**Subject area/course**: English/Language Arts; AP Language & Composition

**Grade level/band**: 11-12

**Task source**: Summit Public Schools

**Literary Analysis Essay**

**STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **Task context**:

In this task, you will answer the following essential question: *How do writers communicate ideas through literature?*

Literature is often seen as distinct from other modes of writing. However, at its core, literature, like all writing, is about communication. When we have something to say, we often find it most effective and efficient to say it in a clear and direct way. However, big ideas and complex concepts can often be more powerfully delivered in ways that are not always obvious or easy to understand. Through fictional, creative writing (in other words, literature) we can make profound statements about ourselves, others, and the world we live in.

For this project, you will be exploring how one writer uses literature to convey important ideas about the human experience. You will accomplish this by writing an essay in which you analyze a novel. Just as a film critic might analyze a movie to better understand its meaning, you are going to analyze a text to better understand what the author is trying to convey.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

In order to complete this project, you will be reading an American novel. As you read the novel, you are free to focus on the elements of it that are most interesting to you. You will identify the specific elements of the text—characters, ideas, symbols, etc.—that you find intriguing and you will gather evidence related to them as you complete the reading. This will provide the foundation for you to identify the central themes of the text. You are free to explore any themes you choose, as long as you can justify your choice.

To make this task more manageable, it has been broken down into a series of smaller steps that will build toward the final 4 to 5 page paper you are going to write:

1. Identify a central theme of the novel you are reading
2. Write a thematic statement
3. Write a thesis statement in which you make an argument about the theme(s) of the text
4. Select textual evidence that you can analyze in order to support and develop your thesis
5. Statement
6. Construct a detailed outline of your paper
7. Write a first draft
8. Receive feedback on this draft from your teacher and your peers
9. Revise your draft
10. Reflect on the writing process and respond to the ideas of one of your peers.

A successful essay will be 4 to 5 pages long and will adhere to the conventions of the discipline (including MLA format) appropriately with almost no noticeable errors. The writing will use a formal style and academic language, and it will include variation in style, language, and sentence structure.

You will incorporate a variety of detailed, relevant evidence that is sufficient to support your thesis, and you will present your evidence objectively and accurately. Your analysis will be insightful and clear and will thoroughly and accurately explain how your evidence supports your thesis. You will identify multiple themes in the text and provide an accurate analysis of their development and interaction with each other. In analyzing your evidence, you will consider the development of events and/or ideas in the text and the cumulative impact of specific word choices on the meaning of the text.

1. **Final product**:

You will write a 4 to 5 page literary analysis essay in which you analyze how an author develops themes through the use of word choice and the development of events and ideas.

**Additional Information**

1. **Knowledge and skills you will need to demonstrate on this task:**

* The ability to read independently and comprehend an American novel.
* The ability to formulate a thesis based on your reading.
* The ability to find, organize, integrate into an essay, and cite correctly evidence from a text.
* The ability to use the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading).
* The ability to critique a peer draft.

1. **Materials needed:**

* American novel selected by you OR assigned by your teacher. Your teacher will provide guidance around the text.
* Say-Mean-Matter Graphic Organizer

1. **Time requirements:**

You will have approximately 5 weeks to work on this task. You teacher will provide you with specific guidance and checkpoints.

1. **Scoring:**

Your work will be scored using the Summit Public Schools Literary Analysis Essay rubric. You should make sure you are familiar with the language that describes the expectations for proficient performance.