

On Flannery O'Connor and her critics

For our final literary analysis of the semester I'll be asking you to craft a 750-1000 word analysis of O'Connor's work and the criticism that you read last week. This is a difficult assignment for two reasons: first, there is not a specific prompt. Second, as a consequence of the lack of a specific prompt, you'll be responsible for choosing a theme to address in your analysis.

So, to help you out a bit, here's a basic "how-to" with an essay like this.

Prewriting

1. Choose a theme. We'll brainstorm some together.
2. Pick an article that in some way addresses your theme. You'll need to integrate it into your piece as you provide some analysis.
3. Think about what you want to say about this topic. Think about what O'Connor says about this topic. Think about how you'll integrate the two.

Writing

1. Introduce the topic and the stories that you'll be writing on.

Here's a sample thesis:

"Flannery O'Connor's writing demonstrates a profound, concrete, conception of what is right and what is wrong. Throughout her stories she consistently forces the reader to struggle with the possibility that our own moral relativism might be a terrible shortcoming."

2. From here, I would go on to discuss her writing, focusing on how her characters, plots, themes, etc., force the reader to acknowledge our own understanding of morality, of what is right and what is wrong.
3. I would cite something from Dan Curley's article "Flannery O'Connor and Moral Relativism," probably the part about "her opposition to moral relativism" as "being unchanging from first to last."

Revising

4. Next, I would have somebody else read it. I would ask them to tell me what my main point was. If they couldn't do it, I would need to change what I'd written.

• A quick word about revision. Revision is about ideas, content, organization. When you're fixing commas, spelling errors, punctuation, etc., you aren't talking about revision. That's called proofreading. Revision is all about evaluating whether or not your ideas work, whether or not they're effective arguments, whether or not you really made your point. Don't be afraid to revise and revise hard. Revision is about hardcore, full-on, blood and guts rewriting. As William Zinsser, writing guru and Yale professor said, "rewriting is the essence of writing well—where the game is won or lost."

This essay will be due on Tuesday, January 26th, 2010, by 11:59:59 on Turnitin.com.

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Literary Analysis Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Introduction	Introduction states clearly the main topic and previews the structure of the essay. Thesis is clear and compelling.	Introduction clearly states the main topic, but does not invite the reader to continue reading. Thesis is clear.	Introduction states the main topic, but may be unclear. Does not preview the essay's structure. Thesis is mostly clear.	Essay lacks a clear introduction, and the topic is not clearly discussed. Thesis is unclear.
Support For Topic	Support is relevant, and goes well beyond the obvious, drawing heavily on an appropriate selection of literary analysis tools and the text(s). Two or more sources are cited.	Supporting details are relevant, but draws on few analytical tools. Only one source cited.	Supporting details are relevant, but are not necessarily well explained. Outside sources are not used.	Supporting details are unclear or unrelated to topic.
Focus On Topic	Topic is clear, focused, and supported by detailed information.	Main idea is clear, but supporting information is general.	Main idea is somewhat clear, but needs more support.	Main idea is unclear and unsupported.
Organization	Essay is well organized, clear, and understandable. Details are presented logically and effectively.	Essay is well organized, but details are not presented in an effective order.	Essay is generally well ordered, but some details are presented in a distracting order. Author may dwell on unimportant details.	Essay is organized illogically or distractingly.
Grammar & Spelling (Conventions)	Writer makes 2 or fewer errors in conventions that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in conventions that distract the reader	Writer makes 5-6 errors in conventions that distract the reader from the content.	Errors are abundant and distracting.