

The Literary Analysis: "Young Goodman Brown"

The Assignment: As a method of expressing your interpretation of a piece of literature, you are to write a literary analysis focusing on the *symbolism and imagery* used in the development of a *theme* (the symbolic meaning) found in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown."

The Method: Literary analysis differs from the conventional book report in that you assume the reader of your analysis has read the story. Therefore, you should not rely heavily on plot summary but instead on interpretation. You focus on certain elements of the story and how the author uses these elements in the creation of meaning. "Young Goodman Brown" is a particularly appropriate piece to analyze because it is a *moral allegory*; that is, a story told with two levels of meaning: the *literal* and the *symbolic*. The symbolic meaning reflects moral themes. For example, when people look within for depravity, they can learn undesirable things about themselves lose their faith and alienate themselves from society. There are other moral themes that you can explore as well depending on your interpretation of the story. Your job is to show how Hawthorne develops the theme by focusing on his use of *symbolism*. We will discuss other potential themes in class.

The Thesis Statement: Because you focus on specific elements of a story, a literary analysis requires a thesis or focus statement. You can arrive at this statement by **asking yourself a question**. For example, the question could be: How does Hawthorne use symbolism and imagery to create meaning in "Young Goodman Brown"? You could then write a thesis statement focusing on the symbols and imagery that Hawthorne uses to develop the central theme of the story based on your interpretation. .

The Body Paragraphs: The body paragraphs should explain how specific symbols and images develop the theme as the story progresses. Each body paragraph should support your thesis statement. Furthermore, you should cite specific examples (quote or paraphrase) from the story to support your interpretation. Integrate quotes into your own sentences. Because quotes are concrete details, do not use them as topic sentences. After stating a concrete detail (a detail that could generate level 2 questions), provide commentary explaining what the concrete detail reveals or means (answer level 2 questions about it).

The Concluding Paragraph: You should not simply restate your thesis, but tie the paper together and explain its significance and the significance of the story. Answer the question, "So what?" (level 3).

Oops! If you find yourself frequently using "time" words such as "before" "after" or "when," you might be drifting into summary. Use these transitions, but use them sparingly. It is very tempting to summarize because chronological organization of your paper is easier to manage. Summarize only when a short summary is needed to illustrate a point you are making in the analysis. Remember to use present tense when discussing the action in the work. Use a formal academic writing style, third person (no "you" or "I"), as well as affirmative language – state your opinion as fact because you are going to prove your points through the evidence you provide.

Requirements: The rough draft is due 9/27-28. The final draft must follow the MLA **essay format**, or I will not accept it. You will submit two peer-edit sheets, the adult conference form as well as the rough draft with your final draft. The final draft is due 10/1.