

Critical Lens Essay - Self-Assessment Checklist

To succeed, your essay must have everything on this checklist.

Introduction:

1. Re-state the entire quote – mention the author, and then:
2. Interpret the lens. Restate it in your own words to show that you understand it.
3. Agree or disagree with the lens.
4. Say what works of literature (novels, stories, plays, poems, etc.) you will use to prove your opinion of the quote. Also mention the literary terms you will be using to prove your opinion.

Body Paragraph 1:

1. Prove that your opinion of the critical lens is true based on the **FIRST** piece of literature.
2. Begin the paragraph with a clear topic sentence that connects the work of literature to the critical lens.
3. Flesh out the paragraph with sub-topics and details that support the topic sentence. Stay focused.
4. Use at least **TWO** ‘literary terms’ in your discussion

Body paragraph 2:

1. Prove that your opinion of the critical lens is true based on the **SECOND** piece of literature.
2. Begin the paragraph with a clear topic sentence that connects the work of literature to the critical lens.
3. Flesh out the paragraph with sub-topics and details that support the topic sentence. Stay focused.
4. Use at least **TWO** ‘literary terms’ in your discussion

Conclusion:

1. Restate what you have proven about the two works of literature, about the critical lens and about the literary terms.
2. Add another sentence that shows how the ideas you discussed in the essay apply to real life.

Critical Lens: “Literature opens a dark window on the soul, revealing more about what is bad in human nature than what is good.” (no author is mentioned)

“Literature opens a dark window on the soul, revealing more about what is bad in human nature than what is good.” This statement suggests that literature shows more about the bad aspects of people than the good. This critical lens is invalid because literature shows good and bad sides of human nature about equally, both in terms of people’s personal qualities and in terms of their actions. To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee, and Of Mice and Men, by John Steinbeck, are two books that illustrate this balance of good and bad.

The characters of To Kill a Mockingbird represent a wide range of human nature. For example, Atticus Finch is a character with very positive qualities. He is a model of courage and integrity, someone willing to take a stand for what he believes in. By contrast, Bob Ewell is evil and violent. He has many of the worst qualities of human nature. Furthermore, most of the other people of Maycomb, Alabama, where the story takes place, show attitudes of bigotry, prejudice, and racism.

The plot of To Kill a Mockingbird similarly shows both good and bad through people’s actions. On the negative side, people cruelly and unjustly accuse Tom Robinson of rape because he is black. Bob Ewell curses Atticus and spits in his face. However, many positive events occur, too. For instance, Atticus risks his own safety to confront a lynch mob outside the jail. And the neighbor, Boo Radley, comes out of hiding to save Atticus’s children when Bob Ewell attacks them. Such heroic actions suggest the basic decency of human nature.

The characters of Of Mice and Men also show people’s good traits as well as their bad. In the relationship between George and Lennie, there are positive qualities of human nature, such as friendship, loyalty, and trust. But Curley, a mean troublemaker, shows just how unpleasant people can be.

The plot of Of Mice and Men shows how good or bad people can be in their actions. George protects Lennie and takes care of him. At the end, George has to shoot his friend to save him from a worst fate. Meanwhile, Curley is a bully. It’s he who wants to shoot Lennie down after Lennie accidentally kills Curley’s wife. It’s interesting that George shoots Lennie out of friendship, while Curley wanted to shoot him for revenge. These two motives in themselves suggest the range of human nature.

Books such as To Kill a Mockingbird and Of Mice and Men show the interaction between positive and negative aspects of human nature. Rather than emphasize the bad, they present a more or less balanced view of people’s good and bad qualities and actions.