

# *Literary Paragraph Assignment*

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## **Formative Writing Assessment**

# Analysis Paragraph Assignment

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**Overview:** A large portion of this course will be built around analyzing literary texts and justifying your interpretations through writing. In order to do this well, it is essential that every paper you write incorporates both claims about your reading (i.e. your interpretation/conclusions) and evidence from the text.

**For this assignment, you will write a paragraph in response to one of the prompts below:**

- In what ways does Lawrence use supernatural elements to convey the meaning of the work as a whole?
- Pick on symbol and analyze its function in the text. What does the use of that symbol add to the overall theme?
- How does Lawrence use the concept of “lucky” and “unlucky” characters to convey his message to his readers?

**Your paragraph should include:**

- **A topic sentence** at the beginning of your paragraph that includes the author’s name, the title of the work, and a claim that answers the prompt.
  - In **[author’s] [“Title of Story”]**, he/she **[rhetorically appropriate verb - asserts, demonstrates, etc.]** that **[big thematic idea]** by **[your response to the prompt above]**.
  - **Example:** In Flannery O’Conner’s “Good Country People,” she demonstrates the disconnect between seemingly close characters despite constant communication through characters’ constant repetition of meaningless clichés.
- **Evidence from the text:** Evidence should be smoothly embedded into your paragraph (preferably with in-text citations). Consider the following approaches to embedding quotes in your paper.
  - **Set off quotations with a comma:** From the very start of the text, Mrs. Hopewell speaks in clichés, stating, “Everybody is different” (180).
  - **Embed multiple quotations as part of a sentence:** Mrs. Hopewell constantly notes that “everybody is different” and “it takes all kinds to make the world” (180).
  - **Set off a quotation after a complete sentence using a colon:** Mrs. Hopewell’s conversation is littered with clichés with little meaning and the people around her have come to expect such: “The girl was used to this kind of dialogue for breakfast and more of it for dinner” (180).
- **Explanation of the evidence:** Explain your line of reasoning connecting the quote you chose to your claim. Try to avoid overused phrases such as “this shows” or “this reveals” and embed your analysis in the paragraph.
  - **Example:** Mrs. Hopewell uses such repetitive phrases automatically, with little regard to the matter at hand. Although she appears to be engaging in discussion, her responses are little more than mechanical. Rather than a mutual exchange of ideas, both Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell are stuck in a holding pattern where nothing of actual substance is exchanged.

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## Example Paragraph #1:

In Flannery O’Conner’s “Good Country People,” she demonstrates the disconnect between seemingly close characters despite constant communication through characters’ constant repetition of meaningless clichés. From the very start of the text, Mrs. Hopewell speaks in clichés, stating, “Nobody is perfect” (179), “Everybody is different” (180), and “It takes all kinds to make the world” (180). Mrs. Hopewell uses such repetitive phrases automatically, with little regard to the matter at hand. Although she appears to be engaging in discussion, her responses are little more than mechanical. Rather than a mutual exchange of ideas, both Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell are stuck in a holding pattern where nothing of actual substance is exchanged.

## Example Paragraph #2:

In Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Wilde demonstrates the superficial nature of Victorian uppercrust society through Lady Bracknell’s absurd response to Jack’s origin story. Although Jack meets almost all of the requirements she has listed for marrying her daughter, she is willing to reject Jack because he lacks a family name. She notes that his lack of family is a moral fault, displaying “a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution,” yet tells him he can fix it by “acquir[ing] some relations,” preferably as soon as possible as it is nearing the end of the social season. Inherent in her response is an emphasis on appearance over reality. It does not matter that any relation Jack might acquire would be an imposter; rather, what matters is the way he is perceived by outsiders.

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