

Studying Literary Text Introduction

Studying Literary Text: Introduction

Spark

One of the most beloved and popular forms of text you can read is the literary text.

Watch the video to learn about its history and some of its genres you may encounter.

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Studying Literary Text Transcript

Activate Prior Knowledge

Our earliest encounters with the written word are generally through literary text. We learn nursery rhymes by heart, and adults read stories to us. At some point, we begin to understand that another human being wrote each of those texts—a human being who had the imagination to create characters, settings, and plots that we ourselves may never have imagined.



Source: Vadim Georgiev. Shutterstock

Later still, we develop our own taste in literary texts, choosing our own books to read. We may gravitate to science fiction or read a series of mysteries by a single author. We may prefer romance writing to historical fiction, or we may only read current realistic novels set in urban environments.

Activity

Think about your own taste in fiction. Complete this organizer with titles of books or stories to reveal your early encounters with literary texts and how they inspired your reading habits. Explain your answers in a sentence or two.

Four Square

Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

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Learning Goals

Throughout this unit, your student will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a 1937 novel about one Black woman's search for her own voice and value. Your student will also read a variety of shorter literary texts. As they read and respond to the texts, your student will be asked to analyze and evaluate complex ideas and to write about their observations and conclusions.

Spark

1. Have your student read aloud the title of the unit. Explain that a literary text may be as short as a sonnet or as long as a novel, but it is always a work of imagination.
2. Have your student watch the flipbook about the history of literary texts. You may wish to explain that a change in academic focus from Western (European) Literature to World Literature led to a gradual recognition that the novel was much older than previously acknowledged.
3. Tell your student that over the course of this unit, they will read several examples of literary text. Certain features of the texts will be similar—all will feature characters and settings, for example—but the stories will be as different as the authors who imagined them.

Activate Prior Knowledge

1. Have your student read the opening paragraph, and point out that like all text, literary text is communication between an author and reader.
2. After your student reads the second paragraph, discuss how their and your tastes in fiction have changed over time.
3. Give your student a copy of the Four Square graphic organizer and have them respond to the prompts with titles of texts and explanations of their choices. Then, talk about their responses and have them classify themselves as an open to multiple genres and types reader, or a specialized reader of fiction. Point out that their preferences are likely to continue evolving and changing over time, as yours have.

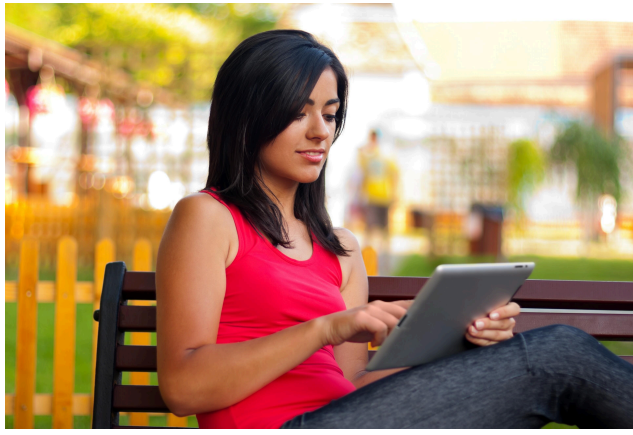
Four Square

Studying Literary Text: Introduction

The Basics of Literary Text

To read a short story or novel successfully requires us to form a connection with the text. We can do this by thinking about other texts we have read, by comparing characters and events to the people and incidents in our lives, and by connecting the text to world events. Ask yourself questions like these as you read, and record your answers in your reading log.

- Does this remind me of any books or stories I have read?
- Have I read anything similar from the same era or by the same author?
- Which character in this novel can I best relate to, and why?
- How would I react under the same circumstances faced by this character?
- Have I ever seen a place like the one depicted here? Where was it?
- Do people today still behave the way people in this novel behave? How are they the same? How are they different?
- What does this novel tell me about life in a particular time and place?



Source: Kacso Sandor. 123rf.com

It is also important to connect a work of fiction to the time and place in which it was created. Details of setting, dialogue, and even characters' actions and motivations can seem alien and odd if we look at them through the lens of our own lives today. Ask yourself these questions: What aspects of culture or history do I need to recognize to understand this text? How does the setting affect the behavior of the characters and the fate that befalls them?

Question

How might a novel from 1937 differ from a novel of today when it comes to issues of gender and race? What attitudes toward gender and race would seem radical in a novel from 1937?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Today's novel might feature examples of anti-racism or gender equality, but a 1937 novel might show inequalities without assuming that they are wrong. A radical novel from 1937 might show inequalities as something to be battled or overcome.

Learning Coach Guide

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The Basics of Literary Text

- 1.** Explain to your student that connections to text may be text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world connections. Have them read the opening paragraph and the list of bulleted questions. Suggest that they copy and keep the questions in their Reading Log to refer to as they read the Unit Text.
- 2.** Continue with the second paragraph, pointing out that texts from a different era or culture may at first seem difficult to modern American readers. Looking for universal connections—how people think, feel, and act similarly to us in situations that may seem unusual—can be one path into a text from an unfamiliar time or place.
- 3.** Have your student read the question and respond to it orally or in writing. If necessary, define *radical* as meaning “revolutionary” or “unconventional.”

Previewing the Unit Text: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

About the Author



Source: neftali77. 123RF.COM

Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960) might have been surprised to see her likeness on a 2003 postage stamp. By the time of her death in 1960, she was forgotten and impoverished. Born in Alabama to formerly enslaved parents, Hurston soon moved to Florida, where her family did well in the first incorporated all-Black town in the United States.

Hurston joined a theater company as a teenager and found herself in New York City just as the Harlem Renaissance, a Black cultural and intellectual revival, was beginning. She attended Howard University and returned to New York to study folklore in an anthropology program at Columbia University.

Hurston published her first novel in 1934 and a collection of African-American folklore a year later. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) remains her most popular work and influenced later Black writers, such as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison.

About the Text

Their Eyes Were Watching God reflects many elements of Hurston's life. Much of it takes place in all-Black Eatonville, Florida, where Hurston grew up and her father served as mayor. It features a dialect like that spoken by the people Hurston knew and stories similar to the folktales Hurston studied.

At the time of its publication, the novel received mixed reviews. Many readers were unprepared to read about a Black female protagonist who eventually finds her strength and her own identity. In fact, the novel only garnered a real audience after Hurston's death, as the feminist movement made women like Hurston's Janie Crawford seem appealing and authentic.

Question

Zora Neale Hurston once said, "If you are silent about your pain, they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it." Why might this quote appeal to feminists? Why might it appeal to those who fight for other civil rights?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The quote implies that silence is surrender and that if you want something, you must speak up.

Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

About the Author

1. Make sure that your student can access the text. Supply your student with a graphic organizer that they can use as a Reading Log; or, if they prefer, they may jot down observations, questions, and evidence in their notebook as they read the novel. Explain that they will record their opinions and impressions as well as answers to some specific questions about the text. They may also record any ideas and questions that emerge from their reading to discuss with you.
2. Ask your student to read the brief biography of Zora Neale Hurston. Explain that Hurston's work was rediscovered by later scholars, including author Alice Walker, who wrote a magazine story about Hurston in 1973. Today, Hurston's works are back in print and far more popular than they ever were while she was alive. The reasons for this are complex: Hurston was fairly apolitical compared to many Harlem Renaissance writers, and some of her fellow writers thought she portrayed Black Americans as stereotypes. Rather than writing about obstacles and dangers related to being Black in America, as many of her compatriots did, Hurston chose to look at the inner life of Black women.



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

About the Text

1. Point out that like many authors of fiction, Hurston chose to write about places and people similar to those she knew in childhood.
2. Have your student read this section and then respond to the question. If your student needs support, then scaffold with these questions:
 - What does the quote mean? Explain it in your own words. (It means that silence lets other people take advantage of or speak for you.)
 - Why might that idea appeal to people striving for equality or acceptance? (It shows the importance of using your own voice to tell what you need and deserve.)

Previewing the Unit Text: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Pace and Prepare Yourself

You will have approximately two full weeks to complete this text. Pace yourself so that you can read with understanding and finish the text in time to complete the Apply activities that follow your reading. Here are some suggestions, but feel free to adjust them in any way that works for you and your schedule.

Days	How Much to Read
Day 1 (today)	Chapters 1 and 2
Reading Day	Chapter 3 through 5
Other days	One chapter a day

In the Apply activities that follow your reading, you will find questions that assess your understanding and your ability to analyze literary text. You can prepare for these activities by thinking about some key questions as you read. As you finish each day's reading, take notes in your Reading Log that offer potential answers to these questions:

- What was Zora Neale Hurston’s purpose in writing this novel? What themes did she want to explore?
- How does Janie develop as a character? What changes in her relationships with men? What changes in her relationship with herself?
- Why did Hurston use dialect, and what is its effect on the reader? How does dialect contribute to point of view and characterization in the novel?

Begin Reading

Their Eyes Were Watching God is framed at the beginning and end by scenes in which the main character converses with her friend Pheoby. The rest of the book is Janie’s story—a story she tells Pheoby so that Pheoby may share it with others.

Read Chapters 1 and 2 and watch for the change from first-person to third-person narration. Think about how this change in point of view helps the reader fall into the story much the way a listener might. Write your initial feelings about the novel in your Reading Log before you continue reading.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

[View Learning Coach Guide](#)

Pace and Prepare Yourself

1. Read the information in this section with your student. Review the chart and compare it to your calendar to help your student devise a reading schedule that will work for your needs.
2. Review the bulleted questions with your student. Explain that after they complete the novel, they will apply skills they learn in this unit to *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The questions here will help them organize their thoughts as they read and prepare them for the analytical questions that they will encounter in Apply.

Begin Reading

1. With your student, locate Chapter 1 in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and read the opening two paragraphs together. Discuss what this opening indicates about the difference Hurston is drawing between men and women. For example, she sees men's dreams as being far away and out of reach and women's dreams as being reality. Women are more practical, and men are more idealistic.
2. Have your student begin reading, making sure that they have their Reading Log available for note-taking. Remind them that they will have more reading time available later.

23/24 Honors English 11 A - Studying Literary Text

Studying Literary Text Reading Day

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Reading Day

Please use today's lesson to read from the designated text for this unit. Use your reading log to take notes based on the guidance in the unit introduction reading preview. Refer to the pacing guide to plan your reading time during the rest of the unit. In the final lesson of the unit, you will be asked to apply skills learned during the unit to analyze the designated text.

23/24 Honors English 11 A - Studying Literary Text

Literary Text Evidence

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Objective and Key Words

Objective

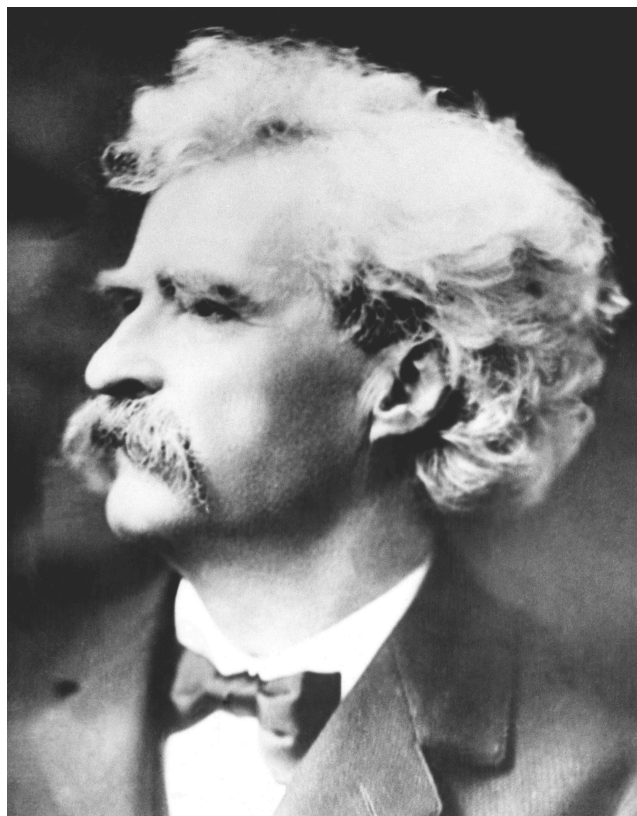
In this section, you will provide strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of explicit meanings in a text.

Key Words

- **evidence** – the facts and information that support an idea or analysis
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Provide Textual Evidence

Humorous stories can often be more challenging to read and understand than dramatic stories. It is the reader's responsibility to determine what the joke is and whom the joke is aimed at. Today, you will read a short story about a train journey that becomes, by turns, hilarious and deadly serious.



Author Mark Twain, around 1900

Take Notes as You Read

The author Mark Twain (1835-1910) is considered one of the most beloved writers of the nineteenth century. His works include such classics as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Life on the Mississippi*. Twain began his career as a journalist who traveled widely around the United States, but he eventually found popularity in writing fiction using a voice that reflected vernacular American speech. Twain was primarily a humorous writer, but he was a moralist, not a sentimentalist, and much of his work is slyly satirical, as it mocks the customs and conventions of American life.

Satire is an ancient literary form whose purpose is to expose the flaws of powerful people and institutions through the use of humor. Satire is often, but not always, political in nature. As you read “Cannibalism in the Cars,” try to determine exactly who and what Twain is mocking and to what end.

Did You Know?

Parliamentary procedure refers to the rules and practices of lawmakers in a democracy. Despite its name, which refers to Parliament, the highest legislative body in England, all lawmaking bodies in the United States, including the two houses of Congress, rely on these rules and practices to maintain order, decorum, and a sense of fairness during the messy and sometimes verbally combative process of creating laws. As you read the story-within-a-story in “Cannibalism in the Cars,” pay attention to how the stranded passengers invoke parliamentary procedure to navigate their dire situation. Think about how Twain uses it to add to the humor of the story.

Take Notes as You Read

As you read “Cannibalism in the Cars,” consider Twain’s use of humor. Notice which details make you smile or laugh and why. Take notes in your Reading Log about your reactions to specific details in the story.

Useful Vocabulary

1. **cannibalism** – the practice of eating the flesh of one's own species
 2. **canvassed** – solicited votes from voters, as during in an election
 3. **caucusing** – holding a political meeting in which members discuss and put forward their preferred candidates
 4. **leagues** – measurements of distance of about three miles or 5 kms
 5. **monomania** – a preoccupation with something to exclusion of all else
 6. **purveyor** – a person who deals, sells, or promotes something
 7. **presentiment** – a foreboding feeling that something bad will happen
 8. **provisions** – supplies of food, drink, and equipment for a journey or expedition
 9. **requisition** – the claiming of materials for military or public use
 10. **succor** – aid or assistance
 11. **vagaries** – unpredictable and sudden changes in a person's behavior; quirks
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Provide Textual Evidence

Supporting Analysis of Explicit Meanings with Evidence

“Cannibalism in the Cars” has a frame, or main, story and a story-within-a story. The frame story establishes the narrator, a traveler, presumably someone like the author himself. The story-within-a-story is told by a gentleman the narrator meets. In both parts of the story, Twain provides numerous explicit details about the characters, setting, and events. These details provide the reader with information that helps them understand the story and its meaning. As the reader, you don’t need to interpret the information because it’s stated directly in the text. However, you must cite strong evidence from the text to support and verify your ideas. Textual evidence includes words, phrases, and sentences paraphrased or quoted directly from the text.

As you watch the following video, observe how the student uses explicit information from the text to support their understanding of the story. The student quotes extensively from the text. Think about how this process of stating an idea and identifying supporting evidence enhances the student’s experience of reading Twain’s story.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Peer Model Video Transcript

Now, answer the questions.

Question 1

How does the author's inclusion of explicit information help the student in the video?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The inclusion of explicit information helps the student understand specific characters, settings, and events in the text. Citing explicit details from the text helps the student confirm their understanding.

Question 2

How does the student in the video support their analysis of the text?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The student cites textual evidence in the form of direct quotations. They quote exact words, phrases, and sentences from the text to support their ideas and verify their understanding.

Check-In

Use this excerpt from “Cannibalism in the Cars” to answer these questions.

Question 1

In your own words, what do you understand about the gentleman the narrator meets on the train?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The gentleman first appears happy, then thoughtful, and then gloomy. He has a secret story to tell.

Need a little extra support?

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Question 2

What evidence in the text supports your ideas about the gentleman? Cite explicit details in the text.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The narrator describes how the gentleman’s eye “lighted pleasantly” at first, but then “his face settled into thoughtfulness” and then “almost into gloom.” The gentleman tells the narrator that he wishes to share “a secret chapter” in his life that he has never told before.

Need a little extra support?

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Practice

Reread the passage from “Cannibalism in the Cars” to complete this activity.

Activity

In your own words, explain Mr. Rogers’s objection to Mr. Herrman as a candidate for cannibalism. Be sure to cite explicitly stated meanings in the passage as evidence to support your analysis.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Mr. Herrman has been nominated as the first of the passengers to be eaten by the other men. Mr. Rogers objects to Mr. Herrman’s nomination because Mr. Herrman has “lost more flesh during the week we have lain here than any among us.” He argues that the committee “has been derelict in its duty” by proposing a man who “has really less nutriment in him.” Mr. Rogers believes that Mr. Herrman is now too thin to make a satisfying or nutritious meal for the rest of the passengers to eat.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to the prompt by explaining my understanding of a section of the story.
 2. _____ I analyzed the explicit details in the passage.
 3. _____ I provided evidence in the form of direct quotations from the text.
 4. _____ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation in my response.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will provide strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of inferences drawn from a literary text.

Key Words

- **evidence** – the facts and information that support an idea or analysis
 - **inference** – a conclusion formed from evidence and reasoning
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Making Inferences

The world is a more civilized place when people adhere to the rule of law; however, following the rules in the most extreme situations may lead to unexpectedly comic results. Today, as you read Mark Twain's short story, "Cannibalism in the Cars" you will discover what happens when stranded train passengers apply the rules of procedural democracy to a dire situation.



Source: Serjio74. Shutterstock

Take Notes as You Read

Mark Twain's (1835–1910) style of writing reflects the American way of speaking at a time when the United States was rapidly expanding westward and becoming

increasingly regionalized. His contemporaries marveled at his ability to mimic vernacular speech in his journalism and fictional stories to comic effect; however, to modern readers, his writing may seem archaic and ornate. Many of Twain's sentences are discursive and indirect, characterized by strings of clauses and phrases. As a reader, you may find it helpful to approach Twain's writing style with patience. Be prepared to read some passages more than once.

Take Notes as You Read

When you encounter a challenging passage, read it all the way through silently or aloud. Concentrate on determining what the words mean. Then, paraphrase the text using your own words. Record your ideas in your Reading Log and later, when you return to the text to identify evidence, you can use your paraphrases as a “translation” of the text.

Useful Vocabulary

1. **cannibalism** – the practice of eating the flesh of one's own species
 2. **canvassed** – solicited votes from voters, as during in an election
 3. **caucusing** – holding a political meeting in which members discuss and put forward their preferred candidates
 4. **leagues** – measurements of distance of about three miles or 5 kms
 5. **monomania** – a preoccupation with something to exclusion of all else
 6. **purveyor** – a person who deals, sells, or promotes something
 7. **presentiment** – a foreboding feeling that something bad will happen
 8. **provisions** – supplies of food, drink, and equipment for a journey or expedition
 9. **requisition** – the claiming of materials for military or public use
 10. **succor** – aid or assistance
 11. **vagaries** – unpredictable and sudden changes in a person's behavior; quirks
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Making Inferences

Providing Evidence that Supports Analysis of Inferences

In “Cannibalism in the Cars,” Mark Twain provides many explicit details about the characters, setting, and events, which help shape the reader’s understanding of the story. However, much is also implied. When an author implies important details and information instead of stating them directly, the reader must use their own knowledge and understanding to make inferences. Inferences are often called “educated guesses,” but they are valid conclusions based on a combination of the details in a text and the reader’s own reasoning.

