**Let’s Improve Synthesis and Evaluation (KEEP THIS NEARBY WHEN DRAFTING RESEARCH PAPER!)**

**From syllabus glossary: Predict meaning of words.**

**Evaluation:** *make an appraisal by* ***weighing up or assessing strengths, implications and limitations****; make* ***judgments*** *about ideas, works, solutions or methods in relation to selected criteria; examine and determine the* ***merit, value or significance*** *of something, based on criteria.*

**Synthesis:** *combine different parts or elements (e.g. information, ideas, and components) into a whole in order to* ***create new understanding***

**SYNTHESIS**

Here the structure of your academic research paper is an important consideration. You need a logical and cohesive structure in which to synthesize different elements of your research. The syllabus describes your **research paper** in the following way:

“*a paper written by scholars of a discipline for other scholars; the aim of the academic paper is to* ***help readers understand the topic more fully;*** *academic writing in English & Literature Extension involves students developing a focus question to* ***explore how texts and theoretical approaches can work together to produce close readings of texts;*** *the paper examines the chosen text/s from a particular perspective that is made clear in the thesis”*

**Relevant syllabus subject matter:** *use the patterns and conventions of academic genres and related writing strategies to construct extended analytical responses for an academic audience (****paraphrase)***

**Relevant syllabus objective***: synthesize analysis of the selected complex literary text/s, the applied theories and resultant interpretation/s with supporting evidence. (****paraphrase)***

Firstly, it is important to develop a coherent and logically structured research paper. The principles of good essay writing should assist here. i.e.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction** | Introduce your **complex text**, **focus question** and **theories** you intend to apply. Remember, you are exploring rather than arguing.  | See notes on opening paragraph below. You also might like to begin with a quote or a clever heading.  |
| **Body paragraphs****Explain theory****Analyse text/support****Evaluate** | Begin each paragraph with a **topic sentence/idea** that tightly back maps to your focus question. **Expand/elaborate and support** your ideas in the body of each paragraph. Thoughtful **linking sentences** will add to cohesion and synthesis of ideas.  | Paragraphs in the research paper may be considerably longer than those in a standard high school essay.Maintain a clear focus throughout by using topic and linking sentences which relate to you tight focus question.  |
| **Conclusion** | Draw **firm conclusions** and make **discerning evaluations** that strongly back map to your introduction. | Half of the conclusion can be a summary but the other half should be a conclusion in the sense of deepening the thesis established in the introduction. |

Refer to the specific colour-coded scaffold provided in IA3 Scaffold document on NEST. Complete your own scaffold (10 minutes)

**Opening paragraphs**

* Explain the aspect of the text that you find interesting/ explain why you chose the particular text. What is it about the text that drew your attention?
* Introduce your topic (the specific focus of your investigation), outlining your central focus or problem and /or outline the question you are posing about your text.
* Explain how you intend to apply your two theoretical approaches in order to answer this question. Why did you choose this particular pair of theories? **How might you reveal something not immediately obvious about the text?**
* Comment, in general terms, on what each approach might reveal. **What might one approach reveal that the other fails to reveal?**

**Synthesis tips**

1. Develop each main idea thoroughly by explaining a theoretical approach, then applying the approach to produce reading/s, and finally evaluating the approach. Move backwards and forwards between **explanation, analysis and evaluation**. Try to include each of these components in each body paragraph. I.e. try to avoid writing long ‘standalone’ paragraphs of theory explanation and then long paragraphs of analysis.
2. Be sure to integrate quotes from theorists and the novel smoothly into your own writing using **attribution verbs/phrases** and **transitions**. Provide appropriate transitions/cohesive links both within and between paragraphs. See below.

