Assignment Directions & Focused Goal

Directions: This paper outlines the assignment expectations for the literary analysis that you will create this quarter. Close Reading is an essential analytical approach in academic study. Get comfy with it, because you will be working with it for the rest of your academic career in literature and composition.

Goal: Through this literary analysis, you will explore the three main components of close reading: (1) the meaning and purpose of the literary production, (2) the author’s writing strategy (style), and (3) the language and its role in the interpretation of the text. Furthermore, you will analyze this text through a theoretical lens (a critical approach). Recall the realms of literary criticism: archetypal criticism, feminist criticism, critical race theory, Marxist criticism, and Formalist criticism (or New Criticism). Remember the thesis platforms we discussed in class: perspective, location, gender, race/ethnicity, power hierarchies, socio-economic status, etc.

Part One: Brainstorming & Such

1. Select the text you would like to critically analyze for the literary analysis: ____________________.
2. Select a critical vantage point from which you would like to analyze the text: ____________________.
3. Draft a working thesis statement (which includes: the title, the author, and the focus of your paper).

Part Two: Dissect & Tear Apart

On the first notecard, write down all the components that tie into the meaning of the text. On the second notecard, write down all of the components that tie into the author’s writing strategy. On the third notecard, write down all of the components that tie into the language aspect of the text.

Part Three: The Beloved Outline

Once you have gathered your close reading components, you will make a standard outline (using the standard Roman Numeral format). This will be an extension of both your dissection and brainstorming. In your outline, your topic sentences and thesis will flesh out the outline and begin giving you a more accurate view of what your paper is going to look like.

Part Four: Diverting Drafting Bliss

Assignment: Write a literary analysis (minimum 2 pages (500 word count) | maximum 4 pages (1000 word count)) that critically analyzes the text that you selected. You are expected to have a beautifully crafted final draft and a works cited page in MLA format.

Part Five: Posting & Collaboration

On our class WordPress, collaborationnahs.wordpress.com, post your final draft of your literary analysis. Then, pick another literary analysis to read and respond. You need to provide a positive comment and one question.
Final Paper Checklist (Just For You)

___ Introductory Paragraph (20 points): The Theatrical Trailer
   ___ Integrates an introductory statement that includes the title, the author’s name, and what the text is about. (4 points)
   ___ Briefly highlights the main components of the plot diagram. (6 points)
   ___ Elaborates on characterization in the text. (4 points)
   ___ Includes a well-constructed and teacher approved thesis statement. (6 points)

___ Supporting Paragraph One: Close Read: Meaning (20 points)
   ___ Includes a topic sentence, which supports thesis statement. (2 point)
   ___ Topic sentence is elaborated. (4 points)
   ___ Includes textual support (in-text quotation and citation). (4 points)
   ___ Includes explanation of how textual support exemplifies topic sentence and includes concluding sentence of how this ties back to thesis. (10 points)

___ Supporting Paragraph Two: Close Read: Writing Strategy (20 points)
   ___ Includes a topic sentence, which supports thesis statement. (2 point)
   ___ Topic sentence elaborated (4 points)
   ___ Includes research support (in-text quotation and citation). (4 points)
   ___ Includes explanation of how textual support exemplifies topic sentence and includes concluding sentence of how this ties back to thesis. (10 points)

___ Supporting Paragraph Three: Close Read: Language (20 points)
   ___ Includes a topic sentence, which supports thesis statement. (2 point)
   ___ Topic sentence elaborated (4 points)
   ___ Includes research support (in-text quotation and citation). (4 points)
   ___ Includes explanation of how textual support exemplifies topic sentence and includes concluding sentence of how this ties back to thesis. (10 points)

___ Conclusion: Tying Back to the Theoretical Premise (16 points)
   ___ Re-states the thesis statement in a new way. (2 points)
   ___ Re-summarizes and highlights meaning, writing strategy, and language. (8 points)
   ___ Delves into how this text adds to the critical literary discourse that you selected. (6 points)