As you reread this passage from “Cannibalism in the Cars,” use the implied details to make an inference about the narrator and the gentleman he encounters on the train.

Question 1

What inference can you make about the two characters?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The details in the passage suggest that both men are intelligent and interested and informed about politics. They feel comfortable with each other, even though they are total strangers.

Question 2

What details from the passage strongly support your inference?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The two characters “talked together pleasantly on various subjects for an hour.” The narrator finds the gentleman to be “intelligent and entertaining.” The narrator seems impressed by the gentleman’s familiarity with “the ins and outs of political life” in Washington, D.C., including “the ways, and manners, and customs of procedure of Senators and Representatives in” the U.S.

Congress. These details suggest that they are intelligent, informed, and articulate individuals.

It is important for you, as a reader, to access and evaluate textual evidence when making inferences. Not every detail supports an inference. As a reader, you need to identify evidence that you can point to as you explain the reasoning behind your “reading between the lines.”

As you reread “Cannibalism in the Cars,” carefully access and evaluate the textual evidence as you infer. Ask yourself these questions: What does this detail imply or suggest? Will it help me prove that my inference is valid? Answering these questions enables you to show that your inference is accurate, and the evidence thoroughly supports your ideas.

Question 3

Why is it important to access and evaluate evidence in a text when you make an inference?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: When I make an inference, I am drawing a conclusion based on details and information in the text as well as on my own knowledge, so I need to be able to point to specific evidence that supports my reasoning. Accessing and evaluating the textual evidence enables me to confirm that my inference and the reasoning behind it are sound.

Check-In

Reread this passage from “Cannibalism in the Cars” to answer the questions below.

Question 1

What inference can you make about how being stranded for a week without food has affected the men on the train?

Reveal Answer

Sample answers: The details suggest that with each passing day, the men grow hungrier and more desperate. At first, they mope silently. Then, they quietly lose hope. By the fifth day, they are savagely hungry and begin to formulate a terrible thought. By the seventh day, the passage implies they are ready to commit cannibalism.

Need a little extra support?

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Question 2

What details in the passage support your inference?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The passage describes how the men devolve from moping to “restless slumber” to “savage hunger” and “the foreshadowing of something that was vaguely shaping itself in every heart.” The story’s title suggests that this idea “which no tongue dared yet frame into words”—is cannibalism.

Question 3

How did you access and evaluate the evidence you used to support your inference?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I scanned the passage for details that described how the men felt and what they thought. The text doesn't say directly that by the seventh day, the men are ready to commit cannibalism to survive, but the detail about the "something which no tongue dared yet frame into words" and the word *cannibalism* in the story's title helped me infer what the narrator is talking about.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Practice

Reread the passage from the conclusion of “Cannibalism in the Cars” to complete the activity.

Activity

Write a paragraph in which you use details from the excerpt and from elsewhere in the text to support an inference about how the narrator feels and why he feels this way. Be sure to access and evaluate the evidence that you cite in your response.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The narrator explicitly states that, after the other gentleman departs, he “never felt so stunned, so distressed, so bewildered in” his life. He has been listening to—and apparently believing—the gentleman’s experiences with cannibalism. Earlier in the story, the gentleman confided feelings of affection and kindness towards Harris, the first of the passengers to be eaten. At the end, the gentleman tells the narrator that he “could like you as well as I liked Harris himself.” Reflecting on the gentleman’s words, the narrator interprets them in a dark way. He shudders with fear and disgust and declares that his “heart fairly stood still.” The implication is that the narrator believes the gentleman’s story and is afraid that any further acquaintance with the man would result in the narrator being eaten for dinner.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to each part of the prompt by providing strong evidence to support my analysis of inferences drawn from the story.
2. _____ I made inferences about the narrator of the story based on implied details throughout the text.

3. _____ I accessed and evaluated the implied details in the text to support my inferences.
 4. _____ I incorporated quotations from the text as evidence to support my ideas.
 5. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will determine where a text leaves matters uncertain.

Key Words

- **evidence** – the facts and information that support an idea or analysis
 - **hyperbole** – the deliberate use of exaggeration for comic effect
 - **inference** – a conclusion formed from evidence and reasoning
 - **irony** – a literary technique in which the way something appears is different from what it actually is or what readers expect
 - **satire** – the use of humor to criticize someone or something
 - **understatement** – the act of describing something in less strong or more modest terms than would be expected
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Text Evidence

Determining When the Text Leaves Matters Uncertain

Imagine you strike up a conversation with a fellow passenger on a subway, bus, or train. You presume they are presenting themselves honestly as you exchange pleasantries and personal anecdotes; however, you can't truly be certain. Today, you will read a story in which the narrator encounters a stranger who tells a wild tale, and he wonders how it could possibly be true.



Source: marcobonfanti. 123rf.com

Take Notes as You Read 

If you think about what makes you laugh, then you will realize that humor is highly subjective and timely. Jokes “land” when audiences understand the references to the people, places, and things being mocked. For this reason, humorous literature often loses its impact as time passes. Author Mark Twain (1835–1910) has been hailed as the greatest American humorist, and his work has withstood the test of time primarily because of its basis in satire.

Satire is an ancient literary form that employs the techniques of understatement, irony, and hyperbole to mock powerful people and institutions. Satire is often but not always political in nature, and it is not always funny. However, because satire exposes the flaws of the powerful and influential, many consider it to be an art form of the ordinary people. Even if modern audiences don’t always understand the references in Twain’s works, they implicitly understand that he is forcefully skewering cherished American institutions, customs, and conventions.

As you read “Cannibalism in the Cars,” try to figure out exactly who and what Twain is mocking and to what end. Keep in mind that although Twain himself is now a beloved literary figure, he is not a sentimentalist, and his writing is based on a strong moral code and sense of fairness.

Useful Vocabulary

1. **cannibalism:** the practice of eating the flesh of one's own species
 2. **canvassed:** solicited votes from voters, as in during an election
 3. **caucusing:** holding a political meeting in which members discuss and put forward their preferred candidates
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Text Evidence

Use and Manage Details to Determine What the Text Leaves Uncertain

In “Cannibalism in the Cars,” Mark Twain provides explicit and implied details about the characters, setting, and events, which help shape the reader’s understanding of the story. When an author implies important details instead of stating them directly, the reader must use their own knowledge and understanding to make inferences.

Thoughtful readers use and manage the evidence in the text to support their ideas by citing specific details to support their “educated guesses.”

Sometimes, authors leave matters uncertain by deliberately omitting important details and information. Readers need to recognize when this is happening and why. The author may exclude key pieces of information in order to build suspense, to inject humor or confusion, or to move the story along. The effect is to make the reader feel dissatisfied, off-balance, or confounded; however, if they are patient, the matter may be cleared up by a detail provided later in the text. In some cases, authors never resolve the uncertainty because they want to tantalize readers with questions that can never be answered. Their literary choices reinforce the idea that some things in life can never be explained.

Question 1

Why might the author of a literary text leave matters uncertain?

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: They may want to inject a moment of humor or confusion, create a sense of suspense, or move the story along.

Question 2

How does the reader feel when a text leaves a matter uncertain?

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: The reader may feel dissatisfied or confused because they can't make sense of something that happens in the story. They may feel like the author leaves them "hanging."

Use and manage the details provided in a text to make inferences and notice gaps in the story. Sometimes, as in the case of "Cannibalism in the Cars," a text may leave a key matter uncertain. As you reread the text, be patient and keep reading in case the author provides the missing information later. However, be prepared for uncertainty to linger. You can try to "read between the lines," but you may never achieve certainty.

Question 3

How can you use and manage information in a literary text that leaves matters uncertain?

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: I can use the explicit and implied details to make inferences and to recognize when there are gaps in the story that the author or narrator does not explain.

Check-In

Reread this passage from “Cannibalism in the Cars.” Then, use and manage information in the passage to complete the activities.

Activity 1

Explain which matter is left uncertain in this passage. Then, make an inference about this matter and support it with details from the passage.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answers: It is not clear what happened to Harris. The narrator tries to ask a clarifying question, but the gentleman refuses to answer or be interrupted. The details that Harris “agreed with me” and provided “satisfaction” suggest that the gentleman ate Harris.

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Activity 2

Explain why you think Twain leaves the matter uncertain and describe the effect of this uncertainty on you as a reader.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answers: Twain leaves this matter uncertain to inject humor and confusion into the story. The way the gentleman describes the situation—Harris “agreed with me” and provided “satisfaction”—is vague and has double meanings, so it is suggested but not entirely clear that the gentleman and the other passengers cannibalized Harris. The idea is laughable, but at the same time, it leaves me feeling confused and uncertain because I’m not sure I believe the gentleman’s story.

Practice

Reread the conclusion of “Cannibalism in the Cars” to complete the activity.

Activity

In one or two paragraphs, present your analysis of how and why the conclusion of Twain’s story leaves matters uncertain. Describe how this uncertainty affects you as a reader. Finally, offer a critique of Twain’s use of uncertainty in the story. Use and manage specific details from the text to support your answer.

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: At the conclusion of “Cannibalism in the Cars,” the gentleman’s story and abrupt departure leave the narrator feeling incredulous and unsettled. When he turns to the conductor for clarification, he learns three pieces of information. First, the gentleman had once been a member of Congress, which explains the gentleman’s familiarity with politics and parliamentary procedure. Second, the gentleman had once been stranded in the snow on a train to the point of nearly starving to death. This detail suggests that the gentleman had been truthful in this part of his recollection. The third piece of information explains the gentleman’s state of mind: He “was sick and out of his head” for “two to three months” after his experience and is now “a monomaniac” who talks non-stop about his experience “till he has eat up that whole car-load of people he talks about.” The gentleman apparently tells this “secret” tale often enough that the conductor knows how it ends, with the gentleman resigning rather than being elected to be eaten. This explanation makes the narrator feel “inexpressively relieved to know that I had only been listening to harmless vagaries of a madman,” but the reader is not so sure. The conductor’s use of the word *eat* does not entirely clear up the matter of whether or not the gentleman was a cannibal. It seems unlikely, but the reader cannot be certain and is left feeling unsettled and suspicious.

Twain’s decision to leave matter of the gentleman’s state of mind uncertain at the conclusion of the story is effective because it forces the reader to reconsider what message the author is conveying. The text is a satire, so Twain is mocking

something. The heart of the story is the gentleman's tale about being stranded on the train during a snowstorm. In his retelling, the passengers, on the brink of starvation, act like politicians, employing complicated congressional rules of order to determine who they will eat first. The process takes days, but eventually they get the job done. At the end of the story, Twain offers two explanations for the gentleman's behavior. By suggesting he is either a cannibal or a madman, Twain clearly implies how little he thinks of American politicians.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to each part of the prompt by explaining how the story leaves matters uncertain and offering a critique of this use of uncertainty.
 2. _____ I used and managed information and details from the story to make inferences and determine where matters were left uncertain.
 3. _____ I cited specific details from the text to support my ideas.
 4. _____ I incorporated quotations from the text as evidence.
 5. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Literary Word Choice

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will analyze the impact of specific word choices, including words with multiple meanings, on the overall meaning and tone of a literary text.

Key Words

- **connotation** – the feeling a word evokes in addition to its literal meaning
 - **diction** – the choice of words an author uses in writing a story to convey an idea or point of view
 - **multiple-meaning word** – a word that has more than one meaning, depending on the context
 - **syntax**- the rules of a language that tell how words should be organized to form coherent sentences
 - **tone** – the writer's attitude toward the subject
 - **sarcasm** – a bitter expression that may state the opposite of what it means
 - **voice**- the overall personality and style an author portrays in a body of text
-

Literary Word Choice



Source: chaiyapruerk youprasert. Shutterstock

Writers of literary texts pay careful attention to diction and syntax because it is through the words they choose and how they are put together, that they establish their tone, create a mood, and convey their meaning. In choosing their words, writers consider their purpose, audience, and what they want to say. With those considerations in mind, they pay attention to the connotation of the words they choose, recognizing that some words elicit positive emotions, while others evoke negative emotions. In addition, writers often employ multiple-meaning words to help them set a specific tone. For example, multiple-meaning words can help a writer establish a tone of sarcasm.

The way words are organized to form a sentence also matters. Without the right syntax, sentences don't make sense and the writer's purpose is lost. This is why authors are often experts in the many rules of their language. They know how to use consistent verb tense, correct word order, and how to use punctuation effectively. Syntax is also a part of a writer's style. Although there are rules, each writer puts words together in their own way that can make a body of text fun and enjoyable or boring and difficult to read.

All these things combined create the author's voice. Not all bodies of text have a well-developed voice. If the tone, word choice, and syntax are not consistent throughout a text, the author's voice will also not be present. This can make the writing feel awkward or disjointed. Alternatively, when a writer carefully develops these things, you will have a better understanding of their values and the writing will feel like one whole piece.

Consider the following passage.

Nala shook her head in disgust as she surveyed the sea of empty plastic water bottles littering the beach. Great! Someone must have been *very* thirsty, she thought. Why were people so thoughtless? Nala sighed as she started gathering the bottles into a pile. She counted the damage as she dropped each slap against the environment on the pile—57 bottles! As Nala turned to grab a bag out of her tote, a sneaker wave crashed onto the beach, sweeping the pile into the water. What a waste of good waste, Nola sighed in exasperation as she waded in after the wayward bottles. Here we go again, she thought. Such are the wages of other people's sins.

The writer uses the words *disgust*, *sighed*, and *exasperation* to describe Nala's emotions. These words all have negative connotations that suggest irritation. The writer also uses words with negative connotations to describe the situation: *littering*, *thoughtless*, *damage*, *slap*, *wayward*, and *sins*. In addition, the writer uses multiple-meaning words. In the first sentence, the writer characterizes the number of empty

bottles as a “sea.” *Sea* is another word for *ocean* or a great body of salt water, but it can also refer to something that is vast. In the second sentence, the writer uses the multiple-meaning word *great* to introduce sarcasm: “Great! Someone must have been *very* thirsty, she thought.” Obviously, Nala does not think the littered bottles are great. The writer does the same thing in the eighth sentence, using the multiple-meaning word *waste*: “What a waste of good waste.” In the first instance, the word is being used to describe using something carelessly. In the second instance, it is meant as material that is not wanted. Nala doesn’t really think the bottles are “good waste.” She is using sarcasm to express her displeasure at needing to pick up the bottles again.

Taken together, the writer’s word choices create a tone of sarcastic irritation. The writer’s meaning is clear: People’s thoughtless littering hurts the environment and causes other people more work. The mood of the piece is judgmental—the character is frustrated at the lack of concern some people have for the environment. Not surprisingly, sarcasm is often rooted in judgment and frustration.

As you watch the following video, observe how the student analyzes how word choices, including multiple-meaning words, impact meaning and tone.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Peer Model Video Transcript

Now, answer the questions.

Question 1

According to the student, why do authors choose their words carefully?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Authors choose their words carefully because words have specific connotations that can be either positive or negative. Writers choose words with the specific connotations that match their intended tone and help them convey their intended message.

Question 2

What example does the video give of how an author can use a multiple-meaning word to create sarcasm? Summarize the video's explanation.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The video uses the example of the word *grave*, which can mean “a burial place” or “very serious.” By using the word in the latter sense to refer to something as trivial as underdressing, the author of the Mr. Poppin passage is establishing a sarcastic tone. Underdressing for a party is hardly a serious situation. Using sarcasm allows the author to draw attention to Mr. Poppin’s conceit and high opinion of himself.

Check-In

Use the following passage to answer these questions.

Jamal frowned as he looked at the tall grass in the backyard. He'd been away most of the summer helping his uncle on his fishing boat. It had been backbreaking work but rewarding. Calvin, Jamal's younger and less diligent brother, had promised to stay on top of the yard work. Jamal smirked as he wondered how Calvin had mastered the art of walking atop two feet of grass. The kid should join the circus! No, wait, Calvin would need to be disciplined to do that. Calvin couldn't manage to mow the lawn once a week. Imagine trying to put on two or three shows a day! It was time to get the kid out of bed and into the yard. Maybe a little hard work would help him cultivate a sense of responsibility.

Question 1

Apply the concepts from the lesson by analyzing the words the writer uses in the first four sentences to contrast Jamal's and Calvin's work ethic. What are the words, and what tone and overall meaning do they help establish?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The writer uses the words *backbreaking* and *rewarding* to characterize Jamal's work ethic, in contrast to *less diligent* in the case of Calvin. Although *backbreaking* can have a negative connotation, when coupled with *rewarding* it shows that Jamal is willing to work hard for a good cause. By contrasting these words with *less diligent*, the writer begins to establish a tone that emphasizes responsibility. This suggests that the writer's overall meaning is that responsibility requires hard work and diligence.

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Question 2

In the fourth and fifth sentences, the writer uses *on top of* and *atop*. Analyze how the writer uses the multiple meanings of *on top of* to create a tone. How would you characterize the tone?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The tone is sarcastic. *On top of* can mean “at the top or atop” or “in control of.” The writer uses the two meanings to provide Jamal with the opportunity to make a sarcastic comment about Calvin’s lack of effort in the yard: “Jamal smirked as he wondered how Calvin had mastered the art of walking atop two feet of grass.” Jamal doesn’t mean that Calvin walked atop the grass; he means that he did not stay on top of, or carry through with, his promise to mow the lawn.

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Question 3

Analyze the last six sentences in the passage. How do the multiple-meaning words *disciplined* and *cultivate* contribute to the tone and overall meaning of the text?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: *Disciplined* can mean “punished” or “having self-control.” The “No, wait” adds an air of sarcasm to the sentence, but the word *disciplined* still reinforces a tone of responsibility and the overall meaning that responsibility requires hard work. The same is true for the multiple-meaning word *cultivate*.

Cultivate can mean “to prepare land for crops” or “to develop.” Jamal is suggesting that a little hard work might help Calvin develop a sense of responsibility.

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Question 4

Analyze how the writer’s diction establishes a mood in the passage. What is that mood? Cite evidence to support your response.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Words and phrases like *frowned*, *backbreaking work*, *less diligent*, *smirked*, *disciplined*, *couldn’t manage*, *maybe a little hard work*, and *cultivate a sense of responsibility* produce a mood of frustration—hence the sarcasm—but the word choices also suggest a mood of superiority. Jamal is frustrated that Calvin did not carry through with his promise, but he also feels superior to Calvin because he is willing to do backbreaking work.

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Question 5

What is the purpose of this text? How does the author’s use of good syntax support their purpose in this text?

Reveal Answer:

Hide Answer

Sample Answer: The purpose is to tell a story about two brothers with different work ethics. The author creates a coherent story that is written in the same voice

throughout. This allows you to enjoy the story without trying to figure out what each sentence means.

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Practice

Read the following passage to complete this activity.

Elena walked along the rocks at the creek's edge, peering intently at the ground. She knew it was a long shot, but she was desperate to find her necklace. It wasn't terribly expensive, but it had been a gift from a family friend, so it had sentimental value. Elena knew that she still had it on after she crossed the creek. It had become tangled in her long curly hair when she bent over to pick up an unusual rock. She had liberated her hair, but she had the sickening feeling that she had liberated the necklace at the same time, or at least loosened the clasp. Just then Elena spotted a flash of light on a branch of a nearby tree. To her delight, she saw her necklace hanging from the beak of a blue jay. But before she could consider what to do, the bird took flight with her necklace flashing in the sky. Great! Elena thought, the operation was a success, but the patient died.

Activity

In one or two paragraphs, analyze the impact the writer's diction has on the meaning, tone, and mood of the passage. In your response, consider the roles played by the use of connotation and multiple-meaning words. Cite text evidence in your response.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The writer quickly establishes Elena's deep desire to find her necklace by using the words *peering intently* in the first sentence. When someone peers intently, they look very carefully. The writer reinforces this idea in the second sentence by characterizing Elena as "desperate to find her necklace." *Desperate* carries a strong negative connotation. In the second sentence, the writer also uses *long shot*. *Long shot* has multiple meanings, but one meaning is "a venture that is not likely to succeed." Thus, the word has a negative connotation. The writer is suggesting that Elena really wants to find her necklace, but is unlikely to succeed.

