

College / Academic Review Samples (3 Examples)

1. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison – Review Through a Postmemory & Psychoanalytic Framework

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* occupies a central place in contemporary African American literary scholarship for its intricate exploration of trauma, memory transmission, and the metaphysics of historical haunting. Applying Marianne Hirsch's concept of *postmemory*, the novel emerges as a study of how the afterlives of slavery infiltrate subjectivity across generations. Denver's evolving consciousness, for instance, reflects inherited trauma not primarily through direct experience but through the "imaginative investment" and affective residues of Sethe's past.

From a psychoanalytic standpoint, the character Beloved functions as a disruptive return of the repressed—a corporeal manifestation of collective trauma that destabilizes the fragile psychic equilibrium of 124 Bluestone Road. Morrison's nonlinear narrative architecture mimics the fragmentation characteristic of traumatic recall, while her use of polyvocal monologues aligns with contemporary trauma theory's rejection of unified narrative coherence.

While the novel has sometimes been critiqued for bordering on the fantastical, such critiques overlook Morrison's deliberate deployment of magical realism as an epistemological strategy—a way of articulating histories that resist empirical narration. Thus, *Beloved* does not merely represent trauma; it interrogates the frameworks through which trauma can be known and communicated, sustaining its relevance in scholarly debates on memory, embodiment, and cultural inheritance.

2. *1984* by George Orwell – Review Through Political Theory & Discourse Analysis

George Orwell's *1984* has long been foundational in political theory discourse for its critique of totalitarian epistemology and linguistic hegemony. From the standpoint of Michel Foucault's theories of power/knowledge, Oceania can be read as a hyperbolic extension of disciplinary society wherein surveillance, ideological saturation, and discursive control converge to produce compliant subjects. Newspeak, in particular, exemplifies the political manipulation of semiotic structures; by systematically eliminating lexical nuance, the regime restricts not only expression but the cognitive possibilities available to its citizens.

Contemporary rhetorical scholars often interpret Winston's resistance as a form of counter-discourse, though his failure complicates celebratory narratives of individual agency. Orwell anticipates modern concerns about digital surveillance and algorithmic governance, suggesting that the erosion of privacy leads not merely to behavioral conformity but to ontological instability.

Yet critics have noted that the novel's gender politics remain underdeveloped, particularly in its portrayal of Julia as a catalyst rather than a fully realized ideological actor. This limitation does not diminish the novel's political insight but invites ongoing discourse about the intersection of authoritarianism, embodiment, and social identity. *1984* thus persists in academic conversations as both a warning and a theoretical test case for analyzing power in contemporary sociopolitical systems.

3. *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley – Review Through Bioethics, Romanticism & Science Studies

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* occupies a pivotal position within the interdisciplinary nexus of literature, science studies, and bioethics. The novel's exploration of creation and responsibility resonates with modern debates on biotechnological intervention, particularly in relation to synthetic biology and artificial intelligence. Victor Frankenstein's transgressive scientific ambition exemplifies the Romantic critique of Enlightenment rationalism, revealing the ethical consequences of knowledge unmitigated by moral accountability.

Through a science-studies lens, the Creature can be understood as a product of sociotechnical assemblage rather than mere monstrous aberration. His consciousness develops through environmental conditioning, reflecting theories of social constructivism that foreground the relational nature of identity formation. The novel's epistolary structure serves as a meta-commentary on the circulation of scientific knowledge, anticipating the peer-review mechanisms and moral debates that shape modern scientific communities.

Recent ecocritical scholarship has repositioned *Frankenstein* as a proto-environmental narrative, suggesting that Victor's disregard for natural limits parallels contemporary anxieties surrounding anthropogenic disruption. While some critics argue that Shelley's scientific representation lacks technical precision, this critique misses the text's speculative intention—its aim is not scientific accuracy but philosophical inquiry. Consequently, *Frankenstein* continues to operate as a versatile theoretical artifact within academic discussions about technological innovation, ethical governance, and the human desire to transcend natural boundaries.