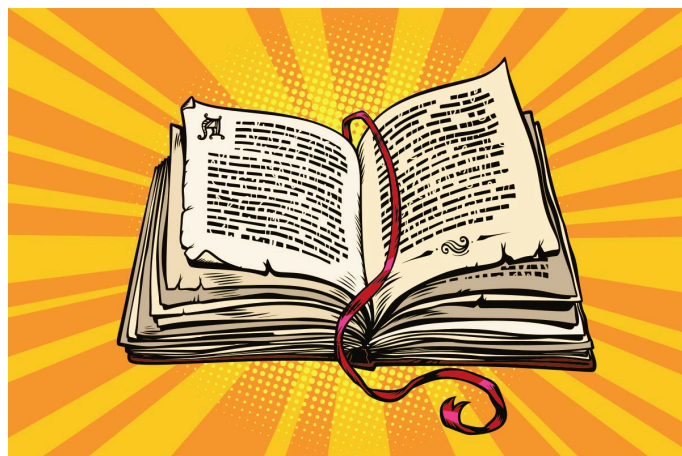


Analyzing Literary Text Introduction

# Analyzing Literary Text: Introduction

Spark



Source: rogistok. Shutterstock

Literary analysis involves examining works of literature to determine how and why they were written. College literature courses require students to analyze the literary works they read, but literary analysis isn't restricted to academia—it's something that is done in book groups, on social media, and sometimes in everyday conversation. When stories, novels, and other literary texts we read impress us, we often want to talk about them and examine why they have had such an impact. Usually, the reason is that they touch a chord with our personal lives; something about them leaves us with a new understanding of ourselves and our experience in the world.

## Activate Prior Knowledge

Even if you have little experience reading literary text outside of your classes, you probably understand the appeal of stories. Stories have entertained us and enlightened us for centuries—and long before we could read or write. Think about stories that survive the test of time—stories we consider classic. What explains their lasting appeal? Maybe the characters captivate us; they delight us or enrage us, or they remind us of someone we know. Maybe the setting seems so real that it draws us into another world, another time. Maybe the plot is full of action and adventure, or maybe the themes express universal truths that we know in our own lives and that transcend time and place.

## Activity

Think about an example of a short story, novel, or other fictional literary text that drew you into the story so deeply that it transported you to another place. Then, complete the concept web by writing the title of the literary text in the center box; in the surrounding boxes, add the characteristics of the story that in your opinion explain its appeal.



## Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

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### Spark

1. Throughout this unit, your student will read *Les Misérables*, the classic novel about the French Revolution written by Victor Hugo, as well as 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.
2. Remind your student that literary text includes a number of different genres, including poems, plays, novels, and short stories. Explain that although the term *literary text* usually implies fiction, literary texts are often based on real events and/or convey views, emotions, or opinions of the author. Historical fiction, for example, conveys information about past events that is accurate in the eyes of scholars, but it can also convey political views of the author through the unraveling of characters and events, literary language and metaphors. As with all literary texts, it is important

to remember that the stories themselves are works of the author's imagination.

- 3.** Discuss with your student how authors of literary texts have a creative license to play with language and create works of art that express personal views. Encourage them to gain background information on historical events they read about in literary works to give them an understanding of the social and cultural environment that influenced the author.
- 4.** Tell your student that over the course of this unit, they will read several examples of literary text. Point out that a work of literature can be unique to an author but also characteristic of a certain literary style.

### Activate Prior Knowledge

- 1.** Discuss with your student classic stories you have read and loved. Explain what makes them memorable and why you loved the stories.
- 2.** After your student reads the second paragraph, give them a copy of the Concept Web graphic organizer and have them complete the activity by describing the characteristics of fictional literary texts they have found particularly memorable. Then, talk about their responses, discussing how these characteristics define literary texts and form the basis for literary analysis.

# Analyzing Literary Text: Introduction

## The Basics of Analyzing Literary Text

Analyzing a work of literature requires us to examine it piece by piece and from every angle. Consider the focus of journalists who report on a news story: They gather information about what they call the “five Ws.” The *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *why* of an event tell you the basics—the gist of what you need to know to understand what happened and draw conclusions about its significance.

