

The AP Literature and Composition Research Paper

The AP Literature and Composition Research Paper is an opportunity to study in greater depth three literary works.

Specific Guidelines

1. You must organize your research information. Follow the correct format below. You will receive a grade for research documentation.
2. You must use at least **ten sources**. Include information from both primary and secondary sources. Your sources must be valid. Internet postings by college and graduate students are not authoritative. Sources must have titles and authors and be from reliable sites, **Preferably from our school databases (EBSCO, GALILEO, etc.)**. No Wikipedia, Sparknotes, Monarch notes, Barron's, Cliffs, etc. will be acceptable. Three primary sources will be your literary works
3. Your paper should be 2000 words, typed and double spaced, 12-point font, 1" margins on all sides.
4. You must follow all the conventions of research papers in MLA format, including proper parenthetical citations and works cited page. Use the Research paper Style Sheet provided on my website. Purdue Owl has excellent MLA resources. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Introduction

Secondary sources are critical examinations of a work by literary scholars. The purpose of this research assignment is to help you learn to use secondary sources in an analytical literary essay. The positions of the literary scholars should inform your work, not dominate it. In other words, the main idea of your essay should be based on your own opinions/observations/conceptions about the work. The articles should serve as direct support for your assertions, starting points for your thinking, or alternative views which provide contrast for yours.

Summary of the Process

Step #1: Establishing a Plan for the Body of the Paper

Select a topic that will lead to a detailed interpretive analysis of some aspect of the works. Basically, this is the **BIG QUESTION of your Research Paper—an idea you can really think deeply about and wrestle with on an intellectual level**. You should select an element of the novel/play as the focus for analysis, including character(s), symbolic motifs, narrative style, structure, etc. Your goal is to analyze specifics details to support your interpretation of the works' themes. Prepare a thesis (controlling idea) for your essay. Create a basic framework or outline for the full argument of the essay. The thesis/framework may change as your research helps to develop your interpretation of the novel/play.

Step #2: Develop Introductory Paragraph

Establish the context of the work. As you read your secondary sources, select materials that are most connected to the ideas you developed for the body of your essay. Consider a variety of background issues such as popular literary themes of the period, general philosophical and cultural assumptions, influence of other major authors, notable narrative techniques, and the context of the novel/play amongst the author's other literary works. Focus only on how these topics connect to your author, novel/play, and thesis.

Your introductory paragraph should include the authors' names and the titles of the works, as well as a rationale or set-up of exactly why this question is worthy of serious examination. Conclude your paragraph with a clear, precise statement of your controlling idea (thesis).

Step #3: Write a Precise Thesis Statement

A general guideline for all literary papers is to turn your topic into a question that your research paper answers. Your thesis should not be a simple fact or easily proven concept. It must be an idea that someone can and probably will disagree with—something you will defend using your sources.

Untenable Thesis Statement: *Hamlet* is a drama about a young man who wants revenge.

Acceptable Thesis Statement: Hamlet's religious beliefs prevent him from exacting swift revenge.

Step #4: Use Secondary Sources for Support

Select material from secondary sources that will provide support for your argument or offer a means of elaborating your argument. Select specific facts, interpretations, insights, or ideas and add them to your text to enrich your interpretation, being sure to document your source appropriately. Do not lift an entire argument from a source. If you do, you effectively become a "ditto-head."

As you do this research, your reading should spark your thinking, give you new ideas, make you question your interpretations, and give you the support of an authoritative argument for an interpretation. Read with an open mind, but also look for material that is related to the focus and ideas you have already established in your outline.

Step #5: Write the Conclusion

Your conclusion should end your essay effectively. You should recapitulate and reinforce the main ideas of the essay without repeating the exact words you have used previously. Your conclusion should make your whole argument persuasive and satisfying to the reader.

Step #6: Edit, Revise, and create Works Cited Page

Revise and edit to create your final draft of the essay.

- Tie together the sections of the essay by adding transitional sentences and improving topic sentences to make the essay coherent and focused.
- Check spelling, punctuation, syntax, and all formatting issues .
- Use quotation marks and parenthetical citation to distinguish others' writing from your own. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism and will result in a zero for this assignment**NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- Create a **PROPERLY FORMATTED** Works Cited page. . Use the Research paper Style Sheet provided on my website. Or use Owl online - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/12/>

Step #7: Submit your work on the assigned due dates. This assignment is worth a total of 300 points (100 points were part).