**Literary Analysis Diagnostic:**

**This exercise is intended to introduce you to the five criteria which will be the basis for evaluating your written and video work this semester. It is based on a 10-point scale. It goes through the pre-writing steps and the composing of a final paragraph.**

***Instructions***

Please read the short text printed below *[and the paragraph of background or contextual information that accompanies it].* After you have examined the text closely, read the five prompts below. You will develop responses to each of them. Please follow the directions for each prompt. The prompts lead you through five sequential steps of close reading, asking you to ***paraphrase***, then to ***observe***, then to ***contextualize***, then to ***analyze***, and finally to ***argue*** a claim or thesis about the text. Please refer back to the text as you respond to the prompts.

**Haruki Murakami, After Dark (Japan, 2004)**

“Eyes mark the shape of the city.

Through the eyes of a high-flying night bird, we take in the scene from midair. In our broad sweep, the city looks like a single gigantic creature –or more like a single collective entity created by many intertwining organisms. Countless arteries stretch to the ends of its elusive body, circulating a continuous supply of fresh blood cells, sending out new data and collecting the old, sending out new consumables and collecting the old, sending out new contradictions and collecting the old. To the rhythm of its pulsing, all parts of the body flicker and flare up and squirm.

Midnight is approaching, and while the peak of activity has passed, the basal metabolism1 that maintains life continues undiminished, producing the basso continuo2 of the city’s moan, a monotonous sound that neither rises nor falls but is pregnant with foreboding.”

1 the minimal amount of energy necessary to maintain respiration, circulation, and other vital body functions while fasting and at total rest.

2 an accompanying musical part that includes a bass line and harmonies

[Murakami’s contemporary novel tracks a series of encounters experienced by two sisters, a sleeping fashion model and a student. It is set in downtown Tokyo during the spooky hours between midnight and dawn. Murakami is known for his humor, psychological insight, and his blurring on the lines between logic and imagination. This is the opening paragraph.]

**Preparatory Pre-Writing Work:**

1. **Paraphrase**: In your own words, give as accurate and complete a summary as you can of the *factual* content of the text: what situation it literally describes, what concrete action or actions (if any) take place in that situation, and who or what performs these actions. Respond to this prompt in two or three sentences. (A full credit response to this prompt would be worth 2 points.)

2. **Observe**: Identify 3-4 features or qualities of the text’s language that catch your attention and that you think may be important to understanding what the text means. Respond to this prompt by stating each of your observations in one short sentence that ends with the phrase “is potentially significant.” Your list may include any elements that you think may be significant: descriptive details; structural and stylistic patterns; arrangements of words; changes in vocabulary, rhythm, or tone; evocative images or metaphors; repetitions of phrases, sounds, or ideas. In each of your four sentences, be as specific as possible about the feature you are observing. (A full credit response to this prompt would be worth 2 points.)

3. **Contextualize:** *[Drawing on the information provided in the paragraph of background information]*, identify and list 2 different facts about the social, historical, literary historical, and/or biographical context or circumstances that you think may be important to understanding what the text means. Respond to this prompt by stating each of your observations in one short sentence that ends with the phrase “is potentially significant.” (A full credit response to this prompt would be worth 1 point.)

4. **Analyze**: Select 2-3 of the elements you have listed in steps 2 and 3. State in one or two sentences for each of the features you have selected why that it is significant, how it contributes to an understanding or interpretation of what the text means. Respond to this prompt by naming the textual feature or contextual fact you are analyzing, followed by “is significant **because** . . .” (A full credit response to this prompt would be worth 3 points.)

**Final Step (which will be scored):**

5. **Argue:** Based on the 4 preceding steps, write a paragraph (100-150 words) presenting your interpretation of the text that conveys your understanding of the text’s meaning, purpose, and importance. Respond to this prompt by composing 3-5 sentences in which you state your main thesis– the central claim you are arguing – and support that thesis by presenting your evidence an analysis from Steps 2 through 4 and referring to the whole text (Step 1). The individual observations and analyses that you present in this paragraph should all contribute to the support of your central thesis or claim and should make clear why you think as you do and why your ideas are important. (A full credit response to this prompt would worth two points.)

This assignment is intended to help you to be as successful as possible in the course. The available points for this assignment would total 10 (broken down as indicated). We will be using this breakdown as a basis for assessing your written assignments (the travelogue, essay, video project, etc.) for the class. A fully successful assignment will contain all of the elements listed above and will look like what is requested in Step 5. While completing all steps is crucial to ensure that you present your ideas as effectively as possible, you will only be scored on the integrated final product that you compose in Step 5. The goal of the exercise is to clarify the course expectations for you, and to let you know where and how to focus your energies. The point breakdown is designed to give you an idea of how we will weigh each element and to ensure that you are aware of the expected elements for the formal written assignments.