Analyzing literary text works in much the same way. To analyze a work of literature, first determine the who, what, where, when, and why. Then, examine the work from a broader context by considering why the author chose to tell the story in a particular way and what effects resulted from those choices. As you read and analyze the texts in this unit—including the unit text, *Les Misérables*—ask yourself questions such as the ones below, and record your answers in your Reading Log:

- Who is the story about? How would I characterize this person or persons? What roles do they play in the context of the genre or archetype in which the story falls?
- Where and when is the story set? What historical and cultural aspects of the time may be important to consider when reading?
- From what point of view is the story told? How does the narrator’s viewpoint affect how the story is told?
- How is the plot structured? How does the author manipulate time to achieve a particular structural goal?
- Why was this story written? What ideas did the author mainly want to convey?
- How would I characterize the language and literary techniques used to convey ideas and messages effectively?

- How do the themes conveyed by the text compare to those in other works of literature?

*Where* and *when* questions are important to answer in order to understand a work of literature in the context in which it was written and in which the story it was set.

Novels gain complexity when we have an understanding of the setting, as the social and political environment of any given time colors the way the people think, act, and perceive the world. Authors of literary text draw on informational sources to create a believable framework for their stories and lend credibility to the plot and characters.

## Question

Soon, you will begin reading *Les Misérables*, an epic story that takes place in Paris, France and its surrounding areas during the first part of the nineteenth centuries. Though the plot revolves around one man's lifetime of struggle and search for redemption, readers encounter real-life historical events and battles as part of the story. Given that the novel was written in 1862, a few decades after the revolution depicted in the story, what are your expectations of how the author might present the events? How might the presentation differ from one written today?

## Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

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### The Basics of Analyzing Literary Text

1. Emphasize to your student that whether a literary text conveys a true narrative or originates from the imagination of the author, it is almost certain to have characters, setting, plot, and themes. Examining those four elements in any text will give them a good understanding of the story and help them unravel its meaning and purpose.

2. Have your student read the first two paragraphs; then, discuss why the idea of the “five Ws” is such a critical part of both journalism and literary text analysis. Point out that the *who/what /when/ where /why* elements of a piece of literature are the elements on which all analysis is built. A thorough understanding of these elements can lead readers to draw conclusions about the author’s craft and purpose. Review the sample analysis questions with your student, asking them to determine how each might contribute to a more in-depth analysis of a particular aspect of the text.
3. Continue with the next paragraph, stressing that although texts from a different era convey themes of universal relevance, they contain language and ideas that could be misunderstood if viewed through the lens of our society today.
4. Have your student read the question and respond to it orally or in writing. Discuss whether someone living during a certain period would have more insight into that period than someone in later years who studies the period thoroughly, or vice versa.

# Previewing the Unit Text: *Les Misérables*

About the Author

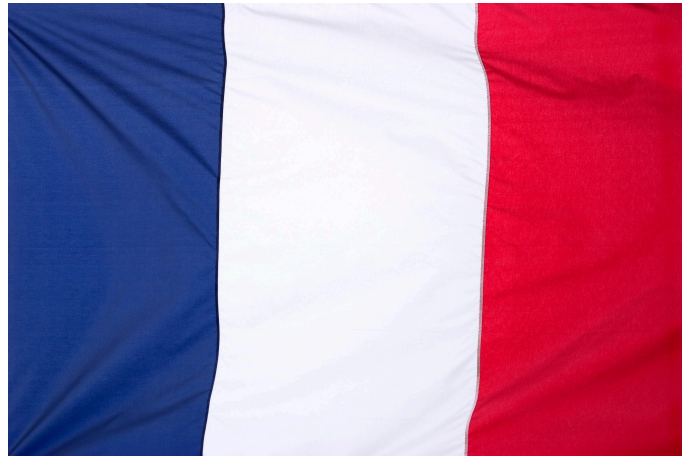


Victor Hugo (1802–1885) was a French novelist, poet, playwright, and essayist and one of the most important writers in the French Romantic Movement. Although he was best known in France for his poetry, worldwide, his lasting legacy focuses on two novels, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (In French, *The Notre Dame de Paris*) and *Les Misérables*. Both works are dramatic masterpieces, tragic and timeless, read and loved throughout the world both in written form and in the well-loved and widely popular adaptations for stage and screen.

