying the textual evidence and commentary back to the thesis.

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19) **Commentary (2-3 sentences)**:

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20) **Transitions**: words or phrases that connect or "hook" one idea to the next, both between and within paragraphs. Transition devices include using connecting words as well as repeating key words or using synonyms.

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21) **Lead-In**: phrase or sentence that prepares the reader for textual evidence by introducing the speaker, setting, and/or situation.

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22) **Textual Evidence #2**

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23) **Commentary on TE #2 (2-3 sentences):**

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24) **Clincher/Concluding Sentence:** last sentence of the body paragraph. It concludes the paragraph by tying the textual evidence and commentary back to the thesis.

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25) **Topic Sentence**: the first sentence of a body or support paragraph. It identifies one aspect of the major thesis and states a primary reason why the major thesis is true.

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27) **Commentary (2-3 sentences)**:

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28) **Transitions**: words or phrases that connect or "hook" one idea to the next, both between and within paragraphs. Transition devices include using connecting words as well as repeating key words or using synonyms.

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29) **Lead-In**: phrase or sentence that prepares the reader for textual evidence by introducing the speaker, setting, and/or situation.

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30) **Textual Evidence #2**

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31) **Commentary on TE #2 (2-3 sentences):**

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III. CONCLUSION: last paragraph in your essay. This paragraph should begin by echoing your major thesis without repeating the words exactly. Then, the conclusion should broaden from the thesis statements to answer the "so what?" question your reader may have after reading your essay. The conclusion should do one or more of the following:

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HOW TO CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE WITHIN YOUR PAPER

PRIMARY SOURCE: The literary work (novel, play, story, poem) to be discussed in an essay.
   ✓ **Example: :** Steinbeck's _Of Mice and Men_
                        Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-tale Heart"

For most literary analysis papers, you will be using **ONLY PRIMARY SOURCES

 PARENTHETICAL DOCUMENTATION: a brief parenthetical reference placed where a pause would naturally occur to avoid disrupting the flow of your writing (usually at the end of a sentence, before the period).

Most often you will use the author's last name and page number clearly referring to a source listed on the "Works Cited" page:
   ✓ **Example:** Hemingway's writing declined in his later career (Shien 789).

If you cite the author in the text of your paper, give only the page number in parentheses: ✓ **Example:** According to Francis Guerin, _The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn_   reflects "those same nightmarish shadows that even in our own time threaten to obscure the American Dream" (49).

If two works by the same author appear in your "Works Cited," add the title or a shortened version of it to distinguish your sources:
   ✓ **Example:** "He wouldn't rest until he had run a mile or more" (Dickens, _A Tale_
         78).

BLOCK QUOTATION: avoid these for short essays

WORKS CITED: a separate page listing all the works cited in an essay. It simplifies documentation because it permits you to make only brief references to those works in the test (parenthetical documentation). A "Works Cited" page differs from a "Bibliography" in that the latter includes sources researched but not actually cited in the paper. All the entries on a "Works Cited" page are double spaced.