

**1. TITLES**

- a. Give your paper a title that conveys its content (“Morrison’s Use of Biblical Allusions in *Song of Solomon*”), rather than the assignment (“*Song of Solomon* Close Reading”).
- b. Italicize or underline titles of books, novels, plays, or other complete works. Place the titles of shorter pieces like poems, articles, stories or essays in quotation marks.

**2. VERBS**

- a. Use present-tense verbs in literary analysis. Reserve past-tense verbs for events that took place in the past; and also recognize that when you do, you run the risk of narrating what has happened (re-telling the plot or paraphrasing the language) rather than analyzing the text (showing how the language produces a certain effect or outcome).
- b. Avoid passive verbs, which can lend themselves to wordy or vague language. Avoid over-use of the verb “to be,” which can produce static sentences. Look for active, vigorous verbs.

**3. Check DANGLING MODIFIERS AND PHRASES:**

- a. “. . . simply by examining his choice of words, it is quite clear that the feeling remains.”
- b. CORRECT SO THAT THE PHRASE MODIFIES THE APPROPRIATE NOUN: “simply by examining [who’s examining?] WE SEE that the feeling remains.”

**4. PRONOUN AGREEMENT:** Make sure pronouns agree in number and gender with the nouns they refer to. “The diction is very lofty throughout this passage—almost as if each speaker is flaunting their knowledge.” “Each speaker” is singular. Hence: “each speaker is flaunting HIS knowledge.” If the gender is unknown use HIS OR HER or change the number of the noun: “the SPEAKERS are flaunting THEIR knowledge.”**5. FAULTY PRONOUN REFERENCE:** Make sure that pronouns like “which,” “this,” or “that” have nouns to refer to. See [OWL \(Online Writing Lab at Purdue\)](#).**6. PUNCTUATION IN A COMPOUND SENTENCE.** A compound sentence links two or more main clauses with a comma and coordinating conjunction (and, but, or), or a semicolon.

- a. Conjunction and no comma makes a *run-on* (error). “I collected bananas, yoghurt, and frozen berries and I made a smoothie.”
- b. Comma and no conjunction makes a *comma splice* (error). “I collected bananas, yoghurt, and frozen berries, I made a smoothie.”
- c. Comma and conjunction makes it just right. “I collected bananas, yoghurt, and frozen berries, and I made a smoothie.” OR “I collected bananas, yoghurt, and frozen berries; I made a smoothie.”

**7. SENTENCE STRUCTURE**

- a. A **simple** sentence has *one main clause* (a subject-verb unit that can stand alone): “My dog eats bats.” It can have a compound subject—“My dog and my cat eat bats”—or a compound verb—“My dog eviscerates and then eats bats”—or both. But it cannot have more than one clause. It can have multiple *phrases* (groups of words missing a subject or verb or both):

“My dog, spotted all over, eats bats.” “Running after bats, my dog trips over rats.” “My dog eats bats, not rats.” It can be a long sentence (lots of phrases). It is still a simple sentence.

- b. A **compound** sentence has *more than one main clause* linked by semicolon(s) or coordinating conjunctions and correct punctuation (see above). “My dog eats bats, and my cat eats rats.”
- c. A **complex** sentence has *one or more main clauses* and *one or more dependent clauses* (subject-verb units that cannot stand alone). “Although my cat prefers rats, my dog eats bats.” “My dog eats bats, which are found under mats.” “When my dog learns to eat cats, I will lose my favorite pet.”
- d. You can probably guess what a **compound-complex** sentence looks like: “I am finding out a great deal about the dietary habits of cats; and as I progress in my studies, I have also learned that dogs eat bats, a discovery that fills me with delight and awe.” How many clauses and what kind do you find here?
- e. A group of words missing a subject and/or verb is a phrase. When it stands alone with an opening capital letter and a closing period, it is a **sentence fragment** (generally an error, though writers sometimes use it for effect).

## 8. CITATIONS AND QUOTATIONS

- a. Supply a “Works Cited” list at the end of your paper. Cite the text you are quoting from, as well as the *Oxford English Dictionary* or anything other work you cite. If a text appears in “Works Cited,” you should *cite* it in the essay, that is, refer to or quote from it, supplying a page number within parentheses after the reference or quotation (21). You do not need to use the author’s last name in the parentheses unless there’s any doubt about which source you’re referring to. Use MLA format for the “Works Cited” list. If you used a source that you do *not* refer to or quote in your essay, you can supply a list of “Works Consulted” and add it to that.
- b. When quoting material from a text, set off longer passages with indented margins. You do not need to use a different size font or italics, nor do you need to use quotation marks unless they appear in the quoted material. Place the page number in parentheses after the quotation and final punctuation.

9. **GENERALIZATIONS** Try to avoid basing your argument on what a “reader” must do to understand the text. This approach leads to generalizations you cannot support (do you really know how all readers see the book?). Focus rather on what you can substantiate with concrete evidence, that is, what the text reveals, what you can see and demonstrate on the page.
10. **PROCESS LANGUAGE** Get right to your ideas. Avoid language that announces your methods (“This essay will examine certain images,” “In order to understand this idea, we need to look at this passage”) and set up your argument directly instead (“As the author’s use of imagery suggests, this passage is significant because . . .”).

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21L.315 Prizewinners: Nobelists  
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