The writer is setting the stage for a tone of disappointment. The writer adds to this tone by using the phrase *sickening feeling* in the sixth sentence, which again has a negative connotation. The writer also uses *liberated* in the sixth sentence in a sarcastic way. *Liberated* can mean “freed,” which has a positive connotation, but the writer is using it sarcastically to mean the opposite—Elena lost the necklace when she freed her hair. To reinforce Elena’s ultimate disappointment, the writer uses the word *delight* to describe how Elena feels when she sees the necklace in the blue jay’s beak, but her delight soon turns to resignation when the bird flies away with the necklace. Elena’s use of sarcasm in the last sentence cements the tone of disappointment: “Great! Elena thought, the operation was a success, but the patient died.” The multiple-meaning word *great* is used sarcastically—obviously, it is not great that the necklace was forever lost. Similarly, the expression is sarcastic in its irony—Elena found the necklace only to lose it again. Taken together, the word choices and sarcasm create a mood of disappointed resignation and suggest that the writer’s overall meaning is that things do not always work out the way you hope they will.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to the entire prompt.
 2. _____ I analyzed the impact of the writer’s diction on meaning, tone, and mood.
 3. _____ I considered the roles played by the use of connotation and multiple-meaning words.
 4. _____ I cited text evidence in my response.
 5. _____ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a literary text, including figurative and connotative meanings.

Key Words

- **archetype** – a character or symbol recognizable as a typical or representative example of a particular thing
 - **connotation** – the feelings or emotions a word evokes
 - **denotation** – the dictionary meaning of a word
 - **figurative language** – a way of expressing information in nonliteral ways using figures of speech
 - **hyperbole** – intentional exaggeration
 - **implied metaphor** – a figure of speech that compares two unlike things by saying something is something else without directly referencing one of the things
 - **metaphor** – a figure of speech that compares two unlike things by saying something is something else
 - **personification** – giving human characteristics to animals, inanimate objects, ideas, or forces of nature
 - **simile** – a figure of speech that compares two unlike things by saying something is like something else
-

Literary Word Choice



Source: Bumble Dee. Shutterstock

Mark Twain once said, “Don’t use a five-dollar word when a fifty-cent word will do.” The idea behind that statement is that writers should be clear and concise. However, literary text writers often use “five-dollar words” to create rich imagery and build layers of meaning into their word choices. They do this by using words in nonliteral ways. Nonliteral language helps writers capture the imagination of readers, suggest specific emotions, and express ideas in memorable ways.

One way that writers use nonliteral words is by selecting words that have strong connotations. Connotations are nonliteral because they go beyond a word’s

denotation. Words with strong connotations help writers call forth specific emotions in their readers. These emotions can be positive, negative, or even neutral.

Using **figurative language** is another method. Figurative language includes such figures of speech as **personification**, **hyperbole**, **similes**, **metaphors**, and **implied metaphors**. Although both similes and metaphors compare things, only similes use *like* or *as*.

Because connotations and figurative language go beyond literal meanings, readers must determine the writer's intended meaning. Readers can determine connotative meanings by thinking about the feelings or emotions the words suggest. Consider this example.

The apprehensive recruits stood at attention, wary of the expectations of the gruff-looking drill sergeant.

One denotation of *apprehensive* is “anxious or fearful about the future,” while the dictionary definition of *wary* is “feeling or showing caution.” The negative connotations of the two words suggest the recruits are extremely worried about what will happen during basic training. The source of their worry is what the gruff drill sergeant will expect of them. When someone is *gruff*, they speak or act sternly.

With personification, hyperbole, similes, and metaphors, readers can think about how the human qualities apply in the passage, what and why the author is exaggerating a specific detail or action, and what the things being compared have in common. Consider this example.

By the end of their first week, the recruits had marched a million miles, and the drill sergeants barked orders that echoed in their ears 24-7. According to the sergeant, they were broken cogs rather than like a well-oiled machine. If the barrack walls could talk, they would recount a litany of complaints from recruits trying to adjust to their new life.

The writer uses hyperbole in the first sentence. Of course, the recruits did not march a million miles, but by using exaggeration, the writer brings attention to the fact that basic training involves a lot of marching. The writer also makes several comparisons. In the first sentence, the metaphor is implied by the word *barked*. The writer is comparing the sergeant to a dog to underscore his gruff nature. In the second sentence, the writer uses a metaphor (saying the recruits are “broken cogs”) and a simile (saying they are not “like a well-oiled machine”) to contrast what the recruits are with what they should be. Finally, the writer personifies the barrack walls to bring attention to the fact that the recruits are unhappy. Using the word *litany*, which can mean “a lengthy enumeration or list,” underscores the degree of the recruits’ unhappiness.

Question 1

Why do writers use connotative and figurative language?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Nonliteral language, such as connotations and figurative language, helps writers capture the imagination of readers, suggest specific emotions, and express ideas in memorable ways.

Question 2

How do personification and hyperbole differ? How is their purpose similar?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Personification gives human characteristics to animals, inanimate objects, ideas, or forces of nature, while hyperbole is an exaggeration. Both figures of speech draw attention to something the writer wants to stress.

Question 3

How are similes and metaphors similar and different?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both compare unlike things, but only similes use *like* or *as*.

Metaphors can also be implied, so one of the things that is being compared is not stated directly.

Question 4

How can readers determine connotative and figurative meanings?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Readers can determine connotative meanings by thinking about the feelings or emotions the words suggest. When determining the meaning of personifications, similes, and metaphors, readers can think about how the human qualities apply in the passage, what and why the writer is exaggerating a specific detail or action, and what the things being compared have in common.

Impact of Literary Word Choice

Word choice, figurative language, and literary devices can greatly enhance a story. These elements add depth to characters, reinforce themes, highlight conflicts, and establish archetypes. An archetype is a typical character, action, or situation that represents a universal pattern of human nature. The way an author uses words and language makes the story more engaging and allows readers to connect more deeply with the characters and their experiences.

Read the following passage and consider how the author's choices of words, figurative language, and literary devices impact character development, theme, conflict, and archetypes.

In the heart of the bustling city, Mia, a hummingbird in a concrete jungle, dashed through the crowded streets, her heart pounding like a drum. Her mission was clear: deliver the lifesaving medication to her ailing grandmother. She was a spark of determination in the sea of indifference—an unexpected hero in the race against time.

Character Development	Words and phrases like <i>hummingbird</i> , <i>dashed</i> , and <i>spark of determination</i> paint Mia as a quick, determined, and caring individual. Her action of delivering medication to her grandmother highlights her sense of responsibility.
Conflict	The conflict here is Mia's struggle against time and the crowded city to deliver the medication, as suggested by the phrase <i>race against time</i> .
Theme	The theme of determination and resilience in the face of challenges is conveyed through phrases like <i>heart pounding like a drum</i> , <i>race against time</i> , and <i>spark of determination</i> .
Archetype	Mia embodies the hero archetype—a character who overcomes obstacles for a noble cause. This is shown through the description of her as a <i>hummingbird</i> standing out against a drab <i>concrete jungle</i> , and her determined action of dashing through the crowded streets.

Check-In

Use the following passage to answer these questions.

Hector looked at the pile of dishes in the kitchen and cringed. How could four people use a million dishes in a day? Shaking his head, he revved his engine and began to plow through the mess. As he ran hot water over the dish soap, bubbles danced in the air. He worked methodically, turning the city of dishes into a small village and finally into a deserted plain. Like a conquering hero, Hector smiled as he threw his wet dish towel onto the counter.

Question 1

What is the denotation of *cringed* in the first sentence? How does knowing the connotative meaning of the word help a reader understand how Hector feels?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: One denotation of *cringe* is to “recoil in distaste.” The connotation is negative. This alerts the reader to the fact that Hector is unhappy that he has so many dishes to do.

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Question 2

The writer says, “How could four people use a million dishes in a day.” What type of figurative language is this? Why do you think the author uses it?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The figurative language is hyperbolic. By exaggerating the number of dishes, the writer makes sure the reader understands Hector has a lot of dishes to do. This helps explain why he cringes.

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Question 3

Read the third sentence. What type of figurative language is the writer using, how do you know, and what does it mean?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The sentence uses an implied metaphor that compares Hector to a front-end loader. I know it is an implied metaphor because the writer does not mention a front-end loader, only an engine revving and the fact that Hector “began to plow through the mess.” The comparison means that Hector got busy and worked efficiently to do the dishes, even if he didn’t enjoy the task.

Need a little extra support?

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Question 4

What type of figurative language does the writer use in the fourth sentence of the passage? Why do you think the writer uses it?

Reveal Answer

The writer uses personification. The personification creates a vivid image for the reader.

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Question 5

What figure of speech does the writer use in the fifth sentence? What does the writer mean? How does the word *methodically* add to your understanding?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The writer uses a metaphor that compares the dishes first to a city, then to a village, and finally to a deserted plain. The three-part metaphor tells the reader that the pile of dishes slowly disappeared through Hector's efforts. The word *methodically* helps me understand Hector had a system and kept working. When someone is *methodical*, they have an ordered method of working.

Need a little extra support?

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Question 6

What figure of speech does the writer use in the last sentence? What does it tell you about how Hector feels?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The writer uses a simile when they liken Hector to a conquering hero. The simile shows that Hector is satisfied with the job he has done.

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Practice

Read the following passage to complete these activities.

The picnic was a disaster! Olivia had prepared a feast for her friends, eager to show off her culinary chops. She had selected a perfect place by the river under a picturesque tree to lay out her tablecloth and set out her treasures. The tree's welcoming arms were a perfect place to hang little paper lanterns to add to the festivities. The scene was like a spread from a high-end lifestyle magazine. Everything was perfect—at least that's what she thought. As her friends approached, Olivia gave the scene one last look. To her horror, she saw a thousand ants marching toward the tablecloth, intent on ruining her perfect day.

Activity 1

In a paragraph or two, determine the meaning of key words and phrases the writer uses to express ideas in the passage, including at least five figurative meanings and one connotative meaning.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In the first sentence, the writer uses a metaphor to compare the picnic to a disaster. One denotation of *disaster* is “something that is very bad.” Thus, *disaster* has a negative connotation. Using *culinary chops* in the second sentence has a positive connotation and indicates that Olivia is proud of her cooking. *Culinary* means “related to cooking,” and *chops* can mean “expertise in a particular field.” Her pride in her cooking is reinforced in the third sentence when the writer uses an implied metaphor to compare her food to treasures. The fourth sentence uses personification when it speaks of the “tree's welcoming arms.” The personification draws attention to Olivia's attention to detail. This, along with the simile in the fifth sentence (which uses *like* to compare the scene to a spread in a high-end lifestyle magazine), suggests that Olivia views herself as being extremely good at what she does. The writer ends the passage with hyperbole by

exaggerating the number of ants—surely there were not “thousands of ants.” The exaggeration draws attention to Olivia’s distress. The personification of the ants as being “intent on ruining her perfect day” reinforces how much Olivia has invested in the picnic's success.

Activity 2

Create a table to analyze how the word choices and figurative language in the passage impact character development, theme, conflict, and archetype.

Reveal Answer
Hide Answer

Sample answer:

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How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to both activity prompts.
 2. _____ I determined the meaning of key words and phrases the writer uses to express ideas.
 3. _____ I included at least five figurative meanings and at least one connotative meaning.
 4. _____ I addressed four elements in the analysis: character development, theme, conflict, and archetype.
 5. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will describe the origins and meanings of foreign words or phrases used frequently in written English.

Key Words

- **etymology** – a word's origins and how its meanings have changed over time
 - **literal meaning** – the most basic meaning of a word without any metaphorical or other figurative meanings
-

Literary Word Choice



Source: Ralf Kleemann. 123rf.com

Picture this: You are shopping for a car and find what you think is the perfect one. It is used, but it looks like it is in good shape, plus it is the perfect color and size. You fall so in love with the car that you don't pay much attention to how it sounds on the test drive. You quickly sign the sales agreement and head home with your new prized possession. After a week, you notice that it makes some very strange sounds, and the engine sometimes dies when you stop at a light or stop sign. When you go back to the sales lot to complain, the salesperson shrugs and points to a sign: *Caveat Emptor*.

The literal meaning of *caveat emptor* is "let the buyer beware." The Latin phrase, which first appeared in English in the 1520s, conveys the principle that a person who

buys something is responsible for making sure there are no defects, since once the item is sold, the seller has no responsibility, unless the goods are under warranty.

English has many words that are borrowed from other languages, such as Latin and French, with their spelling and meanings intact. The study of a word's origins and how its meanings have changed over time is called etymology.

Other examples of borrowed Latin words and phrases include *status quo* and *per capita*. *Status quo* is Latin for “the state in which.” According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the noun was first used in English in the early 1700s to mean “the existing state of affairs.” However, some sources indicate an earlier or even later borrowing. *Per capita* is Latin for “by the head” or “by heads.” The word first appeared in English in the 1680s and can be used as an adjective or adverb. In both cases, the word means “by or for each person,” in other words, “per person.” It is often used when quoting statistics: “The per capita personal income in the United States was \$63,444 in 2020 when measured in current dollars.”

English has also borrowed many words from French, including *pas de deux*, *coup de grâce*, and *coup d'état*. In French, *pas de deux* literally means “step for two.” In English, it often refers to a dance for two people, especially a ballet dance. However, it can be used figuratively to mean any intricate relationship between two people or groups. For example: “The two candidates did a pas de deux when discussing the proposed new law, each hoping to win the debate without alienating voters.” *Pas de deux* first entered English in the late 1700s.

The literal meaning of *coup de grâce* in French is “stroke of grace” or “blow of mercy.” It refers to a single death blow or shot used to end the suffering of the mortally wounded. The noun entered the English language at the end of the seventeenth century meaning “a death blow or shot.” Today, the expression is also used to mean “any decisive finishing act, blow, or event.”

Like *coup de grâce*, *coup d'état* refers to a blow or strike, this time by the state. Literally a “stroke of state” in French, it refers to “any sudden, decisive act by a smaller group meant to overthrow an existing government.” The noun entered the English language in the mid-1600s.

It is tempting to skip over unfamiliar foreign words and phrases when reading. However, doing so can cause you to miss valuable information. When you encounter an unknown foreign term, use a dictionary and other sources to determine its meaning and etymology.

Question 1

What does the word *etymology* mean? How can you determine a word's etymology?

Reveal Answer

The etymology of a word is its language of origin and how the word's meaning has changed over time. Dictionary entries generally include a word's etymology.

Question 2

What is the etymology of *pas de deux*? How has the meaning of *pas de deux* changed over time in English?

Reveal Answer

Pas de deux is a French word meaning "step for two." In English, the word originally referred to a dance for two, generally a ballet. Today, it is often used to describe any intricate relationship between two people or groups.

Check-In

Question 1

Read the following sentence. What is the English meaning of the word *status quo* in this context? What is the etymology of the word?

Rather than change procedures halfway through the experiment, the team decided to maintain the status quo.

Reveal Answer

Status quo is a Latin word that literally means “the state in which.” In this context the word means “the existing state of affairs.” By maintaining the status quo, the team is keeping the same procedures in place.

Need a little extra support?

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Question 2

What is the etymology of *per capita*? What is its literal meaning in its language of origin? How is this literal meaning similar to its definition in English? Write a sentence using *per capita* as an adverb and one as an adjective.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: *Per capita* is Latin for “by the head” or “by heads.” In English, the word means “by or for each person.” When you count “by the head,” you are counting each person, so the two definitions are similar. The following is a sentence using *per capita* as an adverb. “The amount of money spent per capita

on students has increased since 1960.” Here is a sentence using *per capita* as an adjective: “Per capita spending on education is higher today than it was in the 1960s.”

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Question 3

From what language did English borrow the phrase *caveat emptor*? What principal is conveyed by the phrase in English? How is this meaning similar to the phrase’s literal meaning in its language of origin?

Reveal Answer

Caveat emptor is Latin for “let the buyer beware.” The English phrase conveys the principle that a person who buys something is responsible for making sure there are no defects, since the seller has no responsibility for the good once it is sold, unless it is under warranty. The two definitions are connected because they both focus on the buyer. The English definition simply provides more context and brings the definition up to date by qualifying that the seller still has a responsibility if there is a warranty.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Practice

Activity

In a paragraph or two, describe the etymology of *coup de grâce* and *coup d'état* and how the phrases' meanings are similar and different in their language of origin and in English.

Reveal Answer

Coup de grâce and *coup d'état* are both French in origin. The meanings are similar in their use of *coup*, which means "blow or stroke." The literal meaning of *coup de grâce* is "stroke of grace" or "blow of mercy," while the literal meaning of *coup d'état* is a "stroke of state." The meanings are different in the intent of the blows or strikes. In the case of *coup de grâce*, the purpose of the death blow (or shot) is to put a mortally wounded human or animal out of its misery. In the case of *coup d'état*, the death blow, so to speak, is against the government. A *coup d'état* is "any sudden, decisive act by a smaller group meant to overthrow an existing government."

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to the entire prompt.
 2. _____ I described each phrase's etymology.
 3. _____ I described each phrase's meaning in its language of origin and in English.
 4. _____ I described how the two phrases are similar and different in meaning.
 5. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Theme

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will determine two or more themes of a literary text.

Key Words

- **theme** – a central, unifying idea that an author is trying to convey in a piece of literature
-

Theme



Source: Mikhail Leonov. Shutterstock

Millions of people engage on social media, where they share opinions, announcements, jokes, and even their most private thoughts for everyone online to see. In the 1800s, however, people's private and public lives were kept in rigidly separated spheres, especially for women, who were expected to live in accordance with strict social and moral codes. Today, you will read a story about a woman on the verge of breaking away from others' expectations so that she may at last live a life of self-determination.

Take Notes as You Read

American author Kate Chopin (1850–1904) was a traditional wife and mother until the death of her husband, after which she daringly embarked on a career as a writer to support her children. Her stories were groundbreaking for their realistic depiction of the inner lives of her female characters. These women felt, as Chopin herself did, hemmed in by societal expectations and the restrictions placed on women that did not also apply to men. In the story “The Story of an Hour,” Louise Mallard learns that her husband has suddenly died, and the possibilities of a new life beckon. Chopin was a realist, however, and the ironic twist at the story’s conclusion underscores her message about what few liberties were available for women.

As you read “The Story of an Hour,” take notes in your Reading Log about the contrast between what the world expects of Louise Mallard and what she desires for herself.