___ Works Cited Page & Paper Format in Correct MLA Format (4 points)
Pre-Writing: The Beloved Outline
Sample Literary Analysis Outline
Theoretical Premise: Critical Race Theory

Paragraph One: “The Theatrical Trailer”
1. **Introductory Statement:** In Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Junior narrates his journey as he transfers from the reservation school (Wellpinit) to the all-white school in Reardan.
2. **Plot Diagram at a Closer Look**
   A. **Exposition:** Junior is born with a brain condition that leads to physical differences and internal complications. His life on the Rez is underprivileged. There is very little money in the school system. His best friend, Rowdy, is one of the only things that Junior has in his life.
   B. **Rising Action:** Junior transfers to Reardan, where he is not accepted initially. However, over time, he gains respect, begins dating Penelope, and joins the basketball team. He begins to find his identity in a predominantly white society.
   C. **Climax:** At the second basketball game at Reardan, Junior and his team beat Wellpinit and Rowdy. However, Junior realizes that his “win” was more of a loss, because he begins losing his tribal identity.
   D. **Falling Action:** There are a plethora of losses among Junior’s friends and families on the Rez. His grandmother is hit by a drunk driver. His dad’s best friend is shot and killed over the last sip of wine. His sister is too drunk and passed out to notice her trailer is on fire and subsequently dies. He realizes the cause of all unhappiness on the Rez is alcohol.
   E. **Resolution:** Rowdy explains that Junior can still be a Spokane Indian and live within white society.
3. **Characterization**
   A. **Dynamic Characters:** Junior, Rowdy, Roger, Penelope, Mary, Gordy, and Mr. P
      Junior is a dynamic character because he gains confidence and identity as the story progresses.
   B. **Static Characters:** Grandmother Spirit, dad, Eugene, Agnes Adams, Mr. Dodge, Miss Warren, etc.
      Earl is a static character, because he does not really develop throughout the story. All we know is that he likes Roger and dislikes Junior because he is American Indian.
4. **Thesis Statement:** In Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*, the theme of racism is analyzed through Junior’s struggles in securing an identity in both white and Spokane society.

Paragraph Two: Close Read on Meaning
1. **Topic Sentence:** While the difference between societies in this text can be categorized based on race, Sherman Alexie also skillfully provides a realistic view of the effects of alcoholism and poor educational opportunities within the Spokane Indian Reservation.
2. **Elaboration:** In so, Alexie conjures a more complicated process in Junior establishing a split identity. Since he is both a part of the collective Spokane culture and a part of the white educational society, Junior must seek to maintain two forms of identity in two very different cultures. However, this crisis allows the reader to more readily notice the differences the inequities inherent in each racially denoted institution and location.
3. **Textual Support:** In the text, Junior remarks, “Tolstoy wrote, ‘Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.’ Well, I hate to argue with a Russian genius, but Tolstoy didn’t know Indians. And he didn’t know that all Indian families are unhappy for the same exact reason: the fricking booze” (Alexie 200).

4. **Explanation:** Through Junior’s critique of Tolstoy’s theory, Alexie’s readership can more readily identify a collective issue on the Spokane Indian Reservation. As mentioned in the introduction and text summary, Junior loses his grandmother, sister, and his dad’s best friend to alcohol or alcohol-related events. In addition, the irregularity and instability in Junior’s family revolves around his father’s drinking problem. When Junior is trying to secure his identity, these events and routine inconsistency cause him to question the cause. He initially feels that his betrayal is in some way a part of these deaths. However, under closer scrutiny, the perpetrator is alcohol and subsequent addictions.

**Additional Paragraph:**

5. **Topic Sentence:** Though alcoholism is an inhibitor to Junior securing an identity, the poor educational system at the tribal school exemplifies inequity in a knowledge-based economy for American Indians as well.