**Cohesive Links/Transitions:** One of the central criteria for marking analytical essays and other texts such as research papers is the student’s proficiency in the use of cohesive links. Cohesion is the means by which text structure ‘comes together’. There are seven conjunctions that are used most often: **and; but; yet; or; nor; so; for.** But there are many other conjunctions, as well as adjectival and adverbial phrases and clauses that give your writing cohesion. Here are some of them:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| above allaccordinglyadmittedlyafterwardsalsoalthoughas a resultat the same time besidescertainly | clearlycuriously enough consequentlyearliereven ifeven thoughfinallyfirst... secondfirstly...secondly following this | for examplefor instancefor this reasonfurther (more)hencehoweverif this be grantedin additionin conclusionindeed | in factin particularin order that in shortinsteadin summaryit might be thoughtlaterlikewise | many a case like thismeanwhilemoreovermore specificallyneverthelessnonethelessnot only, but alsonot surprisinglynot until thenobviouslyof course |

It is possible, on a very general level, to describe cohesive ties in terms of the following primary functions:

• To indicate **alternatives**: *or; either; on the other hand; nevertheless; though ...*

• To indicate **cause**: *as a result; because; therefore; so; since this is so; consequently..*

• To indicate **a conclusion**: *to sum up; finally; thus; as this is the case; so ..*

• To indicate **contrast**: *however; instead; moreover; nevertheless; on the other hand*

• To indicate **coordination**: *accordingly; and; similarly; not surprisingly ...*

• To indicate **inclusion**: *clearly; specifically; likewise; for example; to illustrate ...*

• To indicate **inference**: *thus; latter; if this is so; respectively; former ...*

• To indicate **sequence**: *afterwards; earlier; finally; firstly ... secondly; since ...*

Please ensure you use text connectors correctly! Get someone to proofread!

REMEMBER: Be careful with your choice. Each verb has implied meanings, and many are not interchangeable. Use only verbs that you understand!

<https://www.centralia.edu/resources/docs/verbsatrib.pdf>

Insert **transitional words and phrases** where necessary. Integrate all quotations so they flow smoothly within your own sentences. Use **attribution phrases** to distinguish between theorists’ and your own ideas. Make sure the essay reads smoothly, logically, and clearly from beginning to end.

Consider the role of the following ways of synthesizing and evaluating ideas:

1. **Summary**: this grounds your paper in relevant and specific explanation of theory. **Quote from theorists rather than attempt to explain complex theory in your own words**. Try to anticipate what your reader needs to know at any given point of your paper in order to comprehend or appreciate fully the point you are making. Write concisely using precise vocabulary. Cut to the heart of the theory as it relates to your focus. Be sure to avoid unnecessary repetition of ideas.
2. **Examples and illustrations:** when quoting from your novel or from theory, choose the correct verbs of attribution. Integrate shorter quotes smoothly into your own sentences rather than always having quotes stand alone. Provide in-text referencing.
3. **Provide two or more reasons/ideas** to support your thesis/analysis/evaluation in places rather than just one reason/idea. This adds depth to your exploration. Save your most profound ideas for the conclusion.
4. **Strawman technique: (great for maximizing your marks for evaluation!)** you present an argument against the usefulness of a theoretical approach, but immediately afterward you show that this argument is weak or flawed by referring to positive evaluations of the theory. The advantage of this technique is that you demonstrate your awareness of the other side of the argument about the worth of a theory and show that you are prepared to answer it. The strawman argument first presents an introduction to the theory, then an argument critiquing the theory, then a refutation of this opposing argument, and finally a positive affirmation/evaluation of the theory. i.e.

**Introduce theor**y**/theorist** **– point out weakness/es in theory – refute these weaknesses by affirming the strengths of the theory. Don’t overuse!**

NB Although you may spot weaknesses in theory yourself as you attempt to apply it, you mostly need to find reputable critiques of the theory through research. As your focus is very narrow and the number of theories you are applying is quite limited, this should not be too onerous a task! Draw up a table of strengths and weaknesses for your theories…

1. **Concession:** Like the strawman, the concession technique points out the weakness of the theory but instead of refuting the negative evaluation, concedes that this is a valid point, but that, even so, the positive evaluation/argument is the stronger one.
2. **Comparison and contrast:** This is terribly important to your synthesis and evaluation marks. This enables you to examine two or more theories in relation to one another. When you compare, you consider similarities between the theories. Do they have a generational relationship? Do they complement one another? Do they overlap? Is there only a subtle difference between them? (e.g. difference, difference; binary oppositions and violent hierarchies) When you contrast, you consider differences. Do the theories clash? Has one theory superseded the other? By comparing and contrasting, you perform a multifaceted analysis that often suggests subtleties that otherwise might not have been revealed. Try to find a specific point to which each theorist refers and about which they may agree or disagree.