Reading Log: The Story of an Hour

Useful Vocabulary

1. **elixir:** a magical or medical potion

2. elusive: difficult to catch or hold on to

3. importunities: annoyingly persistent actions

Theme

Determining Theme

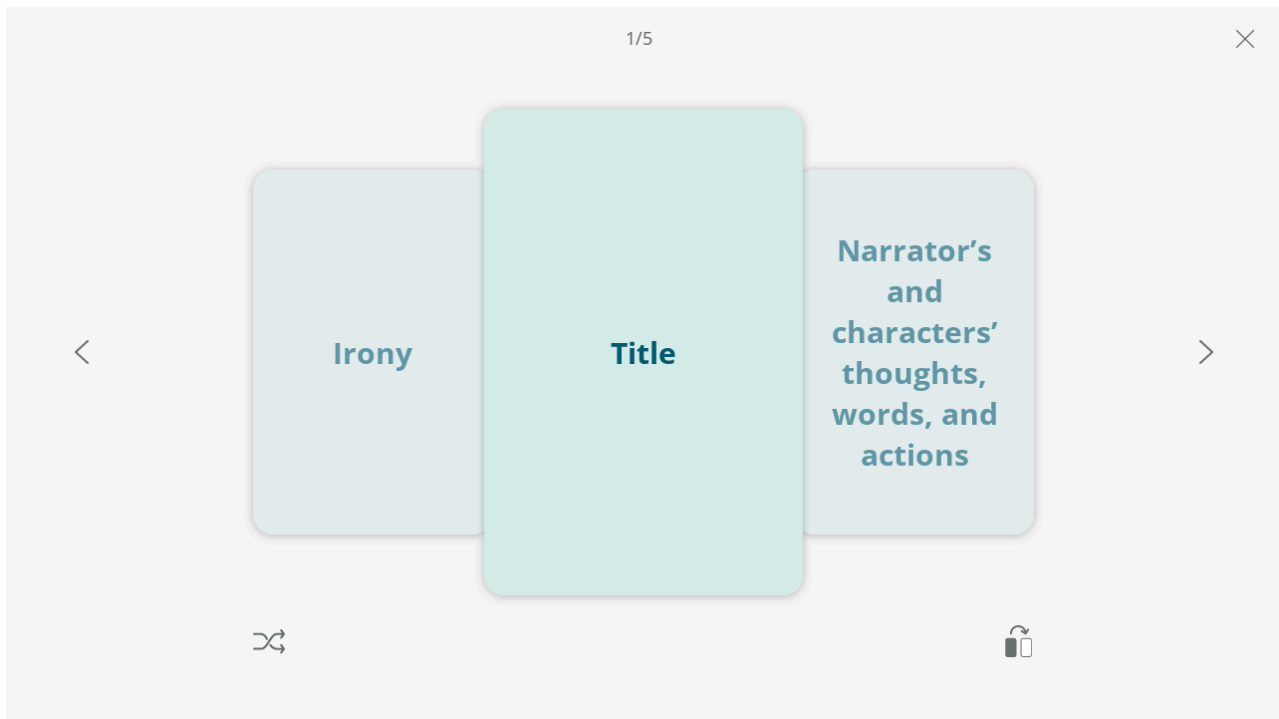
A theme is the central or unifying idea that gives a piece of literature its meaning.

Themes are commonly understood ideas about the human condition that often transcend culture and historical periods. Every story has at least one theme; most have multiple themes that often relate to and reinforce one another.

A story's themes are rarely stated explicitly; instead, the author implies the messages through the choices they make about characters, setting, and plot, particularly the conflict and its resolution. Even the story's title may provide a clue to the themes. As a reader, you can determine the theme of a story by analyzing these elements carefully and making inferences about the message the author is trying to convey. Every reader brings their own experiences to a story, and as a result, they may interpret the same details as another reader but determine a different set of themes.

In reading a literary text, you may initially identify one or more broad or overarching themes that apply to many works of literature, such as "coming of age," "forgiveness," "the quest for fame," or "self-acceptance." As you analyze the details of the story in depth, you will distill your ideas into statements of theme that reflect the specifics of the story and its meaning.

View the flashcards for information about analyzing story elements to determine themes.



Reread the beginning of “The Story of an Hour” to answer the questions.

Question 1

How do others treat Mrs. Mallard when they deliver the news about her husband? Why do they treat her this way?

Reveal Answer

Her sister treats her “as gently as possible” because they know she has a heart condition. Her friend makes an effort to break the news before someone “less careful, less tender” can do so. They treat her this way because of her heart condition. They assume she is weak and fragile.

Question 2

How does Mrs. Mallard react to her husband’s death, both in front of her sister and when she is alone?

Reveal Answer

In front of her sister, she weeps “at once, with sudden, wild abandonment” but when she is alone, she experiences a “physical exhaustion” that seems “to reach into her soul,” yet she is able to appreciate the “new spring life” and the scents and sounds coming through her window.

Question 3

Which theme or themes are implied by the details in the story so far? Explain why you think this.

- a.** private self versus public self
- b.** the power of secrets
- c.** family responsibilities
- d.** freedom from expectations

Reveal Answer

- a.** The theme of private versus public is hinted at as Mrs. Mallard receives the news of her husband’s death. She grieves loudly and uncontrollably with her sister, but when alone she sits quietly, feeling physically and mentally exhausted. She feels and acts differently when she is alone than when she is with others.

Keep the theme or themes you chose in mind when you reread the rest of “The Story of an Hour.” As you consider the characters’ words and actions, analyze the main conflict and how it is resolved, and notice recurring words and ideas in the text, you will refine your ideas about this theme and discover others. Remember to reflect on the story’s ironic conclusion and how the unexpected ending reshapes your chosen themes.

Check-In

Reread this passage from “The Story of an Hour” to answer the questions.

Question 1

What words recur in this passage? What do the words reveal about Mrs. Mallard?

Reveal Answer

Repeated words include *will*, *free*, *power* (in the words *powerfull* *powerless*), *intention*, *love*, *possess/possession*, *pulse/impulse*. The words *free*, *power*, and *intention* suggest that instead of being weighed down by grief and expectations, Mrs. Mallard feels a new sense of empowerment and purpose after the death of her husband.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Question 2

Focus on the details about Mrs. Mallard’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. What will she do going forward?

Reveal Answer

She will “live for herself” and with “self-assertion” going forward because there will be “no powerful will bending hers in a blind persistence.” She will be “Free!”

Question 3

What themes are supported by the author’s use of language and her characterization of Mrs. Mallard? Choose as many as apply.

a. female empowerment

- b.** freedom from expectations
- c.** the power of grief
- d.** desire for control

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The themes of female empowerment and freedom from expectations apply to this passage. For the first time, Mrs. Mallard is experiencing powerful new feelings of freedom from other people's expectations and society's rules. She enjoys a sense of abandon as she welcomes this new stage of her life, in which she will live, for the first time, "for herself."

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Practice

Reread “The Story of an Hour” and then focus on the story’s conclusion to complete the activity.

Activity

In a few paragraphs, explain at least two themes you detected in Chopin’s story. Support your ideas with specific details about the characters, setting, mood, and resolution. Think about how the irony of the story’s ending affects your understanding of the themes in “The Story of an Hour.” Explain how the themes you noticed relate or interconnect.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: One theme suggested by the details in “The Story of an Hour” is women’s empowerment. After an initial burst of grief in front of her sister, Louise Mallard retreats alone to her room, where she experiences a profound sense of “exhaustion” but also the awakening of her senses, as she appreciates the sounds and scents outside of her window. Within moments, she abandons herself to “a monstrous joy,” the possibility of living “for herself” in a world “that would belong to her absolutely” and in which “no one can impose a private will upon” her.

A second, related theme is public self versus private self. Louise is almost like two different people depending on whether she is alone in private or among others. Her sister and friend treat her as a fragile object. They expect her to grieve her husband’s death, and Louise obliges. However, when Louise is alone, she sheds her public persona and recognizes her own desires for an independent life. At the end of the story, she emerges from her room as “a goddess of Victory,” yet her hopes for being “free” are dashed when her husband enters.

The story’s ironic ending hints at a third and much darker theme—the risks of freedom. Louise’s death after experiencing only an hour of self-awareness and self-determination is a cruel fate dealt by the author. It implies that it is dangerous, if not fatal, for a woman to dream of a life of self-empowerment. The author tarnishes Louise’s brief awakening by having the doctors diagnose the cause of Louise’s death as “a joy that kills.” Their diagnosis implies that she died from the

shock of the happiness she experienced when she learned her husband was alive.

In fact, the opposite was true; his return killed her dreams and stopped her heart.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to all parts of the prompt by identifying two or more themes implied by the story and explaining how I determined them.
 2. _____ I cited specific details from the story to support my ideas about the themes.
 3. _____ I clearly explained the relationship between the themes.
 4. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will analyze how an author develops two or more themes in a literary text and how these themes interact and build on one another.

Key Words

- **imagery** – an author’s use of language to create vivid pictures in the readers’ minds
 - **sensory language** – an author’s use of language that appeals to the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell to help readers imagine the story
 - **theme** – a central, unifying idea an author is trying to convey in a piece of literature
-

How Themes Develop



Source: HONGQI ZHANG. 123rf.com

Almost everyone dreams of living a different life from the one they are currently experiencing. People dream of having or achieving more—more excitement, more opportunities, more independence. Today, you will read a story about a woman on the verge of living a life she has only dreamed of.

Take Notes as You Read

American author Kate Chopin (1850–1904) primarily wrote stories about female characters who felt, as Chopin did herself, weighed down by the social, moral, and legal restrictions imposed on women in nineteenth century. At that time, women could

not vote and had very few rights and opportunities. Even in the family home, they were subject to will of their husband or other male relatives. Chopin's groundbreaking fiction, with its honest portrayal of women's experiences, shocked the audiences of her day. It was not until more than fifty years after her death that her work was rediscovered and newly appreciated by a generation of readers eager for stories written in women's voices.

In the story "The Story of an Hour," Louise Mallard's husband has unexpectedly been killed, and the possibilities of a new life suddenly beckon. Chopin weaves throughout the story language and imagery that appeal to the reader's senses. She was a realist, however, and her story concludes with an ironic twist that forces readers to reconsider their ideas about its themes.

As you read "The Story of an Hour," take notes in your Reading Log about how the author employs sensory language and imagery to depict Louise Mallard's grief and reawakening. Record your own thoughts about what message Chopin conveys about what kind of life is possible for Louise. Consider whether or not that message is still relevant to readers today.

Useful Vocabulary

1. **elixir**: a magical or medical potion
 2. **elusive**: difficult to catch or hold on to
 3. **importunities**: annoyingly persistent actions
-

Did You Know?

Kate Chopin is a naturalist writer. Naturalism was a literary movement in the late nineteenth century, in which writers explored how uncontrollable forces, such as nature, family history, or society, influence a character's choices and ultimately shape their fate. Naturalistic writing tends to be pessimistic because it suggests that a character's fate is predetermined by forces beyond their control. The characters are powerless to change their lives. No matter what choices a character makes, their fate is sealed, often by a sudden and ironic twist.

How Themes Develop

Analyze How Themes Develop and Interact

A **theme** is the central or unifying idea or message that gives meaning to a piece of literature. Most stories have multiple themes that interact and build upon one another. The author rarely states these themes explicitly; instead, they develop the messages incrementally, through the use of dialogue and details about the characters, setting, and plot. Astute readers track and analyze these details and their development throughout the story. Themes that emerge in the beginning of the story may develop into completely different messages by the story's conclusion.

Authors rarely develop their themes in isolation. In a story with multiple themes, the author's messages will often build on and interact with one another, like the branches on a tree or vine. As you analyze a story's details, consider how the author develops and weaves together the different themes into a message that can be articulated.

As you view the video, focus on how the students identify multiple themes in "The Story of an Hour" and trace how Chopin develops them through her choice of details.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Peer Model Video Transcript

Now, answer the questions.

Question 1

What themes in “The Story of an Hour” do the students identify?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: They identify several themes, including “women are weak and incapable,” “freedom from expectations,” and “women are misunderstood.”

Question 2

How are these themes interconnected, according to the students in the video?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The theme “women are misunderstood” pairs with the theme “women are weak and incapable” because at the end of the story, the doctor assumes that Louise dies from a shock of joy instead of the shock of losing her “freedom from expectations.”

Question 3

How do the students in the video analyze the themes in “The Story of an Hour”?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: They look at the characters’ and narrator’s words. They think about what they already know about women’s lives in then nineteenth century. They trace and analyze the details throughout the story to determine what the author’s message is.

Keep the themes discussed in the video in mind as you reread “The Story of an Hour.” You will likely notice the development of other themes. Notice how these themes are shaped through the author’s choices of details. Consider how the story’s conclusion affects your understanding of the themes.

Check-In

Reread this passage from “The Story of an Hour” to complete the activity.

Activity

Consider the following themes:

- different ways of grieving
- desire for escape
- the power of transformation
- springtime rebirth

Choose one of the themes, or suggest one of your own, and explain how it emerges and is developed in the passage. Cite details from the text in your response.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The theme of different ways of grieving is supported by the narrator’s observation of how Louise handles the news of her husband’s death. She does not hear the story “with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance” like “many women have heard the same.” Instead, she first weeps “with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister’s arms” before retreating to her room alone, where she feels “pressed down by a physical exhaustion.” In a different phase of her grief, she stops weeping and pays attention to the scents and sounds coming in through her bedroom window. A moment later, she feels fearful and confused as she becomes aware of a sense of anticipation, “fearfully” awaiting something that is “too subtle and elusive to name.”

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Practice

Reread the “The Story of an Hour” and review your answers to the Check-In questions and the notes in your Reading Log to complete the activity.

Activity

In two or three paragraphs, identify at least two themes in “The Story of an Hour.” Then, explain how the author develops these themes over the course of the story. Be sure to clarify how the themes build on and interact with each other. Finally, offer a critique of the themes by explaining whether or not you think they are relevant to modern readers. Cite evidence from the text to support your response.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Two themes that Kate Chopin develops in “The Story of an Hour” are the life-changing power of grief and rebirth. The story opens with the report of the death of Louise’s husband, and it traces her reaction to this life-changing event over the course of a single hour. Louise immediately experiences “a storm of grief.” Moments later, however, she undergoes a dawning realization that she is now free from the bonds of marriage. Through the details of the smells and sounds of spring that waft through Louise’s open window, the author introduces the theme of the rebirth. For the first, time, Louise imagines a life in which she is “Free! Body and soul free!” to live “for herself.” She marches down the stairs like a “goddess of Victory,” prepared to embark on a new life. At this point, the story and Louise’s life both end abruptly with the return of her husband, who is very much alive.

The two themes are deeply connected from the beginning of the story. The death of Louise Mallard’s husband immediately upends life as she has known it. She responds with an outburst of grief by weeping with “sudden, wild abandonment” before retreating alone to her room to consider what life will be like for her now. While sitting “quite motionless” beside the window, she begins to understand that she is now “free, free, free!” to reinvent her life and to “live for herself,” free from the restrictions imposed on her by anyone else’s will. She acknowledges that she

will “weep again” over Mr. Mallard’s death, but her feelings of grief are overshadowed by the “impulse” for “self-assertion” and a new life.

Although the text was written more than one hundred years ago, the themes in Chopin’s story still feel relevant to modern readers. The experience of grief is universal, and no one goes through it in exactly the same way. For many, the death of a loved one leads to upheaval and great change. The initial shock of grief eventually gives way to a sense of rebirth or renewal as the survivor continues to live life and move on.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to all parts of the prompt by identifying multiple themes and by explaining how the author develops them in the text.
 2. _____ I explained how the themes relate to and build on one another.
 3. _____ I offered a critique of the relevance of the themes I choose.
 4. _____ I cited specific details from the story to support my ideas.
 5. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Studying Structure

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will analyze how an author's choices about the structure of specific parts of a literary text contribute to the overall structure.

Key Words

- **plot** – the sequence of events that make up a story
 - **story structure** – the way a story is organized and presented
-

Studying Structure



Source: believeinme33. 123rf.com

Authors must make many decisions when crafting a short story. They need to decide on characters and one or more settings. They also need to decide how to structure the events that comprise the [plot](#). The settings they choose and how they structure the plot impact the story. In “The Story of an Hour,” Kate Chopin chooses to organize the story in a three-part structure. In the story, Louise Mallard is informed of her husband’s death

in a railroad disaster. Her public and private reactions to his death drive the plot and lead to a surprise ending.

Take Notes as You Read

As you read “The Story of an Hour,” use your Reading Log to record important details about how the setting changes from the beginning to the middle to the end of the story. Note the effect the changing settings have on the plot of the story and on what you learn about the main character, Louise Mallard. You can use this information when it is time to analyze how the structure of the specific parts of the story contribute to the overall structure.

Reading Log: The Story of an Hour

Useful Vocabulary

1. **elixir:** a magical or medical potion
 2. **elusive:** difficult to catch or hold on to
 3. **importunities:** annoyingly persistent actions
-

Studying Structure

Analyzing Story Structure

Story structure, or narrative structure, refers to how a literary text is organized.

Authors make deliberate choices on how to organize specific sections of a story. For example, authors must decide where to begin a story, where to insert the conflict that will drive the plot, and how to end the story. The decisions the author makes at the section level impact the overall structure of a literary text. This is equally true for a full-length novel and a short story. Being able to analyze how a story is structured is an important skill to develop.

In “The Story of an Hour,” Kate Chopin uses a three-part structure to explore Louise Mallard’s reaction to the supposed death of her husband, Brently Mallard. The entire story takes place in a single hour in the Mallard home. The sections correspond to Louise’s public reaction to the news that her husband is dead, the reaction she has while in the privacy of her bedroom, and her public reappearance and discovery that Brently Mallard is still alive. These three sections drive the overall structure of the story.

When analyzing Chopin’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of “The Story of an Hour,” consider both what she does and what affect her choices have on the story. Ask yourself:

- How does the story begin? What is the setting? What characters are introduced? What happens in this setting? What does this section’s structure enable Chopin to do?
- How does Chopin alter the structure in the middle of the story? How is the setting different? How does the composition of characters change? What does this section’s structure allow Chopin to do?
- How does the story end? What is the setting? Which characters are present? What does this section’s structure allow Chopin to do?
- What effect do the section structures have on the overall structure of the story?

Reread the beginning of “The Story of an Hour” to answer the questions.

Question 1

What setting does Chopin choose for the beginning of the story? Who is present?

Reveal Answer

Chopin sets the opening of the story in a public room, possibly the living room, in Louise and Brently Mallard's house. Three characters are present: Louise Mallard, her sister Josephine, and Richards, a friend of Brently Mallard.

Question 2

How does Louise Mallard react to the news that her husband is dead?

Reveal Answer

When she learns of her husband's death, Louise weeps with “wild abandonment,” falling into her sister's arms.

Question 3

What does this section's structure help Chopin accomplish?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: It enables Chopin to establish the characters, the main event that is driving the plot, and the expected public reaction of a wife to her husband's death.

Check-In

Think about the structure of the second section of “The Story of an Hour” as you answer these questions.

Question 1

How is the setting in the middle of the story different from the setting in the beginning of the story? How do the number of characters change? Why is this shift important?

Reveal Answer

In the middle of the story, the setting shifts from the public areas of the house to the privacy of Louise Mallard’s bedroom. Except when Josephine briefly speaks to Louise through the closed bedroom door, Louise is the only character. This allows Louise to be alone with her thoughts.

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Use the following passage to answer Question 2.

Question 2

How does the structure of the middle section of the story enable Chopin to move the plot in a new direction?

Reveal Answer

By placing Louise in the privacy of her own bedroom, Chopin can have the character explore her feelings and come to a new realization about what Brently’s death might mean for her own happiness. This would not be possible in the very public setting of the opening section of the story.

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Use the following passage to answer Question 3.

Question 3

How does the passage help the author transition between the middle and the end of the story?

Reveal Answer

Having Josephine beg Louise to open the door provides a way to move the plot back to the public sphere. Louise does not immediately leave the room. Instead, she glories a bit longer in the joy she feels at the thought of freedom, and then she opens the door and joins Josephine.

Need a little extra support?

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Practice

Reread the ending paragraphs from “The Story of an Hour.” Then, complete the activity.

Activity

In one or two paragraphs, analyze how Chopin’s choices concerning how to end “The Story of an Hour” contribute to the story’s overall structure. In your analysis, consider:

- the structure used in the end section of the story
- how the different section structures contribute to the overall structure by working together to move the plot from the beginning to the end of the story

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In the ending section of “The Story of an Hour,” Kate Chopin has Louise leave her room and descend the stairs with Josephine. She is still elated by her realization that she is now free to pursue her life under her own terms.

Richards waits at the base of the stair. Unexpectedly, Brently enters the front door, unaware of both the railroad disaster and the fact that everyone believes he is dead. The shock of seeing Brently causes Louise to have a heart attack. The doctors believe that Louise died because the joy of Brently’s return was too much for her diseased heart. However, because of the structure of the middle section of the story, in which Louise alone in her room becomes aware that she is now free, readers know that she died over the shock of losing her chance at freedom.

