HELPFUL INFORMATION FROM THE PROFESSOR

**SAMPLE ESSAYS AND REASEARCH GUIDE**

* **IMPORTANT**: Review this link on how to write a literary analysis essay: <http://www.drakehs.org/staff/doherty/litanalysis.htm>

**Note:** The essays are in MLA style; we are using the APA style of documentation.

**Also**, Go to “Course Home” and scroll down to the bottom to “Instructor Files.”

Note this document: “LITR201\_Library\_Research\_Guide.”

Follow this method to quote: **APA style of documentation.**

**RULE:** Add the author, insert the quote in quote marks, and add the page after. **CAUTION:** Do not quote more than 39 words.

**EXAMPLE:** According to Gilb (1993) “The fact was that he’d probably have to change his whole style to develop proper characterization to engage the reader” (p. 219).

**REFERENCE EXAMPLE:**

MacGowan, S. (1987). Belfast bombsite. In S. L. Fingers (Ed.). *An Irish Punk Poetry*

*Anthology* (pp. 117-118). Donegal:Culchie Press.

**LINK TO APA FORMATTING:** <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

**NOTE THESE LINKS ON COMPARISON-CONTRAST WRITING; AVAILABLE AT TASK LIST**

* **Developing a comparison-contrast essay:** <http://www.cuyamaca.edu/lyn.neylon/englishweb/122web/English%20122%20on-line/Assignments/122LAP.htm>
* **Slide Show 1:** <http://www.slideserve.com/niveditha/comparison-contrast-literary-paper>

* **Slide show 2:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gznDPgIbbbw>
* **Video 1:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtAJmVdOKAA>
* **Video 2**: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7Znwp8nHTQ>
* **APA Documentation: text:** <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

**Sample Essay Discussion: Textbook: pages 19 - 22**

**Add a title page.**

**Repeat the title at the top of page 2. Double-space all writing, and indent paragraph opening.**

Differences in Responses to Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour”

Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” appears merely to explore a woman’s

unpredictable reaction to her husband’s assumed death and reappearance, but

actually Chopin offers Mrs. Mallard’s bizarre story to reveal problems that are

inherent in the institution of marriage. By offering this depiction of a marriage

that stifles the woman to the point that she celebrates the death of her kind

and loving husband, Chopin challenges her readers to examine their own views

of marriage and relationships between men and women. Each reader’s judgment

of Mrs. Mallard and her behavior inevitably stems from his or her own personal

feelings about marriage and the influences of societal expectations. Readers

of differing genders, ages, and marital experiences are, therefore, likely to

react differently to Chopin’s startling portrayal of the Mallards’ marriage, and

that certainly is true of my response to the story compared to my father’s and

grandmother’s responses.

**Add a title page. Repeat the title at the top of page 2. Double-space all writing, and indent paragraph opening. NOTE: APA requires improvements in this essay to meet expectations.**

Differences in Responses to Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour”

Marriage often establishes boundaries between people that make them

unable to communicate with each other. The Mallards’ marriage was evidently

crippled by both their inability to talk to one another and Mrs. Mallard’s

conviction that her marriage was defined by a “powerful will bending hers in

that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to

impose a private will upon a fellow-creature” (p. 14). Yet she does not recognize

that it is not just men who impose their will upon women and that the problems

inherent in marriage affect men and women equally. To me, Mrs. Mallard is

a somewhat sympathetic character, and I appreciate her longing to live out

the “years to come that would belong to her absolutely” (p. 14). However, I also

believe that she could have tried to improve her own situation somehow, either

by reaching out to her husband or by abandoning the marriage altogether.

Chopin uses Mrs. Mallard’s tragedy to illuminate aspects of marriage that are

harmful and, in this case, even deadly. Perhaps the Mallards’ relationship should

be taken as a warning to others: sacrificing one’s own happiness in order to

satisfy societal expectations can poison one’s life and even destroy entire

families.

