

3A

A **literary analysis** is an attempt to explain how a piece of literature—small or large—produces some effect or achieves some purpose. It begins with close analysis of the work to discover what strategy (figurative language, literary or narrative device) that poet or author uses to make the poem interpretive. The writer identifies examples from the text that highlight the same strategy (here, extended metaphor) to build an assertion about the text as a whole. Below is an example of an effective literary analysis. Read the analysis below once for comprehension. Then, discuss what is different/added to this type of argument that is not necessary in the one you built for your IB Learner Profile argument.

Literary Analysis: "How Falling in Love is Like Owning a Dog"

In his poem, "How Falling in Love is Like Owning a Dog," Taylor Mali uses an extended metaphor to show both the frustrations and the enduring power of love. Mali compares falling in love to owning a dog, noting the protection that both bring people. He writes, "When you have a leash on love/Ain't no one going to mess with you" (5-6). Mali suggests that dogs will viciously engage anyone who is attacking their owner. Likewise, a person in love with another human being will defend that loved one with the same veracity that a dog might, even to the death. Mali suggests, therefore, that love is both protective and therefore invaluable. However, Mali also points out that love is not always a positive experience, either. Later in the poem he writes, "Sometimes you want to swat love on the nose./Not so much to cause pain./Just to let love know *Don't you ever do that again!*" (26-28). In other words, just as dog owners might swat their pets' noses for being bad, people also yell at loved ones, too, in situations where they feel hurt or treated poorly. Clearly, Mali's metaphor suggests that love can make people vulnerable because in order to experience love, people must accept the reality that it will bring some emotional pain. Mali seems to indicate his strongest point, though, at the very end of the poem when he writes, "Most of all, love needs love, lots of it./And in return, love loves you and never stops" (39-40). The love between dog owners and their pets is special because dogs require a lot of care and attention, and dogs reward their owners with unconditional love each and every day. Similarly, love between humans endures only when it is reciprocal, each person having a responsibility to return and give love in an endless circle. Though love is not an easy or painless journey, Mali emphasizes it is a special one worth every moment of frustration and doubt.