**ELA B30**

**Ms. McLeod**

**Novel Study**

**Book Club/Critique**

**Critique of an Author’s Style**

* Your task is to choose a novel, read it, collaborate with a group of students in a book club and finally write your own critique of the author’s style.

**A book (novel) critique of an author’s style** is an analysis and evaluation of a book. A book critique is different than a book review: a summary of a book that lets readers know what the book is about. Unlike a book review that summarizes a book, a critique should analyze and evaluate the book.

**Before Writing your Critique**

1. Read the book carefully. With your book club discuss the questions (included in this handout) and note the key points discussed in your Writing Notebook. This will help you generate ideas for your critique.
2. Collaborate with your book club to determine the author’s main idea.
3. Collaborate with your book club and divide your book into sections and write a brief summary of each section to distinguish the most important ideas to pay attention to.
4. Research and read some articles that review the book to understand its content and message. Share your findings with your book club. You can include the articles in your critique’s Work’s Cited page.

**ELA B30**

**Mrs. McLeod**

**Novel Study**

**Book Club/Critique**

**Book Club**

**Instructions:**

1. Choose a book.
2. Form a group with other students that chose the same book as you. This will be your book club.
3. Set a timeline for pages/chapters to be read in **two weeks.**
4. Your book club will have five meetings. At your meetings you will work collaboratively as a group on the questions below. Your group discussions are the starting point for your critique that you will be writing!

**At your 1st Meeting…**

1. What is your impression of the main character so far?
2. What do you think about what has happened so far?
3. Describe any challenges you encountered while reading?
4. Has the author ‘hooked’ you? Explain.

**At your 2nd Meeting…**

1. Being as specific as possible, state the time and place for this novel. Give support for your answer.
2. Is the choice of setting reasonable and appropriate for the events? Explain.
3. What mood is created?
4. Are there any Vocabulary words you do not understand? Have someone in your group look up the definitions.
5. Is there any background information that you need to research? Have someone in your group do the research.

**At your 3rd Meeting…**

1. What is the initial incident that begins the conflict?
2. What type of conflict: internal, external or both?
3. Who is the protagonist? Antagonist?
4. Imagine the events in this novel were part of your own life. How would this make you feel? What would you do in response?

**At your 4th Meeting…**

1. How is the main character developed? Through dialogue? By the actions they take? By what other characters say or do toward this character?
2. Evaluate a decision by a character or characters. Do you feel a wise or poor decision had been made? Why? What decision would you have preferred to have been made and why?
3. How would this story be different if it were told by a different character?
4. Imagine the events in one of the character’s lives. How would this make you feel if you were in his/her situation? What would you do in response?
5. Are there any characters who remind you of people you know and how?

**At your 5th and final meeting…**

After you have finished reading your book, discuss the following questions:

1. What rhetorical devices does the author use? (Alliteration, allusion, analogy, hyperbole, metaphor, onomatopoeia, simile)
2. How does the author’s attitude shape the way the author presents the material?
3. What techniques does the author use ie. foreshadowing, flashback?
4. How does the author create a certain mood?
5. What is the author’s tone?
6. What point of view is the novel told in?
7. Who should not read this text? Who should?
8. What was the best part of your book? What was the worst part of your book?
9. What do you think the author is trying to say?
10. What questions do you still have?
11. Has the book helped you in any way?
12. What does the book make you wonder about? What confuses you?
13. Were you surprised by anything in the book? What were you expecting instead?
14. How do you feel about the ending?
15. How does the title fit or not fit the text?
16. What is the author saying about life and living?
17. What do you know now that you didn’t know before?

**Writing your Critique**

Before writing your first draft of your essay, take the time to answer these questions and support your answers with examples from the text. Review the rubric to see how you will be assessed.

* Analyze the author’s treatment of the subject.
  + What is the purpose of the novel?

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* + What is successful in this novel?

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* + What is weak in this novel?

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* How does this novel compare to other novels you have read?

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* Analyze the form chosen by the author to express his/her ideas:
* tone (informal, conversational, professional critical, satirical, amused, encouraging, pensive)
* point of view, first person or third person
* arrangement and organization of ideas; sentence structures; diction (e.g., formal, informal or technical)
* imagery and symbolism and use of literary devices (simile, metaphor, allusion, flashback, etc.)

