Success Tips: Writing About Literature

☐ Read, reread, and annotate to form an interpretation of the literature.
  ➢ See A Writer’s Reference L1 tab and Part 4 of your literature book.

☐ In your paper, don’t retell or summarize the entire story or poem.
  Give enough context, including quotes, to support your interpretation of the literature.
  ➢ See A Writer’s Reference, L3 tab and L5 tab

☐ Don’t confuse the writer of the literature with the “fictional” narrator or other characters.
  ➢ See A Writer’s Reference, L5-A.

✍ Task: Identify the author, narrator, and characters.
  ▪ Who wrote the literature (the creator)?
  ▪ Who is telling the story?
  ▪ Who is speaking (or narrating) the poem?
  ▪ Who are the characters? Analyze actions, attitudes, and appearance.

☐ Follow MLA format when introducing authors and literary works
  The first paragraph introduces the author by full name, followed by exact title of the work. Be careful with spelling and punctuation!

Example: In John Updike’s short story, “A & P,” Sammy is distracted by three girls who walk into the grocery store where he works as a cashier.

✍ Task: Write a sentence that contains the title of the work you will write about and the full name of the author of that work.

☐ After fully introducing author and work title, use author’s last name only in subsequent references.
Write about literature in present tense.

Task: Identify the present tense verbs in the below sentences by underlining them.

1. In John Updike’s short story, “A & P,” Sammy is distracted by three girls who walk into the grocery store where he works as a cashier.
2. In Suzanne Collins’ novel, The Hunger Games, young Katniss Everdeen resists the unfair conditions that “The Capitol” imposes on her district.
3. Langston Hughes, in his poem, “Mother to Son,” creates a speaker who is warning her child about life’s struggles.

Include a Works Cited page.

- See A Writer’s Reference, MLA tab
- See the EFSC Writing Center’s LibGuides on how to format and document sources

Example: