

Literary Works: Patterns For A Thesis

As with all thesis statements, it is important to define your ESSAY QUESTION to help you declare a clear thesis. The following examples are many possible essay questions and patterns for a thesis evaluating a literary work.

In what ways does? What does? How does (title of work) use, show, illustrates (one aspect)?
In (title of work), (author) uses, shows, illustrates (one aspect)
Example: What do the characters of Sadie and Abner Snopes illustrate? In "Barn Burning" William Faulkner shows the characters Sadie and Abner Snopes struggling for identity.

In what ways does? How does the author define, strengthen, illustrate the (element of the work)?
In the (title of work), (author) uses (one aspect) to define, strengthen, illustrate the (element of the work).
Example: How does Conrad strengthen the plot in "Youth?" In "Youth," Joseph Conrad uses foreshadowing to strengthen the plot.

What serves as a unifying device within (title of work)?
In (title of work), (author) uses (an important part of work) as a unifying device for (one element), (another element) and (another element). The number of elements can vary from one to four.
Example: What serves as a unifying device within Conrad's "Youth?" In "Youth," Joseph Conrad uses the sea as a unifying device for setting, structure, and theme.

How does (author) develop a character in (title of work)?
(Author) develops the character of _____ in (title of work) through what he does, what he says, and what other people say to him or about him.
Example: How does Welty develop the character of Phoenix? Eudora Welty develops the character of Phoenix, in a "Worn Path," through what she does, what she says, and what other people say to her.

How does (author) develop a character in (title of work)?
(Author) develops the character(s) _____ through his use of (element or elements of the work).
How does Updike develop the character of Sammy in "A & P?" John Updike develops the character of Sammy through point of view and language.

How does (author) use (literary device) to accomplish, develop, illustrate, strengthen (element of work)?
In (title of work), (author) uses (literary device) to accomplish, develop, illustrate, strengthen (element of the work).
Example: How does Poe use symbolism to develop the theme of death in "The Masque of the Red Death?" In "The Masque of the Red Death," Poe uses the symbolism of the stranger, the clock and the seventh room to develop the theme of death.

What is a major theme in (title of work)?
(Author) shows, develops, illustrates the theme of _____ in (title of work).
Example: What is a major theme in "A Good Man is Hard to Find?" Flannery O'Connor illustrates the theme of selfishness of the grandmother in "A Good Man is Hard to Find."

What is the meaning of a key question, problem, gap in (title of work)?
In (title of work), the question, problem, gap represents _____.
What is the meaning of the ending in "A&P?" In the perplexing ending of "A&P," Sammy reveals the contradictions of his character.