

## WRITING A BASIC ANALYSIS (50 POINTS POSSIBLE)

An analysis is, in essence, a study of the structure of something through its elements. A basic analysis of a text is a focused look at one or more of the elements of the text (e.g., the content, argumentation, rhetoric, mechanics, or style) that follows general critical principles rather than discipline-specific methods. A good basic analysis uses the examination of these features to develop a main idea from your own thinking that addresses a problem, issue, or concern (i.e., a gap) that is relevant to the audience of the analysis.

To write an effective basic analysis, you must both read and understand the nuances of a text, take generative notes, and then cohesively reorganize your notes around either a known gap (e.g., one given to you), or around an emergent gap (e.g. one you discover). You do this by synthesizing the connections and interrelationships of your ideas around a conclusion.

### DIRECTIONS

Your assignment is to write a 500- to 600-word basic analysis as a response to [Consider the Lobster](#), by [David Foster Wallace](#). You will do so without making use of any discipline-specific techniques to literary analysis. Instead, you will use general principles of critical thinking. Below are the things that you must be willing to do.

#### A. Taking Notes

Like the summary, as you prepare to write a basic analysis, you must read the text, and take notes. If you are inexperienced in writing basic analyses, I recommend that you write directly on the text itself in the form of annotations and then transfer them to a working document. This will involve the following:

- You must be willing to read and understand what you read by writing your way through this understanding.
- You must be willing to commit time and focus to read closely and track what you have read through your annotations and notes.
- As you read critically and take notes, you must be willing to stop, reflect on what you have read, ask yourself questions about it, and add notes to your existing notes as part of that process (recursivity).

#### B. Composing Ideas

Once you have completed your close reading of the text to be analyzed, take your annotations and transcribe them into a document. While doing so, you must be willing to consider what ideas are most important to you, and which other ideas are related to that idea (and “speak to it”). As part of this process, you have to find the main idea, or argument, or narrative/story **of your own piece** that is speaking to you. To do this, you must:

- Have enough notes that you can then produce ideas in sentences to create chains of argumentation (i.e., related paragraphs) to introduce, support, and then conclude a main idea that you develop.
- Be able to articulate an opinion on the subject you are writing on (an informed opinion), but also try to apply that opinion towards more abstract, or general, ideas.
- Recognize and question your own relationship with the text to situate yourself within it.

**C. Finding the Gap**

Once you have an adequate base of notes from which to work, you are prepared to draft your analysis.

- Your analysis should be focused on what is missing (in your own opinion) that can be filled in through analysis. This is something that will bridge the “gap” between your own interest and understanding, the text, and the audience. For example, thinking about what people’s relationship with is to the animal proteins they consume, and society’s relationship to its meat supply more generally.
- As part of your analysis, you may summarize, evaluate, connect, and/or extend ideas from the source text with your own.
- As part of your analysis, you may reorganize the text around conflicting or conflicted viewpoints, contradictions, theses, factual information, or any other content found within the text itself.
- Your own analysis should have an introduction (written last), body, and (brief) conclusion.

**EVALUATION**

This assignment is worth 50 points (~5% of your final grade). You will be graded on your ability to demonstrate an effective analysis. While you do not need to show each step in the composing process, you may do so to bolster your credibility. Use the basic MLA format of your summary. Show evidence of revision and editing. The deliverables for this project are:

1. The edited 500- to 600-word summary (uploaded to Drive).

Keep in mind the following requirements;

- Your summary must be in MLA format, and in .doc, .docx, or .rtf file formats. For this assignment I will not accept Google Docs, printed summaries, or .pdf documents.
- You can find an example of MLA format on the Purdue OWL by searching for “[MLA Sample Essay](#).”
- Your analysis should be revised and copy-edited before you hand it in.
- This assignment is due on Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup>.