Hugo lived during tumultuous times, and he was right in the thick of them; his mother was a royalist, his father a military officer and general who served under French military leader (and later, ruler) Napoleon Bonaparte. Hugo's novels are dense, deep, and saturated with French history; they are considered significant as historical works and political commentaries as well as French romantic literature.

## About the Text

*Les Misérables* is widely respected as a classic work of 19<sup>th</sup> century literature. It was published in French in 1862 and translated to English that same year; at around 1,500 pages, it is one of the longest novels ever written. Over the course of five volumes, a third-person narrator relates the story of the events surrounding the Paris Uprising of 1832, which in Hugo's view provided a fitting lens to examine the lives and laws of nineteenth-century France. Through the stories of captivating characters, we see the failures of the criminal justice system and the social welfare system, and we feel the effects of poverty, war, industrialization, and revolution.



Source: Svetlana Larina. Shutterstock

How can such a lengthy work of French literature become a beloved classic worldwide? The novel has been translated and adapted in multiple forms. Most famously, it was popularized by the British musical version, which debuted on stage in London in 1982 and honed in on the themes and stories from the massive work that touched the hearts and minds of audiences and made Hugo's work a global sensation. The novel was not just a story about the revolutionary events in France in 1832; it was about the revolutionary struggle of any time, of any place, and of any people, through any hardship. It was about their suffering and about their spirit.

Before you tackle Victor Hugo's masterwork, gain some context by taking a look at the issues at the heart of the story through Hugo's lens. Watch this flipbook to learn about the events that led to the Paris Uprising and that fueled the revolutionary spirit.



Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

## The French Revolution Transcript

It was in this wave of revolutionary fervor that Hugo wrote *Les Misérables*. The novel, like the revolution itself, attested to the power of democracy and the will and resilience of the oppressed.

## Question

*Les Misérables* is one of many fictional literary works set against a backdrop of revolution and violent struggles for freedom. Why do you think authors choose to tell a particular story in this manner? How does the historical context of a fight for a cause add to the impact of the events and themes the author conveys?

## Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

[View Learning Coach Guide](#)

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### About the Author

1. Prepare your student for their analysis of the text by supplying them 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 text. 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 Victor Hugo, the author of *Les Misérables*. Explain that the Romantic movement was characterized by a style of literature and art that came to prominence in the 1800s. It emphasized a free form of writing that expressed strong emotions and conveyed the experiences and suffering of the common people. In France, it was linked to nationalism and the passions and tragedies of the French Revolution.

## About the Text

1. Point out that *Les Misérables* is often mistakenly thought to be about the French Revolution. Instead, it's about the revolutionary spirit that led to the Paris Uprising of 1832, which occurred some 43 years after the Revolution took place. Have your student watch the flipbook and discuss their thoughts on the historical context it provides. Encourage them to spend a few minutes researching any topic they still have questions about.
2. Have your student read the rest of the section and respond to the question. If they need support, scaffold with these questions:
  - What other well-known stories, TV shows, or films take place during a war or revolution? What aspects of the setting make each work more compelling to experience?
  - “Love” and “war” are two concepts often presented together. Consider why that is. Might one lead to the other? Might one survive in spite of the other?

# Previewing the Unit Text: *Les Misérables*

## Pace and Prepare Yourself

In *Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo tells a compelling, engrossing story—but unfortunately for readers with limited time, he does so over many, many pages. The text is divided into five volumes—four named after the characters of Fantine, Cosette, Marius, and Jean Valjean, as well as one, Saint-Denis, that culminates in the famous battle at the barricade. Each volume is further divided into books (48 in all), and then subdivided again into chapters.

You will have approximately two weeks to complete the novel, and given its length, you will likely need to spend a bit more time on it than on other unit texts you have read. As you put together your reading schedule, consider allocating time on the weekend to complete a portion of the text so that you are able to read an average of around 100–125 pages per day. In addition, you may want to take some time to view a film adaptation of the story before you begin so that you have a general familiarity with the main characters and events portrayed in the text.

