AP Literature & Composition

Mrs. Mason

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Long Form Literary Analysis for: AP Literature & Comp Supplemental Reading

Directions: Complete the following Literary Analysis. Do your best. Be thorough. Look-up words you do not know in a dictionary of literary terms. And for goodness sake, do not seek the assurance of outside sources. I want to see what you can do. This is not an essay; therefore, label each section separately, but please use paragraphs within each section to organize your ideas. All work should be typed, double-spaced.

The Author and His Times: Born/died; biographical background important to understanding the novel; important family, community, national and world events that might have influenced author and novel. Make some connections between the author and his work. Cite the source of your information. (Your source must have an identified author; use MLA documentation.)

Form, Structure, and Plot: How is the novel organized? Length? Chapters? Discuss techniques such as flashbacks or dream sequences, stream of consciousness, chronological order of events, foreshadowing, parallel events, and subplots. How much time is covered?

Point of View: Is the novel written from the first person (I), second person (you), or third person (he/she)? Is it reminiscence or a recent perspective, written in the present tense or the past tense? If in the third person, is the narrator omniscient (all knowing), limited omniscient (aware of one character’s thoughts most of the time), or objective (no subjective commentary by the narrator, but limited omniscient)?

Characterization: Is the protagonist static or dynamic? Believable? Is he idealized? Is he a type or an individual? Is he a caricature? How is the character revealed? Directly? Indirectly? What are the forces internal and/or external, which motivate and shape the character’s actions and personality? Are these forces due to a clash of wills or ideas? Are they related to his neuroses and psychoses (internal conflicts over which the character has little or no control)? Select two minor characters and explore their purpose in the novel.

Setting: What is the basic setting of the story, and what atmosphere or mood radiates from it? Is the setting

important in establishing conflict or in making an impact on the people in the narrative? Is the setting symbolic? How so?

Diction: Analyze the author’s word choices. First discuss the work in general: is the language formal, informal, neutral? Explain and give an example. Does the author use much imagery? Metaphor? Irony? Is the language plain? Flowery? Concise? Strong? Does the diction indicate social status, education, region? How much dialogue is used? How different is the dialogue from the narrative voice? How distinct is the dialogue from character to character? Select two passages (approximately one-half page) reflecting two different plot segments. Copy them. Referring to the passages, discuss specific diction. Comment on how diction helps define character, set tone, or further theme.

Syntax (sentence structure): Analyze sentence and phrase patterns. Make some general observations: are the sentences predominantly simple or complex? Long or short? Level of formality? Any fragments? Is there much variety to the sentence pattern? Is there interesting punctuation? How does it affect tone? How does the author use syntax to create rhythm? Using one of the passages already copied to exemplify diction, focus on the author’s syntax choices. What effect is he creating?

Imagery: Identify words or phrases that appeal to the five senses (most commonly visual, but not always!). Look for recurrent images. What function does the imagery seem to serve? Use direct quotations from the text to support your observations.

Symbolism: Identify images used to suggest complex or multiple meanings. Is the novel highly symbolic? Allegorical? Point out images used as symbols. What function does the symbolism seem to serve? Use direct quotations from the text to support observations.

Figurative Language: Identify language that is not literal. Metaphorical devices link meaning; most common are metaphor, simile, personification, and allusion. Point out examples (direct quotes) and discuss how they are used.

Ironic Devices: Irony adds extra dimension to meaning. Most commonly used include verbal, situational, or dramatic irony, paradox, oxymoron, euphemism, hyperbole, and understatement. Point out examples and discuss how they are used.

Tone: Identify the speaker’s attitude toward the subject and characters. This could be playful, serious, angry, ironic, formal, somber, satiric, and combinations of many more. Discuss the tone and offer support in the way of direct quotes.

Theme: The theme refers to the book’s controlling idea or central insight, often a criticism of life. Identify the book’s central theme. Express as a statement with subject and predicate, not as a word or phrase (i.e. Wrong: “loyalty, or “loyalty to country”; Right: “Loyalty to country often inspires heroic self-sacrifice.”) Discuss the author’s intention. Does the title of the work mirror the theme or give significant clues about it?

Memorable Quotes: Copy three or four passages, sentences, or fragments that capture the essences of story and style. Discuss their significance.

Personal Response: Did you enjoy the novel? What were its strengths and weaknesses? What are your lingering questions? Does it put you in mind of any other books you have read? Did you gain any insights into human folly or triumph? Do you think you’ll remember this book ten years from now? Will it have any lasting effects on you?

As always, resist the urge to seek the comforting arms of Cliff, Spark and the like.