Analytical Essay
Resources: Website of Mrs. Maio and Cynthia Clumneck Muchnik’s “Base Five-Paragraph Structure”

An analytical essay
- Begins with a main object, such as a poem, novel, short story, or play.
- Should examine how the selection establishes itself.
- Referred to as a five-paragraph essay
- Attempts to explain the significance of a selection from a literary work.
- Proves some point based on evidence from the text, which may focus on characterization, plot, theme, style, or other literary concerns

Note: The point you are trying to make is often the answer to a prompt that your professor has given you for the written assignment (thesis statement).

Introduction (~1 paragraph): Other titles may or may not occur with a definition.
- State the purpose and/or significance of the analysis.
- Discuss the author in terms of the literary work.
- Provide the title of the literary work being analyzed.
- Give necessary background information about the story (very little).
- End the paragraph with the thesis statement.

Main Body (~3 paragraphs): The main body should answer the question, “Why?” or explain “How?” Each paragraph should discuss and analyze one key point at a time.
- State the topic sentence, which will clarify the paragraph and reflect the thesis statement.
- Provide specific examples—quotations, passages, descriptions, or comparisons—to support the topic statement.
- Analyze how the examples fit with the main idea (thesis) and how the analysis is appropriate for the essay.
Avoid retelling the story or interpreting the plot unless this is needed to support a particular claim.

Note: You must continually explain why and how your examples clarify your thesis, so readers can follow along with your opinion.

**Conclusion (≈1 paragraph):** The conclusion restates the argument and reveals a deeper understanding of the work. Just as your introduction leads the reader into the thesis, the conclusion leads out from it.

- Restate the thesis to emphasize the purpose of the essay.
- Provide an analytical summary of the main points.
- Conclude why the main points are significant.
- Close the essay with how the audience should ultimately be affected by the work. (Why should the audience care about your points?)