

## Essay Assignment 1: Documented Literary Analysis

Your literary analysis essay will be on the novel *Sula* by Toni Morrison. You can choose from any of the topics listed below (recommended) or explore further topics in the chapter on *Sula*, pp. X to Y in the book *How to Write about Toni Morrison* (linked here for your convenience).

Your literary analysis should be between 2 ½ and 3 pages (600 to 750 words), not including the Works Cited page, should be double spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font and must include:

- A clearly articulated thesis that states, somewhere in your introduction, the assertion (position, interpretation) that your paper will prove
- An introduction, a minimum of 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion
- At least two quotes from the novel itself that are integrated into your discussion
- At least two citations of outside sources (such as literary criticism on the novel, preferably from articles from the MDC databases)
- Topic sentences that focus the discussion in the body paragraphs
- Examples, details, explanations in the body paragraphs that clearly support your thesis
- Clear connections between ideas from paragraph to paragraph and within paragraphs
- Proper MLA style format in the heading, in the in-text citations, and in the Works Cited page (see the template for the heading and margins in this lesson)
- Works Cited page includes articles from two sources and from the novel for a minimum of three total listed sources
- Standard usage, grammar, and mechanics

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- You will submit your final draft through the Turn-it-in drop box designated for this purpose in the course. Please be aware, that although Turn-it-in does allow for similarities for quotations up to 24% of your paper, any similarity above 24% is considered too high for an original paper and will be flagged as plagiarism.
- You can get help with your paper at any of the campus writing centers (see the link in the course with this information), and you can also receive online help via SmartThinking, the online tutoring service provided by the College. This

service is available by clicking on SmartThinking in the left-hand menu bar of the course under Tools & Resources.

Choose from the following topics:

1. Analyze the ending of the novel. What are the “circles of sorrow” that Nel experiences? Is the ending pessimistic, optimistic, or something else altogether?
2. Nel and Sula’s friendship is central in the novel. What role does this friendship play in Nel and Sula’s lives and what point is Morrison making about the role of life-long friendships in the formation of identity?
3. How do people who are intensely individualistic fare in the novel? Is it possible to break away from the values of the community and to be one’s own person? Answer the question with reference to at least two of the novel’s characters.
4. How and by whom is love expressed in the novel? In what ways is the love in the novel a ease the suffering of the characters? How is love not enough to appease the characters in light of their suffering?
5. In what ways are the various characters in the novel alienated from the community? How do they cope with their loneliness, their preoccupations, and other after effects of feeling abandoned?
6. Compare and contrast the journey of self-discovery for two characters in the book. Remember to take a position in your thesis that establishes the significance of the comparison and contrast.
7. Contrast Nel’s relationship to her mother and Sula’s interaction with her mother. Remember to take a position in your thesis that establishes the significance of the contrast.
8. Trace the use of three symbols in the novel and explain their connection to a theme in the novel.
9. What does Shadrack’s character teach us about the after effects of war and the ways mentally ill people can be ostracized from a community?
10. Although no one has ever joined Shadrack on National Suicide Day, in the chapter titled 1941, much of the town marches toward the tunnel where they have not been able to get work and in their rage, they try to “kill, as best they could, the tunnel they were forbidden to build” (160). What is the significance of the event at the tunnel and the resulting deaths there?