Analytical Essay

In an analytical essay students interpret a work and support their interpretation with evidence. An analysis typically begins by identifying the work and the author. This identification is followed by general information such as plot summary or social and historical context. In an English 110 analysis, this general information is concluded with the thesis statement at the end of the introductory paragraph.

As in other types of writing, the thesis sentence presents the main argument of the essay. It should be extremely clear and should be a statement, not a question. Every paragraph in the essay should develop and support the thesis in some way. In an analytical essay, the student will frequently use literary elements such as theme, plot, setting, irony, diction, or symbolism to analyze a literary work. These elements may be stated in the thesis.

A strong analysis requires proper use of quotations. Students should use a quotation to support every argument in their essay, and every quotation should be carefully chosen to develop the thesis. Each quotation must also be put in context before the quotation and then given relevance after the quotation. Finally, each quotation must be correctly cited in text and on the Works Cited page using MLA format.

An analytical essay provides considerable latitude for student interpretation, but the students must be able to support their assertions with examples from the text. All assertions should develop the thesis, and no empty arguments or language should be included.

An analytical essay:

✓ Will contain a strong thesis statement
✓ Will develop this thesis in every paragraph
✓ Will include quotations to support each point
✓ Will introduce each quotation
✓ Will explain the relevance of each quotation
✓ Will cite each quotation using MLA format
John Keats’ Poem, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, was written over two hundred years ago. The main character of the poem is an ancient Grecian urn, which the speaker stands in front of, analyzing with depth. He looks at the urn with compassion and appreciation as he sees different pictures on the urn’s sides. He asks many questions to himself while trying to understand what the urn’s pictures are telling him. The art depicted on the sides of the urn all contribute different themes, which reveal to the reader the never-ending beauty in our world.

The first and most beautiful theme the art on the urn reveals is purity. One example of this can be found in these lines, “Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave,/ Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare” (24-25). The speaker sees a young couple, frozen in time, lounging under a tree. We see that he is overjoyed, about the limbs of the unchanging tree, “Ah, happy, happy boughs! That cannot shed” (31). The tree that the couple sits beneath has leaves that it will never be lost to the passing seasons. These leaves will stay with the tree forever, and so will the couple relaxing underneath, with pure simplicity. The couple is youthful and virtuous, enjoying each other’s company until the end of time.

Permanence is another key theme evoked throughout the artwork on the urn. The speaker makes this clear while appreciating the art on the sides of the urn. In a way he
seems envious of the people on the urn, who are frozen in time. In the same sense, the speaker seems relieved that he does not have to live like this. In the forth stanza, the speaker examines a picture on the urn of a group of villagers, on their way to sacrifice a cow. “Who are these coming to the sacrifice?/ To what green altar, O mysterious priest,/ Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,” (31-33). He wonders where they came from and when they will return. They are stuck in time and their town will forever be empty.

A mysterious romantic notion serves as another theme found within the artwork of the ancient urn. Pictures of lovers are shown on the urn’s surface, conveying their undying love for one another. Although with the concept of transience in the poem we can’t help but question whether they are in love or just waiting to have sex. Keats freezes them in a pure romantic time, before sex would be an issue in their relationship. Now that they are frozen, they can enjoy each other’s company, forever in joyful bliss. This line expresses the speakers overwhelming satisfaction with this everlasting bliss, “More happy love! more happy, happy love!/ For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd” (25-26). When he says, “still to be enjoy’d” he is alluding to the fact that the couples live forever with the anticipation of consummating their relationship.

When analyzing this poem, we see that the speaker looks to the urn’s artwork as a source of wisdom and inspiration. The urn serves as a higher power of knowledge, teaching him as he ponders the pictures on its surface. He even goes on to call the urn a “Sylvan historian” (3), who reveals its rustic nature and old age. The urn is ancient and holds many truths that the speaker wants to find so he can better his own life. Through this poem, which has been made in honor of this ancient urn, we too can find help from it and apply it to our lives.
Finally, the most important theme of the urn is the magnificent power of art and its effect on the world. The speaker approaches the ancient urn with an attitude of discovery and ends up finding more than what was on the surface. He discovers that the most amazing truths can be found in everyday art. When writing this poem, Keats suggests that in order to find truth, it must be experienced in everyday life. The truths in life are found through a personal approach and not through a logical viewpoint or an argument. Many pictures are frozen in time, which gives us the opportunity to step back and find truths in the rushing world we live in.

