YOU WILL BECOME A LITERARY CRITIC
“Literary critics analyze and interpret texts, often to help others explore a text’s meaning” – The St. Martin’s Handbook, Sixth Ed.

Purpose: to present your opinion on a specific attribute of the text, and to support your opinion using researched critical analysis.

An ideal paper is one in which the writer discovers something and shares his or her pleasure in the discovery with a reader. The discovery may be an interpretation of a challenging story or poem (or portion thereof), or it may just be the discovery of what you really think about something or other. (“How do I know what I think until I see what I’ve said,” Churchill is supposed to have said.) To discover your own considered opinion or valuation of the work you're writing about is a satisfying outcome to a paper.

-Seamus Cooney, “Writing Papers of Literary Analysis”

So…What are these LITERARY CONCEPTS that are to be explored????
The following literary concepts are standard:

Plot Metaphor
Setting Irony
Narration/Point of View Genre
Characterization Historical Context
Symbol Social Context

Steps for a literary research paper
1. Research an author and a book. Choose a book that has been critiqued professionally, and that has significance and potential for discussion and analysis.
2. *Read the book. Take notes and ask analytical questions as you go.*
3. Choose the literary concept you wish to explore, you must develop a specific, arguable point about that concept.
4. Re-read the book (or re-read certain portions) focusing on portions of emphasis. Scan read.
5. *Research critical analysis of your paper, utilizing the various resources and data-bases at your disposal.*
6. Make source cards to identify source information for the paper’s “Works Cited” page.
7. Make note cards of important pieces of information and text (summarized, paraphrased, or directly quoted).
8. Organize your thesis and supports into a working outline.
9. *Compose the paper.*
10. Conference with the instructor.
11. Revise the paper.
12. Conference with peers.
13. Proofread and edit the paper.
“Like stones, words are laborious and unforgiving, and the fitting of them together, like the fitting of stones, demands great patience and strength of purpose and particular skill.”  -Edmund Morrison

Things to keep in mind
1. You actually have to think when writing this research paper. (Thinking does not entail going to outside sources and borrowing their thoughts.)
2. This is not some mystical kind of writing so much different than the type you’ve been doing.
3. It often helps to have your own copy of the book, even if you have to purchase it. (Many colleges will insist you purchase your primary source.) This allows for highlighting, underlining, and marking of the text.
4. You might have to do some preliminary research as you read to help provide direction for your focus.
5. A minimum of Five sources will be required, however, one of these sources will be your primary source.
6. A literary research paper is not a cut and paste of secondary sources. Although you must have a minimum of 35 note cards, many of those note cards will come from your primary source.
7. You will probably not use all of your note cards. Do not feel the need to force your notes into your paper.
8. Sometimes research papers change direction. Do not let this frustrate you. Continually adapt to newly discovered feelings, views, and research.
9. The school librarians and library literary databases are excellent resources.
10. Have specific concerns and questions ready ahead of time for the student/instructor writing conferences.

“In writing, I am living.
I am growing.
I am tapping myself.
The process is the product.”
-Theodore Isaac Rubin