

A literary essay analyzes elements of a piece of literature and is really no different than any other essay that analyzes a topic. There are a few points that you need to remember:

### General Essay Points

- Ensure that the titles of novels are ALWAYS underlined. Film are written “In Quotation Marks”.
- A literary essay is a formal piece of writing. Do not use contractions, (Can’t; won’t; etc,) and avoid using “I” statements. There is no need to write “I think the author means...” – just get to the point: “The author means...”
- Make sure you know MLA Style for the first page, spacing, page numbers, quotes and the Works Cited Page.

### Intro Paragraph

- The Introductory Paragraph should include the titles and authors of the works you are studying. If you are comparing a novel with a film, the director’s name is used, (this prevents confusing the film with other ones of the same name).
- Ensure you have a clear and strong thesis. Don’t just make a basic statement about the novel.  
**Weak Thesis:** *TKAM* shows the development of Scout’s character  
**Better Thesis:** Harper Lee’s portrayal of Scout in *TKAM* traces the development of a child as she copes with growing up, and teaches readers that although the world might not always be fair, it’s the lessons learned along the way that are important.
- It is important to clearly lay out the points you will be using to discuss your piece of literature. Typically, things like theme, plot events, character development, text-to-world connections are topics that are discussed

### Body Paragraphs

- Explain *why* or *how* each topic is important. For example, if you are discussing themes, and the theme of childhood innocence, the paragraph will focus on how characters, plot events, etc. contribute to this theme. You will also discuss how readers can relate to the theme.
- Back up points in your essay with specific examples from the novel. The best bet is to use a short, effective quote. Make your point, introduce and include the quote, and then make the connection to show how the quote supports your point.
- Don’t overuse quotes or summarize the novel. An essay is not a book report. You are analyzing topics to support an argument.

### Conclusion

- Similar to other essays, you restate your thesis and main points. Ensure that you have come to a conclusion and comment on how your chosen points have clearly demonstrated that conclusion.