

Lenses for Literary Analysis

Reading Analysis Exam studies any number of literary elements/text features/writing strategies, showing how they support a central theme of a text.

- *What is the universal message or idea that the author is trying to convey to the reader?*
- *What specific things does the author do to best convey the central theme?*

Synthesis Argument Essay compares and evaluates how different authors develop an argument.

- *Which author develops the strongest argument? Why?*
- *How do the authors develop their arguments?*
- *What is your opinion or claim based on the evidence from your reading?*

Argument Essay compares claims about a controversial topic or issue that impacts society to determine what rhetorical devices/writing strategies help create the strongest argument.

- *What important topics do we argue a lot about today?*
- *What are the many different opinions out there?*
- *How does the author try to strengthen their opinion? Which strategy is most successful?*

Thematic Essay explores any number of central themes in a text.

- *What are the universal messages or ideas that the author is trying to convey to the reader?*
- *How do these themes develop from the beginning to the end of the text?*
- *How do these themes connect to each other?*

Character Analysis Essay explores any number of characters and how they develop through a text and how they impact the central theme of a text.

- *What is the role of a character(s) in the story?*
- *What do you think, how do you feel, what are you curious about, and what inferences can you make from characters' traits and their different relationships?*
- *What are the conflicts driving the story?*

Sociological/Historical criticism examines the cultural, economic, or political values of a text or the social context in which it is written, explicitly or implicitly.

- *What does this text convey about how people are living in the world at the time it was published?*
- *Are people struggling with money, employment and taking care of themselves and one another at this time?*
- *What are people's political beliefs at this time?*

Reader-response criticism explores the impact of a particular text on the reader's own ideas or values.

- *What connections can I make to the characters or themes in this text?*
- *What is it about my religious, cultural, or social values that make me feel a certain way about this text?*

Gender criticism analyzes how the text might reflect or reject the roles of men and women in society.

- *How does an author's gender or sexual identity affect the writing of the text?*
- *How do readers' gender or sexual identity impact how they feel when reading the text?*

Biographical criticism studies how understanding an author's life can help readers better understand the text.

- *How are the author's personal life experiences communicated through the text?*

New Historicism looks at the impact of the politics, ideologies, and social customs of the author's world on the themes, images, and characterizations of a text. This type of critic considers the historical events or conditions during which the work was written.

- *What was going on in the world and how did it impact this text when it was written?*

Psychoanalytic criticism views the themes, conflicts, and characterizations of a work primarily as a reflection of the needs, emotions, states of mind, or subconscious desires of the author.

- *How is the author's mental and emotional state communicated through the text?*

Book Review judges or evaluates a text based on its content, organization, central themes, and/or impact on the reader.

- *Should/should you not read this text?*
- *What are the many different reasons why I would/would not recommend this book to a particular audience?*
- *How did the book make you feel? What did the author do to make you feel that way?*

English Exam Prompts

Old Regents: Critical Lens Essay

Your Task: Write a critical essay in which you discuss two works of literature you have read from the particular perspective of the statement that is provided for you in the "critical lens". In your essay, provide a valid interpretation of the statement, agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it, and support your opinion using specific references to appropriate literary elements from the two works. You may use scrap paper to plan your response.

Critical Lense Quotes (PICK ONE):

- “We could never learn to be brave and patient if there were only joy in the world” (Helen Keller)
- “To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else” (Bernadette Devlin);
- “It is not what an author says, but what he or she whispers, that is important” (Logan Pearsall Smith);
- “What lasts is what is written. We look to literature to find the essence of an age” (Peter Brodie);
- “Good people are good because they've come to wisdom through failure” (William Saroyan);
- “All literature is protest. You can't name a single literary work that isn't protest” (Richard Wright);
- “The bravest of individuals is the one who obeys his or her conscience” (J. F. Clarke);
- “We do not read novels for improvement or instruction” (Oliver Wendell Holmes);
- “In a dark time, the eye begins to see” (Theodore Roethke);
- “A person is a person through other persons” (Archbishop Desmond Tutu);
- The right good book is always a book of travel; it is about a life's journey” (H.M. Tomlinson).

Common Core Regents: Argument

<http://www.nysesdregents.org/hsela/>

Common Core Regents: Text-Analysis Response

<http://www.nysesdregents.org/hsela/>

AP Literature and Composition Exam:

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-english-literature-public-practice-exam-2012.pdf?course=ap-english-literature-and-composition>