

Introductory Paragraphs for Literary Analysis Essays

Any introductory paragraph to a literary analysis must include the following information:

1. The author's full name
2. The full title of the work of literature
3. A general opening statement at the beginning
4. The thesis statement and comment at the end

Once you've used the author's full name, refer to him or her by the last name only throughout the rest of the paper. Do not use the first name by itself or any titles (Ms., Mr., Dr., etc.).

Ex. Shakespeare presents . . .

Not Mr. Shakespeare presents . . .

Not William presents . . . (we are not on a first-name basis!)

EXAMPLES

- A. For over two thousand years, music has played a significant role in drama. Many people believe that early Greek tragedy actually evolved from music. Today, however, the modern playwright may use music in a number of different ways. In *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller uses music to accentuate the characters, enhance the mood, and punctuate the many shifts between reality and fantasy that occur throughout the play.
- B. Today's nuclear threat has caused much fear and speculation of total annihilation. Robert Frost, in "Fire and Ice," and Archibald MacLeish, in "The End of the World," address themselves to a horrifying subject—the physical destruction of the world. Although the poems present quite different visions of the end, both temper their terrifying visions with a tone of grim irony.
- C. Throughout the ages, mankind has attempted to fill what Pascal defines as the "God-shaped void" within each individual. In "Caliban upon Setebos," Robert Browning satirizes the Victorian dilemma over Darwinism as a means to account for God and all of creation. Through the character of Caliban, Browning presents the fallacies of attempting to discover God through anthropology and the utter hopelessness and degradation of mankind when it accepts Darwin's theories of evolution.
- D. The acceptance of responsibility is an important step toward maturity and adulthood. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Samuel Langhorn Clemens presents Huck's initiation into adulthood through his acceptance of responsibility for himself and for others. Clemens presents this maturation as a three-fold process: Huck's separation from society as a reckless, immature youth; his transformation as he accepts responsibility; and his return to society as a spiritually mature individual.
- E. By the time a reader has finished only a few chapters of *My Antonia*, he or she becomes captivated with the anticipation of each new season. The reader becomes acutely aware of the promises and tragedies associated with each new season that foreshadow events to come. In *My Antonia* Willa Cather uses the season of the year as symbols of life's tragedies and rewards.