

I'm not a bot



Butteaching 12-14 year-olds the art of literary analysis seems like a battle you'll never win.You struggled withhow to plan a literary analysis unit.You'renot sure how to scaffoldand break it down for student success.You're tired of readingsurface-level analysis.You want to have conferences with students,but what do you do with the rest of the class? Writing and essay "formulas" that are supposed to help students produce a solid essay.Every trick, prompt, and strategy in the book to get your students to dig deeper into analysis.Wearing yourself ragged trying to get your students to be independent writers. What if having a solid instructional framework for teaching literary analysis could be simple and easy? With this middle school ELA literary analysis writing unit, you'll have everything you need to: Learn how to plan and implement a complete literary analysis unitwithin the prefect class period structure.You'll get solidstrategies and frameworks for scaffolding and differentiating your instruction.We wantall students to be successful andincrease their writingindependence. We'll dive into specific prompts, scaffolds, and strategies to teach your students todig deeper into their analysis.Each lesson builds on the previous lesson so students increase their analytical writing skills daily. Students write multiple reading responses before they write essays and will use the skills, lessons, and past work to really dig deep into the texts in front of them. The scaffolded instruction in the units starts with students writing flash draft reading responses to help students build up their independence and writing competency. Those flash drafts build in difficulty so you can assess and conference to adjust instruction and support your students in real-time (we give suggestions for each lesson based on common student struggles).These strategies and scaffolds willimprove student writing and decrease your grading. I teach in a very small district. I am the only ELA teacher for 6-8 grade.I found some of Martina's resources and they made life so much easier being scaffolded for all 3 grades! After finding these resources, I knew I wanted more. The resources arethe perfect opportunity to support the resources I already had. The more resources I downloaded, the more I realizedI could raise the rigor for students. I have raisedthe level of my students' ability to analyze a variety of texts. The resources scaffold perfectly while challenging students to raise their level of work on every step.It is amazing. I love that Martina engages in a positive manner to all feedback!MORGAN PHELPS I wantedto ease my planning/give me peace and reinvigorate my lessons. I'd say the BIG WIN for me was I ended up with way more time!The way I used to teach my classes caused a LOT of grading for me-- A LOT!! I entered this thinking the first year of using these resources would be a lot of work, but if I kept it up it would be less next year. Well, low and behold! I have more free time! I still have grading, but it is not tons of comprehension questions, short answer questions and THEN essay questions for each chapter/assignment so it takes me LESS time to grade!Also, my kiddos are not overwhelmed and put more effort into the 'smaller' assignments! Win-win!Proof it is working: I had to be gone for two weeks after Thanksgiving. It was easier to leave the 'old way' with the sub and students. BIG MISTAKE! They hated!!!! And, I came back to HOURS and HOURS of grading! Worst of all--no effort was seen in most essay-type questions! Never again! VAL JONES LET'S TAKE A LOOK INSIDE OF The Complete Literary Analysis Writing Unit A Scaffolded and Differentiated Writing Unit Everything you need from start to finishwith an effective literary analysis unit that gives you desired results.A complete unit plan. Includes pacing, content, step-by-step teacher instructions, and solid class period structures.Strategies and frameworks for scaffolding and differentiating your instruction so all students are successful and increase their writing independence. Specific strategies to teach your students to dig deeper into their analysis. This isn't scaffolding, pacing, and content, but thoughtfully designed to ensure you and your students both feel supported and to consistently increase students' independence.A complete overview pingscope and sequence for teachers.A weekly and daily pacing guide with materials so teachers can prep with one quick glance. 50+ Response and Essay Examples As a middle school ELA teacher, I always found myself saying,"I wish I just had an example to look at and to show my students."You will not be saying that to yourself. We've included:Threedifferentiated reading responsesfor the first ten lessons.Three differentiated essays, outlines, and planning pagesfor the essay portion of the unit.All examples have images on teacher slides with a breakdownof what the responses accomplish so students can learn from the examples. Editable and Digital Rubrics and Checklists Like all resources in this unit, the rubrics are differentiated for sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade ELA for teachers who teach multiple grade levels.100% editable rubrics to adjust based on your students or district requirements.Digital version of rubrics included to make for even quicker assessments.Conference forms and checklists to formatively and assess in real-time. WE'RE NOT STOPPING THERE... The brand new slide decks have been created to help you teach all the elements of literary analysis and show students examples of quality literary analysis responses