

Recontextualization

The idea of recontextualizing a claim from a critical essay is that you put the claim into a **new context**. Like any interpretation of a work of literature, your recontextualized claim should say something about the significance or meaning (**theme and message**) of the literary work.

The new context could be **another work of literature**. For example, if you were responding to a critical essay written by someone named John Smith:

New context:

Smith argues that the narrator of Poe's "Pit and the Pendulum" is insane and is an unreliable narrator. I apply this same approach to Poe's "Annabel Lee," arguing that the narrator of "Annabel Lee" is an insane, unreliable narrator.

Significance:

This poem is not celebrating healthy romantic love, but criticizing the narrator's destructive possessiveness.

The new context could also be **another aspect of the same work of literature**—something the original critical essay did not discuss. For example:

New context:

Footnote argues that new technologies (the train and the telegraph) have a negative effect on the protagonist of Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," but I will argue that old technologies (the door and the window) have a positive effect on the protagonist of the story.

Significance:

Unlike the out-of-control new technologies which the story criticizes, the older tools built into Louise's house give her control over her environment—a taste of the control over her life which she hopes for after her husband's death.