

Understanding how to write formal analysis essay on art essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Formal or visual analysis is a description of visual elements of a work of art. It acts as a visual guide for the viewers. Through formal analysis, visual structure of the art is laid bare to the viewers. They are able to understand functions of elements and why an artist chose to use them in his artwork. Since it is only limited to visual description of a piece of art, visual analysis cannot evoke much thought into the viewers' minds like other analyses. However, formal analysis is also important as it allows readers to navigate through an artist's work to understand his point of view. It therefore forms the basic foundation for all types of analyses on art.

Writing Guidelines for Formal Analysis Paper

The most important thing you need to know is that formal analysis essays are not the same as normal essays. While normal essays are reflective, argumentative and sometimes descriptive, formal analysis essays are only restricted to the visual aspect of the artwork, which may be in the form of a portrait, sculpture or a photograph. Another difference is that in formal analysis there is no research statement.

Before starting the essay, you should carefully study the portrait or the sculpture to get the general idea about the setting, the mood and the overall tone of the artwork. By internalizing the art into your memory, you will start to have a deeper understanding of it. Now that the picture is embedded into your mind, have a detailed study of the artwork looking at finer details, such as hue, texture, borders, colors and emotions. These are the ingredients needed for the successful completion of the visual essay.

Structure of a Visual Analysis Essay

Formulating a plan is essential for all types of essays, not just for this essay.

While studying the artwork, it is important that you note down on paper every idea that pops into your mind. Many students fail to note down points, assuming that their minds will keep a record of all ideas. But, the mind is like a highway of ideas, where each idea takes a brief residence on the mind and if ignored disappears. Ideas that come out of the blue are the best and you should therefore not ignore them.

Introduction

The introduction is the first part of the essay. It should include the name of the work of art, the artist who created it and the date it was created. Other details, such as its current location, the time in which it was created and the medium used are also important. You may include the artist's biography or interests if they directly influenced his work. Any information that may have influenced his artistry can also be included, for instance, social or political problems during the time of creation.

You should then formulate a thesis statement. A thesis statement will guide you on what direction to take. It will also indicate to the readers about the ideas you are trying to pass across. Without a thesis, your analysis is as good as dead. The thesis statement should be part of the introduction, preferably at the end.

Body

The body allows you to choose the formal elements you want to analyze. Ensure that each element is analyzed in its own paragraph. The paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that highlights the significance of the element analyzed. However, you should only concentrate on elements that support your thesis. Arrange the elements in a logical manner, starting with the ones that are more profound or the ones at the focal point of the art, then move to the less weighty elements and finish with the least elements.

While writing this essay, be sure to include art jargon that will indicate to your professor that you know what you are talking about. Do not be too simple and also avoid being too complex in your description, as it will make it complicated and unenjoyable. You should also avoid using the first person in your essay. Using the first person will make it a personal opinion rather than a formal analysis. Remember, the essay should be developed from the visual elements and not from a personal perspective.

Conclusion

The conclusion should summarize the ideas you were putting across the essay. Instead of repeating whatever you presented in the introduction, you should include new ideas that you want to offer to the reader, but you are unable to do so in the body. For instance, there may be some facts you came across that directly affected the piece of art that you have a burning desire to share to the reader but you are unable to do so, because of the limiting nature of this essay. You may present it in the conclusion. It should however

be brief. Do not go into too much detail, because the conclusion should be short and precise.

Visual Argument Analysis

This is a special form of a visual analysis that involves personal interpretation of the piece of art. It follows the same format as the formal analysis. However, with visual argument analysis, the essay does not end with visual description; it extends to what you perceive about the artwork. You give your own interpretation of the piece using visual evidences. After you have sufficiently exhausted your arguments with appropriate evidences, you can conclude the visual argument analysis with a summary of the key points and your final remarks on the artwork.

Elements of Painting

- Color
- Lines
 - Consider direction or movement of lines
 - Types of lines, like contour lines
- Shape
- Plane of the painting
- Composition
- Texture
- Contrast

Elements of Sculpture

- Texture

- Shape- organic, geometric
- Material
- Color
- Volume
- Technique- additive, subtractive
- Light and shadow
- Type of silhouette – open form or closed form

Read good examples of art essays:

Timeline of the Ancient Greek Art

Similarities and Differences between Greek and Roman Arts

Experience God's Magnificent Artistry through the Beauty and Sustainability of Nature