Literary Criticism Research

with Nardia Cumberbatch
Our Goals for Today:

- Explore literary criticism
- Preliminary research
What is Literary Criticism?
A criticism is an interpretation, or a way of discussing and evaluating a novel, story or poem.
Literary criticism may examine a **particular literary work** or it may look at an author's writings as a **whole**.
Challenges

It depends on what you choose to write about
Selecting an Author or Work

Let’s make it easier
Tips: Let’s make this easier

Maya Angelou
1928-2014

Anthony Doerr
1973-
Tip 1: Well-known authors

Maya Angelou
1928-2014

Anthony Doerr
1973-
Tip 2: Age or Popularity of the Work

Anthony Doerr
Memory Wall

Anthony Doerr
All the Light We Cannot See
Tip 3: Variety

• Consider looking for two to three works
• Preliminary research
Research: Multi-Step Process

- online reference works
- print reference works
- journal databases
- context
  - knowledge of author, time period, theories
- MLA citation

scholarly research
Let’s focus on Reference Works

Research: Multi-Step Process

- Online reference works
- Print reference works
- Journal databases
- Scholarly research
- Context (knowledge of author, time period, theories)
- MLA citation
Examples of Reference Works Include:

- Literary dictionaries
- Literary glossaries
- Literary encyclopedias
- Accessible online and in print
Thinking About Your Thesis

narrow your focus
Literary Concepts

What attribute of the work will you focus on?

- *The Basics*
  - Plot
  - Theme
  - Style
  - Tone
  - Point of view
  - Characterization
  - Type of narrative
  - Symbols

Adopted from Purdue Online Writing Lab
Literary Concepts

What attribute of the work will you focus on?

- **The Basics**
  - Plot
  - Theme
  - Style
  - Tone
  - Point of view
  - Characterization
  - Type of narrative

- **Other key concepts**
  - Historical context
  - Setting
  - Social, political, economic contexts
  - Ideology
  - Multiple voices
  - Various critical orientations
  - Literary theory

Adopted from Purdue Online Writing Lab
How can you support your analysis?

- Analogies
- Define literary terms/concepts
- Consulting supporting analysis from literary critics
- Illustrate with examples from work (avoid making your paper a book report)
  - State claim – elaborate and explain
  - Direct quotes
  - Paraphrase
  - Specific detail
# Sample Literary Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Story</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Robin Hood</strong></td>
<td>Robin Hood stole goods and money from the rich residents of his town to give to the town’s poorer residents.</td>
<td>The use of a monarchy or kingdom setting in Robin Hood allowed the author to portray the abuses of power that often occur among the wealthiest members of a community.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Snow White</strong></td>
<td>Snow White falls into a deep, death-like slumber when she takes a bite of a poisoned apple.</td>
<td>The use of certain plot elements in Snow White, such as the poisoned apple and resulting slumber, help readers understand that being too trusting can lead to dire consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cinderella</strong></td>
<td>Cinderella tells the story of a young girl whose evil stepmother tries to keep her from her true love.</td>
<td>The author of Cinderella paired lazy female characters with a hard-working female protagonist to show that hard work leads to love and happiness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developing Your Argument

Sample Literary Analysis


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