Strategy for Writing Literary Analysis Paragraphs

1. Identify the question.

2. Collect evidence.

3. Listen to/interpret the evidence

4. Craft a working claim (paragraph topic sentence: ¶TS)

5. Draft the analysis.

Claim(s):

- In analytical writing, the ¶TS should offer an arguable claim. That is, other smart people might be able to offer a different answer to the same question.
- Present clear supporting subclaims within the ¶.
- The final sentence of a ¶ often restates the central claim in slightly different language than can be found in the ¶TS.

Evidence:

- The most persuasive evidence takes the form of direct quotations from the source text.
- Textual evidence should always be embedded in your own sentences.
- Textual evidence should always be trimmed down as far as it can. Avoid excessive quotations and avoid BLOCK quotations.
- Sentences containing textual evidence should provide a bit of narrative context to allow the audience to avoid wondering "when did THAT happen?".
- Textual evidence should be cited in accordance with MLA manuscript requirements.

Reasoning:

- Reasoning explains how the textual evidence supports the claim.
- Reveal the analyses in small steps, taking special care to avoid big leaps.
- Avoid constructions that produce writing about the writing ("This evidence proves that…"; "As stated above, …")
- Reasoning should employ appropriate literary terms.

Structure/Style:

- Literary analysis should be structured in emphatic order, moving from the least important point to the most important point, or, from the easiest point to prove to the most difficult point to prove.
- Internal transitions should guide the reader from point to point.
- Literary analysis should be written in the third person and in the present tense.