



LITERARY NON-FICTION

A Short Primer

TWO TEXTS, TWO
CONTENTIOUS TOPICS
(SOLID PREP FOR CAMPUS
LIFE IN UNIVERSITY)

- “Am I a Bad Feminist?”
(Margaret Atwood)
 - Power of social media
 - Repression and abuse of women
 - What is justice?
- “Contempt as a Virus” (Zadie
Smith)
 - Social and economic inequality
 - Racism / BLM
 - Historical injustices





THESE MIGHT BE TOPICS YOU CARE VERY STRONGLY ABOUT!

- “I’m a feminist!”
- “I’m an anti-feminist!”
- “BLM!”
- “Protect and value history as a source of national pride!”



OR MAYBE YOU
DON'T CARE AT ALL

“North Americans are crazy....”

OR MAYBE YOU ONLY CARE WHAT YOUR TEACHERS THINK AND FIGURE THAT MIMICKING THIS IS THE SUREST WAY TO A GOOD SCORE...

- “Petula seems like she hates feminism. If I hate it too, she’ll give me a good score...”
- “I know Doug likes Zadie Smith, so I can’t disagree with her writing....”



THE CHALLENGE
FOR LITERATURE
STUDENTS:



We might agree or disagree with, be inspired or be revolted by a text **BUT be aware that...**

We are not exploring all sides of the issue

We are not exploring the historical background

We are not making political arguments

We are not making moral judgements

WELL, WHAT THE HECK ARE WE DOING?



Exploring how the text works / doesn't work



How the author uses language to make a persuasive argument



How the author establishes and explores a theme



Understand the issue from the author's point of view



Identify biases, limitations, and implications of that point of view

SOME TIPS FOR READING AND ANALYSING NON-FICTION PROSE

1

Consider the nature of the narrator

- First-person? Third-person? Point of view and biases?

2

Consider the structure

- What is happening in each paragraph?

3

Look for as many literary strategies as you can find

- Simile, metaphor, allusion, imagery, setting, etc...

4

Be able to make connections between 1 - 3 and explain how they are significant to the meaning, power, and persuasiveness of the text

WHAT HAPPENS IF I
GET GOOD AT
THIS?

- Well, we're glad you asked!
- On a test, you should be able to see a text for the first time and be able to write an insightful and convincing analytical essay on it! Yeh!

