

Commentary Notes

Writing commentary means giving your opinion, interpretation, insight, analysis, explication, personal reaction, evaluation or reflection about a concrete detail in an essay.

You are "commenting on" a point you have made.

Writing commentary is higher level thinking.

Commentary is what makes an essay interesting to read.

Writing commentary requires extra effort. It requires you to think! Commentary requires you to think of some original things (from your brain) to say about your concrete detail.

Literature commentary has some rules:

- do not use *I, me, my, we, us,*
- avoid using *would, should, could, may or might*

Literature commentary discusses what the concrete detail shows about a character or event in a story.

If you get stuck writing commentary, start your commentary sentences with

This shows that _____ .

The result will almost always be commentary.

You can change the phrase "this shows that" in revising your essay.

Example 1 of commentary from "Charles" by Shirley Jackson.

Sentence 1 (TS) Laurie is a mischievous little boy who is testing boundaries as he starts kindergarten.

Sentence 2 (CD) For example, Laurie plays a trick on his father at lunch and ends it by telling his father "gee, you're dumb."
Using quote
for concrete detail

Sentence 3 (CM) This shows that Laurie may not be as sweet as his mother thinks he is and that Charles may not be the only child acting up in the kindergarten class.

Example 2 of commentary from "Charles" by Shirley Jackson.

Sentence 1 (TS) Although Laurie is becoming more independent in kindergarten, he still needs to inform his parents of his struggles.

Sentence 2 (CD) For example, on the first day of school Laurie tells his parents about a boy named Charles who was spanked for being fresh.
Using
paraphrase
for concrete detail

Sentence 2 (CM) Through the invention of "Charles", Laurie is telling his parents each day of his troubles adjusting to kindergarten.

Sentence 3 (CM) Even though Laurie sometimes seems proud of his misbehavior, the fact that he tells his parents of each incident indicates that he may be troubled by his actions at school.

An example of commentary from *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens.

Sentence 1 (TS) Pip is a lonely boy whose visit to the nearby cemetery scares him.

Sentence 2 (CD) For example, he meets a convict who threatens his life by saying "keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat" and tells Pip to bring him some food and a file.

Sentence 3 (CM) Pip is frightened by the man's wild appearance and rough language since he is clearly a dangerous stranger.

Sentence 4 (CM) A feeling of helplessness overcomes Pip as he realizes that he must do what the man demands.