**Add a title page.**

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Differences in Responses to Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour”

When my father read “The Story of an Hour,” his reaction to Mrs. Mallard

was more antagonistic than my own. He sees Chopin’s story as a timeless

“battle of the sexes,” serving as further proof that men will never really be able

to understand what it is that women want. Mrs. Mallard endures an obviously

unsatisfying marriage without ever explaining to her husband that she feels

trapped and unfulfilled. Mrs. Mallard dismisses the question of whether or

not she is experiencing a “monstrous joy” (p. 14) as trivial, but my father does

not think that this is a trivial question. He believes Mrs. Mallard is guilty of a

monstrous joy because she selfishly celebrates the death of her husband without

ever having allowed him the opportunity to understand her feelings. He believes

that, above all, Brently Mallard should be seen as the most victimized character

in the story. Mr. Mallard is a good, kind man, with friends who care about him

and a marriage that he thinks he can depend on. He “never looked save with

love” (14) upon his wife, his only “crime” (14) was his presence in the house,

and yet he is the one who is bereaved at the end of the story, for reasons he

will never understand. Mrs. Mallard’s passion for her newly discovered freedom is

perhaps understandable, but according to my father, Mr. Mallard is the character

most deserving of sympathy.

**Add a title page. Repeat the title at the top of page 2. Double-space all writing, and indent paragraph opening.** Differences in Responses to Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour”

Maybe not surprisingly, my grandmother’s interpretation of “The Story

of an Hour” was radically different from both mine and my father’s. My

grandmother was married in 1936 and widowed in 1959 and therefore can

identify with Chopin’s characters, who live at the turn of the century. Her

first reaction, aside from her unwavering support for Mrs. Mallard and her

predicament, was that this story demonstrates the differences between the ways

men and women related to each other a century ago and the way they relate

today. Unlike my father, who thinks Mrs. Mallard is too passive, my grandmother

believes that Mrs. Mallard doesn’t even know that she is feeling repressed until

after she is told that Brently is dead. In 1894, divorce was so scandalous and

stigmatized that it simply wouldn’t have been an option for Mrs. Mallard, and

so her only way out of the marriage would have been one of their deaths. Being

relatively young, Mrs. Mallard probably considered herself doomed to a long

life in an unhappy marriage. My grandmother also feels that, in spite of all we

know of Mrs. Mallard’s feelings about her husband and her marriage, she still

manages to live up to everyone’s expectations of her as a woman both in life

and in death. She is a dutiful wife to Brently, as she is expected to be. She

weeps “with sudden, wild abandonment” when she hears the news of his death;

she locks herself in her room to cope with her new situation, and she has a fatal

heart attack upon seeing her husband arrive home. Naturally the male doctors would think that she died of the “joy that kills” (p. 15)—nobody could have guessed that she was unhappy with her life, and she would never have wanted them to know.

**Add a title page.**

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Differences in Responses to Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour”

Interpretations of “The Story of an Hour” seem to vary according to the

gender, age, and experience of the reader. While both male and female readers

can certainly sympathize with Mrs. Mallard’s plight, female readers—as was

evident in our class discussions—seem to relate more easily to her predicament

and are quicker to exonerate her of any responsibility for her unhappy situation.

Conversely, male readers are more likely to feel compassion for Mr. Mallard,

who loses his wife for reasons that will always remain entirely unknown to him.

Older readers probably understand more readily the strength of social forces

and the difficulty of trying to deny societal expectations concerning gender

roles in general and marriage in particular. Younger readers seem to feel that

Mrs. Mallard is too passive and that she could have improved her domestic

life immeasurably if she had taken the initiative to either improve or end her

relationship with her husband. Ultimately, how each individual reader responds

to Mrs. Mallard’s story reveals his or her own ideas about marriage, society, and

how men and women communicate with each other.

Reference

Chopin, K. (2011). “The Story of an Hour.” *Literature to Go*. Ed. Michael Meyer. Boston:

Bedford/St. Martin’s. 13–15. Print.