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* Articulate the author’s style (How does this author write in a unique way? How would you recognize this author’s writing?

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* Compose a thesis statement for your introductory paragraph that clearly states whether the work is successful or not.

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A critique of a novel has a definite structure: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

**Introduction**

Your critique’s introduction should include the author’s name, the book’s title, your thesis and your main points you will discuss in the body of your essay.

**Body**

A critique of a novel consists of two paragraphs minimum in the body of the essay: one paragraph for the book’s summary, and one paragraph for your evaluation of the book.

**Summary**: write a review of the book. Discuss the author’s purpose and main points he/she wanted to present.

**Evaluation**: analyze the author’s form and treatment of the subject and articulate the author’s style.

**Conclusion**

The final part of your critique should include both positive and negative sides of the book. Here you should evaluate its value for readers. Try to answer the questions whether this novel is worth reading and why, what a reader (and you in particular) can learn from this book, and whether you would recommend this work to others (and why, or why not).

* Do you agree with the author?
* Why do you disagree with the author (if you do)?
* What is the general opinion on this work? (research other reviews and cite your sources)

Try to be specific and give readers concrete examples from the book (cite your source).

**Critique of an Author’s Style Planning Sheet—do in point form**

1. **Introductory Paragraph:**

* Last sentence of the introduction should contain the **thesis statement**
* Include title of book, and author's name
* Main points you will be discussing in the body of your essay

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Thesis statement: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. **First body paragraph:**

Topic sentence (connect to the thesis): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Body Sentences ideas (examples, detail, proof—quotations):

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Concluding statement: (connect to the thesis and topic statement)

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1. **Second body paragraph:**

Topic statement (connect to the thesis): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Body Sentences ideas (examples, detail, proof—quotations):

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Concluding statement: (connect to the thesis and topic statement)

**4. Concluding paragraph:**

Topic sentence:

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Body Sentence ideas: (a BRIEF summary of supporting details. DO NOT include new ideas. Statements should lead to a generalized conclusion)

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**An Epic Showdown as Harry Potter Is Initiated Into Adulthood** [**http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/19/books/19potter.html?\_r=0**](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/19/books/19potter.html?_r=0)

Top of Form

So, here it is at last: The final confrontation between [Harry Potter](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/complete_coverage/harry_potter/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier), the Boy Who Lived, the Chosen One, the “symbol of hope” for both the Wizard and Muggle worlds, and Lord Voldemort, He Who Must Not Be Named, the nefarious leader of the Death Eaters and would-be ruler of all. Good versus Evil. Love versus Hate. The Seeker versus the Dark Lord.

[Skip to next paragraph](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/19/books/19potter.html?_r=0#secondParagraph)[J. K. Rowling](http://www.nytimes.com/indexes/2005/07/15/books/authors/index.html?inline=nyt-per" \o "J. K. Rowling retrospective with articles and reviews.)’s monumental, spellbinding epic, 10 years in the making, is deeply rooted in traditional literature and Hollywood sagas — from the Greek myths to Dickens and Tolkien to “Star Wars.” And true to its roots, it ends not with modernist, “Soprano”-esque equivocation, but with good old-fashioned closure: a big-screen, heart-racing, bone-chilling confrontation and an epilogue that clearly lays out people’s fates. Getting to the finish line is not seamless — the last part of “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,” the seventh and final book in the series, has some lumpy passages of exposition and a couple of clunky detours — but the overall conclusion and its determination of the main characters’ story lines possess a convincing inevitability that make some of the prepublication speculation seem curiously blinkered in retrospect.

With each installment, the “Potter” series has grown increasingly dark, and this volume — a copy of which was purchased at a New York City store yesterday, though the book is embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m. on Saturday — is no exception. While Ms. Rowling’s astonishingly limber voice still moves effortlessly between Ron’s adolescent sarcasm and Harry’s growing solemnity, from youthful exuberance to more philosophical gravity, “Deathly Hallows” is, for the most part, a somber book that marks Harry’s final initiation into the complexities and sadnesses of adulthood.

