

Students will closely analyze an important passage from most of the texts we read. The purpose of this assignment is to practice literary analysis, which argues for the importance of symbols, tone, and word choice in understanding larger themes in a dramatic text. Sometimes we don't get a chance in class to really focus on one passage the way I hope you will do in these close analyses.

**Instructions:** Each entry begins with any key passage (1-3 sentences) from the work at the top of the page. After copying this passage, write a 1-2 page (250-400 word) [close analysis](#), which means analyzing specific [literary elements](#) in that one passage and arguing for their significance in terms of the drama's major themes and questions.

- Please avoid plot summary, and include a Works Cited. Please remember that this exercise is to examine how a playwright expresses meaning, not just what he or she writes. So keep stage directions in mind.
- If you are submitting an Annotated Bibliographic Essay on the same day as a Close Analysis is due, you do not have to submit one, although you may (and may also submit one in the Final Portfolio).
- I am looking for originality in these analyses; so please do not simply recreate passages we discussed in class.

These short writing exercises are not officially graded until they are presented in a revised Portfolio at the end of the term ([see below](#)). Owing to scheduling difficulties, I am afraid **I am NOT able to read late submissions**, although I do expect to see them in the final Portfolio. If you are unable to turn in your analysis on time, you could ask a fellow student to read and evaluate the work-in-progress, or request an online meeting to discuss it.

The **Final Portfolio** includes a cover letter, **your TOP 3 analyses**, including at least 1 revision that highlights your editing skills, and all originals you submitted. If you wish to submit all 4 assigned analyses, you may; I average the top 3 scores.

The cover letter should self-evaluate your own analyses and address the following questions: How have these writing exercises aided your thinking this semester? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your analyses? What is your best analysis, and why? What grade would you give yourself for this assignment?

Consider the following guidelines in averaging your grade:

- [Check plus = Very Good/Great/Excellent \(88-100 range\)](#): Shows excellent understanding of the material. Provides a close and an original analysis that articulates the reader's position on the text, and demonstrates an ability to argue for the importance of details in a literary passage. Needs very little or no revision.
- [Check = Okay/Fine/Good/Very Good \(78-87 range\)](#): Shows fine understanding of themes and issues in the text, and may provide more summary than close analysis of details in the passage. Provides a summary

that may need some revision, such as articulating the reader's position and argument, providing support for assertions, and writing in an academic style.

- [Check minus = Unsatisfactory/Okay \(0-78 range\)](#): Shows poor understanding of the material. Provides an unclear summary or analysis. Needs a lot of revision in terms of clarity and/or style. May be too short.

Although you are only required to revise one analysis, if you revise others, I will reevaluate them. Immediately following the cover letter, place your mandatory revised close analysis, and the rest of the analyses (revised or not). Here's a final list of everything you should include: 1) Cover letter; 2) Mandatory revised analysis; 3) Any other revised analyses; 4) Any late submissions.

### Wendy C. Nielsen      Example of a Close Analysis

Willmore. "Hark ye, where didst thou purchase that rich Canary we drank to-day? Tell me, that I may adore the Spigot, and sacrifice to the Butt: the Juice was divine, into which I must dip my Rosary, and then bless all things that I would have bold or fortunate" (Behn 41, 3.1).

In this passage from act three, scene one of *The Rover, or the Banished Cavaliers* (1677), the dramatist Aphra Behn shows her disdain for Catholicism. The tone she gives to Willmore's words mocks Catholic sacraments. The syntax of the sentence draws the reader's attention to what follows the colon: "the Juice was divine, into which I must dip my Rosary." The word "Rosary" is a metaphor that stands for Willmore's phallus. (Alternatively, it could be a non-religious object, since "rosary" also connotes a counterfeit coin before 1800 ["Rosary"]). What follows—"and then bless all things that I would have bold or fortunate"—plays on Willmore's libertine lustfulness, his Epicurean lifestyle.

Willmore desires not only sex, but also drink. Before 1800, the word "spigot" referred to some "one given to drinking or tippling" ("Spigot"). The word "butt" differs from its modern-day usage. Before 1800, it connoted "A cask for wine or ale, of capacity varying from 108 to 140 gallons" ("Butt"). The wine in the butt, in this case, is Canary wine, "a light sweet wine from the Canary Islands" ("Canary"). In this way, Willmore lives up to the meaning of his name, playing as it does on the famous libertine John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, the word "will" or want, and the French word for word (mot) (Ballaster 165).\*

Behn's disdain for Catholicism is evident not only in this mockery of sacraments, but also in the rest of the play. Hellena and Florinda remain sequestered, and their brother Don Pedro controls their fates; Hellena, in fact, is destined to be nun, and even seeks to marry Willmore, a notorious rapist, in order to escape this fate. Behn's anti-Catholic stance is no doubt influenced by her pro-Royalist stance and the religious tensions in England at time. By associating Willmore/Charles II with anti-Catholicism, she also reassures audiences fearful of the king's religious loyalties.\*\*

## Works Cited

Ballaster, Ros. "Taking Liberties: Revisiting Behn's Libertinism." *Women's Writing* 19.2 (2012): 165-176.

Behn, Aphra. *The Rover, or the Banished Cavaliers*. London: W. Feales, 1735. Print.

"Butt." OED. 2014. Web.

"Canary." OED. 2014. Web.

"Rosary." OED. 2014. Web.

"Spigot." OED. 2014. Web.

\*Research is not required for the Close Analysis, but if you do glean knowledge from elsewhere (as I've done here), then you must cite it.

\*\*Please note that the word count (not including the citation or Works Cited, is at least 250 words).

This page is also available as a pdf:

<http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~nielsenw/behn-ca.pdf>

## Outcomes and Assessment

| <b>Grade</b>          | <b>Close Analysis features</b>  | <b>Nomenclature</b> | <b>Informal Assessment</b> |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 98-100 A+;<br>93-97 A | analysis of figurative language in the passage, discussion of these features' relevance to understanding of larger themes and issues in the text, and original analysis of a few lines of text. Free of any stylistic errors. | Excellent           | Check plus                 |
| 90-92 A-              | some of the above qualities, with few stylistic errors.   | Great               | Check plus                 |
| 87-89 B+              | some attention to the quote, with some discussion of these  | Very good           | Check plus/Check           |

|  |  |      |                   |
|--|--|------|-------------------|
|  | features' relevance to understanding larger themes and issues in the text, and somewhat original engagement with a few lines of text. A few stylistic errors.  |      |                   |
| 83-86 B                                      | some of the above qualities, with more stylistic errors.   | Good | Check             |
| 80-82 B-                                     | summary of the quote, with little to no attention of figurative language, uneven appreciation for the passage's relevance to larger themes and issues in the text, and not necessarily original engagement with a few lines of text. Likely contains stylistic errors. | Fine | Check             |
| 77-79 C+;<br>73-76 C;<br>70-72 C-            | some of the above qualities, to a greater degree.  | Okay | Check/Check minus |
| 67-69 D+;<br>63-66 D;<br>60-62 D-;<br>0-59 F | too short  | Poor | Check minus       |

**Please note that when your turn in your draft, I will use the informal assessment and nomenclature above, and that the points you receive for participation are based on your timely completion of the assignment, and participation within your group and in the class.**