# **LIT 2000: Literature 2000**

USF College of Arts and Sciences

Department of English

Fall 2018

**Literary Analysis Assignment (20%)**

**Introduction to Close Reading**

**Assignment Objectives**

The objective of this assignment is to provide students with opportunities to:

1. Use concepts and terms in literary studies to analyze the aesthetic features of a text.
2. Discuss and interpret a broad variety of writers, their works, and connections among works.
3. Demonstrate the ability to construct a clear, coherent, sustained argument.
4. Skillfully communicate meaning in a variety of written and spoken formats with clarity and fluency in language appropriate to the audience.

**Assignment Requirements**

This assignment will include the following.

1. Draft of Literary Analysis: due on Friday September 21
2. Peer Review of draft: done in-class on Friday September 21
3. Instructor feedback on draft: provided in response to draft submitted on 9/21 by Monday September 24
4. 1,000-1,200 word Final Literary Analysis: due on Friday September 28; upload final draft file to Canvas as either a Word document or PDF. **Warning: submissions in unsupported file formats such as .pages will not be accepted**

**Assignment Description**

Perform a close reading of a passage from any work we have read and discussed in class or, alternately, from any work made available in the “Additional Resources” folder on Canvas. When you do close reading, you focus on specific, often very small, details such as dialogue, narration, description, etc., to explain how those details contribute to the meaning of the story. Close reading typically takes place in the context of a *passage*, or a discrete unit of the larger story. A passage of a work of fiction may be thought of as equivalent to a scene in a play or a film. Passages can vary greatly in length, from a few words to a few pages; what is important when you choose a passage is not its length but that it has a clear beginning and end, and that it includes several interesting details.

Once you have chosen a passage, ask questions like the following to uncover its interesting details:

* What words or concepts repeat in the passage? Are the same words/concepts also repeated in other parts of the story?
* What is the tone of the passage (ironic, serious, humorous, etc.)?
* What is the setting of the passage? What scenery is present and how is it described?
* How do characters interact with each other? How do character interactions in this passage compare to those in other parts of the story? Who says what, and how?
* If the internal monologue of any character is made visible for us (by first-person or omniscient narration), what are the characters thinking or feeling? How does their thinking or feeling change over the course of this passage, or differ from previous passages?

Once you have gathered some interesting observations by questioning the passage, explain why you think these details are important. In other words, answer a “So What?” question about the details you have noticed.

Begin Essay 1 by briefly introducing your passage, then provide your close reading by answering questions like those in the bulleted list above (but not limited to those; that’s not an exhaustive list, so add anything else you can think of).

Your paper should be roughly 3-4 pages in length, of which your close reading of the passage should form the largest part.

Criteria for Evaluation

* A sustained close reading of a specific passage which provides evidence for an argument, particularly by using well-chosen direct quotes from the story.
* Interpretive statements in the writer’s own words explaining how the evidence from the story supports their claims.
* A clear answer to a “So What?” question enunciating what the writer believes to be the meaning of the short story as a whole and how the passage they close-read contributes to that meaning.
* Minimal plot summary (i.e., the writer spends only a few words on telling us what is happening, and devotes most of her/his space to explaining why it matters).