**How to Write a Character Analysis**

**Essay Prompt:** Write an analysis of one of the following characters – JC, M Brutus, C Cassius, or M Antony. Character will be assigned to students. Carefully describe the character using specific examples from the play. In your analysis, you must include the following categories:

* the character’s personal and political beliefs
* the character’s motives for making the choices he makes
* the character’s use of persuasion/rhetorical techniques in the play.

***EACH BULLET POINT IS A SEPARATE PART OF YOUR THESIS STATEMENT AND A SEPARATE BODY PARAGRAPH IN YOUR ESSAY!***

**Introduction**

As you were reading, you probably had been engaging in an informal character analysis without even knowing it, where from your opinions, your reading logs and summaries, annotations.

1. **Pay attention to the character’s ethics.** Does the character make just or unjust choices? Consider Atticus Finch – he is a just character by sticking to his principles even when his life is at stake.
2. **Decide whether the character’s actions are wise or unwise.** For example, Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*, is he a character who continually makes poor decisions that reflect his inner corruption.
3. **What is the character’s motivation?** Mull over the pros and cons of the character’s internal thoughts and external actions. Why is the character acing or thinking in a particular way? Has the author given any clues about the character’s past? In *The Joy Luck Club,* Lindo Jong’s domination of her daughter Waverly can be understood, if not entirely excused, by her terrible experiences in China.
4. **Consider the effects of the character’s behavior on other characters.** One character’s actions on others. In *Pride and Prejudice,* Lydia decides to run off with the charlatan Wickham, she puts the whole family’s reputation at risk.
5. **Look for repeatedly used words that describe the character.** Those words often give insight into a character’s psychology and motivations. In *East of Eden,* Kathy is frequently referred to as having “sharp little teeth” and a “flicking tongue,” which are symbols of her snake-like monstrousness.
6. **Be aware of items associated with the character.** Something about his/her state of mind. O *The Glass Menagerie,* the delicate unicorn figurine is symbolic of Laura’s own sense of hop and her own fragility.
7. **Read between the lines.** Often what a character does not say is as important as what he/she does say. In “Barn Burning”, the court finds Snopes guilty of ruining his boss’ rung, prior knowledge of Abner’s character tells us that his silence upon hearing the verdict actually speaks volumes.
8. **Is the character “flat” or “round”?** A character is considered **flat** (or static) when he or she does not experience change of any kind, does not grow from beginning to end Shakespeare used comic villains as flat characters, like Don Jon in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

**Round characters** are those who do experience some sort of growth. In *A Doll’s House,* Nora, by the end of the play, has gone from being meek and submissive to being strong and liberated.

1. **Consider the historical time period of the character.** Refrain from making modern judgments about the past; put character’s actions and thoughts in context.
2. **Finally, what does the author think?** Look for any of the author’s own judgments about the characters he/she has created. The author may be directing you toward an intended interpretation. In *The Scarlet Letter,* Nathaniel Hawthorne certainly meant for his readers to see Hester as good and Chillingworth as evil

**Character Analysis Essay Requirements**

1. **Character** for analysis

Choose three adjectives that describe the character. These adjectives, **character traits,** will be the basis for your **five – paragraph essay.**

1. **Requirements**

* Thesis statement should be stated directly in your introduction and be proven throughout the body paragraphs.
* One quotation from the play in each of the three body paragraphs to support your ideas.

These quotations must be correctly documented according to MLA guidelines…refer to “format for quotations” below.

* Essay must be typed in Times New Roman, 12 font, and double spaced – per MLA.

Single space the heading – on left of paper, per MLA

* The paper must have a title…do not underline or put in quotes. It must also be 12 font, as above, and not bolded.
* Length – essay should be at least two complete pages, but not more than three.
* Essay must be submitted to turnitin.com. Make sure before the deadline that you are enrolled, and in the correct class. Late work will begin grading at 68 for one day late; 50 for the second day late. Lateness will be determined by the time-clock from turnitin.com.
* Write about literature in present tense. The action is present tense every time it is read.
* First reference to author in essay is FULL name; subsequent references are by LAST name only
* Deductions: DO NOT USE:
* Contractions (except in direct quotations from the play)…they are informal.
* 1st or 2nd pronouns…keep your paper in 3rd person
* Slang and non-specific words and wasted/vague words – use Plague List….also informal.
* Grammar, spelling, and usage errors
* Typing errors
* Tense shifts…write in all present or all past tense…be consistent. Remember, write about literature in present tense.

**Writing the Thesis Statement**

* A good thesis statement tells the reader what the rest of the essay is about. Good thesis statements do not simply announce a topic; they state something about the topic, and provides the framework for your essay. NEVER start with “In this essay I will discuss….”
* *Through Miss Maudie Atkinson’s open-mindedness, optimism, and compassion, she helps Jem and Scout better understand Atticus and their community.* (Notice the three character traits)

**Detailed Outline**

* **Paragraph # 1**
* **Introduction** – general comments about the character that lead you to your
* **Thesis Statement** – described above.
* Be sure to include author and title of play and the character your are analyzing
* **Paragraphs # 2-4**
* **Three Body Paragraphs**

**Topic Sentence** for each body paragraph includes one character trait to describe the character

**Follow the topic sentence with evidence from the play –** bring in one quote to support your topic sentence.

**Explain** how your examples support your topic sentence/point.

**Conclude each body paragraph** with a summarizing commentary – bring all together/wrap up your ideas.

**Transition words/phrases** must be included between body paragraphs.

* **Paragraph # 5**
* **Conclusion**

Restate your thesis more deeply than before. Add some final thoughts about your character. Create a final insight that implies life lesson – (without adding new info)

No new information. No quotes.

**Format for Quotations**

* **Example # 1 Basic**

**Embed.** Create an intro to your quotation that helps the reader understand its meaning/purpose; follow the quote with more information regarding the quote. This embed information for the quote helps develop the quote to align with the topic sentence/thesis/purpose.

**In-line citation:** After every quote, write the author’s last name and the page number that the quote is found in parenthesis, followed by a period. To cite a play, include the Act/scene. Remember to use parenthesis.

(Shakespeare, Act I, sc ii, 60). – final punctuation is AFTER the citation.

* **Example # 2 Changing a word / adding a word**

If you change the original text (for clarity) put the change in brackets.

…”Mr. Radley kept [Boo] chained to the bed”...

**Character Analysis Prewriting Worksheet**

**Character:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Great Starter:**

**Thesis Statement:**

**Body Paragraph #1 Body Paragraph #2 Body Paragraph #3**

**Point:**

**One per PP:**

**Included in**

**Thesis/prompt**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Example:**

**Quote:**

**Explain:**

**Conclusion/Finisher**

**Identifying Character and Textual Evidence Worksheet**

* Identify three specific points that seem especially important about the character. These points will be the three points in your thesis – each one per each body paragraph - support points from prompt.
* Return to the play to find evidence in support of each point. Quote your evidence. List page numbers.
* Looking at your points and evidence, make some conclusions about why the points are important and support points from prompt. Consider what the traits say about your character’s motives, beliefs, persuasion – how are they connected to the play’s plot or theme
* Use the chart below

**Character: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-**

**Point #1 Point #2 Point #3**

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**Text Evidence w page number: one per point**

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**Conclusion: Why these points are important. Answer the ‘so what?’**