Element Analysis Paper

Element Analysis
Examine a literary work with a more objective eye. You might analyze the style and structure of the piece or explore the writer’s use of formal elements (such as character, conflict, and setting in stories and plays; or persona, metaphor, and tone in poetry). You might wish to support a particular interpretation of a work (what you believe to be the main point of the work, what it seems to be saying about life or human nature or the condition of things), or you might evaluate how believable characters and their actions are. Read Chapter Four, pp. 146-171, in our textbook for the various ways you might wish to approach this essay. See in our textbook example essays that begin on pages 169 and 905.

Description of assignment: In an analysis of a work, you look at all elements of the work – plot, character, tone, point of view, etc. – as you discuss the way these elements function together to form the work.

Preliminaries: To understand those, read the work over many times. Consider first the dramatic situation of the work. Determine who is speaking? Then look at what catches your eye and your ear. What does each contribute? Look at the images, the word choices and the repetitions. What do they contribute? What do you notice especially in the work? What caught your imagination in the first place? The responses to these will get you toward the theme as well as an understanding of the literary elements.

Once you have the theme and you have an understanding of the choices the author made to depict that theme, you are ready to begin your analysis in written form. You will follow the traditional essay structure of an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

Writing the rough draft: In the introduction, you will need to have an interesting beginning to get the reader involved. Also give the title of the work, in quotation marks, the author’s name and your thesis. Your thesis is to revolve around the overall theme, or the meaning of the work, and how the element you have chosen contributes to the theme. The body of the paper will be your analysis. You must decide how many points to make, which points to elaborate on, and which to briefly mention.

The conclusion should end the essay. So return to the introduction. Make a final statement about the artistry of the work and then echo the interesting beginning to end the essay.