Chopin’s three-part structure, which moves from Louise’s public reaction to Brently’s supposed death to her private exploration of her feelings of freedom to her public shock and death at the end of the story moves the plot through the story’s arc. Each section is important to the plot. The first public section introduces the characters and the event that establishes the initial conflict. It also alerts the readers to the way society would expect Louise to react to her husband’s death. The second section, which is set in the privacy of Louise’s bedroom, provides a way for Chopin to present an added conflict—the conflict between how Louise is

supposed to feel as a dutiful wife and her actual feelings of freedom. The final section, with Louise once again in the public, allows for the surprising ending—her death over the shock of losing her chance at freedom.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to the entire prompt.
 2. _____ I analyzed the structure used in the end section of the story.
 3. _____ I analyzed how the different section structures contribute to the overall structure by working together to move the plot from beginning to end.
 4. _____ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will analyze how an author's choices about the structure of specific parts of a literary text contribute to meaning. (Reason Effectively).

Key Words

- **flashback** – a literary device that moves the reader from the present in a chronological description to the past
 - **foreshadowing** – a literary device in which authors hint at something that is going to happen in the future
 - **imagery** – an author's use of language to create vivid pictures in the readers' minds
 - **sensory language** – an author's use of language that appeals to the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell to help readers imagine the story
 - **situational irony** – a literary device in which an outcome is opposite or completely different from what is expected
 - **symbol** – something that stands for something else
 - **third-person omniscient** – the perspective in which the narrator knows the inner thoughts of the characters
-

Studying Structure



Source: joingate

Authors do more than drive the plot by the choices they make about how to structure a story. They add layers of meaning to their stories. This is often particularly true in stories that are very short, like Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour." Chopin chooses both her structure and her words carefully to pack meaning into the story.

Take Notes as You Read

In "The Story of an Hour," Kate Chopin uses a three-part **story structure** to explore Louise Mallard's reaction to the supposed death of her husband, Brently Mallard. The three parts represent Louise's public reaction to the news that her husband is dead, the

reaction she has while in the privacy of her bedroom, and her public reappearance and discovery that Brently Mallard is still alive. Understanding how Kate Chopin packs meaning into her short story requires you to reason effectively by analyzing how the three parts interact to produce the story's surprising outcome.

As you reread "The Story of an Hour," use your Reading Log to record details about how the structure of each part of the story impacts meaning. Consider:

- how Louise Mallard's public reaction to her husband's death differs from the reaction she has in the privacy of her bedroom
- how her private revelations make her feel
- what happens and why when she discovers that her husband is alive

You can use this information when it is time to analyze how the author's structural choices contribute to the story's meaning.

Reading Log: The Story of an Hour

Useful Vocabulary

1. **elixir:** a magical or medical potion

2. elusive: difficult to catch or hold on to

3. importunities: annoyingly persistent actions

Studying Structure

Analyzing How Structure Contributes to Meaning

Time, space, and length are compressed in “The Story of an Hour.” The story takes place within one hour in the confines of the Mallard’s home in a story that is only a little over a thousand words long. There is no space for lengthy character development, literary techniques like flashback, or even much dialogue. Instead, Kate Chopin relies on a third-person omniscient narrator to describe Louise Mallard’s public and private reactions to news of her husband’s alleged death in a railroad disaster.

Chopin uses her three-part story structure to craft a tale that ends with a surprising twist fueled by situational irony. Just when readers think Louise is triumphant in her newfound sense of independence, she dies unexpectedly from a heart attack when her husband turns up alive. The doctors claim she died from “joy that kills,” but readers suspect the real cause is the shock of realizing that her chance at self-determination has suddenly evaporated.

With the surprise ending in mind, Chopin begins the story by foreshadowing Louise’s death:

The first line lets readers know that Louise is considered fragile and in need of protection because of her heart trouble. Chopin uses Louise’s heart trouble as a symbol of the character’s growing realization that she is unhappy in the confines of marriage and that her husband’s death offers her a chance to determine her own course in life:

Question 1

How does Chopin use the symbolism of Louise’s heart to express the character’s changing perspective? Cite evidence for your reasoning.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: When Louise realizes that her husband’s death will set her free, her heart becomes stronger, as evidenced by the fact that “her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.” The implication is that she now has a future worth living.

Chopin also uses sensory language and imagery throughout the story to pack meaning into the narrator's words. Consider the following example:

With sensory words and phrases like *paralyzed*, *wild abandonment*, *pressed down*, and *exhaustion* and imagery like “the storm of grief” and “pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach her soul,” Chopin conveys the level of Louise's immediate grief. It is important for readers to understand the depth of Louise's grief so that her impending epiphany about her marriage will have its full effect. But the narration also reveals another deeper meaning by highlighting aspects of Louise's character. Louise is not like the typical woman of her era in her grief or in her need to be alone. Her need to be alone suggests an underlying tendency toward independence and freedom.

Reread this excerpt from “The Story of an Hour” to answer Question 2.

Question 2

How does Chopin's use of imagery and sensory language point to a deeper meaning in her words? What symbols does Chopin use in the passage? Cite evidence to support your reasoning.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Even in her grief, Louise is starting to notice the outside world and its sights, smells, and sounds. She notices the trees “aquiver with new spring life,” “the delicious breath of rain,” “a distant song,” and sparrows “twittering.” These sights, smells, and sounds, and the imagery of the blue sky beginning to show through the clouds, foreshadow Louise's mental transformation from a wife confined by marriage to a reborn woman free to follow her own course in life. The trees “aquiver with new spring life” symbolize Louise's impending “rebirth” as a free woman, while “the patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds” symbolize Louise abandoning her grief for the promise of a brighter future.

As you continue to reread “The Story of an Hour,” consider how the structural elements Chopin uses contribute to meaning in the story. Use effective reasoning by interpreting evidence and drawing conclusions.

Check-In

Reread this excerpt from “The Story of an Hour.” Then, use effective reasoning by interpreting evidence, drawing conclusions, and making judgments to answer the questions.

Question 1

What imagery and sensory language in the first two paragraphs help you know that Louise is frightened by what she is beginning to feel? How do you know that her feelings are changing in the third paragraph? Cite your evidence.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Chopin uses sensory language and imagery in the first paragraph when she characterizes Louise as waiting “fearfully” for what is coming to her and feels it “creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the colors that filled the air.” In the second paragraph, Louise’s bosom rises and fall tumultuously, and she strives “to beat it back with her will,” but she is powerless to do so. In the third paragraph, her feelings begin to change. She says “free, free, free!” under her breath, indicating that she is no longer fearful. This interpretation is reinforced by the narrator’s comment that “the look of terror” is no longer in her eyes, and her eyes are now “keen and bright” as “her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood” warms and relaxes “every inch of her body.”

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Question 2

How has the focus on Louise’s heart changed meaning in the second part of the story? Provide text evidence to support the differentiation.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Whereas the focus on Louise's heart indicated her poor health at the opening of the story, here it indicates her joy at realizing that Brently's death sets her free to live her life for herself, not in someone else's shadow. Evidence of this meaning is provided by "Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body." Rather than indicating a problem, her fast heartbeat indicates the excitement she is feeling.

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Question 3

How do the fourth and fifth paragraphs help you understand how and why Louise is happy with her new perspective on Brently's death? What makes you draw this conclusion?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In the fourth paragraph, Louise does not care if her joy is or is not monstrous. Her "exalted perception" makes that consideration trivial. In the fifth paragraph, she indicates that Brently was kind and loving, but she can see past momentary grief to the "years to come that would belong to her absolutely." The deeper meaning in these paragraphs is that her freedom is more important to her than her marriage to Brently.

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Question 4

How does Chopin's description of Louise's future life in the last three paragraphs help you understand the character's euphoria?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Chopin makes clear that Louise views marriage as restrictive.

Louise believes that her husband has forced her to bend her will to his will, which she characterizes as a crime, even if Brently was not intentionally being cruel. For her, love is not enough if it comes at the cost of a loss of self-assertion and freedom.

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Practice

Reread the “The Story of an Hour” and review your answers to the Studying Structure and Check-In questions and the notes in your Reading Log to complete the activity.

Activity

In several paragraphs, analyze how Chopin’s structural choices, including her use of sensory language, imagery, and symbols, contribute to the story’s deeper meanings. Include at least three deeper meanings and base your analysis on text evidence. In your critique, consider how these meanings contribute to the situational irony of the ending.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: By dividing Louise’s reactions to her husband’s supposed death into public and private accounts, Chopin can explore Louise’s reactions in fuller detail and get at deeper meanings. While Louise is in the privacy of her own bedroom, she awakens to the realization that Brently’s death sets her free. Chopin uses sensory language and imagery to reinforce Louise’s changing perceptions. For example, as Louise stands at the window, she notices the world outside with its trees “aquiver with new spring life,” “the delicious breath of rain,” “a distant song,” and sparrows “twittering.” These sights, smells, and sounds, and the imagery of the blue sky beginning to show through the clouds, symbolize Louise abandoning her grief for the promise of a brighter future. The deeper meaning is that Louise’s perceptions are beginning to shift. She is beginning to see the prospect of a different, and better, life outside of marriage.

Louise soon comes to the full realization that Brently used his powerful will to bend her will. She credits this attempt to “that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature.” For Louise, it does not matter whether Brently’s intentions were kind or cruel—either way, his actions are “no less a crime.” She admits to herself that she only loved Brently some of the time. That love pales in comparison to the “self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!” The prospect of living her life on her own terms invigorates her, leading her to pray for a

long life, when “only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.” For Louise, the deeper meaning is that the protection of marriage does not outweigh the joy of independence.

As Louise contemplates her newfound freedom, Josephine comes upstairs and begs her to open the door, arguing that she will make herself ill. The deeper meaning of this request is that, like her husband or even Richards, Josephine is more interested in controlling her than helping her. Louise’s refusal to open the closed door symbolizes her new sense of self-determination and assertiveness. She is symbolically refusing to accept society’s view that married women are dependent and subservient to their husbands. This is a deeper meaning at the heart of the story.

When Louise finally descends the stairs to reenter the public realm, she carries her newfound joy with her. This joy is short-lived, however. Brently unlocks the front door and walks in, unaware that everyone thinks he is dead. Josephine screams and Richards tries to block Louise’s view. But as readers learn in the last line, Louise has died. While the doctors attribute her death to joy at her husband’s return, readers know that she has died from the shock of losing her newfound freedom. The situational irony creates a surprising ending, but it also carries a deeper meaning, given the foreshadowing at the beginning of the story: For Louise, like other women of her era who are seen as weak and dependent by society, death may be their only way of achieving independence.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to the entire prompt.
2. _____ I analyzed how Chopin’s structural choices, including her use of sensory language, imagery, and symbols, contributed to the story’s deeper meanings.
3. _____ I included at least three deeper meanings.

4. _____ I considered how these meanings contributed to the situational irony of the ending.
 5. _____ I used evidence from the text to support my analysis.
 6. _____ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will analyze how an author's choices about the structure of specific parts of a literary text contribute to aesthetic impact.

Key Words

- **aesthetic** – relating to the beautiful or what is pleasing to the senses
 - **figurative language** – a way of expressing information in nonliteral ways using figures of speech
 - **foreshadowing** – a literary device in which authors hint at something that is going to happen in the future
 - **imagery** – an author's use of language to create vivid pictures in the readers' minds
 - **sensory language** – an author's use of language that appeals to the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell to help readers imagine the story
 - **story structure** – the way a story is organized and presented
 - **tone** – the author's attitude toward the subject matter
-

Studying Structure



Source: sondem. 123rf.com

Short story authors write to entertain. To do this, they choose story structures that capture the readers' imaginations and craft characters with depth and purpose. They also use words that paint vivid pictures and appeal to the senses. Kate Chopin uses all of these methods in her entertaining and thought-provoking short story, "The Story of an Hour."

Take Notes as You Read

As you reread Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," think about how she uses structure and language to craft a story that has both beauty and meaning. Ask yourself:

- Why does Chopin use a three-part structure? What does this structure allow her to do? How does the structure impact my enjoyment of the short story?
- What types of language does Chopin employ to describe Louise, her emotions, and her actions? How do these words make me feel? How do they add to my enjoyment of the short story?
- What type of literary devices and techniques does Chopin use? How do they add to my enjoyment of the short story?

Record your observations in your Reading Log. You can use the information when it is time to analyze how the author's choices contribute to the story's aesthetic impact.

Reading Log: The Story of an Hour

Useful Vocabulary

1. **elixir:** a magical or medical potion
 2. **elusive:** difficult to catch or hold on to
 3. **importunities:** annoyingly persistent actions
-

Studying Structure

Analyzing How Structure Contributes to Aesthetic Impact

The enjoyment you derive from reading a well-crafted story has much to do with the aesthetic impact of the piece. *Aesthetic* refers to the nature of beauty in art, literature, or culture. Things that are aesthetic are pleasing to the senses. Authors achieve aesthetic impact in a variety of ways, including:

- the way they structure their story
- the pace of the story
- their choice of words, including figurative or sensory language and imagery
- their use of foreshadowing or other literary techniques
- the story's style and tone
- the choice of title

Each of these considerations plays a role in the aesthetic impact of “The Story of an Hour.” As you watch the following video, observe how the student analyzes how Chopin uses story structure, words, and other tools to contribute to the aesthetic impact of “The Story of an Hour.”

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Now, answer the questions.

Question 1

According to the student, how does the title create an aesthetic impact?

Reveal Answer

The title, *The Story of an Hour*, has an aesthetic impact because it highlights the short window of time in which the story takes place.

Question 2

According to the student, how does Chopin use imagery to achieve an aesthetic impact?

Reveal Answer

Chopin uses imagery when she describes the view out Louise's bedroom window. The author paints a vivid image that appeals to the senses by describing "the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life" and "the delicious breath of rain that was in the air."

Question 3

According to the student, how does Chopin's decision to structure the story with a surprise ending achieve an aesthetic impact?

Reveal Answer

When Louise comes out of her room and walks down the stairs with Josephine, the reader can sense her power. This might have been the climax of the story, but then Brently opens the door, revealing himself as unharmed. The true climax is the knowledge that Louise dies because she could not survive more years as a wife and subservient being. Chopin simultaneously hits the reader with both a twist and a greater theme.

Check-In

Reread the following excerpt from “The Story of an Hour.” Then, answer Question 1.

Question 1

Think about the ending of the story. How does the foreshadowing in the first sentence of the story add to the overall aesthetic impact of the story?

Reveal Answer

By establishing Louise’s heart condition in the first sentence, Chopin foreshadows the story’s surprise ending. The first sentence makes the story come full circle as Louise dies of grief over the loss of her chance at independence, rather than from what the doctors claim is a “joy that kills” caused by her husband’s return.

Need a little extra support?

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Reread the following excerpt. Then, answer Question 2.

Question 2

How does Chopin’s use of language add to the aesthetic impact of this passage?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The author uses both imagery—the whispered word escaping Louise’s parted lips—and repetition of the word *free* to contribute to the aesthetic impact. The impact is further enhanced by the sensory language describing the changes to her facial expression. These descriptions appeal to the reader’s senses.

Need a little extra support?

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Reread the following excerpt. Then, answer Question 3.

Question 3

How does Chopin use language and tone in this passage to contribute to the aesthetic impact of this section of the story? Cite your evidence.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Chopin uses figurative language in the form of a metaphor when she calls love “the unsolved mystery.” The author’s tone is critical of marriage, as evidenced by her calling marriage “an unsolved mystery” and by her focus on Louise’s impulse for self-assertion and the repeated use of the word *free*.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Practice

Reread “The Story of an Hour” and review your answers to the Studying Structure and Check-In questions and the notes in your Reading Log to complete the activity.

Activity

In one or two paragraphs, use evidence from the text to analyze how the structure of the story and the author’s use of language, tone, and foreshadowing work together to contribute to the aesthetic impact of the story.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Chopin’s organization of the story into public and private parts enhances the aesthetic impact by enabling Louise to realize her true feelings in real time and by setting up the surprise ending that occurs once Louise returns to the public sphere. The author’s first line, which introduces Louise’s heart trouble, foreshadows the story’s surprise ending. The author also uses foreshadowing to reinforce the fact that Louise’s outlook on life is changing because of what she believes is Brently’s death. For example, when Josephine tells Louise of her husband’s death, Louise weeps “with sudden, wild abandonment.” This reaction is not typical for a woman living in the late 1800s, thus it foreshadows Louise’s changing perception of herself and her future. When the narrator describes Louise as having a face that “bespoke repression and even a certain strength,” this also foreshadows an independent nature hiding under social constraints that rigidly outlined what was considered proper behavior for a woman in the late 1800s. Throughout the private section of the story, the author uses sensory language and imagery to capture Louise’s growing perception that Brently’s death will afford her freedom and self-assertion. Imagery such as “the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life” and “the delicious breath of rain was in the air” paints a vivid image that appeals to the senses, adding to the story’s aesthetic appeal. It also symbolizes Louise’s own coming rebirth as an independent woman. Similarly, the author’s use of imagery—the whispered word escaping Louise’s parted lips—and repetition of the word *free* contribute to the aesthetic impact. The author’s

critical tone toward marriage also adds to the story's aesthetic appeal, such as when she uses figurative language in the form of a metaphor to call love "the unsolved mystery."

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to the entire prompt.
 2. _____ I analyzed how the structure of the story contributed to its aesthetic impact.
 3. _____ I considered the role of language, tone, and foreshadowing in creating aesthetic impact.
 4. _____ I used evidence from the text to support my analysis.
 5. _____ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-

Point of View

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will describe how point of view is developed in a literary text.

Key Words


- **first-person narration** – storytelling in which a character narrates the action through their own perspective, using the pronoun *I*
 - **limited** – focused on a particular character
 - **omniscient** – all-seeing; knowing everything
 - **point of view** – the narrator's connection to the story being told
 - **third-person narration** – a point of view from outside the narrative, using the pronouns *he*, *she*, or *they*
-

Point of View



Source: aaronnaps. 123rf.com

One of the joys of reading literature is that it gives you a chance to explore places you have never been, meet people you would never otherwise meet, and view the world from a different perspective. You are about to read a story published nearly 100 years ago, in 1924. As you read the story, notice how the characters express attitudes and perspectives of the time and how those attitudes and perspectives motivate their actions.

Take Notes as You Read 

“The Most Dangerous Game” takes place on a made-up island in the Caribbean at a time shortly after the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the civil war that followed. Like the story’s protagonist, the author, Richard Connell, served in France in World War I. That postwar setting is important to the story, which features a mysterious antagonist who has recently escaped from Russia.

Did You Know?

In the story, General Zaroff refers to himself and his aide as “Cossacks.” Ethnic Cossacks hailed from north of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, in what is now Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and southern Russia. They were largely independent, but their military skill meant they were often employed as soldiers by the Russian government. During the Russian Civil War, many Cossacks fought with the losing side and faced exile or worse from the victorious Bolsheviks as the war ended and the Russian Empire transformed into Soviet Russia.

As you read the story, think about the dual meanings of *game* in the title. Consider the protagonist’s and the antagonist’s very different perspectives on “The Most Dangerous Game.” Record your ideas in your Reading Log.

Useful Vocabulary

1. **brier:** a wooden pipe for smoking tobacco
 2. **capital:** excellent
 3. **château:** a large, French-style country house
 4. **debacle:** a total failure
 5. **lascar:** a sailor from Southeast or South Asia
 6. **refectory table:** a long, thin dining table
 7. **tartar:** a person from Turkey or Central Asia
-

Point of View

Describing and Developing Point of View

To write fiction, an author must establish and develop a point of view. A story's point of view has a lot to do with what the author wants to reveal to the reader and how the author wants that revelation to occur.

