Patterns for Theses on Literary Works

1. In (title of work), (author) illustrates, shows (one aspect) (noun/modifier--word or phrase).

Example: In "Barn Burning," William Faulkner shows the characters Sardie and Abner Snopes struggling for their identity.

2. In (title of work), (author) uses (one aspect) (to define, strengthen, illustrate) the (element of the work).

Example: In "Youth," Joseph Conrad uses foreshadowing to strengthen the plot.

3. (title), (author) uses (an important part of work) as a unifying device for (one element), (another element), and (another element). The number of elements can vary from one to four.

Example: In "Youth," Joseph Conrad uses the sea as a unifying device for setting, structure, and theme.

4. (Author) develops the character of ________ in (literary work) through what he does, what he says, and what other people say to him or say about him.

Example: Langston Hughes develops the character of Semple in "Ways and Means" . . .

5. In (work), (author) uses (literary device) to (accomplish, develop, illustrate, strengthen) (element of work).

Example: In "The Masque of the Red Death," Poe uses the symbolism of the stranger, the clock, and the seventh room to develop the theme of death.

6. (Author) (shows, develops, illustrates) the theme of ________ in the (play, poem, story).

Example: Flannery O'Connor illustrates the theme of the effect of the selfishness of the grandmother upon the family in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find."

7. (Author) develops his character(s) in (work) through his use of ________ language.

Example: John Updike develops his characters in "A & P" through his use of figurative language.