POLISHING FORMAL, ANALYTIC WRITING

Mechanics and Style:

1. Avoid first person (I, my, me, we) and second person (you, your).
2. Avoid contractions (isn't, can't, etc.).
3. Use formal diction. Avoid colloquialism and slang.
4. Avoid verb tense shifts: Use present tense for fiction and past tense for nonfiction.
5. Use active voice and action verbs. Avoid passive voice. Avoid is + -ing verbs.
6. Avoid vague pronouns (it, this, these, those, that) and vague words (things, many, a lot).

7. Properly identify your literature as a short story, novel, play, or poem, and properly punctuate titles accordingly: use quotation marks for short stories and poems; use italics (underlining when handwritten) for novels and plays.
8. Mention title and author in thesis statement.
9. Avoid using the actual word "quote" (e.g. "In this quote"¦"); use "quotation."
10. Avoid "stacking" quotes, e.g. placing quotes one after another without explanation.
11. Spell out numbers less than 100.

Preparing your typewritten paper:

1. Using your outline, prepare your rough draft on the computer. Although you may prefer a handwritten rough draft, it will be easier to write it on the computer: editing will be easier, and the bulk of the writing task will not have to take place the "night before" the paper is due. Additionally, changes during peer editing will be easier for your peers to make on a typewritten draft.
2. Use Spell Check and Grammar Check initially to proofread your paper; however, Spell Check will not catch all your errors (for example, the use of the word two for to); therefore, before you print the final copy, work through the paper line by line, examining it closely for spelling and grammatical correctness.
3. Following the format required by your teacher, make sure you have placed a heading (your name, class name, date, etc.) and a title in your paper.
4. SAVE and PRINT out two copies, one of which you will keep at home, or in your notebook, in case your original is lost or misplaced. Furthermore, you should always keep a saved copy on media (floppy disk, zip disk, e-mail, TurnItIn.com, memory stick, etc.) outside your computer until the end of the semester in case your computer has problems. "My computer crashed," is not an acceptable excuse.