

A literary research paper is not merely a paper that reports on the historical conditions in which a text was composed, nor is it a biographical report on an author. In fact, a literary research paper has more in common with a literary analysis paper than it does with the



research reports done in middle and early high school. That is to say, the author of a literary research paper makes an interpretation of a text, crafts an arguable thesis, and supports the interpretation and thesis through analysis of the text. The author, however, also recognizes that the text is part of history, that through literature, “we come to know periods and nations far more intimately than we can through the misleading and pathetic method of studying their political and military history”ⁱ.

You will be writing a literary research paper arguing how Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* is a part of the time period in which it was written. So, what were the historical/social/political/cultural conditions in which *Great Expectations* was composed, and how does the text interact (respond, refute, or comment on) with those conditions? Select an element, theme, or philosophy expressed in the text and analyze what it adds to the discourse of 1860s London. In short, you are doing a New Historical analysis of the novel.

Your paper will explain your use of the critical lens (New Historicism) you are using, explore the historical period in which the text was written, interpret the text and the role it plays in that period, and an analysis that supports your interpretation.

Your paper will:

- be at least 1500 words
- cite at least 8 reliable, print worthy sources, one of which must be from a New Historicist piece
- cite *all* ideas that are not your own (quoted or not) and all facts that are not common knowledge
- have a “Works Cited” page that reflects all and only the works you actually cited in your paper
- be turned in electronically on turnitin.com and on paper in class on 12/22.

ⁱ Herder, Johann Gottfried, and Marcia J. Bunge. *Against Pure Reason: Writings on Religion, Language, and History*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993. Print