6. **Elaboration:** Within our capitalist economy, knowledge and human capital have become the cornerstones for advancement in socio-economic realms of financial success and security. If students receive an inferior secondary education, they will most likely not have the experience and skills required to compete for superior post-secondary endeavors. Aside from outliers, the majority of individuals without a post-secondary education will not be able to make as much as someone with post-secondary academic credentials. This in turn affects the lifestyle of American Indians who are not provided with the fair chance to compete or pursue post-secondary education due to an inferior secondary education.

7. **Textual Support:** Junior states, “My school and my tribe are so poor and sad that we have to study from the same dang books our parents studied from. That is absolutely the saddest thing in the world” (Alexie 31).

8. **Explanation:** In a knowledge-based economy, identity formation often revolves around career and socio-economic status. This is scaffolded by one’s educational background. At Wellpinit, Junior is provided with a geometry textbook that is so old his mother learned from the same text. This is symbolic of the lack of funds in the tribal school. From a boarder view, Junior cannot compete in white society or secure a competitive economic position without having an education within a white school. This further perpetuates a divide between equitable education and hinders economic advancement of many American Indians in contemporary society. Both alcoholism on reservations and inequity in education (tied to a particular race) demonstrate a lack of opportunity for Junior hindering a healthy development of sense of identity.

**Additional Paragraph:**

9. **Topic Sentence:** Though Alexie crafts this story to explain the negative effects of alcoholism and inequitable educational opportunities for Spokane Indians, he also emphasizes the positive unity and collective consciousness inherent in the Spokane way of life.

10. **Elaboration:** In comparison to Western culture’s individualism, many contemporary Native American cultures place a stronger emphasis on collectivism among families and the tribe as a whole.

11. **Textual Support:** “On the rez, you know every kid’s father, mother, grandparents, dog, cat, and shoe size. I mean, yeah, Indians are screwed up, but we’re really close to each other. We KNOW each other. Everybody knows everybody” (Alexie 153).

12. **Explanation:** Despite the effects of alcoholism, racial inequity, and poverty, Alexie does not fail to emphasize the collective support system on the Rez. When Grandmother Spirit dies, more than 2000 people
show up to her wake and comfort Junior and his family despite everything. Even in the end, Rowdy accepts Junior’s divergent path. He tells him that he is like the original Nomadic Spokane Indians. This conclusion gives Junior the confidence he needs and the understanding that he can still maintain his Spokane heritage while existing in a world revolving around white privilege. Through all of these glimpses into contemporary struggles for American Indians, Alexie is analyzing the bigger process and journey that every teenager faces when forming a healthy identity.

**Paragraph Three: Close Read on Writing Strategy**

1. **Topic Sentence:** Unlike the traditional novel, Alexie integrates cartoons and visual supports as a fundamental component in his writing.
2. **Elaboration:** In so, Alexie transcends language barriers through pictures. Alexie, through the narrator (Junior), explains that pictures are open for all to understand. This authorial strategy integrates a collective sense in the format of the text that reflects the main message in his piece: that struggles exist for everyone who seeks to establish an individual sense of identity in a world that is inevitably and fundamentally collective and skewed.
3. **Textual Support:** In the text, Junior states, “I draw because I want to talk to the world. And I want the world to pay attention to me” (Alexie 6).
4. **Explanation:** Through Junior’s drawings, the reader is able to see the world through a teenager’s eyes. In addition, the colloquial language and the break from the rules of Standard English grammar enable Alexie to put an informal and (at times) comical spin on difficult and tension-filled situations. Alexie integrates this irony and paradoxical nature into his writing style to reflect the realistic nature of these instances and the often times contradictory formation of identity. Traditionally, comic strips were intended to tie humor to visual depictions. However, more recently, with the rise of the graphic novel, authors have been integrating more serious content as a way to break from the traditional writing style, but still maintain a critical stance in commenting on the flaws and challenges faced by society and its members. Alexie demonstrates Junior’s struggles through these depictions and writing platform.

