

Guide to Writing Article Analysis Papers

Overall Instructions:

The object of the article analysis is to challenge the student, develop a higher level of learning (theorizing, hypothesizing, reasoning, and speculating), and to improve written communication skills. The student needs to read, process, understand, and utilize the material in a quick, concise, and dynamic fashion. The entire analysis should work around the paragraph format as opposed to the method of dividing up the evaluation into different parts. The student must concentrate on EVALUATION not SUMMATION of the article. Also, eliminate all First and Second Person usage (Do not use the following words: I, we, our, you, your, us, and me). Eight distinct areas form the basis of each article analysis.

Each article analysis will consist of two to three pages of double-spaced typed text. Margins one inch all around with size 12 font.

Background Information:

The person/people, country, time period involved, as well as the author of the article, source of publication, and date of publication, should all clearly stand out in the beginning of the analysis. If at all possible, find some information about the author. Students who fail to realize the significance of this first area should remember that the background information remains the very first paragraph that the reviewer reads. Subsequently, if the first paragraph appears ill constructed and sloppy, then the reviewer finds the overall work that much less attractive.

Thesis:

Following the background information, the thesis, components, and complete thesis need to appear in a clear and concise manner. Usually, a thesis is no longer than two sentences. Remember, the thesis is the point that the author tries to make in his/her writing. Every author constructs his writing around such a concept so be sure that you correctly identify the thesis. Usually, the author places the thesis at both the beginning and end of the article. In the case of a book, if the author wrote a preface or introduction, then the thesis should appear within the first chapter, or possibly in a separate chapter at the end of the book labeled conclusion. In the case of an article or book that forms its thesis around a comparison of events or people, it remains extremely important that the validity of the comparison acts as the subject of evaluation.

Evidence:

Examine what type of evidence the author uses to support his/her claim/thesis. The analysis should answer some or all of the following questions: were quotations used? Did the author refer to primary or secondary sources? How much generalizing did the author do? Make a list of the sources up as you read the article and the when you have finished reading the article for the first time you will have successfully found the different types of sources. The student needs to critically evaluate the author's use of evidence, so be careful to analyze various pieces of evidence thoroughly. For books, this part of the review remains relatively easy to perform since all one needs to do is examine the footnotes and bibliography as one reads each chapter.

Highlights:

When reading any historical piece, the reader must distinguish between parts in the article/ book that are truly significant and those that remain secondary in importance. Even if the reader finds absolutely little worth or value stemming from the article, the student still must find at least ONE positive aspect of the writing. Locate at least one statement or piece of information that the author provided that proved helpful.

Organization:

Organizing material in a concise yet well-suited framework for the article analysis is required. Students must present information in chronological order unless otherwise specified. The specifics mentioned, such as names and date, should also correlate together and center of the main thesis.

Explanation:

The student needs to explain the specifics in as much detail as the space will allow but should not dwell on any one point of analysis for too long as it might detract from other areas of the analysis. Remember to emphasize EVALUATION of the material, and NOT SUMMARIZE the entire article. For the article analysis, explanation is a one-paragraph summary will suffice, while in the book review a two-paragraph summary will allow the student to clearly identify the general specific topics of the book.

Conclusion:

Decide on the level of convincing done by the author and say so in the concluding paragraph. Always point out both the weak as well as the strong parts of the reading. Remember, however, not to use first person or any personal pronouns. Many students find it attractive to end their review by either recommending or not recommending the article/book to fellow students. One may suggest what the author could do to convince the reader, but remember no first or second person.

Structure:

Students must construct the analysis in a paragraph format. Although areas such as background information and thesis might appear in a listing formation a paragraph remains much more formal and appropriate. Try to keep each paragraph between four eight sentences.