and essays.Simply display and teach while your students learn and immediately apply each new element to their writing. After you teach each literary analysis element with your teaching slide decks, students have matching pages and booklets to reference.No more, "I don't remember what you taught us." Simply have students look at their notes, reference materials, and booklets. If you're like most ELA teachers, you probably have 100+ students writing essays... which means you have 100+ essays to grade.This bonus workshop will teach you how to grade and assess in class so you learn strategies to stop bringing grading home. I don't want price to be a factor between you seeing success and not seeing success in your middle school ELA students' next literary analysis unit.Which is why I'm basically giving away over \$200 of value. For a limited time, you can get instant access to everything for only \$256/\$25! SAY NO MORE! I'M IN! 24 Differentiated + ScaffoldedLesson Plans (Valued at \$37)Editable, digital, and differentiated rubrics for 6th, 7th, and 8th (Valued at \$1740+ examples of differentiatedreading responses(Valued at \$47)Threedifferentiated literary analysis essay examples(Valued at \$27) Writing Assessment and Grading Workshop (Valued at \$67)Teacher digital and print slide decks for each lesson(Valued at \$27)Editable and differentiatedwriting conference forms + standards checklists(Valued at \$17)Printable and digital literary analysis student reference pages(Valued at \$17) If you're not 100% satisfied with this unit after downloading it, contact us within 7 days of purchase, and we will gladly refund every penny you paid for it. WORRIED THIS WON'T WORK FOR YOU? I love hearing you explain what I need to do to utilize the materials fully!I have been contemplating joining The Hungry Teachers hub membership for MONTHS, but it wasn't until after I took the Mentor Sentence training that I actually joined. I love the workshops!Before investing in the membership, I was concerned about whether or not there would be materials at my students' levels (they are LOW for 6th graders).Your teaching style and the fact that you want to make it usable for sixth graders stand out about your membership. I also wasn't sure if the materials would be confusing to me or if the materials would take too much time for me to implement, but everything is explained and easy to use.I'm eager to do the short story units and implement Socratic Seminar. Keep giving the PD!!!! I know they're self-explanatory, but hearing you explain how you used the resources and systems has been so helpful. I would recommend to others watch any of the PD workshops first, then jump in!! belong to another membership that I am going to cancel because it is too difficult for my kids, and there is a treacherous amount of reading for each activity. The support I received when I could not use my monthly credits due to a health issue validated my belief that this community is teacher-centered.I have loved being part of this community for the past two years! The support I received when I could not use my monthly credits due to a health issue validated my belief that this community is teacher-centered.I was thankful to have not lost what I'd paid for.I have told my teammates about The Hungry Teachers Hub!! I brag about my class interactive notebooks for language arts and novel studies. I teach a resource English class and was given no curriculum. The Hub has helped me in so many ways!!!! I literally had no guidance as to what I was doing with my students. My favorite part of the membership is receiving two credits a month.It helps teachers build their library of resources so much faster without hurting the bank.Also, I LOVE the workshops! I did the grammar workshop and loved it. I wish you had the same resources for math!Everything in The Hub is so well written.The value of what I pay each month is definitely worth it! I already recommended you to another teacher because shes in the same boat I am.I told her there are standards, lesson plans, and so many things in the unit!Compared to other memberships, the resources and format of it all stand out.Im so excited to get started back at school tomorrow!!! During my first year of teaching middle school ELA, I was overwhelmed with only 55 minutes to teach writing, reading, and grammar.And, after being a self-contained elementary teacher, I was overwhelmed with list of WHAT writing I was supposed to teach but..... I didn't know HOW to teach my middle schoolers to write.Their seemed to be a lot of assumptions about the writing my students could do and that I was supposed to assign.But I quickly realized that my middle schoolers needed scaffolded writing instruction that broke down precisely the what AND THE HOW.I broke down my literary analysis requirements and weaved them into my students' reading responses during our reading units.They started to be able to write a literary analysis response pretty quickly.I could build on that in our writing unit and started to slowly scaffold and increase the difficulty of their writing.In turn, students increased their ability to dig deeper into their analysis.They started to analyze more difficult concepts, multiple literacy devices, and eventually comparative analysis responses.And it worked.My middle schoolers wh my writing units and instructional frameworks and strategies, they increased their writing proficiency scores from 20% proficiency to 80% proficiency in just two years.Now, I've taken everything I've learned and created and packaged it up into a differentiated and scaffolded middle