**Paragraph Four: Close Read on Language**

1. **Topic Sentence:** Furthermore, it is not only Alexie’s writing strategy that reinforces the meaning and purpose behind this text. His implementation of colloquial language and descriptions evoke imagery and a venue for adolescents and young adults to fully connect with Junior.
2. **Elaboration:** This enables a readership to meet the narrator at an informal level and put down the guards that some readers have built against reading. The text is not challenging. The vocabulary is not too complex, but the meaning - the essence of the text - is poignant and deep.
3. **Textual Support:** Junior states, “I was the kind of idiot that got punched hard in the face by his best friend. Bang! Rowdy punched me. Bang! I hit the ground. Bang! My nose bled like a firework” (Alexie 45).
4. **Explanation:** Alexie does not get lost in elaborate conceits or complex sentences. He writes in a simplistic format. In the excerpt above, he still uses all of the literary techniques. However, the reader most likely does not notice, because they are swept by the face-paced reading nature that accompanies the text. Alexie uses onomatopoeia to add the dramatic effect. He integrates repetition. He uses a simile that further explains not only the nosebleed, by the short-lived intensity of the moment. He also changes up the subject at the start of each sentence to provide variability. All of this is intertwined in a text that is approachable for all readers. His use of language and his implementation of descriptions make this story something that even low-level readers can read and appreciate. It parallels with the authorial strategy of integrating cartoons. Nonetheless, this allows all types of people to connect with Junior in a way that allows them to recognize similarities with Junior in identity formation.
Conclusion

1. **Topic Sentence**: While critical race theory strives to emphasize both the positive and negative aspects of forming a racial identity in a culture that is pervaded with white privilege, Sherman Alexie, in *The Absolutely true Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, demonstrates this in a way that collectively includes young individuals in the process of forming one’s identity.

2. **Elaboration**: This connection also leaves room for differences between the reader and Junior. In these differences, the full effect of critical race theory unfolds. A student at New Albany High School might be able to understand the effects of alcoholism on lifestyle. In this regard, they can connect with Junior. However, they may not be able to understand having to go to forty-two funerals by the age of fourteen. This difference scaffolds a closer analysis of why that might be. Why would there be forty-two funerals? Are they all related to alcohol? Why would so many people be alcoholics? What does that mean about life on a Reservation? Why is life so hard for them? Why does school play into that? (And so forth). The scaffolding of these deeper level questions is what pinpoints the poignant depth of Alexie’s argument. It is a story about finding one’s identity. But, it is ALSO a story about racism.

3. **Textual Support**: At the end, Rowdy explains, “You’re an old-time nomad… You’re going to keep moving all round the world in search of food and water and grazing the land. That’s pretty cool” (Alexie 192).

4. **Explanation**: From the focus on the factors that influence identity and lifestyle to the factors that give it hope and nourishment, Alexie is able to exemplify a young boy’s growth in a world that often times requires a split identity.
Identity Formation, Critical Race Theory, & Collectivism in
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

In Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Junior narrates his journey as he transfers from the reservation school (Wellpinit) to the all-white school in Reardan. At the start of the story, the reader learns that Junior is born with a brain condition that leads to physical differences and internal complications. His life on the Rez is underprivileged. There is very little money in the school system. His best friend, Rowdy, is one of the only things that Junior has in his life. Junior transfers to Reardan, where he is not accepted initially. However, over time, he gains respect, begins dating Penelope, and joins the basketball team. He begins to find his identity in a predominantly white society. At the second basketball game at Reardan, Junior and his team beat Wellpinit and Rowdy. However, Junior realizes that his “win” was more of a loss, because he begins losing his tribal identity. After the game, there are a plethora of losses among Junior’s friends and families on the Rez. A drunk driver hits and kills Grandmother Spirit. His dad’s best friend is shot and killed over the last sip of wine. His sister is too drunk and passed out to notice her trailer is on fire and subsequently dies. He realizes the cause of all unhappiness on the rez is alcohol. After a lot of contemplation and loss, Rowdy explains that Junior can still be a Spokane Indian and live within white society at the end of the story. The story ends with Rowdy and Junior playing basketball without keeping score. There are several characters in the text, including: Junior, Rowdy, Roger, Penelope, Mary, Gordy, and Mr. P. Junior, the protagonist, is a dynamic character because he gains confidence and identity as the story progresses. There are also several static characters that add support to the story including: Grandmother Spirit, dad, Eugene, Agnes Adams, Mr. Dodge, and Miss Warren. Grandmother Spirit is a static character because she does not change throughout the text. Rather, she is the archetypal wisdom-provider to Junior as he is changing and forming his identity. In Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*, the theme of racism is analyzed through Junior’s struggles in securing an identity in both white and Spokane society.

