

## Critical analysis of literature

How to analyze a short story or a novel

## What do we mean by "critical analysis"?

- Critical = to be critical, to look closely at something and think about what really is being said and what the author actually means by saying it.
- Analysis = to break down a story into small pieces and study each piece closely.

## How can I analyze a short story?

- Read the short story closely at least twice!
- First time: quickly.
- Second time: more closely.
- Read with **close attention**! Take notes and write page number so that you can easily go back later.
- Be attentive about the title. What can the title tell you about the story?
- Remember: find **examples from the text** to support your arguments!

## How can I analyze a novel?

- To analyze a whole novel is very difficult.
  - Choose one aspect (one thing) to focus on :
    - The plot (the action). Give a **short** résumé.)
    - Theme (the idea behind – what is this story really about?)
    - Main character(s).
    - Setting (where/when).
- Focus on that one thing when you read. It is wise to take notes while you read.

## The different parts of your analysis.

- **Introduction** (author, title, a short resymee of what your analysis will focus on.)
- **Plot** (action) in the novel/short story.
- **Main character(s).**
- **Setting** (time/place)
- **Motiv/Theme.** What is the story **really** about.
- **Foreshadowing (frampek).** Can you spot any "hint" which gives away what might happen?
- **Conclusion.**

## Plot

- What happens?
- How are the things that happen tied together?
- Give a short résumé.

### Main characters

- Who are the **most important** characters in the story?
- How are they?
- What do they look like?
- What are they doing?
- What are they saying?

### Setting

- Where does the story take place?
- When?
- How do you know? Does it say or do you need to read between the lines to figure it out?
- Do you think time and place means anything for the story?

### Theme

- This is the idea "behind" the story.
- It's not the plot/the action, but what it really means. Most often you need to read between the lines to figure this out.
- What is the author's message?
- What is the author trying to make us understand?

### Conclusion

- Now is the time for you to say your opinion about the story.
- How do you think the story works?
- Do you think there is a message behind the story? Something the author is trying to make us understand?
- If yes: How does it work?
- Are there, in your opinion, any parts of the story that work well/not so well?
- Summarize the different parts of your analysis.