To establish a point of view, an author must first decide whether a character will tell the story through first-person narration or whether an outside narrator will do so through third-person narration. An author must also decide whether the narration should be omniscient or limited. An omniscient narrator may delve inside any character's feelings and motivations. A limited narrator typically focuses on how a single main character feels and thinks.

These choices help the author develop a point of view that reflects the perspective of one or more characters. The point of view through which a story is written allows readers to discover how a character feels or how they see the world—and perhaps more importantly, how this perspective changes over the course of the story's plot.

As “The Most Dangerous Game” opens, two characters traveling at sea are discussing a mysterious island they have passed. The author uses dialogue and third-person pronouns to relay their conversation.

Question 1

What can readers infer about the point of view through this use of dialogue and pronouns?

Reveal Answer

Readers can infer that the author is using third-person narration.

Now, reread what happens immediately after the opening conversation between the two characters, Rainsford and Whitney.

Question 2

How does the author use this passage to establish the story's point of view?

Reveal Answer

The author refers to Rainsford's thoughts and feelings, suggesting that the point of view will be primarily limited to Rainsford and that the narration will focus on what he thinks, feels, hears, and does.

When you read a story, think about the choices the author made to develop the story's point of view. Ask yourself:

- Whose thoughts and feelings does the narrator reveal?
- What do I learn about this character's or these characters' perspectives on a particular topic or on the world?
- How does this perspective change as the plot moves toward a resolution?
- Why did the author choose to develop a point of view this way? In what ways is the choice effective?

Question 3

How does viewing the hunt through Rainsford's eyes make the story more vivid and exciting?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: It shows how it feels to be hunted, and it shows how prey must use its wits and strength to survive.

Check-In

Think about the development of point of view in “The Most Dangerous Game” as you answer these questions.

Question 1

Which evidence from the story suggests the development of a limited point of view?

- a.** "I've read your book about hunting snow leopards in Tibet, you see," explained the man. "I am General Zaroff."
- b.** At the great table the general was sitting, alone.
- c.** He was finding the general a most thoughtful and affable host, a true cosmopolite.
- d.** For a moment the general did not reply; he was smiling his curious red-lipped smile.

Reveal Answer

- c.** He was finding the general a most thoughtful and affable host, a true cosmopolite.

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Question 2

Which evidence indicates Rainsford's initial perspective toward prey?

- a.** “The world is made up of two classes—the hunters and the huntees. Luckily, you and I are hunters.”
- b.** “One superstitious sailor can taint the whole ship's company with his fear.”

- c.** “Where there are pistol shots, there are men. Where there are men, there is food.”
- d.** “I refuse to believe that so modern and civilized a young man as you seem to be harbors romantic ideals about the value of human life.”

Reveal Answer

- a.** “The world is made up of two classes—the hunters and the huntees. Luckily, you and I are hunters.”

Question 3

Which evidence shows that Rainsford's perspective is beginning to change?

- a.** “I suppose the first three shots I heard was when the hunter flushed his quarry and wounded it.”
- b.** Rainsford expressed his surprise. “Is there big game on the island?”
- c.** “Hunting? Good God, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder.”
- d.** He had achieved a doze when, just as morning began to come, he heard, far off in the jungle, the faint report of a pistol.

Reveal Answer

- c.** “Hunting? Good God, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder.”

Question 4

Which evidence shows that the author has turned the tables on his main character?

- a.** Rainsford, with an effort, held his tongue in check.
- b.** The general raised his glass, but Rainsford sat staring at him.

c. Dusk came, then darkness, and still he pressed on.

d. Rainsford knew now how an animal at bay feels.

Reveal Answer

d. Rainsford knew now how an animal at bay feels.

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Practice

Reread the final paragraphs of “The Most Dangerous Game” to complete the activity.

Activity

In a paragraph or two, describe how the author develops the point of view over the course of the story’s end.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Up to this point in the story, the author has used a limited point of view that focuses on Rainsford, allowing the author to capture Rainsford’s fear and panic as he becomes the general’s prey. After Rainsford leaps into the sea, however, the point of view suddenly shifts to focus on the general. The effect on the reader is to make us assume that Rainsford must be dead.

The narration continues to focus on the general through the evening, giving readers insight into his irritation at the loss of his employee and his prey. The point of view stays focused on Zaroff as he makes his way from dinner to the library to his bedroom and remains there until the story’s last line, where the reader discovers that not only has Rainsford survived, but he has also succeeded in killing the general.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to the prompt without veering off-topic.
 2. _____ I explained the development of the story’s point of view in a logical order.
 3. _____ I included specific details and examples from the story in my description.
 4. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will analyze how point of view contributes to meaning and aesthetic impact through satire, sarcasm, or understatement.

Key Words

- **sarcasm** – bitter expression that may state the opposite of what is meant
 - **satire** – the use of ridicule to lower someone or something in a reader's or character's esteem
 - **understatement** – the presentation of something as less than it really is
-

Point of View

Read Strategically

Visualization is a reading strategy that can greatly improve reading comprehension and is especially useful for analyzing point of view in a story. You can insert yourself into the scene and speculate more easily about what a character might be thinking and feeling.

Picture this scene from Richard Connell's 1924 short story, "The Most Dangerous Game." The story centers on the thoughts, feelings, and perspective of Sanger Rainsford, a hunter who lands on a mysterious island after falling off a yacht en route to an expedition in South America. Notice the words the author uses to show how Rainsford feels about what he sees.

Question 1

How can visualizing this scene help you understand how Rainsford feels?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: As I visualize what is happening, I see a creepy castle looming out of the dark, and I hear the sea smashing on the rocks. It helps me understand that Rainsford must feel as though he is in a sort of dream that may turn into a nightmare.

Later, Rainsford meets the owner of the château. Use your imagination to visualize this scene.

Question 2

Put yourself in Rainsford's position and explain why he feels uncomfortable.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Rainsford is uncomfortable because having someone stare at you while you eat can be annoying and threatening.

As you read the full text of the story, continue to visualize what is happening to Rainsford. Record in your Reading Log how Rainsford's perspective on the château—and on his host—evolves over time.

Reading Log: The Most Dangerous Game

Useful Vocabulary

1. **brier:** a wooden pipe for smoking tobacco
 2. **capital:** excellent
 3. **château:** a large, French-style country house
 4. **Cossack:** group of people from what is now Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and southern Russia; known for their military skill
 5. **lascar:** a sailor from Southeast or South Asia
 6. **refectory table:** a long, thin dining table
 7. **tartar:** a fierce, angry person
-

Putting Things in Context

You are about to read a short story written in 1924. At that time, around 100 years ago, people expressed themselves quite differently from how they do today, and many had what we would consider backward attitudes toward people of a different class or ethnicity. As you read the story, be sure to keep the story's historical context in mind and think about how it frames the events as well as the perspectives of the characters.

Point of View

Analyzing the Impact of Indirect Language

In “The Most Dangerous Game,” the author uses indirect language to convey a character’s particular point of view. The author’s use of sarcasm and understatement make the character seem confident and sophisticated, but in reality, this masks underlying cruelty and world-weariness. The use of indirect language deflects from the character’s genuine feelings about people and events.

In addition to reflecting the characters’ points of view, the author inserts his own point of view by using satire to comment on certain social norms and beliefs.

Watch this video to see how two students analyze one character’s use of devices to show his disdainful point of view about human beings and the world they inhabit. As you read the story, identify places where the author’s point of view breaks through with satirical assessments of society and the world.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

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Question

What is the general's perspective on civilized behavior, and how does it contrast with Rainsford's point of view?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The general seems to feel that owning nice things and having electricity makes him civilized, even though his passion is hunting human beings. Rainsford does not share this point of view; on the contrary, he finds it disgusting.

Now, reread “The Most Dangerous Game”—this time, keeping track in your Reading Log of examples you find of understatement, sarcasm, and satire. Notice who is using indirect language and how that affects your understanding of that character.

Check-In

Reread this excerpt from “The Most Dangerous Game” and use your understanding of the scene to complete Activity 1.

Activity 1

In this excerpt, the author satirizes both big-game hunters and the idle rich. Use evidence from the excerpt to explain how he does this and what the effect is on your attitude toward the general.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The author satirizes big-game hunters with the general’s absurd story about God’s making him a hunter. The general’s father did not care that he shot the prize turkeys; he just cared that he was a good marksman. Yet the general seems to derive little pleasure from his hunting; he can’t even tell how many animals he has killed. In his next paragraph, the general reveals that his investments, presumably from his father’s wealth, allowed him to escape dreary fates such as opening a tea room or driving a taxi. He continued to hunt, but it started to bore him—he was not willing to pursue a career that might build something or perform a service, yet the career he did pursue was unfulfilling. In the end, the general looks a bit ridiculous for choosing an interest that no longer interests him.

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Use this excerpt from later in the story to complete Activity 2.

Activity 2

In this excerpt, the general refers to “something extremely regrettable” and to “one rather promising prospect.” Explain how these indirect statements, one understatement, and the other sarcasm, help to disguise the general’s real meaning and add to the tension in the scene.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The general refers to “something extremely regrettable” that might happen to anyone who tries to get into or out of his house. That understatement covers up the fact that he expects the dogs to kill or maim whoever intrudes or tries to escape. This serves as a warning to Rainsford and ratchets up the tension he feels. When the general mentions the “one rather promising prospect,” we realize later that he means Rainsford himself. This sarcastic remark shows how cruel the general’s sarcasm can be and makes the scene ominous by foreshadowing the hunt that will happen the next day.

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Practice

Use evidence from “The Most Dangerous Game” to support your response to this activity.

Activity

As the story opens, Rainsford has a casual, cynical view of hunting and a rather nonchalant attitude toward life. In two or three paragraphs, explain how Rainsford’s exposure to the general’s far more destructive cynicism changes Rainsford. Include examples of the general’s sarcasm and understatement in your analysis.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Rainsford opens the story with a casual conversation with his friend Whitney in which Whitney provides sarcastic observations about the jaguar’s dislike of the hunt. This conversation shows Rainsford’s lack of concern for the feelings of the animals he hunts.

Rainsford changes as he is exposed to the general’s casual language about the hunting of humans. After giving up the business that was his life, hunting, the general “had no wish to go to pieces,” so he came up with a game that required more effort on his part. When Rainsford reacts with disgust, the general ridicules him, calling his point of view “mid-Victorian.” He refers to murder as “that unpleasant word,” showing with understatement how little he cares about taking a life. He calls his prison for captured men his “training school” and calls the manhunt “a game.”

When Rainsford discovers that he is meant to be the general’s prey, he is even more horrified. The general continues with understatement, telling Rainsford that “you’ll hardly have time for a nap.” In the hunt that follows, Rainsford uses all of his strength and wits to survive, having learned a meaningful lesson about the feelings of prey and the dangers of boredom and cynicism.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I organized my response logically to show how Rainsford changes as he is exposed to the general's own cynicism.
 2. _____ I presented specific examples of sarcasm and understatement from the text to support my central idea.
 3. _____ I included transition words to show the passage of time as Rainsford's perspective evolves.
 4. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Story Elements

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will explain various narrative techniques used to develop character and setting.

Key Words

- **first-person narration** – the story is told from the point of view of one of the characters
 - **characters** – the people, animals, or personified objects who experience the events in a story
 - **diction** – the choice of words an author uses in writing a story
 - **mood** – the underlying emotion or feeling of a piece of fiction
 - **narrative techniques** – the devices and methods an author uses to craft a story
 - **point of view** – the narrator's connection to the story being told
 - **setting** – where and when a story takes place
 - **unreliable narrator** – a storyteller who misleads, lies, withholds information, or is extremely biased
-

Story Elements



Source: marco mayer. Shutterstock

Many people find horror stories compelling. It might be because horror stories allow us to feel strong emotions or the rush of adrenaline that comes with fear while remaining in a safe environment. Horror stories also let us explore the unknown and the darker side of human nature. You are about to read “The Tell-Tale Heart,” a horror story by Edgar Allan Poe. As you read the story, notice the techniques Poe uses to create the maximum emotional impact in the story.

Get Ready to Read 

Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” is an example of Gothic horror. Gothic fiction grew out of Romanticism, a literary movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Gothic fiction is marked by dark and gloomy settings and characters consumed by psychological traumas, such as terror, guilt, fear, nightmares, and mental illness. Death, terror, horror, injury, revenge, bizarre or irrational happenings, suspense, and the supernatural figure heavily in the plots.

Did You Know?

In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the narrator says, “He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.” The reference to “death watches in the wall” refers to the deathwatch beetle. Deathwatch beetles live inside the walls of old buildings, where they bore into and eat the wooden structure. When they are trying to attract a mate, the beetles make a ticking or clicking sound. At one time, people who were sitting by the bed of a dying loved one believed the sound signaled the person’s impending death.

As you read the story, think about the narrator’s description of how events unfold. Do you think the narrator’s perspective captures the objective reality? Why or why not? Record your ideas in your Reading Log.

Useful Vocabulary

1. **audacity:** boldness
 2. **dissimulation:** concealment of the truth about something
 3. **gesticulations:** the act of making gestures
 4. **sagacity:** sound judgment
 5. **scantlings:** studs, or pieces of lumber forming a cross section
 6. **tattoo:** a rapid rhythmic rapping or tapping
 7. **vex:** to trouble or distress
-

Story Elements

Narrative Techniques for Developing Characters and Setting

Story elements are the blocks authors use to build their stories. Two of the most important building blocks are characters and setting. Every story must have at least one character and be set in some time and place. Authors use a variety of narrative techniques to craft a story's characters and setting.

The setting is important because it helps set the mood. It also provides a time and place in which the characters interact and the plot unfolds. Authors supply details about the setting to add depth to the story. Consider this description in “The Tell-Tale Heart”:

Question 1

How does the description of the setting help establish the mood?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The black, thick darkness of the room and the fact the shutters are closed for fear of robbers creates a dark, sinister mood. This adds to the story's tension and suspense.

Since setting refers to both place and time, it also influences how the narrator and characters speak. A middle-aged character living in the South in the 1800s will use different words and phrasing than a teenager living in California in the 2020s. The phrasing and choice of words an author uses is called diction. Diction can take on many different tones, including whether it is formal or casual. Reread this passage from “The Tell-Tale Heart”:

Question 2

How does the author's diction help you know the story is not set in the twenty-first century?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The more formal tone, the phrases “when the day broke” and “passed the night,” and the use of the word *chamber* instead of *bedroom* indicate that the story is not set in modern times.

Authors reveal their characters’ personalities and motivations through dialogue and narration. In some stories, a character serves as the narrator and tells the story from a first-person **point of view**. In **first-person narration**, the storyteller can be a main character or a minor character. Because they are telling the story from their own view of reality, a first-person storyteller can be an **unreliable narrator**. Unreliable narrators distort information in a significant way. In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the main character is the unnamed narrator. It is evident from the first line in the story that the narrator is unreliable:

Question 3

What text evidence indicates the narrator is unreliable?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The narrator is claiming not to be mad while exhibiting traits consistent with being mentally unbalanced. He admits to being “very, very dreadfully nervous” and claims “the disease” had sharpened his senses. He talks of hearing “all things in the heaven and earth” and “many things in hell.” In addition, he claims to be calm, while his phrasing indicates he is highly agitated.

As you reread “The Tell-Tale Heart,” think about the narrative techniques Poe uses to craft the narrator and the setting. Ask yourself:

- How does the setting add to the mood of the story?
- Why is the setting important to how the characters interact?
- How does diction help paint a picture of the narrator’s state of mind?
- Why has Poe chosen an unreliable narrator?

Check-In

Reread the following passage from “The Tell-Tale Heart.” Then, answer the questions.

Question 1

How does the first-person narrative help Poe develop the main character?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The narration enables Poe to reveal the character’s personality and motivation. Because the narrator is relating their own actions filtered through their own view of reality, Poe can show the contradiction in the character’s logic. The narrator claims to love the old man, to not want his gold or need to revenge a wrong or insult. Yet, the narrator decides the old man must die because he has “the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye.” The narrator is obsessed with the eye and views it as something separate from the old man and capable of evil. This shows readers that the narrator is not rational.

Question 2

How does this passage support the claim that the narrator is unreliable?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The fact that the narrator views the old man’s eye as something evil and separate from the old man, who the narrator claims to love, indicates that the narrator is not rational. An irrational narrator cannot be reliable because their perception is extremely inaccurate.

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Think about the definition of *setting*. Then, reread the following passage and answer the question.

Question 3

How do details about the setting of the story help you understand the mental state of the narrator?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The narrator relates that they have slowly stuck the lantern and their head into the old man's room for seven nights at midnight to see if they can discover the old man's "Evil Eye" open. Their insistence on completing the act every night at midnight is evidence of the narrator's compulsive behavior.

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Reread the passage. Then, answer the question.

Question 4

How does the author's diction add to the story's suspense?

Reveal Answer

Poe heightens suspense by repeating the phrase *all in vain* and by personifying death when he writes "because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim" and "mournful influence of the unperceived shadow." The words and phrases *all in vain*, *stalked*, *black* or *unperceived shadow*, *enveloped*, *victim*, and *mournful* all have negative connotations. Taken together, the words and the personification create a gloomy and dangerous mood that foretells of impending death.

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Practice

Reread “The Tell-Tale Heart” and review your answers to the Story Elements and Check-In questions and the notes in your Reading Log to complete the activity.

Activity

In one or two paragraphs, explain the various narrative techniques Edgar Allan Poe uses to develop character and setting in “The Tell-Tale Heart.” In your answer, touch on the importance of diction and Poe’s choice of narrator.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Poe uses several narrative techniques to develop character and setting in “The Tell-Tale Heart.” The tale that the narrator relates takes place in the house of an old man with whom the narrator lives. Most of the action takes place in the old man’s bedroom. Poe describes the room through the narration. Readers learn that the room at night is “black as pitch with thick darkness,” the shutters are closed to keep out robbers, and the door is latched. Readers know from the narrator’s description of the murder that the floor is made of wood planks. Although the narrator mentions interacting with the old man during the daytime, most of the story is set at night—around the midnight hour—when the narrator spies on the old man, hoping to see his Evil Eye. It is not until the eighth night that the narrator sees the old man’s eye and murders him. The story ends the next morning when the narrator, driven further mad by what he believes is the dead man’s beating heart, confesses to the murder. Poe uses the narrator’s description of the setting to establish a dark and gloomy mood that adds to the tension and suspense. Poe never establishes the setting in which the narrator is retelling the story or to whom he is talking. He also does not explain when the murder took place, although the narrator’s diction suggests that the story is set in the distant past, likely in the early 1800s, given the time in which the story was written.

There is very little dialogue in the story since the narrator is the main character and is recounting a past event. Poe reveals the narrator’s personality and motivations through the narrator’s words and actions. The first-person point of view is important to the story because the narrator’s mental state is central to the plot. The author’s

diction is important because the narrator's word choices and phrasing quickly convince readers that the narrator's claim of not being mad is far from the truth. The more the narrator provides examples of why he is not mad, the more obvious it is that he is delusional. By the end of the story, the narrator is shrieking and ranting and finally confesses to the murder. All of this makes the character an unreliable narrator. Poe chooses an unreliable narrator because it allows him to reveal the character's emotional instability through the narrator's own words and actions, thereby increasing the horror and suspense in the story.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to the prompt without veering off-topic.
 2. _____ I explained the various narrative techniques Edgar Allan Poe uses to develop character and setting.
 3. _____ I explained the importance of diction and Poe's choice of narrator.
 4. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will describe an author's choices regarding how setting and characters are introduced and developed in a literary text.