**Topic Sentence:** While the difference between societies in this text can be categorized based on race, Sherman Alexie also skillfully provides a realistic view of the effects of alcoholism and poor educational opportunities within the Spokane Indian Reservation. **Elaboration:** In so, Alexie conjures a more complicated process in Junior establishing a split identity. Since he is both a part of the collective Spokane culture and a part of the white educational society, Junior must seek to maintain two forms of identity in two very different cultures. However, this crisis allows the reader to more readily notice the differences the inequities inherent in each racially denoted institution and location. **Textual Support:** In the text, Junior remarks, “Tolstoy wrote, ‘Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.’ Well, I hate to argue with a Russian genius, but Tolstoy didn’t know Indians. And he didn’t know that all Indian families are unhappy for the same exact reason: the fricking booze” (Alexie 200). **Explanation:** Through Junior’s critique of Tolstoy’s theory, Alexie’s readership can more readily identify a collective issue on the Spokane Indian Reservation. As mentioned in the introduction and text summary, Junior loses his grandmother, sister, and his dad’s best friend to alcohol or alcohol-related events. In addition, the irregularity and instability in Junior’s family revolves around his father’s drinking problem. When Junior is trying to secure his identity, these events and routine inconsistency cause him to question the cause. He initially feels that his betrayal is in some way a part of these deaths. However, under closer scrutiny, the perpetrator is alcohol and subsequent addictions.

**Topic Sentence:** Though alcoholism is an inhibitor to Junior securing an identity, the poor educational system at the tribal school exemplifies inequity in a knowledge-based economy for American Indians as well. **Elaboration:** Within our capitalist economy, knowledge and human capital have become the cornerstones for advancement in socio-economic realms of financial success and security. If students receive an inferior
secondary education, they will most likely not have the experience and skills required to compete for superior post-secondary endeavors. Aside from outliers, the majority of individuals without a post-secondary education will not be able to make as much as someone with post-secondary academic credentials. This in turn affects the lifestyle of American Indians who are not provided with the fair chance to compete or pursue post-secondary education due to an inferior secondary education. **Textual Support:** Junior states, “My school and my tribe are so poor and sad that we have to study from the same dang books our parents studied from. That is absolutely the saddest thing in the world” (Alexie 31). **Explanation:** In a knowledge-based economy, identity formation often revolves around career and socio-economic status. This is scaffolded by one’s educational background. At Wellpinit, Junior is provided with a geometry textbook that is so old his mother learned from the same text. This is symbolic of the lack of funds in the tribal school. From a broader view, Junior cannot compete in white society or secure a competitive economic position without having an education within a white school. This further perpetuates a divide between equitable education and hinders economic advancement of many American Indians in contemporary society. Both alcoholism on reservations and inequity in education (tied to a particular race) demonstrate a lack of opportunity for Junior hindering a healthy development of sense of identity.