Here is one suggested pacing guide you might consider, but feel free to adjust it in any way that works for you and your schedule.

### Pacing Guide for Reading

Days	How Much to Read
Day 1 (today)	Volume I, Book First and Second
Reading Day	Remainder of Volume I
Other days	Approximately two Books or 100–125 pages per 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 are the main themes Hugo conveys in the story? How do the experiences of the characters help Hugo convey his message?
- How does the historical setting of the story enhance the novel's themes and color the reading experience?
- How are the themes conveyed in the story relevant beyond the context of 19th-century France? How do they reflect universal truths about the human experience?

## Begin Reading

The message of the story and the power of its themes are evidenced most famously through key scenes in the novel. These scenes are often quoted and excerpted because they encapsulate the power of the work, so not surprisingly, the stage production of *Les Misérables* tells the story largely through these scenes. Pay particular attention to sections of the novel that you find particularly poignant and note how they convey

themes and emotions that characterize the work as a whole. Write your initial feelings about the novel in your Reading Log before you continue reading.

Les Misérables

Reading Log: Les Misérables

# Learning Coach Guide

This section will help you guide students through their learning.

[View Learning Coach Guide](#)

[Hide Learning Coach Guide](#)

## Pace and Prepare Yourself

1. Read the information in this section with your student. Review the chart and compare it to their calendar to help your student devise a reading schedule that will work for their needs.
2. Reiterate that the length of the text is likely to present some challenges and brainstorm ideas for making the task less daunting. Discussing the book with a friend or a group of people can help generate enthusiasm for the story, for example, and everyone in the discussion benefits from the exchange of ideas. Also, reading online literary analyses and reviews of the book can help clarify ideas.
3. Review the bulleted questions with your student. Explain that after they complete the novel, they will apply skills they learn in this unit to *Les Misérables*. 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. Have your student read the opening two paragraphs of Chapter 1. Discuss their initial impressions of the text and the reading task ahead of them.
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 on Day 2.



## 23/24 Honors English 11 B - Analyzing Literary Text

### Analyzing Literary Text Reading Day

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

[Les Misérables](#)

## Reading Log: Les Misérables

# 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 B - Analyzing Literary Text

### Structure and Plot

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

[Les Misérables](#)

## Reading Log: Les Misérables

# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

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

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## Key Words

- **chronological order** – when events in a plot are told in sequence or in the order they happened in time
  - **flashback** – a scene that interrupts the main story to tell about something that happened earlier, often to provide background
  - **parallel plot** – a story structure in which multiple plot lines take place at the same time
  - **structure** – how the events in a story are organized
-

# Analyze the Structure of a Literary Text



Source: Steven Wright. Shutterstock

Think about what you have read or seen in the news about the plight of displaced people, individuals, and communities that are forced to flee their homes because of natural disaster or war. In the 1830s, thousands of Indigenous Americans living in the southeastern part of the United States, were displaced when white settlers, with the sanction and support of the U.S. government, forcibly removed them from their lands

and relocated them to the Indian Territories, now the state of Oklahoma. Thousands of people died along the nearly 5,000-mile network of routes they traveled, which is now known as the Trail of Tears. Today, you will read a story about one family's experience of walking the Trail of Tears.

Tim Tingle is an author, storyteller, and an Oklahoma Choctaw. The story you will read today is based on the real-life experiences of one of his ancestors, John Carnes. Carnes was a child in 1830, when he, his family, and his community were forced to travel thousands of miles on foot, from their village in Mississippi to Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma. Tingle did not set out to become an author or storyteller, but in 1993, he retraced the Trail of Tears and was inspired to collect and share traditional Choctaw stories from tribal elders. These stories became the source material for the stories in Tingle's collection *Walking the Choctaw Road*. "Trail of Tears" vividly describes the brutal conditions of the enforced march and the terrible consequences for those who walked it.

## Take Notes as You Read

As you read the story "Trail of Tears," pay attention to the narrator, a young Indigenous American boy, who is recalling his earliest memories. Think about other literary texts you have read that have been told using the voice and point of view of a child or teenager. Examples include *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Catcher in the Rye*. Consider how having a young person narrate the story shapes your understanding of the characters, setting, events, and theme. Record your observations in your Reading Log.

In addition, as you read the text, notice how the narrator includes words from the Choctaw language. Locate and use context clues to determine the meaning of these words. Write their definitions in your Reading Log, along with your thoughts about why the author chose to use these words.



## Question

What is an effect of having a young narrator tell a story? How is a story told from a child narrator's point of view different from one told by an adult point of view?

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Because the narrator is a child, they will tell the story as they understand it, which means information may be missing because there are things a child simply doesn't know. The effect of using a child narrator is a simpler story, one that focuses on things that are important to a child rather than to an adult.

## Putting Things in Context

The story "Trail of Tears" fictionalizes events that took place in the United States between 1830 and 1840. In the early nineteenth century, the United States was a young nation with a growing white population that wanted to expand onto Indigenous-American-held lands. Indigenous Americans were not U.S. citizens; in fact, they were considered as less than human and had few rights. A series of treaties between the United States and Indigenous American groups in the early 1800s, ultimately led to the mass removal of native peoples from the eastern half of the nation. Keep this historical

context in mind as you read about the cruel treatment the Indigenous American characters endure. If you are interested in the topic of the Trail of Tears, consider doing some independent research before you read the text.

# Analyze the Structure of a Literary Text

## Analyze How the Structure of Specific Parts Contributes to the Overall Structure and the Meaning of a Story

The structure of a story is the way the events are organized and presented to the reader. The most traditional story structure is chronological order, which narrates the events in a linear sequence, so the story progresses naturally from the first event to the last. Each section, part, or scene of the story builds on the previous one and propels the narrative toward the resolution of its main conflict. Many modern authors, however, often make different structural choices in order to engage readers' interest and to add to the story's meaning and impact.

Some authors may decide to frame a story with informational notes to provide historical or cultural context for the narrative. Another structural choice is to introduce the story in the middle of the action. This technique, known as *in medias res*, has the effect of keeping readers off balance as they try to figure out what is happening. Authors may choose to pause the chronological order of events to insert a flashback to provide the reader with missing background information.

An author may decide to introduce one or more parallel plots into a story's structure. The purpose of the additional subplots may be to inject humor or drama or to build up a more meaningful theme. The additional story lines often complicate the plot to make it more challenging for readers. Finally, some authors may choose to omit the resolution to the story's main conflict, leaving the reader to infer the story's meaning or message.

Effective readers know how to access and evaluate the information and details in a literary text to better understand the story's structure and thematic development. The structure of the text often provides clues to the author's intended meaning. For

example, an author may repeat an idea or image throughout the text to underscore or reinforce a unifying theme.

Read these paragraphs from the beginning of “Trail of Tears” and think about how the author structures this part of the story:

## Activity 1

Explain how the author structures the first paragraph of the story and how that structure helps you as a reader.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The author frames the story by beginning with an informational note that provides context. The note helps me understand that the story is about the forced removal of the Choctaw people from their native lands in Mississippi in 1830 and 1831.

## Activity 2

Explain what else you notice about the structure of the beginning of the story.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The story is a memory. It's opening and closing words are “I remember Mother.” They seem to be an important idea or message. In the passage, events are told in chronological order, starting with the narrator's memory of being a baby and pulling his mother's hair.

As you reread “Trail of Tears,” access and evaluate details about the story's structure. Use the following questions to guide your thinking about the author's structural choices and write your ideas in your Reading Log.

- How does the author structure each part of the story?
- How does each part of the story relate to the others? Do the events build on one another or are they told out of order?

- What information does the author omit?
- How do the author's choices regarding structure affect your understanding of the text's thematic development?

Write your ideas in your Reading Log.

## Activity 3

Explain why it is important for a reader to access and evaluate the details related to a story's structure.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: By accessing and evaluating the details, a reader can figure out how the story is structured and how the structure shapes or impacts the story's meaning.

# Check-In

Reread this passage from the conclusion of “Trail of Tears” to answer the questions below.

## Activity 1

Explain how the author structures the story’s conclusion and how that structure contributes to the story’s meaning.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The author continues his use of chronological order to bring the story to its conclusion. All of the events in the story have led up to this point. The conclusion repeats two important ideas from earlier in the story, that the young narrator should “keep your eyes on where you are going” instead of looking backward at “the bloody footprints” he left in the snow and that he is now home. These repeated ideas are important messages in the story.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

## Activity 2

Explain and critique the author’s inclusion of an informational note at the end of the text.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: As at the beginning of the story, the note at the conclusion provides a useful frame for the story. The note here provides additional historical and personal context for the story, which helps me understand the story’s message about the importance of looking forward, not backward. It clarifies that the author is

the descendant of the narrator's older brother. He is the result of the family looking forward and keeping going despite adversity.

## Activity 3

Analyze how the author's structural choices suits his choice of narrator.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The narrator is a young child, and the author consistently uses chronological order to narrate each part of the story. The story's straightforward progression of events suits a child narrator because a child would naturally tell events in the order they happened rather than in a complicated way, such as through flashbacks or with parallel plots.

## Activity 4

Explain how you accessed and evaluated information in the passage to understand the structure of the passage and the story as a whole.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I read the passage carefully and looked for details that revealed how the author structured the text. I noticed how the author used chronological order and informational notes to provide context and meaning.

# Practice

Now, you will read a narrative about a different group of displaced people. In “There Are Snakes Out There,” the narrator is a teenager attempting to emigrate to the United States from Guatemala. Like the characters in “Trail of Tears,” the narrator has been forced from his home by violence and has traveled thousands of miles, often on foot. In the story, the narrator is stuck in the desert at the border between Mexico and the United States. The author of “There Are Snakes Out There” has made different structural choices than the author of “Trail of Tears.” Access and evaluate details you notice about both stories’ structures and meanings to complete the activity.

## Activity

In two or more paragraphs, explain how the author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of the text contribute to the story’s overall structure and meaning. Explain how the author’s structural choices help you understand the characters, events, and the author’s message. Then, compare the effect of the structural choices in “There Are Snakes out There” to those in “Trail of Tears.” Cite specific details from the text to support your ideas.

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Throughout the text, the author interrupts the chronological progression of events with flashbacks, which provides background information that the reader did not have before. One flashback explains why the narrator is fleeing his home and risking his life to reach the United States. The flashback reveals how a small action—“one silly thing”—the narrator did led to his life being threatened by gangs. Back in the present moment, the narrator is stuck at the border between Mexico and the United States in dire circumstances. While waiting to cross the border, he recalls memories, through additional flashbacks, about his long and dangerous journey. The story’s structure, which mostly moves forward but occasionally pauses to reflect on the past, suggests that the narrator’s life, like his



journey, has been full of starts and stops. It is unclear how things will turn out for him. He has taken great risks to escape a dangerous situation at home, but he may in fact end up back where he started. Because he does not want to die in the desert, he hands himself in to the federal agents, who will likely send him home. The author's message seems to be that nothing is certain, and great risks may not lead to reward.

The effect of the author's structural choices in "There Are Snakes Out There" is different from "Trail of Tears." Even though both stories are told by young boys, the narrator of "There Are Snakes Out There" is more sophisticated. He is older than the narrator of "Trail of Tears," has seen more of the world, and lives in a modern world, so it makes sense that he would have a complicated way of seeing it. The effect of the structural choices is to make "There Are Snakes Out There" a more compelling but also more confusing narrative. The reader is as uncertain and on edge as the narrator, and in the end, the reader is not sure what has happened to him. The chronological order used in "Trail of Tears" and the concluding note provides readers with reassuring closure by telling readers what happens to the narrator. The story has a sad ending in the boy's death, but there is hope in the fact that the narrator's descendant is able to tell his story so beautifully.

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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 the prompt by analyzing how an author's choices concerning the structure of specific parts of the text contribute to the story's overall structure and meaning.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I explained the structure of specific parts of the text and as a whole.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I accessed and evaluated information in the text to complete my analysis.

**4.** \_\_\_\_\_ I cited details from the text to support my ideas.

**5.** \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling in my response.

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# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze relationships among thematic development, characterization, point of view, and significance of setting and plot.

