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# Critical Analysis in Humanities

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## 1. The assignment says... “write a critical analysis.” What’s that?

A critical analysis, both **explains and evaluates** its subject so that readers develop a new understanding or appreciation of it.

- It presents **your** own conclusions and argument.
- It uses details from the subject (whether texts, films, or works of art) to **demonstrate** its point.
- It assumes that **readers** are familiar with the work(s) under discussion.
- It focuses on key elements and/or themes and looks for recurring **patterns** in plots, characters, images, rather than plot summary.
- It can make **connections** between a work of art and its place in a greater cultural/historical/literary tradition.
- It looks at **complexities** and for **insights** that usually escape the casual viewer.

## 2. How do I organize an essay of critical analysis?

There is no one “recipe” for this kind of essay, but in writing you might try to...

- Place the work(s) in a **context**—of critical views, perhaps, or of similar works of time period or genre.
- Clearly announce your position and purpose at the end of the opening (usually as a **thesis** statement).
- Presents your analysis (see “what’s that” list above)
- Bring some other voices to bear, other critical views and insights
- Close by drawing some general conclusions.
- It may explain something about the subject that readers may not know.
- It may make comparisons and contrasts among examples as a way of understanding all of them better.
- It draws on other commentary and expert opinion to enrich its analysis.

## 3. What’s the purpose of a critical analysis?

- Unlike a plot summary, the critical analysis presents the writer’s own view;
- Unlike a review, the critical analysis seeks to deepen our understanding of something *we already know about*.
- Your purpose is to go beyond describing the “what” to discussing the *how* and *why*.