school ELA literary analysis writing unit. THIS UNIT IS PERFECT FOR YOU IF... You want a literary analysis unit plan that teaches students to dig deeper into their analysis andYou want a literary analysis unit plan that fosters students' writing independence.You teach multiple grades or students that need lots of differentiation in your writing instruction. THIS COURSE IS NOT FOR YOU IF... Youhave a solid literary analysis unit plan that teaches students to dig deeper into their analysis!Youhave a solid literary analysis unit plan that fosters student independence.You students' writing volume and proficiency consistently increase from your instruction. Grab The Literary Analysis Writing Unit while it lasts! This deal won't last forever, and you'll want to grab it before I realize how crazy I am for giving all of this away for such a low price.Once you click the button, you'll be brought to a checkout page where you'll fill in your details for purchase.Once your payment is processed, you'll immediately be granted access to everything inside oftheLiterary Analysis Writing Unit,as well as email information about each live session. Forever! You will have access immediately and for the lifetime of the products. The resources will show you exactly how to implement an effective literary analysis writing unit in your classroom and the resources will give you everything you need to get started.The daily mini-lesson take 10-20 minutes each day and the units is about 4-5 weeks long. My writing units are designed with 6th-8th grade students and teachers in mind. However, high school teachers have used these units as well.Fifth-grade teachers have also used both my curriculum and this approach, but fifth-grade teachers will have to make adaptations if they want to use any of my done-for-youexamples and lessons. 24 Differentiated + ScaffoldedLesson Plans(Valued at \$37)Editable, digital, and differentiated rubrics for 6th, 7th, and 8th(Valued at \$1740+ examples of differentiatedreading responses(Valued at \$47)Threedifferentiated literary analysis essay examples(Valued at \$27) Writing Assessment and Grading Workshop(Valued at \$67)Teacher digital and printslide decks for each lesson(Valued at \$27)Editable and differentiatedwriting conference forms + standards checklists(Valued at \$17)Printable and digital literary analysis student reference pages(Valued at \$17) Have you ever looked at a students paper and wondered where it all went wrong?Me too.Unfortunately, the reality is that our middle school students may not understand literary analysis the first time we explain it to them, and if we wait until they've finished their entire analysis, we may not know where the disconnect happened.Instead, I give my students one small section of their literary analysis at a time.For example, when my students write their first literary analysis essay, I assign JUST the thesis statement first.Then I assign JUST the topic sentences.Then they write JUST the reasoning.And after each step of this literary analysis, I provide feedback so the kids know what to fix before they move on and the whole analysis goes up in flames.By the time my students are finding their text evidence, they are hopefully on the right track. At least I can sleep at night knowing I did what I could to get them there.5. Give your students something to look forward to.Lets face it. Even when we make it fun and as simple as possible, literary analysis is still a lot of work. That's not a bad thing. Good things take work. That's just reality!Still, it helps if our students have something to look forward to as they are combing through their book pages, looking for the perfect text evidence.When my students invented sandwiches for their book characters, I let them actually make their sandwiches and bring them to class for everyone to taste. It was a big hit!Middle and high school English students gain confidence as they write a literary analysis essay in this short, supportive writing classdeveloping critical thinking about literature with teacher feedback every step of the way.Number of reviews:3 hrs 20 mins in-class hours1 hour per week. Each week, assignments will guide students through the steps of writing their literary analysis essay. Homework will focus on the specific topic covered that week, helping students build their essay section by section.Students and parents can choose to receive a formal letter grade for the course and essay, or opt for detailed feedback without a grade.In this engaging, interactive class, students will explore Sharon Olds's poem "Ode to Dirt" and then use that poem another literary text of their choiceas they develop the skills to write a complete literary analysis essay. This step-by-step course walks students through analyzing theme, tone, and literary devices, organizing their ideas, and crafting thoughtful, well-supported written responses.Each week walks students through a specific step in the literary analysis essay processstarting with close reading and outlining, and moving through drafting, using text evidence effectively, revising, and editing. Although the essay is completed outside of class, students receive clear instruction, structured guidance, and teacher feedback every step of the way. Weekly handouts and assignments reinforce each lesson, helping students build confidence and develop strong writing skills.This class is perfect as a standalone enrichment course or as extra support for students writing literary analysis essays for other classes. For detailed information on the weekly structure, please see the syllabus section below.