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## Key Words

- **characterization** – how an author reveals the characters in a narrative
  - **plot** – the series or sequence of events that happen in a narrative text
  - **point of view** – the perspective of a narrator in a literary text
  - **setting** – where and when a story takes place
  - **symbol** – a person, place, or thing in a literary text that has both literal and figurative meaning
  - **theme** – the central, unifying message in a work of fiction
-

# Analyze Relationships Among Literary Elements



Source: Anton Foltin. 123RF

You may have watched entertainment, such as TV shows or movies, that claim to tell stories that are “ripped from the headlines.” These stories are supposedly based on true events and the people who experienced them, although identities may have been disguised to protect the victims from public scrutiny. Today, you will read a fictionalized but true account of one teen refugee’s experiences at the border between Mexico and the United States.

Author Juan Pablo Villalobos is best known for writing novels and stories about issues plaguing his native Mexico and other countries in Central and South America, including political corruption, drug trafficking, and gang violence. He took a different approach to write *On the Other Side*, his collection of stories about people fleeing Central America. Each story is true and based on interviews with the refugees; however, Villalobos applied fictional techniques to transform the testimonies into compelling stories and to obscure the refugees' identities. As you read the text, think about how the author tells one teen's story.

## Take Notes as You Read

In “There Are Snakes Out There,” the author does not immediately reveal everything you need to know about the person telling the story, so you may have questions about the narrator and his situation. Keep reading the text to discover if the author provides the answers directly or indirectly. If the author does not tell you directly, then you may need to make inferences or educated guesses. In your Reading Log, record your questions, inferences, and any observations you make about how the text affects you.

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## Useful Vocabulary

1. **federales:** the Mexican federal police
  2. **Zetas:** members of Los Zetas, a crime organization based in Mexico
- 

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## Putting Things in Context

The story “There Are Snakes Out There” is a lightly fictionalized account of one teen’s efforts to migrate from Guatemala to the United States. According to human rights organizations, in recent years around half a million people have fled poverty and gang- and drug-related violence in Central America, to seek sanctuary in the United States and elsewhere. Many of the refugees are teenagers striking out on their own, and most only make it as far as Colombia and Mexico before they are deported back to their home countries. In 2019, the number of unaccompanied minors trying to leave Central America jumped by nearly 70 percent from the previous year. As you read the story, keep in mind that it is based on actual testimony by a real person who attempted the perilous journey. Notice how you feel about the narrator as you understand his internal and external conflicts. Pay attention to how the story confirms or refutes stereotypes of people seeking to emigrate to the United States.

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# Analyze Relationships Among Literary Elements

## Analyze Relationships Among Thematic Development, Characterization, Point of View, Setting, and Plot

A narrative text is a bit like a tapestry in which the author weaves together the literary elements of character, plot, setting, theme, and point of view. When viewed straightforwardly, the threads all flow together to create a seamless picture, but when viewed from the back, they're messier. A thoughtful reader can discern how the author has connected the threads to construct the text. They can analyze the relationships among the different literary elements by focusing on each one.

- Characterization is a literary device authors use to create and reveal their characters. It refers to how readers learn about what the characters think, feel, and do. An author may describe the characters directly through dialogue and the narrator's description or indirectly through the observations and comments made by other characters. These details reveal whether the character is round, or well developed, or flat, or one-dimensional.
- Point of view refers to how the narrator tells the story. A story with a first-person point of view is told from the perspective of a character within the story. A story with a third-person point of view is told by an entity that is outside of the story. The author chooses the point of view that will best serve the story.
- The story's setting is often significant because it can impact the character's or narrator's choices. The plot is the sequence of events that happen to the characters because of, or despite, their choices. An author decides how to structure the plot events in order to tell the story effectively. For example, the author may choose to shift the story forward or backward in time or to pause the story so the characters can reflect on past actions or plan for future ones.

Flashbacks and reflection contribute to characterization by providing context and details.

- A story's theme is a central, unifying message that the author wishes to convey but rarely states explicitly. An author develops the theme by thoughtfully weaving together all the literary elements, including point of view, character, plot, and setting. Themes may also be conveyed through the use of recurring symbols that have significance to the story but are not always explained for the reader.

