

# Literature critique essay

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

1) “ The Story of an Hour”

A) Plot : The married Mrs. Louise Mallard is told her husband has died in a train accident. She has a heart condition and experiences deep grief over her husband's death. Slowly the grief fades and she begins to feel a sense of relief. Realizing now she does not have to live for anyone else but herself. She can do what she wants when she wants. Just as she is overcome with joy about her new and limitless future, her husband walks through the door. There was a mistake and he was not even near the crash, Mrs. Mallard dies from her heart condition.

B) Narrative Point of View : Omniscient point of view narrates the story. The narrator knows everything that is happening and what everyone is thinking in the story.

C) Characters : Mrs. & Mr. Mallard are the main characters. Josephine and Richard are the couple's friends.

D) Style : She makes interesting use of the Omniscient point of view. Most stories featuring this particular narrative style become boring and predictable. However, in this particular short story the omniscient narrator has a bit of a sense of humor and timing, keeping the most important information (that Mr. Mallard did not die in the accident) well hidden until the end of the story. There is also a bit of irony that Mrs. Mallard dreams of freedom end in her death which is another form of freedom. It is important to point out that Mrs. Mallard does not die from joy but from sadness having to go back to living and submitting to her husband again.

E) Setting : The bulk of the story takes place physically in the Mallard house, and Mrs. Mallard's room. Much of the text of the novel actually takes place in Mrs. Mallard's mind and thoughts.

F) Imagery : This story is fairly light on imagery, however the train could remind the reader about the forward motion of life.

G) Themes : Everyone should have the freedom to live life as they want too, it can be a source of great joy, but the removal of the joy (however brief) can be deadly.

1) "A Clean Well-Lighted Place"

A) Plot : An old man sits in a café, it is almost closing time. Two waiters are serving him, and are anxious to go home. The younger waiter wants to go home to his wife and warm bed. The older waiter has nothing to go home too. The old waiter will probably end up a bar himself after work. The old man discusses his discontentment with life, attempted suicide, and his loneliness. The story continues and we see that the old waiter has much of the same feelings of depression and struggles against them each night. The old waiter has lost faith in god and he fears what will happen after death.

B) Narrative Point of View : The point of view of this story is third person. The narrator does not participate in the action of the story.

C) Characters : An old waiter, the main character, and the young waiter.

D) Style : Hemmingway makes good use of the foil systems. Both waiters act as foils to the main character.

E) Setting : This short story is primarily set in café in late evening. Two waiters serve their last customers and hope to leave soon.

F) Imagery : The use of light and dark in the story is interesting to look at. The café is clean and well light, the bar however is dirty and dark. The old waiter believes that there is nothing after death so the human race is left in the dark. Light represents what men use to distract himself from the darkness or the thought of death. This is typical of Hemmingway's nihilistic view of the world with no hope and no escape except for what man creates for himself.

G) Themes : The theme of the story is the same thing that run through his other stories - there is no god, no meaning in the world, and man must find things to distract him from the horrible truth.

## 2) “ To an Athlete Dying Young,” AE Housman

A) Speaker / Situation : The speaker of the poem is someone who knows the athlete, perhaps a member of his community who was able to watch the athlete's accomplishments. The poem reads like a speech read at a funeral, though it is never clear if that is the intended purpose. The speaker directly addresses the dead athlete. The situation of the poem is a young vibrant athlete has passed away and the speaker in the poem is telling the audience that is better to die in the prime of your life than to peak and decline in your “ older” years. It is clear from the lines of the poem that the speaker must have had his fair share of glorious moments but no longer can achieve them.

B) Word Choice : In stanza one the speaker talks about the athlete was revered and well loved, and how the town cheered for his victories. The dictation of the first stanza sounds like a cheerleading cheer with a AABB rhyme scheme : race, place and by, high.

C) Figurative Language : The author uses euphemisms for death in the poem : " the road all runners come," " threshold," " shady night," and " shade" instead of directly addressing death.

D) Imagery - N/A

E) Symbols: N/A

F) Other : The poem carries a certain amount of irony while the poem is about a young man dying, it is supposed to be sad but the speaker speaks about how great it is to die in the prime of your life.

G) Structure : The poem has a very monotonous tone with rhymed couplets. This particular structure creates music for the poem much like a death march.

H) Theme : The briefness of life and fame. Housman compares the two and shows are each is brief and should be valued while they last.

2) “ Mending Wall,” Robert Frost

A) Speaker / Situation : The speaker of the poem is one of two neighbors who are having a conflict over the building of a wall between their properties.