What Students Will Learn: How to analyze themes, tone, and literary devices How to find and explain strong text evidence How to organize and structure a literary analysis essay How to write quality body paragraphs, introductions, and conclusions How to revise and edit their work for clarity and flow

Is This Class a Good Fit? This course is ideal for upper middle school and high school students who have some experience with essay writing. Students should be familiar with basic essay structure and the writing process.If your student is still building foundational essay writing skills, feel free to reach out!I'm happy to recommend another class that will be a better starting point.

Questions? If you have questions about the class or whether its the right level for your learner, please feel free to contact me through Outreach messages. I'm happy to help!Students will learn how to move from simply reading a text to thinking critically about what it means and why it mattersstarting with close reading and theme discovery.

Students will learn how to choose meaningful evidence from a literary text and explain how it connects to a deeper themebuilding the foundation for real analysis.Show all 6 learning goalsFollows Teacher-Created CurriculumAligned with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Students will explore a contemporary poem through guided annotation and discussion. They'll learn how to identify theme and literary elements, then choose a text and complete an essay outline with a working thesis and important paragraph details. Students will submit the thesis and outline for teacher feedback. Students will learn how to write focused body paragraphs using text evidence. In class, they'll practice analysis skills. At home, they'll draft at least two body paragraphs, focusing on clarity, structure, and quote integration. This week focuses on strong openings and endings. Students will learn how to hook the reader, what background information to include, and craft meaningful conclusions. Outside of class, they'll complete the rough draft and submit it for teacher feedback. Students will walk through revising and editing strategies for clarity and flow. At home, they'll revise and polish their essay and submit their final draft. This class is designed to support a variety of learning needs with scaffolded and adaptable assignments. Dyslexic, ADHD, and Autistic learners have had great success in this class. Please reach out if you have specific questions.Students will be most successful with a basic understanding of essay writing before taking this class. Students do not need any experience with literary analysis.All required materials needed will be supplied by the teacher. Students will need access to a computer to be able to type their essays.Learners will not need to use any apps or websites beyond the standard Outreach tools.No outside resources are required unless students choose to write about a text other than "Ode to Dirt." In that case, they will need access to the text they wish to write about.I have a Bachelor of Arts in English, and I'm a Professional Teaching Certificate holder in Florida to teach English in grades 6-12. For the past several years I have taught small group classes on essay writing, including how to write literary analysis essays. We want our students to become critical thinkers who read, examine, and write about the significance of whatever text they come across throughout their lives. But how do we do that? Literary Analysis is not an easy topic, usually because most of us don't take classes about it or see very many literary analysis examples. We do, however, read and examine texts all of the time! We break down, analyze, and discuss what we watch, read, or listen to every day, and so do our students. Because we do this, we can teach our students the same process but for literature in our classrooms. We can use literary analysis examples to model what we want in 5 No Sweat Steps! Need help with Test Prep? Check out thisFREE Pack of 3 Test Prep Activistio to help students achieve success on standardized tests! What do you want your students to be able to do? Well, it depends on the students. When it comes to elementary students, you can start with a focus on theme. Say we read The Ugly Duckling or The Little Mermaid. We can focus on having students write a paragraph on how characterization leads to theme. In any fairy tale or fable, there is always a message. It makes the literary analysis quite simple then. Your short response directions that contain literary analysis examples can include the following: How does The Ugly Duckling change? How does this change contribute to the theme in the story? IDEAS FOR A FINAL PRODUCT ELEMENTARY: Students can write a paragraph for a Short Response. Your goal is to simply introduce what it means to think deeply about a text. Start with a fairy tale or fable, so the students have an easier time discussing the message of the story. MIDDLE SCHOOL: Students can write 2 paragraphs with a focus on a theme using an example for each paragraph. It can be based on a poem or short story! HIGH SCHOOL: Students can write a full-blown essay, but you can have it focused on 4 paragraphs, 5 paragraphs, or a 5-page essay! It is up to you! You can even differentiate depending on what your students need! Read