ROADMAP TO LITERATURE
(TNCC WRITING CENTER)

When analyzing a short story, it is important to understand the story but not re-tell the story. You must analyze one or more elements of the story and provide details from the story to support your analysis. Each person’s analysis can be different but must be supported with accurate details from the story.

Use the following guidelines to get started:
Title: “_________________________” by __________________

PLOT: (In only 3-4 sentences tell what the story is about)

SETTING: (List location, time, season, and anything that suggests time and place).

TONE: (Describe the mood or tone of the story—romantic, sad, dark, fearful, suspenseful) Search through the story just to find specific words or images that create this tone. Look for imagery (language that appeals to the 5 senses to help create the tone or atmosphere. Ex. Dank smell, cracked leather)

SYMBOLS: List any items that occur repeatedly (colors, names, items with double meanings, ordinary things that keep appearing). Notice what is happening or who is present when the symbol is used. How does the symbol fit into the overall meaning of the story? Ex. “invisible watch ticking” may suggest the unnoticed passage of time.

POINT OF VIEW: From whose point of view is the story being told? (1st person: I, we; 2nd person: you; 3rd person: he, she, they; omniscient: all knowing) a character/ a narrator
Do not assume the person telling the story is the writer. Authors often use a character or narrator to tell the story.

CHARACTERS: List the characters and give one word that describes each character (honest, selfish, deceitful, etc.). Then give an example from the story that supports your description of each. Character is revealed by appearance, actions, words spoken, type of language used, and what others say about the person.
Example: Miss Emily: crazy (slept with a dead corpse)

Theme: What is learned from the story? How is this story like life in general? What is the moral? The message? The main point? There may be more than one theme. Sea Biscuit is a story about a horse. A possible theme might be that hard work and persistence overcome setbacks and lead to success. State a supportable theme (1 sentence).

THESIS STATEMENT: What point do you want to make about this story or some aspect of the story? Make a factual, interpretive statement that you can support with evidence from the story. Ex. “A Rose for Emily” uses images of death to convey the painful death of an aristocratic, proud southern culture. Evidence would include: decaying house, decaying body, long black dress, dust, etc.