

tips FOR WRITING AN ANALYSIS

WRITING THE OPENING Your opening paragraph should gain your readers' attention and identify the focus of your analysis. Use the suggestions listed below to help you get started on your opening.

1. **Summarize your subject very briefly.** Include the title, author, and the type of book (or other literary form). This can be done with a what-and-how statement.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is one of the most well-known novels of the Romantic era. The story is one that has seeped into the popular imagination . . .

2. **Start with a quotation from the book** and then comment upon its importance (think in terms of the focus of your analysis).
3. **Begin with an explanation of the author's purpose** and how well you think he or she achieves this purpose.
4. **Open with a few general statements** about life that relate to the focus of your analysis.

Chaos often rules on the fringes of society. . . .

5. **Begin with a general statement** about the type of literature you are analyzing. Then discuss your subject within this context.

The best science fiction always seems believable and logical within the context of the story line. This certainly is true in . . .

WRITING THE BODY Develop or support your focus in the body, or main part, of the analysis. To make sure that you effectively explain each main point in your analysis, follow these three steps:

1. **State each main point** so that it clearly relates to the focus of your analysis.
2. **Support each main point** with specific details or direct quotations from the text you are analyzing.
3. **Explain how each of these specific details** helps prove your point.

Special Note: Try to organize your writing so that each new paragraph deals with a separate main point.

4. **Use present tense.** When you refer to characters or events in the work, cast their actions in the present tense. Here are examples from Potter's essay:

Hencherd **is** not idly swept aside.

. . . the people in these pages **are** not paper boats on the tide . . .

5. **Keep your tone consistent.** Adopt and stay with a formal and serious tone. Generally, contractions, sentence fragments, and slang do not belong in literary analysis. You can, however, use images of your own; notice, for example, Potter's comment about the book, "I envy anyone who is reading *The Mayor of Casterbridge* for the first time."

WRITING THE CLOSING In the last paragraph, tie all of the important points together and make a final statement about the main focus of your analysis. (Give your readers something to think about long after they've put your analysis down.)

Writing Hint

To quote from literature:

- Make sure that you copy word for word with exact punctuation.
- Set off as a block any quotations longer than three lines; do not enclose the block in quotation marks.
- Use ellipsis points (. . .) to indicate that you've made a deletion from a passage.

See Chapter 14 for details about quotation marks and ellipsis points.