here for activity ideas >>> The Tell-Tale Heart Edgar Allan Poe At His Best! You can focus on whatever you want for literary analysis! If you want to differentiate, you can have groups of students choose their own topic, or you can assign a focus to students. You will, however, have to define one and then explain what the focus is before moving on. If you want to analyze conflict, explain the 4 types (man vs. man, man vs. society, man vs. nature, and man vs. self) and the 2 types (internal and external) first. Here are some ideas for literary analysis: Plot: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution Literary Devices: similes, metaphors, allusions, hyperbole, etc. Characterization: traits or development Setting: beginning, middle, end Conflict: types of conflict (4), external/internal conflict Literary Criticism: gender, feminism, critical race theory, etc. You will have to model what you want as you read by using literary analysis examples. For instance, if you are reading The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe, you can focus on analyzing characterization. Read through the first part of the story and have students identify traits of the protagonist. 1. Underline the evidence. 2. Think aloud about it. 3. Annotate for meaning. What is he saying or doing? Then, explain by doing your own analysis. Answer this question: What does this MEAN? HERE IS A LITERARY ANALYSIS EXAMPLE In The Tell-Tale Heart, Edgar Allan Poe uses characterization to develop the main character into a complete maniac in order to reveal that anyone can become insane if driven by the right motivation. At the start of the story, the speaker is clearly anxious about his circumstances as well as crazy, even though he claims he is not. He states, True! nervous very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The characterization of the speaker as both anxious and crazy highlights the message that some people dont realize who they really are in certain situations. As he repeats these words, he further reveals his extreme condition as he tells the story. Through this repetitive language, he emphasizes that people who think that they have specific traits may actually have opposite characteristics. Click to read about TEACHING WITH MOVIES IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL! Students need help with organization. Dont we all though? I encourage you to use a simple graphic organizer to help in this process. Have students go back to their own annotations for help. The graphic organizer should include the following: The Literary Analysis Focus, The Evidence, and The Meaning/Message/Theme Connection. Be sure to use literary analysis examples before beginning. Providing 1 or 2 examples will help students go a long way! Now that students have their organizer with their literary analysis examples already written, they can accomplish whatever you want. (Be sure to look at literary analysis examples before you start having them write their own. You can use examples you have created or examples from different sources.) If you want them to write a short response, provide a sentence-by-sentence outline. Or if you want them to write 2 paragraphs for their literary analysis examples, help them with breaking down the paragraphs into smaller parts. Additionally, if you want them to write an essay, provide an outline that will help them to develop their ideas as they go along. If students dont have a basic template, they may not know what to write. I suggest starting with an introduction, 2 body paragraphs, and a conclusion for a beginner literary analysis. Click below for help with teaching The Tell-Tale Heart through literary analysis examples! Dont shy away from teaching literary analysis! Students need the exposure and the practice to think deeply about the meaning and message of anything they come into contact with. Through this step by step process and several literary analysis examples, all students can become literary connoisseurs! Need more ideas for English Lesson Plans for Teachers? Check out my storeKristin Menke-Integrated ELA Test Prep! Teaching middle school students how to write high-quality literary analysis can be a huge challenge. As I'm sure you've found, oftentimes, students literary analysis barely scratches the surface and sounds more like a summary than an analysis. While it can be tough to get students to go deep and move beyond the surface, I promise you its not impossible. Lets talk about how to deepen students literary analysis essays and how to encourage deeper thinking.In a literary analysis essay, students analyze a piece of literature and interpret elements of the text with evidence to support their point of view. Sounds easy, right? (Thats definitely sarcasm.) I think we can both agree that literary analysis is really important because it requires students to develop critical thinking and go beyond the surface. But we can also see why this would be challenging for middle schoolers. Around the age of 12, kids begin to move away from concrete thinking and form more complex thinking skills. So biologically, this is a new skill set for them, and its going to take time and practice. Lets chat about how to make it possible.