Keats wraps up “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by stating what I believe is his main point of the poem, “’Beauty is truth, truth beauty,’ - that is all ye know on earth, and all/ ye need to know” (49-50). This is the last line of the poem, and it leaves us with a mysterious, yet awe worthy, satisfaction. Though it may be a mystery to some, after reading the couple lines before, I have drawn a satisfying answer. “When old age shall this generation waste,/ Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe/ Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st” (46-48). The speaker explains to the reader in these lines, that when you can not find an answer to the troubles in this world, you can turn to this age old piece of art and it will tell you all you need to know.

The themes found in “Ode on a Grecian Urn” written by John Keats show our world that truth and beauty are ageless factors that apply to everyone on earth. Everyone loves, and everyone experiences truth through their own personal experience. The speaker in this poem gives us his interpretation to how he recognizes the truth and beauty shown by a piece of art. If we analyze contributed themes such as these in artwork experienced in our own lives, we can see the truth and beauty within.
Works Cited

Retrieved from http://englishhistory.net/keats/poetry/odeonagrecianurn.html
The content of Martin Luther King's “I Have a Dream” speech is undeniably important. Reading the speech is different from hearing it. When heard, the speech is like a song that has three stages. Those three stages match the stages that Joseph Campbell, an expert on the types of heroes found in ancient myths, identified as a series of steps a person goes through on the way to becoming a hero. First, there is the Call to Adventure, or the point in a person’s life when the person is first given notice that everything is going to change; second comes the Road of Trials, which is a series of tests, tasks, or ordeals that the person must undergo to begin the transformation; and, lastly, the Freedom to Live, the turning point where the hero decides to either continue being a hero or return to life as a regular person with a hero inside (Hero's Journey website 1). Dr. King's speech leads the listener/reader through each of these three stages.

The first stage is the Call to Adventure, representing when African Americans took 100 years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation to begin to be free. The hero's journey of this group of people has involved endless years of struggling for equality. By matching the tempo of his speech to the rhythm of this long journey, Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired the people to stand up and fight for their rights.
In his tone and the pace he used to deliver the speech, he communicated to the crowd that everyone needed to keep climbing.

When Dr. King starts to deliver the speech, his tone on pronouncing the words is calm and melodic; however as he approaches the main idea of his oration, his tone changes into extravagant and, at the same time, passionate tones to proclaim those words. As it is reproduced in our text *40 Model Essays*, King’s repetition of “I Have a Dream” stops as he approaches the speech's “mountaintop”:

I have a dream today! I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; “and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.” (344)

The second stage of the Hero’s Journey is the road of trials. African Americans have been enslaved and have experienced cruel treatment by white people, but they have never stopped believing that some day they’ll be free and receive equal treatment--that they’ll be accepted as brother and sister. The inspirational words of Martin Luther King Jr. helped everyone who heard his speech to stand up and fight for their rights.

African American people haven't stopped climbing, even though they are still discriminated against. Many days are difficult, but they have not stopped reaching for their goals. The inequality formed to keep them from reaching their goal presents a challenge they have accepted and continue to fight against. As a result, they are reaching the final stage of the Hero's Journey--the “Freedom to Live.” At last, they are beginning to stand on the mountaintop that Dr. King's words took them to in his speech. Each time
he repeated “I have a dream,” they could feel themselves taking another step, and when he broke into the speech's final stanza they could feel what it would be like to stand there as heroes on top of a mountain of painful struggle:

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

From every mountainside, let freedom ring. And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

“Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!”

(345)

Martin Luther King’s speech follows all of these stages. The Call to Adventure is delivered in a calm voice. Dr. King's voice starts to get strong as he explains to his people that they need to stay on their journey on the Road of Trials. Then comes the repetition, which he uses until he reaches the loud rhythm, telling the crowd that it is their time to live life as an eagle that can fly freely which is the Freedom to Live. These changes in pitch and tempo gave the speech the power he needed to bring to raise people up and encourage them to keep going, even after he would no longer be there to lead them. Just as in music, content is important. However, the real power comes from the tempo. On The Hero's Journey, “timing is everything.”
Martin Luther King’s speech precedes the series of steps that a person must go through to become a hero and encourages them to grasp their freedom and equality with all Americans. At the end of Dr. King’s speech, the listeners/reader has learned how to follow the steps in becoming a hero.
Works Cited


