

English Literature - Analytical Literature Review

TITLE: To the Lighthouse

AUTHOR: Virginia Woolf

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| <p>Historical context - what do you know about the author's time (political, social, philosophical) that is relevant to the text and its theme?</p> <p>Transition from the Victorian to the modern world. Class positions and gender roles seemed fixed. Modernism questioned the existence of God and the goodness in man. Key themes: transience of man, nature as an external and sometimes menacing force potential to consume humanity.</p> | | |
| <p>Setting - location, region, country, historical period - how does setting influence characterization? How does setting influence theme?</p> <p>To the Lighthouse is set on an island in the Hebrides. The lighthouse nearby symbolizes the meaning of life that all of the characters are trying to reach. Most of the story takes place in the Ramsay house, which is important to the text.</p> | <p>Author Biography - what do you know about the author that gives information about the text, its themes, and its significance?</p> <p>Virginia Woolf was part of the Bloomsbury Group. The Bloomsbury group was an influential group of English writers, intellectuals, philosophers, and artists who believed in the importance of the arts. They rejected Victorianism taboos including religious, artistic, social, and sexual. They were known for "intellectual snobbery."</p> | |
| <p>Inciting Incident - what character and/or events cause the conflict? How does the inciting incident inform theme?</p> <p>A superficial conflict may be that Mr. Ramsay wouldn't let James visit the lighthouse, but the real conflicts lie deeper. All of the characters struggle with their internal thoughts. All characters are adding to the conflict, creating chaos in the Ramsay house. With all three main characters trying to find the meaning of life in different ways, nobody finds it until the end.</p> | <p>Internal Conflict - What characters struggle internally? How and why? Does this conflict inform theme?</p> <p>All of the characters seem to have internal conflict. Mrs. Ramsay often thinks about pleasing her husband, Mr. Ramsay thinks about making himself significant as a philosopher so that he will be remembered, James experiences oedipus rex and has internal conflicts and thoughts about killing his father. Like Mr. Ramsay, Lily feels like her work lacks worth, so she has internal conflicts about her painting and whether she should follow the stereotypical female roles of the time period.</p> | <p>External Conflict- Between whom/what? Why? How does conflict inform theme?</p> <p>James and Mr. Ramsay have a conflict because James wants to go to the lighthouse and his father won't let him. This adds to the theme of not being able to reach what you want to. James always dreamed of visiting the lighthouse, like people are always wanting to go somewhere or do something, but like James, once these people get there, they will realize it isn't the same as they thought. When James finally reached the lighthouse, it wasn't as he expected. He said it didn't look the same as he</p> |

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| | | saw if from far way. He said something changed and something was different. |
| <p>Symbolism - abstract or concrete? What are they? How does symbolism inform theme?</p> <p>Lily's artwork represents a struggle against gender roles and stereotypes. The lighthouse, Lily's painting, The Ramsay's house and the sea are all symbols in this text. They all symbolize reaching the meaning of life. James finally reached the lighthouse, Lily finally found meaning and finished her painting, and the sea shapes the landscape.</p> <p>Characterization - Name & Analysis of major characters. how and what type - flat/round? Static/dynamic? Stock? Protagonist/Antagonist/Foil? Motivation? Attitudes? How does characterization inform theme?</p> <p>Each of the three main characters has a different approach to establishing the worth to his or her life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Mrs. Ramsay-emotional ~Mr. Ramsay-intellectual ~Lily Briscoe-artistic | <p>Tone - How is the author's and/or speaker's attitude evident in the text?</p> <p>The author quickly changes from one character's thoughts to others. This chaos and confusion is present in the work and finally resolves in the end when things start to make sense.</p> <p>Figurative language and literary devices - what devices are most prominent? What do they mean? How does the meaning relate to the theme?</p> <p>Stream of Consciousness- creates the impression that the reader is eavesdropping on the flow of conscious experience. It lays open the imagined inner lives of characters. The characters in this novel are often thinking to themselves and experiencing inner thoughts that contribute to help the reader understand the character without revealing anything to the other characters.</p> | |
| <p>Universal application - What specific themes are relevant to life/the human condition beyond the pages of the text? Answer "so what?" for the themes—why does this text matter?</p> <p>To the Lighthouse "doesn't attempt to the question by sitting down and saying, ' The meaning of life is...,' but rather by showing us fleeting moments the lives of several different people who are attempting to extract meaning from their lives."</p> | | |