B) Figurative Language :

C) Word Choice : Frost uses casual language and a friendly tone to convey the feeling of poem. The speaker seems very friendly and honest, and immediately the reader feels like he is an old friend.

D) Imagery : Frost breathes life into the cold New England landscape which offers a great backdrop to this poem.

E) Symbols : Frost uses the metaphor of stones to represent anything that comes between two people. Whether it is emotion or inanimate objects. The wall embodies this separation and invades every interaction they with each other. The wall represents control and limitation.

F) Other : N/A

G) Structure : N/A

H) Theme : One of the major themes in The Mending Wall is the cycles of the seasons. Many phrases refer to the seasons , in cyclic way - " spring mending-time," " frozen ground-swell," " once again," " spring is the mischief in me." Isolation is another theme. The poem comments on the nature of society , how we interact with each, and how society functions as a whole. Often in society we do not realize that we build walls between us, " No one has seen them made or heard them made."

2) “ The Tyger,” William Blake

A) Speaker / Situation : This poem is about the nature of creation, unlike his other poems this one takes on the depiction of the dark side of creation. It has some pretty intense religious overtones.

B) Word Choice : Each line ends in a perfect rhyme.

C) Figurative Language : N/A

D) Imagery : N/A

E) Symbols : The Tyger is the representation creation, the process of creation, and the creator. He is fierce, strong, cunning, and if he wants to be deadly. Comparing this to God, the creator of the universe.

F) Other : There are several contrasting words “ burning bright - night” shows the visual impact of the tyger, “ hand - eye” contrast practical skill and art, “ deeps - skies” contrasts the depths of the universe and the good and evil within that universe.

G) Structure : Six four line stanzas or six quatrains in rhymed couplets. Most of the lines contain seven syllables. There i

H) Theme : Man-made phenomena (inventions), their purposes and unwanted effects, e. g. technical progress, nuclear power etc. Reflect on religious aspects; is there an almighty God? Does he renounce the control of nature, its creatures and man-made evils?

3) Definitions:

Reversal : unexpected series of events which causes the action in a narrative to switch direction

Recognition : when a character realizes the error of his ways and attempted to make it right

Tragic Flaw : a personality flaw of the hero, which causes the character to make choices which seals their fate

Exposition : background information before the action of the story begins

Rising Action : general introduction of characters and setup for the climax

Crisis : when the main character decides what she/he will do and commits to it.

Climax : is the turning point of the story

Resolution : when loose ends are tied up and characters reflect on what happened and what they learned

### 3) Antigone

Exposition : Polyneices and Eteocles are two brother who fight on the opposite sides of a war. They have both died in battle. The new leader of Creon commands that Eteocles will be honored but Polyneices will not be.

Rising Action : Polyneices will not be given a holy burial, and the animals will eat him. Antigone and Ismene are the sisters of the dead brothers. Antigone plots with Ismene to bury Polyneices. Ismene refuses to help because if they are caught disobeying they will be put to death.

Crisis : Antigone becomes this tragedy's hero and is going to bury Polyneices herself. Creon finds out the body has been buried and orders the sentry to seek out the person who buried him. He soon locates Antigone. She does not deny what she did. Soon her sister is also taken. The sisters are locked



up temporarily. Haemon who is Creon's son, and the Antigone's fiance promises his father his alliance.

Haemon tries to talk his father out of killing Antigone but when he refuses, Haemon fights with his father. Creon imprisons Antigone in a cave.

Teiresias, the prophet warns that the gods will be unhappy with Creon if he continues to hold Antigone. The prophet tells Creon that he will lose his children, Greece will despise him, and the offerings made by Thebes will not be accepted by the gods.

Climax : Creon decides to free Antigone and bury Polyneices. However he is too late, he gets notice that Haemon and Antigone have both killed themselves. Upon hearing the news, Creon's wife Eurydice kills herself.

Resolution : Creon realizes that everything that has happened to him he causes himself. He knows his actions were wrong and the Gods did not approve.

Reversal and Recognition : Antigone and Creon fight over whether or not it is morally right to bury Polyneices properly. Reversal occurs when Creon is told that his children will die, and he will lose the respect of Greece.

Recognition comes when Creon takes the advice of counsel and attempts to make things right by letting Antigone go and burying Polyneices.

Tragic Flaw : Antigone's tragic flaw is her own arrogance. She insists she is right and must bury Polyneices, and even after she is caught she continues to plead her case to Creon by telling him he is wrong and she is right.