From his first days at Hogwarts, the young, green-eyed boy bore the burden of his destiny as a leader, coping with the expectations and duties of his role, and in this volume he is clearly more Henry V than Prince Hal, more King Arthur than young Wart: high-spirited war games of Quidditch have given way to real war, and Harry often wishes he were not the de facto leader of the Resistance movement, shouldering terrifying responsibilities, but an ordinary teenage boy — free to romance Ginny Weasley and hang out with his friends.

Harry has already lost his parents, his godfather Sirius and his teacher Professor Dumbledore (all mentors he might have once received instruction from) and in this volume, the losses mount with unnerving speed: at least a half-dozen characters we have come to know die in these pages, and many others are wounded or tortured. Voldemort and his followers have infiltrated Hogwarts and the Ministry of Magic, creating havoc and terror in the Wizard and Muggle worlds alike, and the members of various populations — including elves, goblins and centaurs — are choosing sides.

No wonder then that Harry often seems overwhelmed with disillusionment and doubt in the final installment of this seven-volume bildungsroman. He continues to struggle to control his temper, and as he and Ron and Hermione search for the missing Horcruxes (secret magical objects in which Voldemort has stashed parts of his soul, objects that Harry must destroy if he hopes to kill the evil lord), he literally enters a dark wood, in which he must do battle not only with the Death Eaters, but also with the temptations of hubris and despair.

Harry’s weird psychic connection with Voldemort (symbolized by the lightning-bolt forehead scar he bears as a result of the Dark Lord’s attack on him as a baby) seems to have grown stronger too, giving him clues to Voldemort’s actions and whereabouts, even as it lures him ever closer to the dark side. One of the plot’s significant turning points concerns Harry’s decision on whether to continue looking for the Horcruxes — the mission assigned to him by the late Dumbledore — or to pursue the Hallows, three magical objects said to make their possessor the master of Death.

Harry’s journey will propel him forward to a final showdown with his arch enemy, and also send him backward into the past, to the house in Godric’s Hollow where his parents died, to learn about his family history and the equally mysterious history of Dumbledore’s family. At the same time, he will be forced to ponder the equation between fraternity and independence, free will and fate, and to come to terms with his own frailties and those of others. Indeed, ambiguities proliferate throughout “The Deathly Hallows”: we are made to see that kindly Dumbledore, sinister Severus Snape and perhaps even the awful Muggle cousin Dudley Dursley may be more complicated than they initially seem, that all of them, like Harry, have hidden aspects to their personalities, and that choice — more than talent or predisposition — matters most of all.

It is Ms. Rowling’s achievement in this series that she manages to make Harry both a familiar adolescent — coping with the banal frustrations of school and dating — and an epic hero, kin to everyone from the young King Arthur to Spider-Man and Luke Skywalker. This same magpie talent has enabled her to create a narrative that effortlessly mixes up allusions to Homer, Milton, [Shakespeare](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/s/william_shakespeare/index.html?inline=nyt-per) and Kafka, with silly kid jokes about vomit-flavored candies, a narrative that fuses a plethora of genres (from the boarding-school novel to the detective story to the epic quest) into a story that could be Exhibit A in a Joseph Campbell survey of mythic archetypes.

In doing so, J. K. Rowling has created a world as fully detailed as L. Frank Baum’s Oz or J. R. R. Tolkien’s Middle Earth, a world so minutely imagined in terms of its history and rituals and rules that it qualifies as an alternate universe, which may be one reason the “Potter” books have spawned such a passionate following and such fervent exegesis. With this volume, the reader realizes that small incidents and asides in earlier installments (hidden among a huge number of red herrings) create a breadcrumb trail of clues to the plot, that Ms. Rowling has fitted together the jigsaw-puzzle pieces of this long undertaking with Dickensian ingenuity and ardor. Objects and spells from earlier books — like the invisibility cloak, Polyjuice Potion, Dumbledore’s Pensieve and Sirius’s flying motorcycle — play important roles in this volume, and characters encountered before, like the house-elf Dobby and Mr. Ollivander the wandmaker, resurface, too.

The world of Harry Potter is a place where the mundane and the marvelous, the ordinary and the surreal coexist. It’s a place where cars can fly and owls can deliver the mail, a place where paintings talk and a mirror reflects people’s innermost desires. It’s also a place utterly recognizable to readers, a place where death and the catastrophes of daily life are inevitable, and people’s lives are defined by love and loss and hope — the same way they are in our own mortal world.