

Essay 1—Stylistic Analysis

Write a stylistic analysis of a short passage from Shakespeare.

Select a short passage (about 5-10 lines) from one of the plays on our reading list and analyze it stylistically. Pick a passage we have not already analyzed carefully in class.

I want you to think and write about how your chosen passage works—not about *what* it achieves but about *how* it achieves it. A good way to approach the assigned task would be to compare your passage with its *No Fear Shakespeare* <<http://nfs.sparknotes.com>> modernization, a modernization that delivers all the information your chosen passage does. Ask yourself what Shakespeare’s language does that the modernization fails to do. Focus on how specific stylistic elements (such as meter, wordplay, syntax, figures of speech, sound patterns, imagery, connotations of words, irony, word choice, and so on) transform a mere vehicle for transporting ideas into an amusement park ride for its readers’ minds.

The more specific your analysis, the better. So focus on small things (like a pun, an ambiguous word or phrase, a striking antithesis, an arresting metaphor, or some other minute particular) and offer some interesting and truthful insight into them. Although your analysis can address many different stylistic elements in the text, you may want to focus on just the one or two elements you find most interesting.

Everything you say in your analysis must relate directly to the actual words of the text. Don’t get sidetracked; stick with the words. Analyze the text itself, not the characters who speak the lines, or the plot they’re involved in, or the themes or ideas they express.

Make your prose as clear and concise as possible. Don’t waste my time and yours trying to sound impressive. Organize your paper around a thesis, a claim about how the stylistic elements in your passage work. A good thesis will address the full complexity of the passage you select.

Your essay should be 2-3 pages (500-800 words). Quote the passage you select at the beginning of your essay. Put the exact word count for your paper (not including the quoted passage at the beginning) on the last page.

Since your only source for this essay will be your chosen passage, you do not need a Works Cited page. You should, however, use MLA style for formatting your document. (See <<http://drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/>>: “Document Format,” “Anatomy of a Citation,” and “How to Quote Shakespeare.”)

Due Date:

- I will write comments on all papers submitted on or before the beginning of class Monday, **October 12**.
- I will write little or nothing on papers submitted on or before the beginning of class Monday, **October 19**, but I will grade these papers just the same as those turned in on the earlier date.
- I will assign a zero to any papers not turned in by Monday, **October 19**.