

Major Works' Study Guides English Literature Honors

Major Works' Study Guides will be typed (12 pt. font, Times New Roman or Arial). You will want to be brief and succinct and list only the **most pertinent** information. You should double space between each heading and single space within each entry. Once your MWSG has been graded by your instructor, the MWSG will be placed in your English portfolio.

1. **HEADING – (list)**

- A. the title of the work – UNDERLINE IT!
- B. the author (complete name—first and last)
- C. the date the work was **FIRST** published

2. **Biographical Information** about the author –Specifically relate the information you discover to the novel or play. **You must specifically make this connection.** *Write three chunks.*

3. **Historical Background** – What events occurring in history at the time of first publication of this novel or play may have contributed to its creation? What was the social, political, or cultural climate of the time and place in which the author lived? Specifically relate the information you discover to the novel or play. **You must specifically make this connection.** *Write three chunks.*

4. **Characteristics of the genre—**

- A. **List** the genre you believe the novel falls into. Examples: tragedy, comedy, historical fiction, psychological thriller, comedy of manners, political novel, romance novel, adventure novel, fantasy, science fiction etc. **DO NOT use fiction, non-fiction, or drama!** Be more specific!

- B. How does the work meet the criteria for this genre? *Write this explanation in one or two sentences.*

5. **Setting**—list the time and place the novel or play occurs (**LIST**)

6. **Title**

- What is the meaning of the title? What is the significance of the title? Why did the author choose this title? What does the title say about overall purpose of the work?
Write this explanation in one or two sentences.

7. **Narration or Point of View**—the vantage point from which an author presents a story—usually first person or third person. (**LIST**)

If **first person point-of-view, identify the name of the narrator(s)

If **third person point-of view, identify if the narration is **omniscient** (narrator knows what all characters are thinking and feeling), **limited** (narrator knows what one or two of the characters are thinking or feeling), or **objective** (fly on the wall—narrator is simply reporting the action and does not know any of the characters' thoughts or emotions).

*EXAMPLE—**First Person – Perspective of John**

*EXAMPLE—**Third Person—Limited—Perspective of Mary**

*EXAMPLE—**Third Person—Omniscient**

* For a major work which is a play simply list **Drama Format**.

8. **Main Characters**—List three main characters and use 3 or 4 sophisticated adjectives to describe them. (List the name of each character and at least three adjectives behind each name.)
9. **Conflict and Resolution**—decide if the conflict is (1) a struggle against another person, usually the antagonist (Man vs. Man); (2) a struggle against nature (Man vs. Nature); (3) a struggle within a person (internal conflict) (Man vs. Himself); (4) or a struggle against society (a form of Man vs. Man—Man vs. Society). A fifth (5) possible kind of conflict is often cited the struggle against Fate or destiny (Man vs. Fate).

List the type of conflict and the names of whom and what is involved in it.

Then, after the word **Resolution** describe in a few sentences how the conflict is resolved.

10. **Symbols**—List and describe three significant symbols used in the work and how they are used.

EX. Red hat – The red hat is used throughout the work to represent the power of the foreman over the migrant workers. John feels fear when he sees the red hat appear over the stalks of corn.

Note: some works do not contain any important symbols—ask your teacher if you should be looking for symbols and possibly which ones.

11. **Quotes of Distinction**—List three quotes from the work and **briefly (in one to three sentences) describe their significance.** (Use quotation marks!) Be sure to list the speaker and the page number after the quote.

12. **Themes**—You must state **two** themes!

Theme should not be confused with the subject of the work. Rather, theme is a perception about life or human nature shared with the reader. Sometimes the theme is directly stated within a work; at other times it is implied, and the reader must infer the theme. There are always a variety of messages or ways to state a message from a major work.

One way to discover the theme of a literary work is to think about what happens to the central characters. The importance of those events, **stated in terms that apply to all human beings**, is the theme. What message about life does the author want the reader to understand? Theme gives a piece of literature meaning; it makes it relevant. Theme also must apply to people outside of the work. Theme should be stated in such a way as to include people in general, not just the characters in the story.

Each theme must be written in one complete sentence and stated as a universal truth. Put your universal truth in bold face type. (Do not refer specifically to the characters.) Do NOT under any circumstances use the words—“The theme is.....”

Example: “Obsession leads to the downfall of one’s moral values.”
“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

Then, after each theme briefly discuss (a few sentences) how that universal truth applies to this specific literary work. In these sentences you should mention the characters and events in the novel or play and how they relate to the universal theme.