Key Words

- **first-person narration** – the story is told from the point of view of one of the characters
 - **characters** – the people, animals, or personified objects who experience the events in a story
 - **point of view** – the narrator's connection to the story being told
 - **setting** – where and when a story takes place
 - **unreliable narrator** – a storyteller who misleads, lies, withholds information, or is extremely biased
-

Describe Setting and Character



Source: alexeykonovalenko. 123rf.com

Authors generally develop their characters over the course of a story. This allows them to highlight how a character changes through interaction with other characters and with events. The slow release of details about the setting can also add to a story's impact or prevent a story from being bogged down in details. This is particularly true in a short story, where space is at a premium. The type of narrator can also affect the development of character and setting. For example, a slow release of information might work best when using first-person narration, like in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart."

Take Notes as You Read

As you reread Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart,” think about the setting and the characters. Ask yourself:

- What is the setting?
- How do you learn about the setting?
- How does Poe reveal the main character?
- How does the fact that the main character is also the narrator affect how Poe develops the character?

Record your observations in your Reading Log. You can use the information when it is time to analyze the effects of the author’s choices.

Reading Log: The Tell-Tale Heart

Useful Vocabulary

1. **audacity:** boldness
2. **dissimulation:** concealment of the truth about something

3. **gesticulations:** the act of making gestures
 4. **sagacity:** sound judgment
 5. **scantlings:** studs, or pieces of lumber forming a cross section
 6. **tattoo:** a rapid rhythmic rapping or tapping
 7. **vex:** to trouble or distress
-

Describe Setting and Character

Authors can choose different ways to introduce and develop their settings and characters. Many factors can affect their choices, including the point of view from which the story is told. In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” Edgar Allan Poe employs a first-person narrator who recounts murdering an old man in the house they share to escape the old man’s supposed Evil Eye. It is through the narrator’s observations and perceptions that readers slowly learn about the setting, the narrator’s characteristics and motivations, the other characters, and how the story’s events unfold. It quickly becomes evident to readers that the main character is an unreliable narrator. Knowledge of the extent to which the narrator is unreliable builds over the course of the short story as readers learn how little grasp the narrator has on reality.

As you watch the following video, observe how the student describes how Edgar Allan Poe introduces and develops the setting and narrator.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Peer Model Video Transcript

Now, answer the questions.

Question 1

According to the student, how does Poe use word choice to accentuate the narrator's madness?

Reveal Answer

The student cites the main character's description of the old man's eye as the "eye of the vulture" as highlighting the narrator's madness.

Question 2

According to the student, in the third paragraph, how does Poe indicate that the narrator and old man live in the same house?

Reveal Answer

The narrator describes turning the latch on the old man's door every night at midnight. This signals that the narrator and the old man live in the same house.

Question 3

According to the student, how do readers know that the setting is not always in the dead of night?

Reveal Answer

The narrator describes speaking with the old man every morning in a friendly way.

Question 4

What evidence does the student give that the narrator's mind is continuing to deteriorate over the course of the story?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The student mentions the narrator becoming infuriated at the supposed sound of the old man's heartbeat when preparing to kill him. Then, the student mentions that, after killing the old man, the narrator acts friendly and confident when the police arrive, even sitting with them in a chair over the place where the old man's body is hidden. But soon guilt over killing the old man leads

the narrator to hallucinate that the dead man's heart is beating ever louder and to finally confess in a raving fit.

Check-In

Look for evidence on how Poe introduces and develops the setting and main character as you reread “The Tell-Tale Heart.” Then, answer the questions.

Question 1

How does Poe slowly release details about the setting over the course of the story? Cite text evidence.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The author introduces the setting in the third paragraph when the narrator describes turning the latch of the old man’s door and slowly sticking a lantern and then their head through the slightly opened door to watch the old man sleep. Readers can infer that the room is the old man’s bedroom, since he is sleeping in a bed there. The narrator also establishes the time—midnight on seven consecutive days. But the narrator also mentions entering the chamber every morning to inquire about how the old man “has passed the night.” The reader learns more about the setting in the fourth paragraph when the narrator mentions that the room is “as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,).” In the ninth paragraph, readers can infer that the room has a fireplace because the narrator mentions that the old man wants to convince himself that the sound he heard is “wind in the chimney.” In the eleventh paragraph, the narrator mentions that the house is old, places the time as “the dead hour of the night,” and makes the point that there are neighbors who might hear the beating of the old man’s heart through the wall. In the thirteenth paragraph, the narrator takes up planks in the bedroom floor to hide the body, so readers know the floor is wooden. In the fourteenth paragraph, the narrator says the police arrive at four o’clock, announcing that a neighbor has reported a shriek and asked them to check it out. This tells readers that the house is in a neighborhood with other houses close enough to hear a scream and a police station in the vicinity. The narrator also notes that the front door opens onto the street. In the fifteenth paragraph, the narrator brings the police into the old man’s room, where the action remains until the end of the story.

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Question 2

How does Poe use the slow release of details about the narrator's mental state to prove that the character is an unreliable narrator? Provide examples.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Readers know that the narrator is unstable from the very first paragraph of the story, but Poe's slow release of details about the narrator's state of mind allows readers to witness his decline into total madness. Poe begins the story by having the narrator admit to being "nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous," but question why the unknown person being addressed says that the character is mad. The narrator admits to having a disease, but claims it has sharpened, not dulled, the senses, and argues that being able to "healthily" and "calmly" relate the whole story disproves madness. In the second paragraph, the narrator relates why the old man had to die—"he had the eye of a vulture," helping convince readers that the narrator is indeed mad and unreliable. In the third paragraph, the narrator provides more evidence of madness by stressing the slowness of their movements, as if taking an hour to thrust a lantern and their head through the partially opened bedroom door to watch the old man sleep is a sign of sanity. In the fourth paragraph, the narrator begins to describe the eighth night—the night of the killing. The narrator notes feelings of power and triumph, foretelling the murder. Over the course of the next several paragraphs, the narrator describes the old man's fear and terror, which reflects the narrator's own fear and terror. Finally, in the ninth paragraph, the narrator becomes furious after finding the old man's eye open. Over the remaining paragraphs, the narrator falls into ever deepening madness. First, the narrator hears a ticking sound that the character takes as the old man's heart, which increases the narrator's fury. The narrator finally springs into action, smothering and then dismembering the body before hiding it under the floorboards. This is hardly the act of a sound mind, particularly

since the narrator characterizes the actions as “wise precautions.” The deed done, the narrator is confident and euphoric, so much so that the character leads the police through the house as they search for the source of the shriek heard by the neighbor. In the last two paragraphs of the story, the narrator descends completely into madness, tormented by the supposed sound of the dead man’s heart. The story closes with the narrator ranting and raving a confession to the murder.

Need a little extra support?

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Practice

Reread “The Tell-Tale Heart” and review your answers to the Story Elements and Check-In questions and the notes in your Reading Log to complete the activity.

Activity

In one or two paragraphs, describe Edgar Allan Poe’s choices regarding how to introduce and develop the narrator and setting in “The Tell-Tale Heart. In your answer, describe the advantages of this approach.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Because the story is told from the point of view of the main character, all the details about the setting and the main character are filter through the narrator’s perceptions of reality. Poe makes clear from the first paragraph of the story that the narrator is unreliable, since he is mentally unbalanced, or “mad” in Poe’s parlance. Poe’s choice of telling the story through the main character’s eyes results in two things—it requires the slow release of details, since the narrator is recounting the story in basically the order the events happened, and it enables readers to watch the narrator’s descent into total madness, which adds to the tension and suspense.

The narrator provides details about the setting in a piecemeal fashion, releasing only the information that is relevant to the event being described. For example, readers are well into the story before they can infer that the house is old and in a neighborhood that has houses close enough together for a neighbor to hear the shriek in the night. This adds to the suspense and tension in the story, but it also highlights the main character’s inability to connect actions with outcomes, which is characteristic of some mental illnesses. A sane character would know that the location of the house made detection more likely. The pacing also reflects the slow and deliberate nature of the narrator, who seems to equate slowness with sanity. By having the main character relate the story, Poe can reveal the narrator’s descent into madness one step at a time in a more impactful way by showing the decline rather than simply describing it. The more the narrator claims to be sane, the more his actions point to his worsening madness.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to the entire prompt.
 2. _____ I described Edgar Allan Poe's choices regarding how to introduce and develop the narrator and setting.
 3. _____ I described the advantages of Poe's approach.
 4. _____ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will analyze how an author's choices regarding how setting and characters are introduced and developed in a literary text impacts meaning.

Key Words

- **characterization** – the process by which an author creates, reveals, and develops a character
 - **characters** – the people, animals, or personified objects who experience the events in a story
 - **juxtaposition** – the literary device in which an author places things side by side to highlight their differences
 - **meaning** – the message the author wants to convey to readers
 - **motivations** – a character's reasons for actions or behavior
 - **point of view** – the narrator's connection to the story being told
 - **setting** – where and when a story takes place
 - **unreliable narrator** – a storyteller who misleads, lies, withholds information, or is extremely biased
-

Story Elements



Source: joingate. 123rf.com

How an author introduces and develops characters and settings has a strong impact on a story. Good characterizations and setting descriptions make stories more entertaining by capturing the reader's imagination and interest. They can also help an author convey a message or a deeper truth about the characters' actions and motivations.

Take Notes as You Read

As you reread “The Tell-Tale Heart,” evaluate how Edgar Allan Poe introduces and develops his main character and the setting. Think about how the details he provides

impact meaning in the story. Ask yourself:

- Why does Poe choose to make his main character the narrator?
- Why does Poe provide only some details about the narrator and the setting?
- What do you learn about the narrator from the character's words and actions?
How does that affect your understanding of Poe's meaning?

Jot notes in your Reading Log. You can access the information later in the lesson when you evaluate which details to use to analyze Poe's choices regarding introducing and developing the setting and main character and the impact of those choices on meaning.

Reading Log: The Tell-Tale Heart

Useful Vocabulary

1. **audacity:** boldness
2. **dissimulation:** concealment of the truth about something
3. **gesticulations:** the act of making gestures
4. **sagacity:** sound judgment
5. **scantlings:** studs, or pieces of lumber forming a cross section

6. tattoo: a rapid rhythmic rapping or tapping

7. vex: to trouble or distress

Story Elements

How an Author's Choices Impact Meaning

Writers often have a message they want to convey to readers. For example, an author may want to make a point about human nature, mortality, or how and why people perceive the world or events differently. They create characters and select settings that help them accomplish their goal. How an author introduces and develops setting and characters impacts a story's meaning. A story's meaning is the message the author wants to convey to readers. Meanings often are not self-evident. Instead, readers must uncover them by analyzing the author's characterizations and setting descriptions.

In "The Tell-Tale Heart," Poe explores the dark side of the human psyche and the impulses and obsessions that drive people to lose control and commit irrational acts of violence. While professing his sanity, Poe's unnamed main character narrates the story of how he murdered the old man he lived with and dismembered his body. Poe uses the literary device of juxtaposition to draw attention to the narrator's madness, as evidenced by the opening paragraph:

The narrator admits to being "nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous" and claims to be able to hear "all things in the heaven and in the earth" and "many things in hell." These remarks clearly point to mental illness. Poe then juxtaposes these remarks with the narrator's statements, "How, then, am I mad" and "observe how healthy—how calmly I can tell you the whole story." This juxtaposition reinforces Poe's meaning that the narrator does indeed suffer from madness.

Poe also uses the setting to get at deeper meanings. The dark and dreadfully silent house in which the narrator and the old man lived serves as the setting of the crime. Although Poe provides few details about the house, it is central to the story, as it serves as the old man's tomb and symbolizes the narrator's dark subconscious. Just as the narrator hides the old man's body beneath the floor planks of his bedroom, the narrator tries unsuccessfully to hide his guilt deep in his subconscious.

Listen to the podcast to hear two students discuss how Edgar Allan Poe uses the narrator and setting to convey a message about the power of guilt.

▶ 0:00 / 0:00 ———— 🔊 ⋮

Chilling Transcript

As the students in the podcast demonstrate, Poe makes a calculated decision about how to introduce the main character. By telling the story from the main character's point of view, Poe can use the character's own words and actions to paint a twisted view of

events. As Jia points out, Poe has chosen an unreliable narrator on purpose. Poe wants to place the focus of the story on the main character's madness and delusion.

Question 1

Why is it often necessary for a reader to uncover an author's meaning? How does a reader go about uncovering an author's meaning?

Reveal Answer

Readers often need to uncover an author's meaning because the meaning is not self-evident. The reader uncovers the author's meaning by analyzing how the author introduces and develops their characters and settings.

Question 2

Why does Poe choose to tell the story from the main character's point of view? What about Poe's main character makes this an effective approach?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Poe choose to tell the story from the main character's point of view because it enables him to show the character's insanity and delusion rather than simply tell readers about it. This is an effective approach because Poe's narrator is unreliable due to his madness and thus presents a twisted view of events.

Question 3

According to the podcast, what is one of Poe's messages in the story? Which details about the character help Poe convey the meaning?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: One of Poe's messages is that guilt over wrongful acts can result in a person's undoing. He conveys this meaning through the narrator's meltdown over hearing what the character believes is the beating of the dead man's heart. In reality, the narrator's own heart is beating hard because of guilt, which leads the character to confess to the murder.

As you reread “The Tell-Tale Heart” to complete the Check-In questions and the Practice activity, access and evaluate details from the story that help you analyze how Poe’s choices regarding how to develop the main character and the setting help convey his meaning. Ask yourself:

- What do the details say about the narrator’s motivations and state of mind?
- Which details point to a larger truth or message? How do the details do this?
- What meaning can you derive from the details you evaluate?

Check-In

Reread this passage from “The Tell-Tale Heart” to access and evaluate the information needed to answer Question 1.

Question 1

Poe uses juxtaposition to great effect in “The Tell-Tale Heart.” What does Poe juxtapose in this passage, and how does the juxtaposition help develop your understanding of the main character’s psyche? In your answer, hypothesize what the eye might symbolize about the narrator.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Poe juxtaposes love and hate in this passage. The narrator claims to love the old man and not want his gold, yet the narrator still wants to kill him because of hatred for his pale blue eye. This draws attention to the narrator’s fractured mental state, which makes it impossible for the character to separate the old man from the narrator’s haunting obsession with his eye. The eye also might symbolize the narrator’s inability to confront or admit to their mental illness.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Reread the following passage. Evaluate the information to answer Question 2.

Question 2

What does the narrator’s empathy for the old man’s terror tell you about the narrator? What message do you think the author is trying to convey in the passage? Cite text evidence to support your answer.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Like the old man, the narrator fears death, as evidenced by “He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.” The fact that the narrator speaks of Death stalking the old man suggests the message that no one can escape death, it will eventually come for them. For the narrator, the wait is unbearable.

Need a little extra support?

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Reread this passage to access and evaluate the information needed to answer Question 3.

Question 3

How does the setting enhance the narrator’s terror? What is the source of the terror? What does this tell you about the power of misperception and Poe’s meaning? Cite text evidence in your answer.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The fact that it is “the dead hour of the night” and the old house has a “dreadful silence” excites the already nervous narrator to “uncontrollable terror.” The source of the narrator’s terror is first described as “a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton.” As the narrator grows more agitated, the characterization changes to “the hellish tattoo of the heart.” The sound is likely the narrator’s own heart, excited by the deed the character is about to commit. However, because of their mental state and “over acuteness of senses,” the narrator is unable to perceive the reality of the situation. This misperception is underscored by the narrator’s concern that a neighbor will hear the beating heart “through the wall.” Poe is suggesting that a person’s reality is colored by their perceptions of the truth. Thus, they can deceive themselves.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Practice

As you reread “The Tell-Tale Heart,” focus on the messages you think the author is trying to convey through his characterization of the narrator and his descriptions of the setting. As you access the information in the story, your notes, and your Explain and Check-In answers, determine which details help you understand Poe’s meaning.

Activity

In several paragraphs, analyze how Poe’s choices regarding how to introduce and develop the narrator and setting impact your understanding of his messages. In your answer, select at least two specific message and evaluate the character and setting details that help you uncover Poe’s meaning.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: One of the Poe’s messages in “The Tell-Tale Heart” is that people fear the inevitability of death. Poe reveals this message in two ways. Poe makes the narrator obsessed with time. The narrator always goes to the old man’s room at midnight—“the dead hour of the night.” Then, the narrator moves so slowly that it takes an hour to put their head far enough into the partly opened door to see the old man. For seven nights, the old man is spared death because his “vulture eye” is closed. In the narrator’s twisted view of reality, the old man’s pale blue eye must be open before he can be killed because “it was not the old man that vexed” the narrator, “but his Evil Eye.”

On the eighth night, the old man is not as lucky. Again, the narrator moves very slowly, claiming “a watch’s minute hand moves more quickly than did mine.” But when the old man awakens and sits up in bed, the narrator freezes in place and says, “I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.” The reference to “death watches in the wall” refers to deathwatch beetles, which live inside the walls of old buildings. They make a ticking or clicking sound when they are trying to attract a mate. At one time, people believed the

sound signaled a person's impending death. Later in the paragraph, the narrator makes a direct reference to death, claiming that the old man's attempts to calm himself are in vain "because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim." In reality, it is the narrator who is the bearer of death, but given their own terror, the narrator knows that they also cannot escape death.

Another message in "The Tell Tale Heart" is that guilt can be suppressed in the subconscious, but it will always resurface. Although the narrator admits to the crime of murdering the old man, for much of the retelling they avoid taking psychological responsibility. In the second paragraph, the narrator says, "It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain," thereby externalizing the source of the impulse to kill the old man. Later in the paragraph, after professing love for the old man, the narrator pins the blame on the old man's pale blue "eye of the vulture." The narrator believes the only way to be rid of the eye is to kill the old man. In the tenth paragraph, the narrator blames the beating of the old man's heart for pushing them toward murder: "It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage." The beating continues in the eleventh paragraph, growing louder in "the dead hour of the night," with the "dreadful silence of that old house" intensifying the sound and exciting the narrator to "uncontrollable terror." Fearful that the sound will be heard by a neighbor, the narrator kills the old man, dismembers him, and buries him under the floorboards of the bedroom. Thus, the house moves from being merely the setting for the crime to the tomb of the dead old man. The house also serves as a symbol of the narrator's subconscious. With the deed done, the narrator buries any feelings of guilt in his subconscious, just as the character has buried the old man under the floor. But the guilt resurfaces in the last three paragraphs of the story as the narrator sits talking with the police officers in the old man's bedroom. What begins as a ringing in the narrator's ears grows in volume until the character is sure it is the old man's heart beating under the floorboards. Thinking that the police officers can surely hear the heartbeat and are simply mocking them, the narrator confesses in a fit of rage.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to each part of the prompt.
 2. _____ I analyzed how Poe's choices regarding how to introduce and develop the narrator and setting impacted my understanding of his message.
 3. _____ I selected at least two specific messages and evaluated the character and setting details that helped me uncover Poe's meaning.
 4. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

23/24 Honors English 11 A - Studying Literary Text

Studying Literary Text

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Objective

Objective

In this section, you will take part in a group discussion about the development of narrative elements in a literary text.

Studying Literary Text Discussion



Source: famveldman. 123rf.com

You have been reading Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* independently. Hurston is an author who is often associated with the Harlem Renaissance, a literary period in the early twentieth century that celebrated Black culture in the United States. Hurston, an anthropologist and folklorist, brought her academic understanding and personal appreciation of rural Black life to her novel. She wove together the narrative elements of character, setting, plot, imagery, and style to explore themes of self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and the power of romantic love. The author's use of diction and imagery and her skill at developing the narrative resulted in memorable characters, striking metaphors, and an engaging plot.

One way readers deepen their engagement with a text is by discussing it with other people. Book discussion groups enable readers to process their reactions to a book and to share their ideas and opinions about it. The object of a book discussion is to consider others' perspectives and to refine one's own ideas about the text.