The False Truths

It is curious to think that any one person could be telling a lie without knowing that they are. In the essay “The Ways We Lie” by Stephanie Ericsson, she explores the thought of how lies are incorporated into everyday life. According to this essay, “We lie. We all do. We exaggerate, we minimize, we avoid confrontation, we spare people’s feelings, we conveniently forget, we keep secrets, we justify lying to the big-guy institutions” (159). How do we know what the truth is, when we are told what we want to hear? Ericsson writes about ten different “lies,” all of which are commonly used. Ericsson speaks about different lies to justify peoples’ actions and thought, even though some of the lies are oversimplified and basic fundamentals are left out.

Everybody incorporates lies into everyday life, without even understanding what lies are and other people’s reactions to them. Two of the lies which Ericsson presents to the readers are omission and dismissal lies, which are common. They both are riskier lies, but are effective if used correctly and hurtful if used upon another. Omission lies are when one is telling the truth minus some key facts and dismissal lies are removing key parts to illustrate a point. The question then becomes how can anyone tell if an individual is living a lie rather than reality? With enough information left out, a new world is created. Ericsson makes it seem as if all
individuals lie, even if they see themselves as honest people. “Like most people, I indulge in small falsehoods and still think of myself as an honest person. Sure I lie, but it doesn’t hurt anything” (159). Which lies are to be accepted in life and how intense does a lie have to be to be considered over-the-top? Everybody uses variations of lies to justify what they are doing and what they believe in. It is human nature at its best. It is the best because it keeps people happy and not have to face the harsh reality. It is also human nature at its worst, seeing that lying is making everybody live a lie.

As some lies are oversimplified in Ericsson’s article, she proves that there’s always some truth to every lie. She also introduces some lies that are not considered the common lie, such as the façade and deflecting. The façade is when an individual puts on another face for different occasions, whereas a deflecting lie is used to hide an individual by tricking others to think about something else. (161,162). Those two lies, as well as the few I have mentioned above, are oversimplified. There’s a lot more to each lie than Ericsson gives credit. No matter the lies’ content, they are hurtful if used incorrectly, but who wants to hear the honest truth to everything? The way Ericsson wrote this essay, it seems as though she doesn’t consider the readers may take these lies and think of themselves as untrustworthy and a bad person. Everybody perceives words differently.

Ericsson makes her argument convincing, although she still ignores some of the basic fundamentals of lies. Ericsson speaks of her own experiences with lies and gives the readers an overview explanation of the ten different lies; I have mentioned four. This essay makes the readers think of their own experiences with lies. While
it makes some individuals feel like bad people as it also prides others on the same grounds. She has done a good job at arguing her point that everybody lies. She believes that people lie out of habit and as a second nature, but on the other hand, there can be no justifying the lies told because in the end they are lies. (159). A basic fundamental is that some of the lies Ericsson presents are actually from one lie. To rephrase some of the lies she presents are just small branches from one big lie. In contrast, some of her definitions and statements about lies are right on the dot. “Our acceptance of lies becomes a cultural cancer that eventually shrouds and reorders reality until moral garbage becomes as invisible to us as water is to a fish” (167). Anything we accept as a whole becomes normal, and a new way of life.

Similarly, Ericsson recognizes how easy it is to lie in everyday life. The question of which parts are lies and which are truths vanish. “I discovered that telling the truth all the time is nearly impossible. It means living with some serious consequences,” seeing that nobody actually wants to hear the actual concrete truth (159). In this regard Ericsson battles the effects lying has in everyday life. It is incorporated with the truth as a balancing act. “Saying it’s okay to lie one way not another is hedging” (160); justify lying in life is naturally done without knowing for many. Ericsson encourages people to be aware of lies, even if the lies aren’t demolished from life. The debate of lying is one an individual needs to have alone. Everybody responds to lies differently, and it’s a personal choice to lie or to be honest. The lies with which Ericsson presents the readers are common even if not all are lies. On the other hand, parts are left out or oversimplified within each of the
lies which Ericsson presents to the readers. We can have a unified life with lies as a second nature to make sense of everyday life and thoughts.
Work Cited