**Begin with the basics**

* **Read the book or books assigned**
* **Ask relevant questions like:**
  + **Why did the author write this?**
  + **What is the theme?**
  + **What are some symbols?**
  + **How are the characters developed?**
  + **How is the style relevant to the content?**
  + **What do the characters learn?**
  + **What literary terms are addressed and why?**

**Look for connections   
and patterns**

* **Ask some more questions:**
  + **How are the characters connected to the themes?**
  + **How are the themes, characters, and symbols connected?**
  + **What does the format and style suggest about the story?**

**What are my connections to the story?**

**(Do some research.)**

* **Maybe. Not all the time.**
  + **Find out about the author.**
  + **What do other critics say about the book?**
  + **Has the author published anything about the book?**
  + **What do other authors say about the book?**
  + **What is the historical context?**

**Thesis statements are not questions.**

**Thesis statements are not mere observations.**

**Thesis statements function in two ways:**

**They introduce the main idea that will be developed in the text of the essay.**

**They analyze or illuminate the text, often in terms of literary elements.**

**Observation:**

* **Toni Morrison’s novel, *Beloved*, uses a non-linear structure with frequent flashbacks.**

**That is merely an observation on the part of the essay writer. It’s a good observation, but it’s one most readers could recognize without your help. Think of your essay as a teaching tool that will help to analyze or illuminate the text.**

**Helpful hints for   
developing thesis statements**

* **Use action verbs:**
  + **Toni Morrison mirrors the fragmentation of her characters’ lives in the structure of the novel itself.**
  + **Not: *Beloved*, written by Toni Morrison, has a fragmented format that mirrors her characters.**

**When applicable, use three examples to support your main idea:**

**Toni Morrison mirrors the fragmentation of her characters’ lives through the novel’s non-linear structure, specifically through her use of flashback, stream of consciousness, and shifts in point of view.**

**Main idea:**

* + **Toni Morrison mirrors the fragmentation of her characters’ lives through her novel’s non-linear structure, specifically through her use of flashback, stream of consciousness, and shifts in point of view.**

**Three ideas that support that idea:**

* + **Toni Morrison mirrors the fragmentation of her characters’ lives through her novel’s non-linear structure, specifically through her use of flashback, stream of consciousness, and shifts in point of view.**

**Locate quotations that support your thesis statement**

* **As a rule of thumb, try to find at least three direct quotations to support each element contained in the thesis statement.**
  + **3 examples of flashback**
  + **3 examples of stream of consciousness**
  + **3 examples of shifts in point of view**

**Determine the order you will use this information.**

* **Note cards.**
* **Traditional outline.**
* **Notes that only you can decipher.**
* **Macaroni art.**

**Add your research to your “outline.”**

**If you’ve done any research, think about where it makes sense to insert it. If you have a difficult time determining this, maybe you shouldn’t add it at all**

**Begin to write the paper.**

* **It may be helpful to begin with your introduction (though not always).**

**Writing an introduction.**

* **An introduction may be more than one paragraph, though in a short essay, it is typically only one.**
* **The thesis statement usually is placed at the very end of the introduction.**

**More on introductions**

* **A guideline to follow is that your introduction should contain at least five significant sentences, including your thesis statement.**

**An insignificant sentence:**

* **Literature often portrays characters who have many conflicts.**

**All sentences should have weight and meaning**

* **They may introduce background.**
* **They may introduce new concepts and/or definitions.**
* **They may provide transitions.**
* **They may introduce quotations.**
* **They may provide facts and support.**

**Empty sentences have no other purpose than to take up space.**

* **Toni Morrison is a good author.**
* **She writes about former slaves and women of color.**
* **Slavery was shameful.**
* **Beloved is a good book that deals with many issues relevant to literature.**

**Using our thesis statement from earlier, let’s write an introduction.**

* **Let’s start with a general statement about writing, one that begins to deal with our topic directly yet hasn’t Experimental writers often subvert the traditional form of the novel by refusing to use a chronological plot line in favor of one less linear.**
* **addressed the specific novel or the thesis statement.**
* **Now let’s get more specific. Let’s mention our novel and the author.**

