

Literary Analysis Outline Checklist

Introduction Section

Hook engages reader and connects to thesis

Background provides necessary context (author, title, brief relevant info)

Thesis statement is: - Clear and specific - Arguable (not just plot summary or obvious fact) - Focused on literary analysis - Answers “so what?” about the text

Thesis **previews main points** or overall argument structure

Body Paragraphs

Each paragraph has one clear main idea

Topic sentences directly support thesis

Evidence from text includes: - Specific quotes or references - Page/line numbers for citations - Multiple examples (aim for 2-3 per paragraph)

Analysis outweighs summary - Explains *how* evidence supports claim - Discusses literary techniques/devices - Interprets meaning and significance

Transitions connect: - Between paragraphs - Between ideas within paragraphs - Evidence to analysis

Paragraphs follow logical order: - Chronological, thematic, or importance-based - Builds toward strongest point

Evidence Quality

Quotes are **relevant and purposeful** (not filler)

Evidence is **balanced** throughout essay

Variety of evidence types: - Dialogue - Description - Narrative moments - Symbolism/imagery

Quotes are **integrated smoothly** (not dropped in)

No over-reliance on single scene or chapter

Analysis Depth

Goes beyond surface meaning

Addresses “**how**” and “**why**” questions: - How does author achieve effect? - Why is this significant?

Discusses **literary techniques**: - Imagery, symbolism, metaphor - Diction, syntax, tone - Structure, narrative perspective - Characterization, dialogue

Connects details to **broader themes**

Shows **original thinking** (not just obvious observations)

Argument Strength

Thesis is debatable (someone could disagree)

Claims are supported with sufficient evidence

Counterarguments or complexity addressed where relevant

Logic flows clearly from point to point

Avoids plot summary in favor of analysis

Stays focused on thesis throughout

Conclusion Section

Restates thesis in fresh way (not copy-paste)

Synthesizes main points without mere repetition

Addresses significance: - Broader implications - Author’s purpose - Universal themes - Relevance

Leaves reader with insight (memorable closing)

No new evidence introduced

Technical Elements

Present tense used when discussing literature

Formal academic tone maintained

Consistent citation format planned (MLA, APA, etc.)

Paragraph balance (roughly similar lengths)

3-5 body paragraphs planned (adjust for assignment length)

Final Review Questions

- Does every paragraph support my thesis?
- Have I said something meaningful about the text?
- Is my argument clear to someone unfamiliar with my thinking?
- Can I defend every claim I've made?
- Have I avoided obvious or simplistic interpretations?
- Does my outline show progression of ideas?

Common Problems to Fix

Thesis too vague: "Shakespeare uses many symbols in *Hamlet*" **Revised:** "Through recurring imagery of disease and decay, Shakespeare depicts corruption's spread through Denmark's political and moral order"

Plot summary paragraph: Retelling what happens **Analysis paragraph:** Explaining what it means and how author creates meaning

Missing connections: Evidence without explanation **Clear links:** Evidence → Analysis → Thesis connection

Weak conclusion: "In conclusion, as I have shown..." **Strong conclusion:** Insight about text's larger significance

Ready to Draft?

If you've checked most boxes, your outline is solid. If multiple items are missing, strengthen your outline before writing. A complete outline makes drafting significantly easier and produces stronger essays.