

Critical Lens
Sample Introduction and
Body Paragraph

Name _____
Date _____ Period _____

Critical Lens:

“If the literature we are reading does not wake us, why then do we read it? A literary work must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside of us”
~Franz Kafka

Directions: All of the following are essential in a quality introduction. Number the following in the introduction:

1. The lens 2. Interpretation 3. Agree or disagree 4. Titles and authors 5. Why the work fits the lens

Introduction:

Franz Kafka once stated, “If the literature we are reading does not wake us, why then do we read it? A literary work must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside of us.” In other words, there is no point in reading words unless they have the power to open our eyes to something we hadn’t yet discovered. I agree with this statement, as its truth is clearly illustrated in Night by Elie Weisel.

Directions: The following is an example of a well-developed body paragraph that uses specific literary elements to discuss how the work demonstrates the critical lens. Complete the following to illustrate what a well-written body paragraph looks like:

1. Circle the words used to discuss literary elements.
2. Underline (once) statements that provide a direct link to the critical lens.
3. Underline (twice) specific examples from the text used to illustrate how the work relates to the critical lens.

Body Paragraph One:

Night is a vivid, detailed autobiography of a young, Jewish boy named Elie who survived a Nazi concentration camp. The story is set during World War II and provides a first-person perspective on an inhumane time in history. Until reading this book, one might not have understood the hateful acts of injustice that characterized the Holocaust. However, Weisel’s stylistic use of imagery contributes tremendously to the establishment of a clearer idea of what life for detained Jews was really like. For example, when Weisel describes the ride into the concentration camp by cattle cars, his imagery is so well crafted that one almost feels the claustrophobic conditions of so many people crammed into such a tiny space, smells the scents of urine and sweat, experiences the humiliation of being sprayed down like animals by men with hoses. Weisel further utilizes his ability to manipulate the reader’s senses by using the taste of the soup on two given nights to convey the general mood at that certain time. The first point at which the taste of the soup is described is just after a man is poisoned and dies as he tries to steal a bit of food to satisfy his famished stomach. The other prisoners enjoy their soup that night, dehumanized so much by their deprived appetites as to feel no remorse for a dead colleague. The second time, however, is just after the hanging of a small child, life stolen because he would not betray a friend. This boy was the symbol of an angel, and his premature death the symbol of the triumph of hatred and evil over faith. This night, Weisel describes the soup as tasting of corpses, effectively sharpening the awareness of readers toward the obscene injustice that was the Holocaust.