

## The Five Rules of Writing Papers on Literature

You need to stick to these rules if you want to write good papers and receive good grades in this course.

### Rule 1:

Every paper needs to have a title that is both interesting and indicative about the topic of the paper. You want to be informative in your titles, not cutesy or smart.

**Bad titles:** “*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” or “Women”

**Good title:** “Representation of Women in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*”

### Rule 2:

Every paper needs to be written around a thesis statement which is given in the introductory paragraph.

**Bad thesis:** “There are many similarities and differences between *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Unvanquished*.”

**Good thesis:** “While both *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Unvanquished* deal with racial issues in the old south, they differ in certain respects such as the depiction of the white protagonist’s friendship with the main black character and the representation of the living conditions of the slaves.”

### Rule 3:

A literary analysis paper supports its arguments through concrete textual evidence. That is, you need to justify your claims with significant quotations from the texts. You need to integrate your quotations into your paragraphs and sentences so that the whole thing reads smoothly. Also, when you refer to books or use quote from them, you need to use the correct citation format, which includes indicating the title correctly, using quotations marks properly and giving page reference at the end of the quotation.

**Incorrect:** The narrator of “*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” introduces the fictional nature of the story on page 3 of the book when he says to the reader, “You don’t know about me, without you have read a book by the name of ‘The Adventures of Tom Sawyer’”.

**Correct:** The narrator of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* introduces the fictional nature of the story at the very beginning of the book when he says to the reader, “You don’t know about me, without you have read a book by the name of ‘The Adventures of Tom Sawyer’” (Twain 3).

### Rule 4:

A literary analysis paper employs present tense throughout unless you are talking about historical facts.

**Incorrect:** “In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which was published in 1884, Huck stole a raft and went down the Mississippi river.”

**Correct:** “In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which was published in 1884, Huck steals a raft and goes down the Mississippi river.”

### Rule 5:

A literary analysis paper uses either the full name or only the last name of the author if the last name is enough to identify the author. Never use first name only.

**Incorrect:** In his *Narrative*, Frederick narrates the story of his escape from slavery.

**Correct:** In his *Narrative*, (Frederick) Douglas narrates the story of his escape from slavery.