Today, you will spend some time discussing *Their Eyes Were Watching God* online with other students who have read the novel. You will respond to a prompt by examining the narrative elements in the text. As you discuss the text, you should demonstrate good communication skills by expressing your ideas clearly and responding respectfully and thoughtfully to the other participants' ideas. Consider these strategies as you communicate online:

- Read the Discussion Prompt carefully, paying attention to each element.
- Engage in a collegial discussion by taking turns to respond in writing.
- Apply the rules of English grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation to your written responses.
- Keep the discussion moving forward by asking questions and expanding on others' comments.
- Stay focused on the topic by reading others' responses and responding thoughtfully.
- Be courteous, even when you disagree. Offer constructive responses that focus on the content of the other participants' remarks.

View the gallery to read a short discussion about an example of imagery in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, paying close attention to the communication skills each student models. Then, answer the questions that follow.

Source: Suzanne Tucker. 123rf.com



Abdi: The novel tells the story of Janie's journey from adolescence to adulthood. I noticed that the novel starts and ends with the image of the horizon. I wonder if that image is important. What do you think?

^ Hide caption



Source: Suzanne Tucker. 123rf.com; mimagephotography. Shutterstock; Galina Barskaya. Shutterstock

Question 1

How does Abdi elicit ideas and opinions from the other two students in the discussion group?

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: Abdi begins by sharing his thoughts about the novel and asking the other students what they think. Later, he shares another idea and asks for confirmation: "Right?"

Question 2

Do you think Roberta and Chloe deepen the conversation and make it more constructive? Why or why not?

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: In her first response, Roberta agrees with Abdi but does not add any substance. Later, she asks a clarifying question. Chloe builds on Abdi's first comment and asks an engaging question, but she is impatient. Later, she is disrespectful to Roberta. She needs to be more courteous.

Question 3

How can you rewrite a response from Chloe to make her participation more constructive and respectful?

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: That's a good question, Roberta. I think the horizon stands for where Janie has been. At the end of the story her adventure is over, so she pulls "in her horizon" around her. In her first response, Roberta agrees with Abdi but does not add any substance. Later, she asks a clarifying question. Chloe builds on Abdi's first comment and asks an engaging question, but she is impatient. Later, she is disrespectful to Roberta. She needs to be more courteous.

Studying Literary Text Discussion

Prepare for the Discussion

Now you will have the opportunity to participate in a discussion with students who have also read *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Your discussion will focus on the author's use of imagery in developing the characters.

Finish reading the novel if you have not already done so. Then, review the notes you have taken throughout the reading period. In particular, focus on your responses to the author's use of imagery. Think about how the author's use of this imagery helped her develop key themes. Finally, choose evidence and examples from the text that support your ideas.

Remember, you will type your ideas and responses to the other students instead of speaking directly to them. Keep in mind that the other participants will likely have different perspectives on the novel. Make an effort to be open-minded and receptive of others' ideas.

To see how other students communicate clearly and respectfully as they respond directly to one another's ideas, read this opening communication among three readers of the novel.

Discussion Board Sample Answers

Discussion Question	Zora Neale Hurston's <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> follows the protagonist, Janie, from love-struck adolescence to battle-scarred widowhood. Throughout the novel, the author uses imagery to convey Janie's inner thoughts and conflicts. How do specific images of nature or animals reveal Janie's true self and her conflicts? How does the author's choice of imagery help convey themes about self-knowledge and self-acceptance?
Student A Response	There is a lot of nature imagery in <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> . One image that recurs throughout the novel is that of the pear tree in bloom, with the bees buzzing among the pollen-dusted blossoms. Young Janie is completely fascinated by it. She understands it has to do with love and life; she even wishes to be a pear tree: "Oh to be a pear tree or <i>any</i> tree in bloom!"
Student B response to Student A	That's a great point. The tree clearly is a symbol of love. Janie gets her first kiss beneath that tree, but Nanny soon throws cold water on Janie's dreams by making her marry Logan Killicks, a man with money who will keep Janie safe. The thought of Logan "was desecrating the pear tree," but she obeys.
Student C question	Don't you think it's interesting how Janie tries to keep alive the image of the pear tree and the feelings she associates with it? In her marriage to Logan, she "waited a bloom time," but love doesn't magically happen. She's disappointed and begins standing by the gate, waiting for things, but "What things?"
Student A response to Student C	Yes, and that's why the image of the pear tree is so important. It crops up every time Janie begins to feel as if she is truly loved. When Tea Cake appears, Janie thinks he "could be a bee to a blossom—a pear tree blossom in spring." At the end of the story, after Tea Cake's death, Janie only notices the pine trees from her window. The pear tree is forgotten.

Studying Literary Text Discussion

Discussion Prompt

Begin the discussion by responding to the following prompt:

Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* follows the protagonist, Janie, from love-struck adolescence to battle-scarred widowhood. Throughout the novel, the author uses imagery to convey Janie's inner thoughts and conflicts. How do specific images of nature or animals reveal Janie's true self and her conflicts? How does the author's choice of imagery help convey themes about self-knowledge and self-acceptance?

Post a detailed response to this prompt, referring to specific details and citing evidence from the text to support your ideas. Then, respond to at least two other readers' posts.

To understand how you will be graded for this assignment, read the Discussion Guidelines and Rubric.

Discussion Guidelines and Rubric

23/24 Honors English 11 A - Studying Literary Text

Summarizing Literary Text

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Objective and Key Words

Objective

In this section, you will provide an objective summary of a literary text, including the elements of fiction.

Key Words

- **summary** – a brief statement that includes the main points or elements of a text
-

Summarize a Literary Text



Source: Alistair Hobbs. Shutterstock

For most people, modern life involves constantly making choices: “What should I eat? What should I wear? What do I have to accomplish today?” Most choices are minor, with few lasting consequences, but some choices can alter the course of a person’s life. Today you will read “The Lady, or the Tiger?”, a modern fairy tale by Frank R.

Stockton, in which a young person has two options that will seal his fate, neither of them good.

Take Notes as You Read

Fairy tales and folk tales were originally part of the oral tradition, as they were passed down orally from generation to generation. Their purpose was to instruct as much as to entertain. Elders relayed the stories to their children to teach them about the perils of the world. The moral of most of these stories was clear: characters who display wit, bravery, and good decision-making skills will live happily ever after, and those who don't will not. In his most famous story, "The Lady, or the Tiger?", Frank R. Stockton employs a fairy tale setting, complete with an imperious king, a devious princess, a young commoner, and a fate-changing choice. As in a traditional fairy tale, the youth finds himself in dire circumstances, and no matter what choice he makes, he will lose something he loves. The author builds the tension and suspense up to and beyond the moment when the young man discovers his fate.

As you read "The Lady, or the Tiger?," record your predictions about what you think will happen to the youth. Take notes in your Reading Log about your response to the story, particularly to the story's ambiguous ending. Include your own ideas about what the youth's fate ultimately was and why you think so.

Useful Vocabulary

1. **barbaric:** uncivilized to the point of being primitive or savage
 2. **epithalamic:** related to songs or poems that celebrate marriage
 3. **imperious:** commanding power or authority in an arrogant way
 4. **moiety:** one of two portions or parts of something
 5. **parapet:** a low wall along the edge of a tall structure, such as a balcony or bridge
 6. **retribution:** vengeful punishment imposed on someone in response to a prior wrong or crime
 7. **tribunal:** court of justice
 8. **wended:** moved slowly in a particular direction
-

Summarize a Literary Text

Provide an Objective Summary of a Literary Text

Most short stories have one or more themes that the author develops and builds on over the course of the text. Because themes are rarely stated explicitly, readers must analyze the text to interpret the themes. Before they do, it is useful to prepare an objective summary of the text.

A summary restates only the most essential details in the text, including the literary elements of character, setting, and plot. Objectivity is important in a summary. It is achieved by avoiding expressions of opinion or judgment about the text in the summary. Effective readers use and manage the information in a literary text to provide an objective summary. They can then use this summary as the basis for their analysis and opinions.

Watch the comic book video to learn how to use and manage the information in a literary text to provide an objective summary.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

An Objective Summary Transcript

Now, answer the questions.

Question 1

What is an objective summary of a literary text?

Reveal Answer

An objective summary is a brief restatement of the most important points and details in a literary text while also avoiding expressing any opinions or judgments.

Question 2

How can you make sure a summary of a literary text is objective?

Reveal Answer

You can avoid including any statements of opinion or judgment.

Question 3

How can providing an objective summary of a literary text help you as a reader?

Reveal Answer

Providing an objective summary helps me thoroughly understand the details and information in the text before I begin the process of analyzing and interpreting the text and its themes.

As you reread “The Lady, or the Tiger?”, apply these strategies for using and managing information to summarize the text objectively:

- Review the story thoughtfully, paying close attention to the literary elements of character, setting, and plot, especially the story’s main conflict and its resolution.
- Determine the most essential elements in the text by asking: can I summarize the story effectively without this detail?
- Recount the details in the proper sequence by paraphrasing them in your own words.
- Avoid expressing opinions or judgment about the text in the summary.

Question 4

How can you use and manage the information in a literary text to prepare an objective summary?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I can pay attention to the literary elements in the story and then determine which are most essential. I can retell the key details in the proper sequence by using my own words and by avoiding any statements of opinion or judgment.

Check-In

Reread the excerpts from “The Lady, or the Tiger?” to answer the questions.

Activity 1

In one sentence, identify the story’s setting and characters.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The story is set in a kingdom during a long-ago time, and the main characters are the king, the princess, and the youth who loves the princess.

Activity 2

In one sentence, explain what the problem or conflict is in the story.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The king does not approve of his daughter being in love with a commoner, so he has the youth sent to prison.

Activity 3

Read this excerpt from a summary of “The Lady, or the Tiger?” Tell why it is or is not objective.

The story is set in a kingdom in olden times, back when people did horrible things in the name of justice. When the barbaric king discovers that his daughter loves a commoner, he has the poor guy imprisoned.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: This summary is not objective because it expresses opinions and judgments. The summary describes the “horrible things” people did in the name of justice and refers to a character as “the poor guy.”

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Practice

Reread “The Lady, or the Tiger?” to complete the activity. As you read, remember to read the text thoroughly, noticing the literary elements. Identify the essential details that an unfamiliar reader would need to know. In your summary, recount these details in the proper sequence. Be sure to use your own words and avoid including opinions or judgments in your summary.

Activity

Use and manage the information and literary elements in “The Lady, or the Tiger?” to write an objective summary of the text. You may refer back to the notes you took in your Reading Log to help you prepare your summary.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Frank R. Stockton’s story “The Lady, or the Tiger?” is set in a long-ago time and describes how a barbaric king builds an arena for the public trials of criminals. If a crime interests the king, he has the accused man enter the arena, where he faces two doors. Behind one is a tiger, and behind the other is a lady, but there is no way to know which door leads to which. If the accused man chooses the door with the tiger, he is considered guilty and his punishment is to be killed by the tiger. If he chooses the door with the lady, it proves his innocence, and he marries the lady as a reward. This system is popular with the people.

One day, the king discovers that his daughter, the princess, is in love with a commoner, so the king imprisons the youth and subjects him to a trial. If the youth chooses the door with the tiger, he will be killed. If he chooses the door with the lady, they will be married. No matter what happens, the king rids himself of the youth, but either outcome upsets the youth and the princess. However, the princess learns which door leads to the tiger, and she signals the youth to choose the door on the right, which he does. The story ends not by describing the consequences of this choice, but by focusing on the princess’s motivations and the agonizing process of deciding which way to direct the youth. As a woman with a jealous nature, she would not want to see the youth married to another woman, but she would not want to witness him being devoured by a tiger. The story ends

without clarity, as the narrator asks the readers to decide for themselves what they think happened to the youth.

How Did I Do?

Assess your response to the Practice activity by completing this checklist. If necessary, go back and revise your work.

1. _____ I responded to all parts of the prompt by using and managing information in the text to write an objective summary.
 2. _____ I determined which details and information from the text were important enough to be included in the summary.
 3. _____ I presented the details from the text in the correct sequence and avoided including any opinions or judgments in the summary.
 4. _____ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling to summarize the text in my own words.
-

23/24 Honors English 11 A - Studying Literary Text

Studying Literary Text Apply

Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Their Eyes Were Watching God



Reading Log: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Studying Literary Text: Apply

Objective

In this section, you will apply skills learned throughout the unit.

Show What You Know



Source: Everett Collection. Shutterstock

In this unit, you focused on skills and strategies necessary to comprehend and analyze literary texts by implementing these learning goals:

- Provide strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of explicit meanings and inferences drawn from a literary text.
- Determine where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Analyze the impact of specific word choices, including words with multiple meanings, on the overall meaning and tone of a literary text.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a literary text, including figurative and connotative meanings.
- Describe the origins and meanings of foreign words or phrases used frequently in written English.
- Determine and analyze the development of two or more themes or central ideas of a literary text.
- Analyze how an author’s choices about the structure of specific parts of a literary text contribute to the overall structure, meaning, and aesthetic impact of a text.
- Describe how point of view is developed in a literary text and analyze how point of view contributes to meaning and esthetic impact through satire, sarcasm, or understatement.
- Explain how various narrative techniques and author’s choices are developed and used to develop character and setting.
- Provide an objective summary of a literary text including elements of fiction.

Now, you will have an opportunity to show what you have accomplished and apply your learning to the unit text, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. If you haven’t already done so, take time now to finish reading the text.

Then, spend a few minutes discussing your reading with your Learning Coach, using these questions as a guide. Notice that the questions are open-ended—there are no “correct” answers—but they will help you to focus on the text as you get ready to apply the learning goals you have mastered in this unit.

- Suppose that you are reviewing *Their Eyes Were Watching God* for a local newspaper. Tell how many stars out of five you would award the novel, and

explain your favorite and least favorite attributes of the text. Describe the audience that you think would most appreciate the novel and explain why you think so.

- Discuss other texts you have read that incorporated dialect, and compare them to *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Describe how the language in the story aided your comprehension of Janie's world.
- Write two different questions about the text to discuss with your Learning Coach. One question should be literal and the other should be an inference question.
- Consider Janie's actions, dreams, and obstacles in this 1937 novel and suggest some ways in which Janie would and would not represent a valuable role model for people today.

Finally, review your notes and get ready to answer the text-related questions that follow.

Studying Literary Text: Apply

Show What You Know

Now, reread the section from Chapter 18 of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* that begins, “After a while somebody looked out and said . . .” and ends with, “. . . Ah wuz fumblin’ round and God opened de door.” Then, assess your grasp of the learning goals from this unit by answering the questions that follow.

Question 1

In paragraph 1, a character uses understatement to refer to what is happening outside. What effect might that understatement have on the other characters?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The character says that the weather “ain’t gitting no fairer.” The understatement might make the other characters disregard the growing storm.

Question 2

How does the author’s use of the word *arm* in paragraph 2 help you predict the power of this storm?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: It suggests that the clouds are holding back only to equip themselves with weapons for the battle to come.

Question 3

Select the interactive to answer the question.

Question 4

How does the author structure this passage to create rising tension in the reader?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The author moves from the characters' mild concern about the weather through descriptions of the winds and sounds, all while the two men continue throwing dice. Only when lightning comes close to the shack do the players stop and huddle in the doorway to watch the storm, as the author describes the terrible velocity and power of the wind and water. The baby rabbit who squeezes into the shack and cares less about the danger from humans than danger from the storm warns the reader that this storm is deadly.

Question 5

Describe some of the ways in which the author develops the sights and sounds of the hurricane.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Even though it is morning, the author refers to the “darking” of the storm, and later she says, “. . . it was night, it stayed night. Night was striding across nothingness with the whole round world in his hands.” She compares the sounds of the storm to a vibrating drum head, to someone trampling over the roof, and finally to someone screaming.

Question 6

At the end of paragraph 6, the narrator states: “Six eyes were questioning God.” Later, the author uses the phrase that repeats in the title: “They seemed to be staring at the dark, but *their eyes were watching God*.” What do the phrases mean, and how do they relate to Janie’s journey through life?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Janie, Tea Cake, and Motor Boat are silently watching the storm and wondering whether they will survive it. Later, they stare into the darkness, but they are watching God wield power in the form of the hurricane. Janie has learned that she can make changes for herself, but these phrases are a reminder that she cannot control everything in her life.

Question 7

What does the conversation at the end between Janie and Tea Cake contribute to the theme of unconditional love in the story?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: As she considers her possible death, Janie tells Tea Cake that she regrets nothing, because she has seen the light that some people never get to see. She is with her husband in the story, so she is content. She has come a long way from her earlier life as a man's possession.

Question 8

Write a brief summary of this passage that includes references to character, setting, and theme.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In this scene, Janie, Tea Cake, and Motor Boat survive a stormy night with the hurricane blowing around them. As morning comes, the sky remains dark, and they stand at the doorway, hearing the destruction mount around them. Tea Cake gently asks Janie if she wishes she had stayed in her big house, safe from this terror, but Janie reveals that she is content to be with him, and that all of her previous life lacked light because she lacked true love.

Self-Assess

Compare your answers to Questions 1–8 with the sample answers. If you did well, move on to Try This. If you need more practice or review, use this chart to review the sections mentioned.

Missed Review

Question Missed	Section to Review
1	Point of View
2	Literary Text Word Choice
3	Literary Word Choice
4	Studying Structure
5	Story Elements
6	Literary Text Evidence
7	Theme
8	Summarizing Literary Text

Studying Literary Text: Apply

Try This

Activity 1

Now that you have read the whole novel, return to Chapter 1 and scan the chapter. In a paragraph or two, explain how the author's framing of the story affects the reader's grasp of the narrative's point of view and general appreciation of the novel.

Activity 2

In addition to its overarching theme about the search for love, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* contains several important subthemes which resonate throughout the novel. In an essay of 300 to 500 words, analyze the development of two themes in the novel, and tell how the two themes connect throughout the text. Use your analysis to evaluate the author's development of her main character, Janie.

Use specific quotations and evidence from the text to support your analysis. Organize your essay clearly, and follow the rules of English grammar and punctuation.

Self-Assess

Use the rubric to decide whether your essay fulfills the standards of ideas/purpose; analysis; organization; comprehension; and grammar, conventions, and spelling.

Studying Literary Text Apply Rubric

Studying Literary Text Review

Unit Review

Today you will review all topics you've learned in this unit and complete a unit online practice. Review the unit introduction and the list of lessons in the course tree to engage with the topics from this unit. Make sure you feel confident about each topic before taking the assessment. If there are any topics that you forget or think you need to practice, go back and review those lessons now.

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Review

Read the information on the page with your student. Guide your student to review the major concepts in each unit by looking at the unit introduction and lessons.

Your student should identify the target concepts where additional practice may be needed before completing the unit's online practice.

Unit Reflect

Write a reflection about your learning in this unit. Your reflection should be at least five sentences in length. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What topics did you find most interesting in this unit?
- What skills or concepts were hard for you?
- What strategies or activities helped you to better understand a concept?
- What do you think you may need more practice with?
- What questions would you like to ask now that you have a better understanding of what you will find on the assessment?

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Reflect

Guide your student to reflect on how well they've mastered the content in the unit. Have your students use the questions provided as a guide for writing a reflection. Help your student to determine the next steps for review based on the responses given for the questions.

Study Tips

Once you have taken the unit online practice, use your results to determine if there are any topics that you need to go back and review. You may find the following approach useful while studying:

- 1.** Review your results on lesson practice activities and assessments from throughout the unit.
- 2.** As you review, make a list of the major concepts found in each lesson.
- 3.** Write a summary of these concepts and place a star next to those you feel you have mastered.
- 4.** Review the concepts that may need a bit more practice using strategies such as summarizing, making flash cards to test yourself, writing sentences with key vocabulary, working out problems or activities, or teaching a concept to a friend or family member. If other study methods work better for you, use those instead.
- 5.** As you become more comfortable with each concept, place a star next to it and move on to the next until you are ready to complete the assessment.

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Study Tips

Read the study tips with your student and help identify what will be most helpful in reviewing the content from the unit. If needed, help your student brainstorm additional study tips that better fit their learning preference.

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Studying Literary Text Unit Test