Fiction is prose writing about imagined events and characters. What makes authors such as Mark Twain, William Faulkner or Alice Walker remarkable short fiction writers? They are true masters at combining the five key elements that go into every work of fiction, from short stories to *War and Peace*: **character, setting, conflict, plot and theme**. For this essay, your instructor requires three outside sources from the library’s research databases. This guide will lead you to the best resources for your assignment.

ASSIGNMENT

For your Researched Analysis paper, develop a narrowly-defined argumentative thesis that considers the relationship between **theme and symbol** in one of the literature options listed below. You will need to find a minimum of **three outside critical sources** to support your analysis. This critical source must come from the Research Databases available from the library.

1. Articulate the central theme of the story and develop a strong thesis statement about that theme.
2. Identify the symbols in the story and discuss how they support and establish the theme. Explain how the symbol helps to communicate the story’s meaning, citing specific moments in the text.
3. What does the story suggest about the relationship between theme and symbol in fiction?

**NOTE:** For more assignment instructions refer to your instructor’s very complete assignment handout, especially additional points for getting started, deadlines and writing about theme, symbolism, and other points to consider.
GETTING STARTED

From your instructor:

- Start by making a list of all the work’s possible themes.
- Determine which points seem most important; then formulate a single sentence in which you combine them.
- Try to capture the work’s essence in a single sentence. Remember, your goal is to transcend a mere one-sentence plot summary. How can you clearly express the central theme in a few words?

(Kennedy and Gioia 223)

Select from these readings:


FINDING CRITICAL ARTICLES IN DATABASES

Databases contain articles, news, and multimedia on various topics. Literary databases will have articles reviewed by peers (scholars in the field) that are appropriate for college paper. Use your keyword list.

1. Bloom’s Literary Reference Online (LSCS Libraries)

(Facts on File) Essays and criticism examining the lives of great authors and their works throughout history. This is an excellent source. It also contains short videos about critical analysis that will be helpful.

2. Literature Resource Center (LSCS Libraries)

(Thomson Gale) Includes journal articles, critical essays, work overviews & summaries, and author biographies from authoritative sources. (See sample search results.)

3. JSTOR (LSCS Libraries)

(JSTOR) Complete historical full text of all issues of journals in a wide range of humanities and social science fields. I found a very good search using JSTOR. Limit to articles you can access.
FINDING BOOKS AND EBOOKS

University Park Library is digital. Use the library catalog if you want to order books or resources from other libraries. [http://www.lonestar.edu/library/](http://www.lonestar.edu/library/) Or download or read online eBooks.

Keep in mind that the author’s name is a SUBJECT or KEYWORD. You are looking for information about the author’s work, not by them.

When researching, keep an open mind. The sample book at the left may be useful, even though it is not on your exact work. It contains critical analysis of short stories.

Select and open it online, search the Table of Contents for your work. Other ‘thematic’ books may be helpful. Use your creative research skills to uncover the best resources for your paper.

GETTING HELP WITH YOUR PAPER

1. Use the MLA paper guide or online MLA Guide.
2. Ask one of the tutors to help. Drop by for an appointment.
3. Use the Writing Lab.
4. About Student Success, in Angel, is a short course covering study skills, doing research, using technology and more. Free. Beef up your skills – improve your grades.

We are rooting for your success. Ask the librarian for assistance, see the tutor and visit your instructor if you have questions.

The Chat line is open when the library is open.

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