



Beyond Literary Analysis Study Guide

Introduction

Welcome to the *Beyond Literary Analysis* study guide! We're glad that you've set aside time in your busy teacher life to study this book and think alongside us about what it means to teach analysis to the students in your classroom in a fresh, authentic way.

Whether you've come to this guide on your own, with a Professional Learning Community or department, or with your favorite teaching partner-in-crime, you'll find many entry points into the important work of truly moving *beyond* traditional literary analysis instruction in your classroom. Specifically, this guide aims to:

- Offer space at the end of each chapter to review what you've read, pull out big ideas, and talk back to the text.
- Help you read with *your* students in mind—what does this book mean for your teaching? For your planning? For the students who will show up at your door on Monday hungry for more?
- Allow you to try your hand at doing the work you will be asking your students to do: reading exciting, relevant, authentic analysis, and thinking about how writers make this kind of writing.
- Help you build a collection of favorite mentor texts.
- Show you how to experiment with making little bits of writing that will put you in the seats of your students and help you think about how the activities and techniques offered in this book might transform any piece of analytical writing—even your own!

Might we suggest you pour yourself a cup of coffee—or put the pot on for your colleagues—grab a few favorite pens, your notebook, and dig in. Happy reading!

Section 1: An Exploration *Beyond Literary Analysis*

Chapter One: Analysis in the Wild

Now that you've read Chapter 1, let's take a breath. We've thrown a lot at you—a new definition of *analysis*, different types of analysis, a broader definition of *text*. Whether you're working through this study guide on your own or with a team, it might be helpful to spend a minute articulating these new understandings for yourself.

Flip to Section 3 of the book—a resource section—and turn to *your* favorite kind of analysis, Movie and Television (Chapter 8), Music (Chapter 9), Sports (Chapter 10), Video Game (Chapter 11), or Literary (Chapter 12). Locate a mentor text title that looks interesting from anywhere in the chapter, “Google it” using the title and author, and give it a read. You should also feel free to go off book and grab a piece of professional analytical writing from your own reading life. (The “Where to Find It” charts in each Section 3 chapter can point you in the right direction.)

If you're working through this study guide with a group, you could each do this with a separate piece of analysis and share, or you could choose one as a group and work through it together.

- According to the book's definition of *analysis* (“a piece of writing that explores a text”), how is the piece you just read a work of analysis? In what ways is it a work of exploration?
- Take a look at Figure 1.2 (p. 14). What type of analysis would you use to classify the mentor text you just read? Why?
- We argue that a text is “anything with a beginning, middle, and end that can be broken down into smaller pieces and studied.” What is the text in the piece you just read? How is it broken down into smaller pieces and studied?

Now, before you move on, where do you still have reservations? What are you already wondering about? It's okay—and often helpful—to articulate these questions for yourself (or with your group).

Chapter Two: Toward a New Understanding of Analysis

Chapter 2 ends with a vision of what students are able to write when they are set free to analyze a text they are passionate about rather than traditionally assigned literature.

Go back to Henry’s piece about the video game *INSIDE*. The first time you read this, we asked you to simply take it in and enjoy it as a reader. Now, we want you to break it down as a writer. Read through Henry’s analysis again, annotating for the following:

- What do you admire about Henry’s piece?
- Identify a “golden line”—a particularly smart sentence or passage in the writing. What makes it powerful?
- Where do you see exploration of the text happening?
- What smaller parts of the text are being examined in Henry’s writing?
- What do you see Henry doing here that you wish *your* students could do in their writing?

Chapter Three: The Essential Tools of Analysis

The essential tools of analysis—passion, ideas, structure, and authority—are the tools that will revolutionize your teaching. When you aren’t teaching the content of a novel so that students can understand it, you will be able to focus on the elements that make amazing analytical writing unfold. Or, if your students want to write about NBA trade rumors, bugs in the latest video game, or any number of topics on which you have little (or no) expertise, the tools of analysis will make this possible by letting you do the job of teaching writing and your students the job of bringing passion and fresh ideas to the table.

We will spend all of Section 2 unpacking these essential tools even more and giving you classroom activities and crafting techniques to help your students use them, but for now, let’s just think about how they apply to lots of different kinds of analytical writing. We want you to see that these four tools are universal—applicable whether you’re writing about literature or basketball.

For this exploration, you can use Anna North’s thinking about *The Odyssey* again (Chapter 1), Henry’s piece about *INSIDE* (Chapter 2), the mentor text you pulled from Section 3 of the book, or a new analytical mentor text that you pull on your own!