Overall, aim to present some original thought and insightful analysis and evaluation.

Adapted from “Introduction to Synthesis” <https://msu.edu/~jdowell/135/Synthesis.html>

*The goal of the exercise is to illustrate: 1) the power of theory to bring out elements of a literary work; 2) the fact that any one theory will always remain to some extent limited in the sorts of things that it will see; and 3) the incredible complexity of great literature, a complexity that is continually open to new ways of thinking and reading.* Dino Felluga

<https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/>

**Evaluation of theories**

**How can you evaluate the usefulness, strengths and weaknesses of a theory?**

1. You can see what is revealed when **you** apply the theory. Do you understand something more clearly or in more detail/depth when the theory is applied? What new insights did you gain?
2. You can read up on your theories in order to compare and contrast them. How did X theorist adapt Y’s theory? What new elements did he/she add?  Understanding this will allow you to evaluate what theory X reveals that theory Y did not reveal. **This is VIP.**
3. Ask Professor Google to take you to sites that evaluate theory using key words like critique, weaknesses, strengths etc. Here you might find evaluations of theory from literary critics that you can quote from or paraphrase.

**Tips on ways to evaluate literary theories – criteria to apply**

**Ask:**

1. Does this theory **improve the social world**? Does the application of this theory reveal ideology that needs to be resisted, social injustice, bias, prejudice, partiality, sexism, racism or classism? (poststructuralist theories)
2. Is the application of the theory useful in **critiquing the status quo**? Does it provide enough evidence of power relations in the novel so that power can be effectively challenged through resistant reading? Does the theory enable you to oppose elite/hegemonic definitions of the social world?
3. Is it just **(pure) research** into literary theory for the purpose of generating new knowledge, not for righting social wrongs? (e.g. narratology, semiotics)
4. Do the proponents of this theory acknowledge that we live in a world of language, discourse and ideology, none of which are transparent, all of which structure our sense of being and meaning? (poststructuralist theories)
5. Is the theory explained by theorists in a **simple, clear and elegant** way? Does this simplicity make the theory more accessible? Are there only a few components to the explanation of the theory yet the theory is widely applicable? Is the theory logically structured? (e.g. Saussure/semiotics)
6. Does it make **abstract ideas** more readily accessible or are explanations of the theory very difficult to understand? (e.g. Foucault/discourse)
7. How much **support** has the theory had in the field of literary theory study? How much new thinking was stimulated by the theory? Do other theorists quote from the theory? Did the theory **lead to later theories** which either complemented or clashed with the earlier theory? Was this theory a springboard for later theories? (e.g. deconstruction, semiotics, Freudian psychoanalytic theory)
8. How much **fresh insight** does the application of the theory offer? How much did it advance your understanding of, say, ideology or character motivation?
9. What is the **scope** of the theory? Is it a **broadly** applicable theory or **very narrow** and focused? (feminism is broad, gaze theory is more focused)
10. Does the pose **profound** (ontological) **questions** like ‘What is the nature of reality’ and ‘Is there an objective universe or is reality what we make it?’ (deconstruction, poststructuralist theories)
11. Has the theory ‘**stood the test of time’**? Has it been used and valued over many years.

