

QPA: Quick Passage Analysis

Purpose:

Use several writing “moves” to develop a single piece of text evidence into a full paragraph of analysis

Process:

1. Claim

- Construct a topic sentence that states your claim or supports your thesis

2. Evidence

- Introduce relevant text evidence with appropriate citation

3. Analysis: WHAT

- Make observations about *what* your evidence means, demonstrates, or reveals

4. Analysis: HOW

- Explain *how* your evidence means, demonstrates, or reveals what you say it does (What details, images, word choices, motifs, symbols, etc. is the author using?)

5. Analysis: So what?

- “So what?” What does this particular example/evidence/scene have to do with the larger ideas at hand?
Connect back to your primary claim, thesis, or theme

A quick note on QPA

The point of the QPA strategy is to give you a reliable formula for constructing a literary analysis. If you do these writing and thinking moves, then by the time you’re done you will have:

1. Thought about and come to some conclusion about what’s going on in the text
2. Explained this conclusion to your reader
3. Supported this conclusion with text evidence.

And that’s literary analysis, whether it’s six sentences or a graduate thesis. You can vary the order of the steps and you can vary the amount of evidence and analysis based on your assignment, but this approach gives you one method that works every time.

QPA Example

Thesis #1 (archetypal lens)

Joyce Carol Oates's story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" plays with fairy tale archetypes and expectations, but soon inverts them as Connie is joined not with Prince Charming but instead with the Prince of Darkness.

(1: Claim)

The majority of Oates's story presents readers with an encounter between the young and beautiful Connie and Arnold Friend, a seemingly handsome man who initially appears to be a fantasy born straight from Connie's daydreams.

(2: Evidence)

We discover Connie's main interests early on: she prizes beauty, loves music, spends her days dreaming about boys, and spends her nights cavorting with her girlfriends to look for boys. It should come as little surprise then when Arnold Friend rolls up to her driveway in his "bright gold" jalopy, dressed just how she likes, with a radio blaring the same music that she is listening to as she relaxes at home alone on a Sunday morning.

(3: Analysis: What?)

Arnold might as well be riding a white horse or driving a golden chariot: he looks like Connie's ideal "Prince Charming."

(4: Analysis: How?)

Unfortunately for Connie, Arnold's appearance is what allows him to entice her just long to entrap her. Over the course of the story, his manipulations are so effective that he compels her to exit the artificial safety of her home and leave with him.

(5: Analysis: So what?)

In the end, we can't know for certain where Connie is going; Oates is too wily and playful of a writer to give us that kind of closure. We can conclude, however, that Connie's fate is at least partially a product of her own misplaced desires. Her inflated interest in physical appearances and her wish that "her mother was dead and she herself was dead and it was all over" could be the sentiments that summon Arnold Friend to her door. If Arnold is the devil, or at least a predator in a greaser's guise, then he is a Devil drawn straight from Connie's dreams and straight from her parents' neglect.

(10 sentences)