- Where is passion evident in this piece of writing? Challenge yourself to be specific—highlight a place where you think the writing screams “passion.”
- What is the big idea of this piece of analysis? What kinds of evidence does the writer use to support it?
- Is this piece written in a five-paragraph format? No? What structures do you see? Try to articulate the logical flow of ideas. Does the writer use anything else to help

provide a sense of structure—images? Headings? Can you label what is happening in each paragraph?

- Authority makes or breaks a work of analysis. How does the writer demonstrate his or her authority on this topic and as a writer? Highlight some places that make you feel you are reading the work of an expert who deserves your attention.

START A MENTOR TEXT COLLECTION

If you are working through this study guide with a group, you might be amassing quite a collection of professional analytical writing, especially if group members are looking at pieces of analysis outside the book. Start sharing them and filing them away in your own analytical mentor text collection. You'll have a stash ready to go and waiting for your students when you are ready to start teaching.

Section 2: Exploring the Essential Tools of Analysis

You have made it through the heavy thinking of Section 1, you've read a handful of mentor texts, and you are ready to start digging into what this means for you in your classroom and what this looks like in a unit of writing study.

That's where we go in Section 2 of *Beyond Literary Analysis*—into your classroom. We do a deep dive into each of the four essential tools of analytical writing. We know these activities and techniques make a difference in student writing because we've tried them and used them with our students. There is simply no better way to imagine what these activities and crafting techniques will look like with your students than for *you* to try them on yourself.

So, throughout this section of the study guide, you will encounter both questions for your discussion as well as short writing activities for you to try. These writing experiments will help you troubleshoot the same strategies with your student writers, better prepare you to confer with students as they attempt them, and then go straight into your classroom as a model.

Chapter Four: Exploring Passion

- Have you ever let students freely choose their topics before? What was the result? How did you feel about it? How did students feel? If you haven't, what has held you back?
- It is unlikely that a single passion-exploring activity or routine will lead every student to a topic ready for analysis. A combination of opportunities is far more likely to help every student (and help students move past their very first, initial idea). Which passion-exploring activities or routines do you think you'll first try with your students?

- **Writing Experience:** For your own writing adventure, choose one of the “Activities for Exploration and Discovery”—this time, specifically to explore and discover your passions and explore potential topics for analytical writing. We love “Mine Childhood Passions” (p. 50)—this one is particularly fun for adults. The “Scavenger Hunt for Passions” (p. 49) could also yield interesting results. (Go inventory your car and see what you find. We dare you.)
- **Dive into a Mentor Text:** You already know that it’s important for writing teachers to model writing strategies for students, and with passion, it’s no different. But how will you model this? Well, modeling some of the activities and routines for exploration and discovery will go a long way toward building a writing community in your classroom. But so will being able to point to passion in a piece of professional writing and articulating *how* you see passion at work in that piece. So, let’s try it. Go out into the wild and find a piece of professional analysis. You can find our go-to sites for analytical writing in a variety of genres in each Section 3 chapter—just look for the “Where to Find It” charts. Read the piece you have chosen. Highlight places where you feel the writer demonstrates passion. Then, practice articulating how passion comes through in this text.

If you’re working in a group, this would be a great activity to share with one another. Take turns sharing a “passion passage”—or write them up on the boards in the classroom—and discuss how the writer demonstrates his or her passion. Not only will this help your teaching, but we suspect that this activity might also convince you that passion really is a necessary ingredient in any good analysis.

Chapter 5: Exploring Ideas

- Chapter 5 begins with some definitions for three terms that are often used interchangeably: *topic*, *text*, and *idea*. We have brainstormed one example for you using Kevin Durant in Figure 5.1 (p. 61). Try this with three more examples—articulate the topic, the text, and a specific idea. You can use our examples below (see Figure 1) for your thinking or you can come up with three on your own!

Topic	Text	Idea
Books		
	<i>The Last Jedi</i>	
		Taylor Swift’s <i>Reputation</i> is the most underrated album of 2017.