**Experimental writers often subvert the traditional form of the novel by refusing to use a chronological plot line in favor of one less linear. Toni Morrison’s Beloved is not narrated chronologically from Sethe’s birth to Beloved’s disappearance. Instead it is told in a series of seemingly unrelated pieces.**

**Now, let’s add our thesis statement.**

**Experimental writers often subvert the traditional form of the novel by refusing to use a chronological plot line in favor of one less linear. Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* is not narrated chronologically from Sethe’s birth to Beloved’s disappearance. Instead it is told in a series of seemingly unrelated pieces. Morrison mirrors the fragmentation of her characters’ lives through the novel’s non-linear structure, specifically through her use of flashback, stream of consciousness, and shifts in point of view.**

**An effectively-written and well-organized introductory paragraph should act as a signpost for the rest of the paper**

**A good introduction essentially writes the rest of the   
essay for you.**

**The outline for the rest of this essay might look something like this:**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Body**
   1. ***Beloved* uses flashback to demonstrate that the past is always a part of the present.**
      1. **Example of flashback.**
      2. **Example of flashback.**
      3. **Example of flashback.**
      4. **Analysis of how flashback relates to your thesis statement.**

**In addition to flashback, Morrison uses stream of consciousness to illustrate the fragmented state of her characters’ minds.**

**1. Example of stream of consciousness.**

**2. Example of stream of consciousness.**

**3. Example of stream of consciousness.**

**4. Analysis sentence of how these examples tie into your thesis statement.**

**\* Don’t forget to add transitions between ideas or to introduce your quotations properly!**

**IV. Morrison also employs a shifting point of view as a method of not only fragmenting the narrative but also to illustrate how each character is connected.**

**1. Example of point of view.**

**2. Example of point of view.**

**3. Example of point of view.**

**4. Analysis sentence explaining how all of these examples relate back to your thesis statement.**

**\* Note: Some of these sections may actually be several paragraphs long.**

**V. Conclusion**

**It is sometimes helpful to think of the conclusion as a reversal of your introduction.**

**You may want to begin by rephrasing your thesis statement.**

**Original: Morrison mirrors the fragmentation of her characters’ lives through the novel’s non-linear structure, specifically through her use of flashback, stream of consciousness, and shifts in point of view.**

**Rephrasing: Because of Morrison’s innovative use of basic literary elements like flashback, stream of consciousness, and point of view, she is able to produce a powerful effect that reflects the sometimes chaotic and often broken lives of her characters.**

**Now we work backwards to something a little more general.**

**Original: Toni Morrison’s Beloved is not narrated chronologically from Sethe’s birth to Beloved’s disappearance. Instead it is told in a series of seemingly unrelated pieces.**

**Conclusion: By constructing the novel in what at first appears to be unrelated pieces unanchored in chronology or point of view, Morrison actually achieves a kind of unity that supports the development of the story and her characters.**

**We finally add the “clincher.”**

**In doing so, Morrison creates a new kind of American novel, one not tied to a form rooted in tradition. Similarly, her characters forge ahead to create new lives, confidently rejecting the history of oppression from which it had once seemed impossible to escape.**

**The final conclusion looks something like this:**

**Because of Morrison’s innovative use of basic literary elements like flashback, stream of consciousness, and point of view, she is able to produce a powerful effect that reflects the sometimes chaotic and often broken lives of her characters. By constructing the novel in what at first appears to be unrelated pieces unanchored in chronology or point of view, Morrison actually achieves a kind of unity that supports the development of the story and her characters. In doing so, Morrison creates a new kind of American novel, one not tied to a form rooted in tradition. Similarly, her characters forge ahead to create new lives, confidently rejecting the history of oppression from which it had once seemed impossible to escape.**

**And oila! Your essay is complete! A+**

**How to do very well in this course**

1. **Read the assigned course materials very carefully**
2. **Plan your essay based on the Task List requirements**
3. **Quote from the story (primary source) to support your ideas**
4. **Add secondary sources (what the critics say) to reinforce your ideas.**
5. **Develop sound APA documentation practices.**

**HERE IS A SUGGESTED ESSAY PLAN TO FOLLOW (Write in complete paragraphs**

