

Essay 3 – Analysis of a Sonnet

Write a two-to-three-page (500-800 words) analysis of ONE of the following sonnets:

“On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” by John Keats

“Ozymandias” by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Analysis In this essay you will analyze a sonnet using both research and explication. As in your Shakespeare paper, your explication will explain how the sonnet’s poetic and rhetorical techniques help convey the meaning of the poem. Remember that explication must analyze *form* as well as *content*: not just the themes and ideas in the sonnet, but also how the author crafts and styles the language. Your research will provide a broader context for your analysis by exploring the author’s biography, the sonnet’s cultural history, or the critical commentary on the sonnet.

To help you develop both your analysis and your thesis you will write a set of **Sonnet Journals**.

Structure of Sonnet Essay	
Introduction (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Introduces the critical question your essay will address.▶ Ends with a thesis statement (your answer to the question).
Background (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Provides relevant information about the biographical, historical, or critical background of the sonnet.
Analysis (2-3 paragraphs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Supports each element of your thesis with a close, careful, and detailed reading of the sonnet.
Conclusion (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Briefly summarizes your analysis.

Sources Your essay will have at least **FOUR** sources: **one** primary source (the text of the sonnet itself) and at least **three** secondary sources. Your secondary sources will provide background information relevant to your analysis. You may look for information on the sonnet’s author (biographical sources), the sonnet’s historical context (historical sources), or at what literary critics have said about the sonnet (critical sources). Make sure all your secondary sources provide specific information directly relevant to your analysis of the sonnet.

Your essay must have a Works Cited page with full bibliographic information on your sources, and it must employ in-text, parenthetical references. Use proper MLA formatting throughout your essay. (See drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/), especially “Document Format,” “Anatomy of a Citation,” and “How to Quote Verse.”).

Schedule for Essay 3 – Analysis of a Sonnet		
Outline Workshop	April 15	Sonnet Journal 4 (including your Working Thesis, Informal Outline, and Works Cited page).
Peer Review Workshop	April 19	THREE copies of your First Draft.
Revision Workshop	April 22	Return Completed Peer Critiques.
Revision Conferences	April 26	No class. (Optional Revision Conferences in CASA 325.)
Final Revision Due	May 3	Revised Draft, First Draft, all the Peer Critiques you received, and all your Sonnet Journals (in a two-pocket folder with your name on the front cover).

Please Note This essay builds on all the skills you learned from writing your first two essays. Therefore everything the assignment sheets for those essays said about Thesis, Evidence, Structure, Style, Audience, Drafts, Revision Conferences, Proofreading, and so on applies to this essay too.

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,	1
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;	2
Round many western islands have I been	3
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.	4
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told	5
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;	6
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene	7
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:	8
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies	9
When a new planet swims into his ken;	10
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes	11
He stared at the Pacific — and all his men	12
Looked at each other with a wild surmise —	13
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.	14

by John Keats
1816

NOTES:

4: *fealty*: sworn oath of loyalty to a feudal lord

Apollo: Greek god of music and poetry

6: *Homer*: Greek 8th century BC poet; author of two epic poems: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*

demesne: domain, lands reserved for the owner's use

7: *serene*: expanse of clear sky or calm sea

8: *Chapman*: George Chapman (1560-1634), English renaissance poet who translated Homer's works into English.

10: *ken*: view

11: *Cortez*: Hernando Cortez (1485-1574), the first Spanish conquistadors who conquered the Aztec empire.
(**N.B.**: Vasco Núñez de Balboa, not Cortez, was first European to see the eastern shores of the Pacific.)

14: *Darien*: Panama

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land	1
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone	2
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,	3
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,	4
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,	5
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read	6
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,	7
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed,	8
And on the pedestal these words appear:	9
<i>My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:</i>	10
<i>Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!</i>	11
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay	12
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare	13
The lone and level sands stretch far away.	14

by Percy Bysshe Shelley
1817

NOTES:

2: *trunkless*: without a torso

4: *visage*: face

7: *survive*: outlive

8: “The hand” belongs to the sculptor, who “mocked” (both imitated and ridiculed) the sculpted passions; “the heart,” which has “fed” the passions, belongs to the king.

10: Ozymandias is the Greek name of Ramses II, a 13th century BC pharaoh of Egypt. The Greek 1st century BC historian Diodorus Siculus records that the largest statue in Egypt depicted Ozymandias and bore the following inscription: “I am Ozymandias, king of kings. If anyone wants to know what I am and where I lie, let him surpass me in some of my exploits.”