#1 Show Examples and Model the ProcessTime and time again, I found that modeling analysis always improved students writing (even if it was little by little). Its hard for students to write something if they dont know what it sounds like or looks like. I recommend varying the types of examples you use and creating them in real-time as often as possible.Modeling the process in real time lets you think aloud and show your students how it looks to go through the analysis process. Good news: you dont have to be perfect. When students see you struggle a bit, they also see how to push through those challenging moments.#2 Get Specific with Your PromptsThe more specific a literary analysis essay prompt is, the easier it will be for students to analyze in the beginning. Really broad, open-ended questions are going to feel hard for students new to analysis because they are trying to look at all the things. Instead, get specific.For example, ask students to imagine themselves as the author. Ask them what decisions they wouldve made differently. You can also ask them how they think those choices would have impacted the story. Or, ask students to explore the relationship between characters in the text. Ask them to analyze how those relationships affect the plot. Ask them how they have an impact on the theme of the text.#3 Promote DiscussionAllow students to discuss their ideas with their classmates. Whether thats an assigned partner or a group discussion. Students can use these discussions to brainstorm new ideas, and it can also help students who are struggling to hear from their friends. Sometimes hearing it from someone their age helps the information click.When we build a community of students willing to collaborate, they can even give each other constructive feedback which can then help students refine their analyses. I always loved listening to students give each other thoughtful and constructive feedback. It showed that they understood the basics of literary analysis and that they knew how to work together to make something better.#4 Scaffold the Writing ProcessWith any new skill, scaffolding is critical. I followed the same theory when teaching literary analysis, and I broke down how to write a literary analysis essay into small bite-sized pieces. One of the best ways to scaffold is by again, using really specific prompts!For example, can you provide more specific examples or evidence from the text to support your analysis? How do these examples enhance your argument? What are some possible counterarguments or alternative interpretations of your analysis? The goal is to focus on analysis but in a really targeted way. I wont pretend that teaching middle school students to go deeper in their literary analysis essays isnt difficult. However, you can help students get there! For a layered skill like this one, I always value progress over perfection. Students may go from writing a general summary to adding some simple analysis and that is progress! As you go through the year, continue modeling, providing specific prompts, promoting discussion, and scaffolding and youll see your students abilities progress in amazing ways. Teaching writing is hard. Teaching literary analysis is hard. Teaching our students how to write a literary analysis essay? Do we have to??? What makes the process of teaching the literary analysis essay feel like such an insurmountable challenge is that its really three skills in one. Students have to read and comprehend a short passage of text. Students have to identify and explain how the author used language to make meaning in that text. And students have to write about it, coherently and persuasively. Because the literary analysis essay poses such a challenge, it is often reserved for our PreAP, honors, and AP English classes (whether this should be the case is a subject for another blog post). We often assume that because these are high-achieving students, they already know the basics of writing and of literary analysis, and so we toss them right in, only to discover that in doing so, weve left them woefully unprepared. We certainly tried this (and failed). Sorry, class of 2008. If youve spent any time with us here at Three Heads, you know we love a structured approach to, well, everything, but especially to writing. So after reading some disastrous sets of prose analysis essays in our AP Literature class, we realized that teaching the literary analysis essay would benefit from a step-by-step approach, and the more we refined it, the more successful our students became at tackling this challenging essay. We recently polished up our materials even further for our Literary Analysis Essay unit, and we wanted to share these steps, just in case yours starting down a literary analysis essay in your curriculum thats making you want to run far, far away. This seems obvious, right? We thought so. But then we watched student after student answer only part of the essay prompt, which meant their essay was doomed for the bottom half of the rubric from the very start. Our students need to understand not only the common elements of a prompt (context, the how, and purpose) but how to use those elements to guide their reading and writing. We taught our students the value of the context that is often provided in prompts: the authors name and publication date can give us helpful clues to what the passage may be about, but many literary analysis essay prompts also provide us