

Fall 2009

ENG 200 # 70878 Honors

### Writing Assignment I: Analysis of Scholarly Article

**Due Date:** October 15 (11:55 PM)  
**Submission:** Blackboard Safe Assignment© drop box  
<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>  
**Grade value:** 150 points

#### Description

For this assignment, you will closely analyze a peer-reviewed article from a scholarly journal that you expect to be useful for your future research paper (if you later change your mind that's fine). This exercise will give you practice in critically evaluating sources according to specific criteria (discussed below), and will model the type of source summary and critique you should do in any research paper, whether an end-of semester project or your honors thesis. Moreover, the work you do in this assignment should ideally feed directly into your research paper project later this semester.

#### Directions

Write a 4-5 page paper (double-spaced text, standard margins) which describes, analyzes, and evaluates *a scholarly article* that is relevant to your research interest. Organize your paper according to the sections listed below; use the questions below as a starting point for analyzing the articles (but do not hesitate to ask your own questions; you will inevitably think of some); and compare and contrast the sources within your discussion. Naturally, some of the questions below will apply to any given article, and others will not--use your judgment about which questions are most relevant and important to your choices.

#### Style & Format

The header of your paper should be the full citation of the article, and your name. (example below). The paper should be written in persuasive, elegant, and academically appropriate English, citing all outside sources used in MLA format.

Article Analysis Assignment  
Jane X. Doe  
ENG 200  
Date submitted

Leila S. May. "Foul Things of the Night': Dread in the Victorian Body" *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 93, No. 1 (Jan., 1998): 16-22.

## Selecting Your Article

Your first step is to identify an interesting article for your analysis. A good place to start is the MLA Bibliography and/or JStor (<http://lib.asu.edu/find-articles>). These databases list only quality, peer-reviewed sources so you are sure to pick a scholarly article worth reading.<sup>1</sup>

You may pick any article relating to the study of literature, preferably one of the works read in this course, though others may be suitable as well. However, the article should be published after 1980.

## Organizing your Analysis

Here are the sections you should use to organize your analysis essay. Use the questions as *starting points*--you do not have to address them necessarily in this order, and you may find that some of the questions overlap a bit. Clean up any repetition in your discussion as you revise your essay. Your organization within sections ultimately should be determined by the points *you* want to make in your analysis, not by my list of prompts. Finally, remember you should support your claims about the source with *evidence* (i.e., examples) from the article.

### Introduction: Brief Overall Description of the Article

- What is the subject matter of the articles? What is their overall purpose (informative? persuasive?) and who is their intended audience? Can you identify the thesis/research question?
- What is the basic structure and format of the sources?

### Research Methods / Disciplinary Perspective

- Characterize the research and analytic methods used by your author. Are the methods quantitative or qualitative? Describe the approach as best you can, even if you are not familiar with all the technical details.
- What kinds of key questions and critical assumptions are evident in the article?
- Is the article interdisciplinary in their orientation? If so, to what degree? How can you tell?

### Data / Evidence

- What kind of data does the author examine--primary documents, statistical information, experimental results, anecdotal evidence, interviews of authors, literary or historical texts, etc.? Are the data subjective, objective, or a mix of the two? <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In academia, professional scholars typically make unsolicited submissions of their articles to academic journals. Upon receipt of a submitted article manuscript, the journal editor (or editors) determines whether to reject the submission outright or begin the process of peer review. In the latter case, the submission becomes subject to anonymous peer-review by outside scholars of the editor's choosing. The number of these peer reviewers (or "referees") varies according to each journal's editorial practice — typically, no fewer than two, and usually at least three outside peers review the article. The editor(s) uses the reviewers' opinions in determining whether to publish the article, return it to the author(s) for revision, or to reject it. Even accepted articles are subjected to further (sometimes considerable) editing by journal editorial staff before they appear in print. Typically, because the process is lengthy, an accepted article will not be published until months after its initial submission, while publication after a period of several years is not unknown. The peer-review process is considered critical to establishing a reliable body of research and knowledge. Scholars can be expert only in a limited area of their fields; they rely upon peer-reviewed journals to provide reliable, credible research upon which they can build subsequent, related research.

- What sort of things count as “evidence” in this article? How strong and compelling is this evidence? Which article uses evidence/data more effectively; or, do they simply use different *kinds* of evidence?
- How well documented are the data? Does the author provide a way for you to evaluate the accuracy and quality of the evidence used?

### Credibility

- Who is the author? Is s/he authoritative? Published in the field? Respected among colleagues? What kind of information does the source give, if any?
- What is the publishing body of the source? Is it a respected journal or institution? Does the publishing body lend the author credibility?
- Does the source seem to be trustworthy? Why or why not?

### Rhetoric and Style

- Characterize the writing style and rhetoric (persuasive techniques) of your article.
- How does the author connect with his/her specified audience? Think here about what kind of tone is adopted (objective, judgmental, reserved, strident, urgent, partisan, etc.), what sorts of examples are used, how the author might frame a particular point or example, what kind of jargon is used (or not used, as the case may be), and anything else you can think of.
- How well does the author address the *significance* of his/her topics? Are you made to care about the issue’s importance, the implications of the study, etc.? Does the author address and/or define significance in different ways? If so, how?

### Conclusion: Overall Usefulness to Your Research

- What did you learn from the source? If the article was an argument, were you convinced?
- What kinds of data, claims, research methods, and/or background material are relevant to your own research interests?

### Works Cited

Give the full bibliographic citation for each of your secondary sources in MLA format.

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<sup>2</sup> Note the distinction between “secondary sources”=research/academic sources and “primary sources.” The literary work(s) examined is referred to as the “primary source” or “source text.” A primary source is a term used in a number of disciplines. Generally, a primary source (also called original source or source text) is a document, recording or other source of information that was created at the time being studied, by an authoritative source, usually one with direct personal knowledge of the events being described. It serves as an original source of information about the topic. Primary sources are distinguished from secondary sources, which often cite, comment on, or build upon primary sources. Please note that Wikipedia, SparkNotes, and similar are not scholarly sources.