Adapted from: <https://slcc.instructure.com/courses/429441/pages/theory-evaluation-criteria> and <https://www.masscommunicationtalk.com/evaluating-theory.html>

**See below for evaluation of specific theorists.**

**Please review the Instrument-specific marking guide (IA3): Extended response — academic research paper before you submit your draft - Have you addressed each criterion?**

**Examples of evaluation** in IA3: From QCAA exemplar

*…and here again* ***the overlapping theories of psychoanalysis and structuralism are revealed****. In the romantic hero's dilemma, completion is the ultimate goal, offered on one hand by total antisocialism and on the other by interaction with the culture he dismisses, "absorbing into his own being of qualities which he felt painfully lacking in himself” (Garber, 1967 p.326).* ***It is here that the limitations of archetypal criticism within psychoanalysis are most apparent; while it is useful in classifying Haller as a romantic hero, an explanation of his dilemma can be found only in psychology rather than literature based psychoanalysis.***

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***While archetypal criticism demonstrates the extent*** *of Harry Haller's conformity to the romantic hero and Hesse's denouncement of this attitude,* ***this approach alone is limited in unpacking*** *Steppenwolf's return to cultural relevance decades after it was first published. Due to Harry Haller's resolution to surrender to Seele at the conclusion of the novel, the question still remains as to why readers of the 1960s and 1970s chose to focus on his intellectualism and rejection of society, and how Steppenwolf came to be adopted by the culture it contests.* ***This is where reader response criticism is applicable****,* ***on account of its concern with "finding meaning in the act of reading itself and examining the ways individual readers or communities of readers experience texts"*** *(Delahoyde, 2011).* ***However, because reader response criticism "encompasses various approaches to literature" (Murfin & Ray, 1998), specific* *branches of reader-centred theory display greater relevance to the investigation of Steppenwolf's cultural rebirth.***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**** *The evaluation of Steppenwolf using archetypal criticism* ***allows an exploration of deeper interpretations beyond the obvious meaning.*** *While the recognition of Harry Haller as a typical intellectual 'outcast' was confirmed by his conformity to the romantic hero archetype,* ***the study of the generic features of the genre revealed a renewed significance of the novel’s resolution and Hesse's ultimate rejection of Geist and indulgent intellectual antisocialism****. While* ***this approach unveils*** *Steppenwolf as an optimistic novel, the application of reception theory offers insight into the Hesse boom and the role of cultural context in creating selective readings. These conclusions demonstrate the power of the reading public in its* *relationship with a text, and that even a novel that shames those who reject society in favour of isolation has been, and may continue to be manipulated to justify the very behaviour it condemns.*

**Read the annotated exemplar several times, noting the colour-coded criteria on the side**. Note that the students evaluates the complex text as well as theory. <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-qce/english/snr_english_lit_ext_20_ia3_asr_high.pdf>

Past student: *Life of Pi – note the high modality, correct text connectors and actual explanation of what is revealed.*

*It is* ***clearly evident*** *that both psychoanalytical approaches are* ***highly useful*** *in exploring the ability of Pi’s psyche to balance his morality and instincts. The application of Freud’s theory of the id, ego and superego* ***clearly demonstrated*** *the plurality of Pi’s internalized sense of self. His superego, based on his religion, created a strong sense of morality that forced the separation of his id from his psyche.* ***Similarly,*** *Lacan’s theory of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic* ***explains*** *the separation of Pi’s primitive animalistic desires from his conscious mind.* ***However, unlike Freud****, Lacan’s concept of the Law of the Father recognizes man as a cultural being and accounts for the presence of cultural discourses operating within language.*

***Additionally,*** *Lacan’s theory of ‘the other’* ***explicitly explains*** *the censorship of primitive desires, whereas* ***Freud only implicitly******refers*** *to the separation of repressed desires from the conscious psyche.* ***Furthermore,*** *a Lacanian approach* ***allows*** *for the explanation of Pi’s growth from cannibalism to civilization.* ***Thus,*** *it can be said that* ***a Lacanian approach allows for a deeper interpretation of Pi’s psyche*** *and has* ***more clearly illuminated*** *how Pi balances his primitive instincts and his morality.*

 Use this as a model!