with a few details about the passage were about to read, ensuring we get off to the right start if we read carefully. In AP English Literature prose analysis questions (Q2), the how is pretty vague now that the College Board has adopted stable prompt wording: students are asked to analyze how the author uses literary elements and techniques to accomplish a specific purpose. If students arent writing an AP Lit prompt (or youre using an older prompt), the prompt might tell them specific literary elements and techniques to look for, and thats valuable information right off the bat. Of course, the most important thing for our students to understand is the purpose. Are they supposed to argue for a theme? How someone is characterized? What tone the author has taken toward a specific subject? When students dont clearly see what theyre arguing for, they often get tangled up in their reading of the passage and write an essay that may be about the text but doesnt address the prompt. In our unit, we used a Google Slides presentation to walk students through the process of analyzing a prompt, and then had them analyze prompts in groups before looking at the prompt that wed be moving forward with. Again, this seems obvious, but it can be really challenging for our students, especially if this is the first literary analysis essay theyve been asked to write. The biggest problem we see with literary analysis essays is that students hunt for literary devices rather than trying to understand the text and the purpose given to them in the prompt. Our students need to know that content is king, first and foremost, but they also need to know how to read for complexity, looking for shifts in the passage or potentially contradictory ways characters or relationships are described. When they miss this complexity, its hard for them to write a literary analysis essay that scores on the upper half of whatever rubric were using. Weve found that when were first teaching students how to write a literary analysis essay, its helpful to give them something specific to look for, whether its specific details to highlight as they read or text-dependent questions to guide them through the passage. We also discuss the passage together. Does this mean our students essays are often pretty similar by the end? Yes, but because were focused on the writing part of the literary analysis essay in this unit, we want to ensure theyre on the right track throughout the process. Eventually, students need to make notes and outlines in a way that works for them. But not the first time we work through a prompt together. We want them to use a strategy that we know works. After students have a firm understanding of the passage, we go back to the prompt, specifically the purpose statement. For example, several AP prose analysis prompts ask students to discuss the relationship between a character and the setting. At this point, we encourage our students to go back through their notes (annotations or answers to text-dependent questions), looking for adjectives they could use to describe the relationship and details that support the selection of those adjectives. Because we frontload the assignment with our text-dependent questions, we force students to note the shifts and complexities in the passage, and we take care to point that out here: they need more than one adjective to describe the relationship (and synonyms dont count!). Its only after students identify their adjectives and their quotations (the shorter the better) that we come back to the how in the prompt, asking students to label the quotations they identified with the correct literary element or technique (imagery, simile, a particular kind of diction, indirect characterization, etc.). By guiding our students focus to the purpose first, the supporting evidence second, and only then to the literary devices, we set them up to write much stronger essays: essays in which their interpretation of the text drives the argument rather than the random simile or use of alliteration they were able to identify. One of the things our students struggled with most was organizing their literary analysis essay effectively. Part of this stemmed from their emphasis on literary devices rather than meaning, but for many students, writing instruction has encouraged them to organize essays by most compelling point to least compelling point (or vice versa), so it hasnt occurred to them that when theyre discussing a specific text, it often works best to organize their essay chronologically. After all, the author built their argument in a specific order, whether that argument is fiction or nonfiction, so it makes sense for us to trace the development of that argument in a similar order. As we encouraged our students to take a beginning-middle-end approach to organizing their literary analysis essays, their arguments got a lot stronger. This also gave our students something to hold onto when they wrote a literary analysis essay without the scaffolds provided with their first essay: if they looked for signposts in the passage that could be considered its beginning, middle, and end, they often identified more complexity than if they viewed the passage as one big whole. For our unit, our students select the three adjectives from their brainstorm they want to discuss (suggesting that they