**Topic Sentence:** Though Alexie crafts this story to explain the negative effects of alcoholism and inequitable educational opportunities for Spokane Indians, he also emphasizes the positive unity and collective consciousness inherent in the Spokane way of life. **Elaboration:** In comparison to Western culture’s individualism, many contemporary Native American cultures place a stronger emphasis on collectivism among families and the tribe as a whole. **Textual Support:** “On the rez, you know every kid’s father, mother, grandparents, dog, cat, and shoe size. I mean, yeah, Indians are screwed up, but we’re really close to each other. We KNOW each other. Everybody knows everybody” (Alexie 153). **Explanation:** Despite the effects of alcoholism, racial inequity, and poverty, Alexie does not fail to emphasize the collective support system on the Rez. When Grandmother Spirit dies, more than 2000 people show up to her wake and comfort Junior and his family despite everything. Even in the end, Rowdy accepts Junior’s divergent path. He tells him that he is like the original Nomadic Spokane Indians. This conclusion gives Junior the confidence he needs and the understanding that he can still maintain his Spokane heritage while existing in a world revolving around white privilege. Through all of these glimpses into contemporary struggles for American Indians, Alexie is analyzing the bigger process and journey that every teenager faces when forming a healthy identity.

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**Topic Sentence:** Furthermore, it is not only Alexie’s writing strategy that reinforces the meaning and purpose behind this text. His implementation of colloquial language and descriptions evoke imagery and a venue for adolescents and young adults to fully connect with Junior. **Elaboration:** This enables a readership to meet the narrator at an informal level and put down the guards that some readers have built against reading. The text is not challenging. The vocabulary is not too complex, but the meaning—the essence of the text—is poignant and deep. **Textual Support:** Junior states, “I was the kind of idiot that got punched hard in the face by his best friend. Bang! Rowdy punched me. Bang! I hit the ground. Bang! My nose bled like a firework” (Alexie 45). **Explanation:** Alexie does not get lost in elaborate conceits or complex sentences. He writes in a simplistic format. In the excerpt above, he still uses all of the literary techniques. However, the reader most likely does not notice, because they are swept by the face-paced reading nature that accompanies the text. Alexie uses onomatopoeia to add the dramatic effect. He integrates repetition. He uses a simile that further explains not only the nosebleed, by the short-lived intensity of the moment. All of this is intertwined in a text that is approachable for all readers. His use of language and his implementation of descriptions make this story something that even low-level readers can read and appreciate. It parallels with the authorial strategy of integrating cartoons. Nonetheless, this allows all types of people to connect with Junior in a way that allows them to recognize similarities with Junior in identity formation.

**Topic Sentence:** While critical race theory strives to emphasize both the positive and negative aspects of forming a racial identity in a culture that is pervaded with white privilege, Sherman Alexie, in The Absolutely true Diary of a Part-Time Indian, demonstrates this in a way that collectively includes young individuals in the process of forming one’s identity. **Elaboration:** This connection also leaves room for differences between the reader and Junior. In these differences, the full effect of critical race theory unfolds. A student at New Albany High School might be able to understand the effects of alcoholism on lifestyle. In this regard, they can connect with Junior. However, they may not be able to understand having to go to forty-two funerals by the age of fourteen. This difference scaffolds a closer analysis of why that might be. Why would there be forty-two funerals? Are they all related to alcohol? Why would so many people be alcoholics? What does that mean about life on a Reservation? Why is life so hard for them? Why does school play into that? (And so forth). The scaffolding of these deeper level questions is what pinpoints the poignant depth of Alexie’s argument. It is a story about finding one’s identity. But, it is ALSO a story about racism. **Textual Support:** At the end, Rowdy explains, “You’re an old-time nomad… You’re going to keep moving all round the world in search of food and water and grazing the land. That’s pretty cool” (Alexie 192). **Explanation:** From the focus on the factors that influence identity and lifestyle to the factors that give it hope and nourishment, Alexie is able to exemplify a young boy’s growth in a world that often times requires a split identity.

- I left the indicators in so that you could see how it plays out in the paragraph format. However, you should remove these when you have your final draft.
- Also, MLA format dictates 1-inch margins, a Works Cited Page, double-spaced font, and your last name and page number right-aligned in the header.
- This would be a rough draft. It still needs improvement in regards to cohesiveness, transitions, and editing.
- Just a side note: This would be a B or C level paper in college (depending on your professor) if you turned it in as is.