Figure 1: Topic, Text, and Idea Chart

- What is the biggest challenge your students have when generating, articulating, and supporting ideas about a text? Which activity or crafting technique in this chapter do you think will be the biggest game changer?
- **Writing Experience:** In the previous chapter of this study guide, you used some of our activities to find topics for analysis. After identifying a passion worth exploring through writing, every writer will need to narrow that topic down into a specific text. Because you have more reading, writing, and living experience than your students, you may have made this move intuitively. Take a minute to try “Choose a Text to Analyze” (p. 64), “Question-Flooding Your Topic” (p. 66), or “Find an Angle” (p. 67). Even if you think you know the text *you* would write about, you might be surprised how these activities lead you to even more ideas.
- **Dive into a Mentor Text:** Grab an analytical mentor text (from Section 3 of the book or one you find on your own). Now, do an “Evidence Inquiry” (p. 74). As you read the mentor text, note the different ways the writer supports his or her ideas. Make a list. Are these types of evidence you regularly allow your students to use?

GET TO KNOW THE EXPERTS

As you and your group work through this study guide, pay attention to the kind of analysis each member gravitates toward. These are going to be your go-to experts.

In our department, Betsy is the go-to person if you are looking for political analysis. Francis reads everything about literature, especially new releases. For music analysis, we start with Chris.

Figure out who your go-to experts will be—the people who will be reading likely all of the sports/music/TV/movie/literary/video game analysis that is written this month. Then, when you have a student who is looking for a very specific kind of analytical writing as a mentor text, you will be able to call on your colleagues and get support, a starting place, and maybe even the perfect mentor text to give your student.

Chapter Six: Exploring Structure

- In some ways, exploring new structures for analytical writing will be the scariest departure of all for teachers. The structure of analytical writing (namely, the five-paragraph essay) has been one of its most defining features in the academic realm. So, before we dive into this chapter, let’s just talk for a minute about your anxieties regarding structure in students’ analytical writing. What are you excited

about? What makes you nervous? What's the worst outcome you could imagine if students choose a structure that fits their ideas?

- When we think about structure, we tend to think first about the order of paragraphs in an essay. In the chapter, though, we present lots of crafting techniques that also support structure—ranging from crafting meaningful leads and conclusions, to moving the claim around within the essay, to using artful transitions and segues, to chunking essays using lists and subheadings. How do these crafting techniques ask students to redefine what structure means in their writing? Which do you think will most transform your students' writing?
- **Dive into a mentor text:** Find a piece of analysis (one you've used before in this study guide, one from Section 3 of the book, or one you find on your own) and map the structure using the instructions from "Create (and Follow!) a Road Map" (p. 96). Label each chunk of text to define and describe the logical flow of ideas from paragraph to paragraph. This will be a great model for your students to see before they try this on their own.

Chapter Seven: Exploring Authority

- Before we wrote the book, we never explicitly taught our students about authority. We sensed it was often missing, but we didn't know how to articulate it to our students or teach them to gather more authority. How will you explain this concept to your students? How will you articulate what *authority* means in a piece of analytical writing?
- Traditionally, when students write academic literary analysis, research plays virtually no role. How might using "Active Research" (p. 142) to add authority to a piece of writing require you and your students to think differently about the role of research in analytical writing?
- We have a feeling that you might have some thoughts on the (tasteful) use of profanity and slang in analytical writing in your classroom. What do you say: yay or nay? How might you negotiate this within your classroom and school context? What will you say when students ask about it (because they will see it in many mentor texts)?
- **Dive into a Mentor Text:** Grab a piece of professional analysis (one you've used previously during your study of the book, one from the resources in Section 3, or one you've found on your own). Imagine you are writing an original piece of analysis in this same subgenre. Use the "Word Clusters" activity (p. 134) to create a list of genre-specific vocabulary that will help you talk the talk as a writer.

WRITE WITH YOUR STUDENTS

You never discover more about the writing process (or teaching the writing process) than when you write alongside your students. As you are planning your unit, or as your students move through the process themselves, consider using that passion topic and text you brainstormed earlier in this study guide to write your own piece of analysis. You will have a model of the process and the product for your students, and you will have firsthand experience using the activities and techniques featured in the book to help you on your way.

Now That You've Read *Beyond Literary Analysis* . . .

We hope your mind is chock-full of possibilities right now—not just dream-worthy images of what analysis *could* look like in a hypothetical classroom, but a heart-pounding real-life vision for what your students *can* do if you will only let them.

Your students can do this. We have been consistently gobsmacked time and time again by the caliber of analysis middle and high school students can write when we leverage their preexisting content expertise and focus our instruction simply on the craft of smart writing.

You can do this. You have the four essential tools (and oodles of mentor texts) in your hands. Teach the tools. Use the mentor texts for support. Go where your students lead.