Analytical Literary Response Paper

Assignment:

In order to develop and appreciate the keen awareness of narrative/poetic forms, themes, images, literary styles/movements, and historical contexts, you will be asked to write 1 detailed analysis; it must focus on one quote of your choice from either *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Othello*, or *Hamlet*.

- The quote can be as short as one line or as long as an entire paragraph.
- The focus of your analysis should be on the (literary) details of the quote (tone, voice, images, irony) and/or the narrative form as a whole (narrator, characterization, conflict).
- Consider how form, style, structure, themes, and voice reflect the literary period.
- Most importantly your analysis should focus very closely on the details of the quote (unpack the quote), and then it can make larger connections to the text as a whole (or related texts), course themes, literary histories, and/or personal reactions.

Requirements:

1. 1.5-2 page typed, double spaced analysis of at least 1 quote (with author’s name and page number using MLA format). Quote should be at the top of the page with the analysis following.
2. Late submissions will lose 1 full grade for every class they are late.
3. You may revise the analytical response if it earns less than a C. The revised response is due 1 week after the graded response has been returned to you. You must highlight all changes and turn in your revision with the original response.
4. Consider using campus resources (the WRC) or consulting me during office hours if you want to discuss ideas or writing.
5. The paper must use MLA formatting and documentation. Please see me if you are unsure how to use MLA citation methods.

Due Date:
Tuesday, Oct. 26th at the beginning of class
Example Literary Analysis

John Doe
Leonard
ELIT 48A
De Anza College
Oct. 19th, 2010
Literary Response 1

“He had been saying to himself – ‘it is nothing but the wind in the chimney – it is only a mouse crossing the floor,’ ” or “ ‘it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp.’” Yes, he has been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all vain.” (Poe 1207)

I have read many of Edgar Allan Poe’s writings, all of which portrays his great skills in literature. In his “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the plot of the story steadily leads up to a killing, and it is through the narrative that readers are able to perceive the slaying from the perspective of the murderer. The quote I choose, however, is a scene in the story taken from the victim’s standpoint. As the old man sat up motionless from his bed he thought to himself, “It is nothing but the wind in the chimney – it is only a mouse crossing the floor,” or “ it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp.” (Poe 1207) The old man had awakened after hearing something in the darkness of the night. Telling himself that the noise he heard was probably just the wind or a mouse was just a way for him to feel comforted, “ Yes, he has been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all vain.” (Poe 1207) Through this passage Poe was able to capture the intensity and fear of the innocent victim before he was put to death.

All of us at one point or the other has probably been through a similar situation; where we are alone and all of a sudden we become frighten by a sound and in order to relieve ourselves from this fear we tell ourselves that we are just hearing things. Personally, I have encountered this situation many times. Whenever I am home alone or even after I had just finished watching a scary movie and I start to hear strange sounds in the distance I always tell myself that it is just the wind or a rat caught between the walls. Like the old man in the story, telling myself that the strange noise I hear is just the wind is a way for me to ease the fear that I feel inside when I do hear these strange noises.

Another illustration that I perceive from Poe’s description of the old man’s suppositions is like a scene from a horror movie. In most horror films a victim is seen creeping down a dark hallway after being diverted from a strange noise coming from the end of the hall. Tip-toeing slowly towards the sound the victim’s only hope is that the sound is coming from a branch banging against the window, and as the victim gets closer to the end of the hallway a cat races pass the victim scary the victim by surprise. In much relief, the victim in the horror film usually takes a moment of breath, and it is during this moment that the victim falls short to another crime scene by the man awaiting him/her at the end of the hall.

Delighting ourselves with denial and comfort in order to ease the fear we feel inside is a common action we take. The old man in the short story sensed that something was not right. He tried imagining that the sound he heard was something that was not harmful, but he knew that death was coming towards him. Like tip-toeing down a dark hallway, Poe was able to allure readers into the highlight of the story as the old man reached his final point.