Tragedy Themes and Structure : Antigone chooses to bury Polyneices and in doing so has accepted her punished and fate of being buried alive. Creon chooses to not bury Polyneices and chooses to cave up Antigone in doing so, even though he is counseled not to he seals his fate of loosing everything he values in the world.

### 3)Hamlet

Rising Action : Hamlet is the son of Denmark who has recently been died. Hamlet's uncle (Claudius) then marries Hamlet's mother (Gertrude). Hamlet thinks that Claudius might have killed his father to become the kind of Denmark. Hamlet's father's ghost appears to two officers and eventually Hamlet himself. The ghost tells Hamlet that Claudius did kill his father.

Crisis : Hamlet then begins to plot to avenge his father's death. Hamlet begins to act like a madman, and it isn't entirely clear if he is truly insane or just pretending. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, friends of Hamlet, are sent to spy on him by Gertrude. Claudius sends Hamlet to England, and tells Ophelia (who may be in a relationship with Hamlet) not to associate with Hamlet any longer.

Climax : Before leaving Hamlet puts on a play re-enacting the King's death in hopes of getting Claudius to admit to the murder. Instead he becomes enraged.

Resolution : Hamlet's mother tries to reason with Hamlet. Polonius, Ophelia's father, spies on them, and Hamlet kills him. Claudius does send Hamlet to England with secret orders to have Hamlet killed. But Hamlet

finds out and is not killed. Ophelia ends up going mad and killing herself. Hamlet is captured by pirates and is returned to Claudius. Claudius arranges a sword fight between Hamlet and Laertes. Hoping Laertes will kill Hamlet with a poison sword tip.

The victory cup is also poisoned just in case Laertes is not successful. . During the fight the poison drink is offered to Hamlet, who declines and the Queen ends up drinking it, and dies. Hamlet switches swords with Laertes, who then dies. As he dies he admits Claudius did murder the King of Denmark. Laertes dies, Hamlet stabs and kills Claudius and Hamlet dies.

Recognition and Reversal : When Hamlet re-enacts his father's death in the play performed in front of Claudius and Gertrude is the unexpected event that cause Claudius to realize that Hamlet does know that he is responsible for his father's murder. Claudius recognizes that he must get rid of Hamlet if he wants to continue to be the King of Denmark.

Tragic Flaw : Hamlet's tragic flaw is that he is loyal and is consumed with avenging his father's murder.

Tragedy Themes and Structure : When Hamlet decides to avenge his father's death he is also accepting his fate of a similar end. He knows he must murder, and also die to make right the wrongs that were committed against his father, the King of Denmark. When Claudius and Gertrude choose to betray the king and murder him, they choose their fate to die just like the King. They do not realize their fate until after Hamlet performs his play.

4) Biographical Critical Theory - Understanding the history of an author is extremely important in understanding the reasons why he wrote, the way he wrote, and what he was trying to communicate in his writing. Biographical information can be very expansive covering the life and times of an author and his / her views on multiple topics. It can also be very specific and center only on key plot points in the text. For example understanding Hemmingway's life - he was an alcoholic, he was in World War II, and womanizer certainly can shed light on his short story "A Clean Well-Lighted Place." Without that biographical information the story makes very little sense.

4) Deconstructive Critical Theory - Deconstruction is a movement in literary criticism that questions traditional assumptions of identity, truth, and certainty. Critics using this method believe that text contains no meaning. Meaning only exists in the minds of the reader. This is extremely interesting approach and explains while two students reading the same piece of text can have different views about what the poem is about and what the author was trying to convey to the reader.

The reader's past experience greatly effects the meaning he may draw from a piece of literature. The poem "To an Athlete Dying Young" by AE Housman, can be interpreted in many different ways. Some people believe that the poem is an actual eulogy, a father's thoughts about the lost of his son, a man speaking to himself as a young man, etc. The views aren't based on the text but on the meaning that the reader draws from that text. Without deconstructive critical theory we would have to accept the traditional view that this poem is a eulogy.

5) I think Historical Critical Theory is the most limited. I do think it is important to understand the historical context a piece of literature is written in. It is also important to have a general information about the details of specific historical events of that given time period. However, I think that the reader often gets bogs down in history and misses parts of the prose that are really important like dictation, metaphor, rhyme, irony, and most importantly personal experience.

For example in Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*, the reader could research the historic events that occurred in the late 19th century. We could take note of the relationship between men and women this time, and write a whole paper about relationships and the dominance of women in the time period. In doing that the reader misses the humor, the sharp ironic edge, the wit, and the social satire Chopin so skillfully employs.