might consider choosing the adjectives they have the most evidence to support). Then we encourage them to look back at their evidence and select quotations that show, rather than tell and which focus on the most meaningful words and phrases rather than large chunks of text. Perhaps counterintuitively, only when students have all the pieces of their argument are they ready to craft an effective thesis statement. Students often try to draft a thesis statement too early in the process, leaving them with an incomplete claim that they often forget to go back and revise after theyve gone through more of the writing process. This sets them at a huge disadvantage. Not only do we know that an effective thesis statement drives both the reader and the writer through an essay, but on the Q2 rubric for the AP Literature exam (or a comparable rubric), the thesis statement accounts for 17% of students overall score. Thats a significant amount! First, we spend some time directly teaching students that an effective thesis statement must take a position on/provide an accurate, defensible interpretation in response to the prompt and may establish a line of reasoning. We go through each part of that statement in detail, addressing common pitfalls with student thesis statements. Then we guide students through the process of using an outline to draft a thesis statement that includes (a) the adjectives they believe characterized the person, relationship, or attitude referenced in the purpose part of the prompt, (b) the literary devices they will discuss in their supporting evidence, and (c) a so what, or larger purpose the author might have had in including the text in a longer work. At this point, we provide students with a sentence frame. While we know this is a controversial choice in an honors and AP class, we feel its important early on as were teaching students the language they will need to use in order to effectively convey their ideas. Before we move on, we make our students double-check that they listed their adjectives and literary devices in the order they plan to discuss them in their essay, emphasizing that a thesis statement is a roadmap for the reader to follow as they move through the essay. While it might seem silly at this point to have students write an essay when weve discussed so much of it in class and we know student essays will be so similar, we find this to be a helpful part of the process. We want to see if our students understand what weve taught them about the writing process before we worry about their ability to independently analyze a text. The first time our students write a literary analysis essay, we provide them with a sentence-by-sentence template for their body paragraphs as well as their introduction and conclusion. For honors and AP students, we dont provide them with sentence starters (we do for standard-level classes), but we do want to teach them what an effective line of reasoning and effective commentary look like. However, this is not our final assessment of the skills were taught in this unit. We always follow it up (whether its immediately or a few weeks later) essays take time to grade, after all) with a new literary analysis essay prompt in which students must apply what theyve learned to a new passage. Because students now know the process to follow, they can focus on developing their literary analysis skills (and we can shift our feedback focus to the development of ideas rather than the basic essentials, for those who still havent got it, we will refer them back to the first essay unit before intervening with additional writing support). We assign literary analysis essays as timed, in-class essays. In part, this is because students must write this essay within 40 minutes on the AP Lit exam, but in an age of Google and generative artificial intelligence, weve also found it to be the most effective way to determine what our students actually understand of the passage or their own. Providing a structured, step-by-step approach to the literary analysis essay really helped our students. With a solid understanding of what to do, they could focus on their analysis and the quality of their ideas, and as they did so, their writing got stronger over the course of the school year (the writing process is remarkably similar for the Q1 poetry essay prompt and requires few adaptations for the Q3 open prompt). They, of course, had varying degrees of success and took time to develop those skills, but giving them something to hold onto made a challenging task seem more manageable for all of us. If your students need some help writing a strong literary analysis essay, consider checking out our Literary Analysis Essay unit! It comes with the materials (and answer keys) for all the activities described here along with a list of key literary terms to know for the analysis of prose (and a corresponding Kahoot) and three additional prose analysis prompts you can assign to your students. Each of the three prompts is modeled after the College Boards stable prompt wording but is not a College Board prompt, making it more challenging for your students to find ideas online. While we used the College Boards Q2 rubric, weve also provided a similar adaptation for you if you like to have everything in one place.

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