**Saussure/Semiotics**

**Strengths:**

* “*He developed an approach to languages as systems of signs, each sign consisting of a signifier (sound pattern) and a signified (concept), both of them* ***mental*** *rather than physical in nature, and conjoined arbitrarily and inseparably.*”

[**https://oxfordre.com/linguistics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.001.0001/acrefore-9780199384655-e-385?result=4&rskey=n15Wx6**](https://oxfordre.com/linguistics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.001.0001/acrefore-9780199384655-e-385?result=4&rskey=n15Wx6)

* Without Saussure's breakdown of signs into signified and signifier, later semioticians, such as Umberto Eco and Roland Barthes, would not have had anything to base their concepts on**.** [**https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signified\_and\_signifier**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signified_and_signifier)Derrida also used Saussure’s ideas as a starting point for his ideas about “violent hierarchies”.
* Semiotic analysis shows that *"****language does not reflect reality but rather constructs it"*** *D. Chandler cited in* [**http://repo.uum.edu.my/12976/1/1-s2.0.pdf**](http://repo.uum.edu.my/12976/1/1-s2.0.pdf)

**Weaknesses:**

* Saussure’s theory is considered to “*lack…theoretical consideration for the social and temporal dimensions of signs”* i.e. he did not take into account the social context of language and he did not account for the ways in which the meaning of words change over time. “*That is, he was not concerned with the social and historical ideas of meaning making – his was just an a-temporal system of logical differences*” **Out of the nineteenth century. (2004). In C. Sanders (Ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Saussure (p.251). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.** How can we know that a bunch of roses signifies passion unless we also know the intention of the sender and the reaction of the receiver, and the kind of relationship they are involved in? Chandler, D. Semiotics for Beginners <http://www.visualmemory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem11.html?LMCL=BylHsh>
* The theorist Roman Jakobsen critiques Saussure: *“Those attempts made to construct a linguistic model without any connection to a speaker or a listener and which therefore hypostatize a code detached from actual communication, risk reducing language to a scholastic fiction.”* (Ibid p.252)
* Semioticians present their analyses as if they were purely objective 'scientific' accounts rather than subjective interpretations.
* **Structuralist semioticians tend to make no allowance for alternative readings**, assuming either that their own interpretations reflect a general consensus or that 'their text interpretations are immanent in the sign structure and need no cross-validation' [(McQuarrie & Mick 1992, 194](http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem13.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22McQuarrie_%26_Mick_1992)
* Saussurean semiotic analysis **requires supplementary tools** in order to reveal ideologies underpinning discourses in texts.

**Derrida/Deconstruction**

**Strengths:**

* His early work criticized the structuralist presumption that language could be described as a static set of rules
* Deconstruction is an approach to understanding the relationship between [text](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text_%28literary_theory%29) and [meaning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meaning_%28linguistics%29). Derrida does not simply interpret texts to find the best interpretation or the text’s ‘true meaning’ like traditional readers – he did not accept that a text had an original or true meaning. **He provides a transformed text** rather than an interpreted one. Derrida’s project is to undo the ways in which the text is put together in order to deconstruct it and **form new meanings**.
* He did not write about the stable existence of opposites as Saussure had done; he contends that **oppositions are “violent hierarchies**” - one of the two terms governs the other or “has the upper hand". One terms is privileged over the other. The first task of deconstruction would be to find and overturn these oppositions inside a text in order to **expose/reveal hidden or naturalized ideologies**. e.g. patriarchal ideology is supported by the privileging of one half of the binary over the other. man/woman, inside/outside, assertive/passive, work/home
* Derrida argues that meaning does not arise out of fixed differences between static elements in a structure, as the Structuralists argued, but that the meanings produced in language and other signifying systems are always partial, provisional and **infinitely deferred along a chain of differing/deferring**[**signifiers**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sign_%28semiotics%29).
* In literature, gaps, silences and contradictions may provide moments of Aporia for the reader and open up the possibility of multiple readings of a text. Attention to Aporia enable us to **more productively analyse (deconstruct) a text**.
* Opens texts up to the construction of **multiple meanings**; makes for a **richer analytical experience**.

**Weaknesses:**

For ‘easy’ pros and cons of deconstruction see <https://sites.google.com/site/nscdeconstruction/pros-and-cons> **What can you discover about the strengths and weaknesses of the theory you are applying to your complex text? Ask Dr. Google.**