As you watch the video, focus on how the plot structure, point of view, and setting in "There Were Snakes Out There" affect the student's understanding of the story.



Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Peer Model Video Transcript

Now, answer the questions.

## Question 1

What does the student in the video notice about the structure of the plot of “There Are Snakes Out There”?

Reveal Answer

The student notices that the story uses flashbacks to go back in time and reflection to slow down the story to reveal the narrator’s thoughts.

## Question 2

How do the story’s flashbacks and reflection help the student in the video understand the narrator, who is also the main character?

Reveal Answer

The flashbacks help the student understand the narrator’s feelings and his situation. They provide context for the narrator by revealing why he is so desperate to come to the United States. The flashbacks and reflection reveal what is at stake for the narrator.

As you reread “There Are Snakes Out There,” pay attention to the relationships among the literary elements and how they help you understand the story. It may help to ask yourself the following questions and record your ideas in your Reading Log.

- How does the author characterize the narrator and his situation?
- What is the narrator’s point of view and how does it tell the story effectively?
- What symbol or symbols do you notice in the story? What do they mean to you and to the story’s narrator?
- How do the characterization, point of view, setting and plot contribute to the development of the theme?

# Check-In

Reread this passage from “There Are Snakes Out There” to answer the questions below.

## Question 1

How does the author use point of view to develop the characterization of the narrator?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The author uses a narrator with a first-person point of view to tell the story by directly sharing his thoughts and memories with readers. The narrator describes being stuck in the desert, his fear of snakes, his fellow refugees, and his memories of how they all got this far. The narrator’s memories and fears directly reveal who he is and what he is like.

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## Question 2

What is the relationship between the setting and the plot in the passage from “There Are Snakes Out There”?

Reveal Answer

The setting affects what happens to the characters. The characters are stuck in the desert, unable to complete their journey to the United States. The setting is hot and dry and home to poisonous snakes, all of which makes the narrator and his fellow refugees more desperate to cross the border into the United States.

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## Question 3

What is the significance of the snakes in the passage? Are they literal or figurative?

### Reveal Answer

The snakes are both real and imagined. The real snakes living in the desert are a malign presence in the story. The narrator is afraid of them because they are poisonous and deadly. The narrator talks about how there “are snakes there, too, in my dad’s head” and in the gang members’ hearts. Those snakes are figurative; they are demons that drive people to do bad things.

# Practice

Reread “There Are Snakes Out There.” Then, use what you have learned to analyze the relationship among the literary elements. Think about how the author uses the literary elements to develop the story’s theme. Then, complete the activity.

## Activity

In one or two paragraphs, analyze the relationship among thematic development, characterization, point of view, and the significance of the setting and plot in “There Are Snakes Out There.” Explain how the author weaves the elements and uses the devices to create a story that is meaningful and insightful. Cite specific details from the text to support your ideas.

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The elements of character, plot, point of view, and setting in “There Are Snakes Out There” help the author develop an important theme about the power of desperation. The narrator is a character in the story, a young teen who is trying to escape gang violence in his home country by migrating to the United States. The narrator uses a first-person point of view to describe the horrible conditions of being trapped on the Mexican side of the border between Mexico and the United States. The narrator and his fellow refugees are stuck in a hot, dry, and unforgivingly sunny desert. The refugees are hot, thirsty, sunburnt, hungry, and desperate to leave. What’s more, “there are snakes out there,” which the narrator deeply fears for their ability to “sting you with their poison” while you sleep. The author uses the narrator’s point of view, the story’s setting, and a plot structure that moves backward in time to create a meaningful picture of how desperation and fear can drive people to leave their homes with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

The image of the snake also contributes to the thematic development. Appearing in the story are literal snakes that the narrator believes are lurking in the desert at

night as well as the real one he and his friends find and kill. There are also figurative snakes that live in his father's head and in the gang members' hearts. None of these snakes are a good omen for the narrator. The story's plot ends on an ambiguous note. The narrator and other refugees cross the border to surrender to immigration authorities and face certain deportation. The narrator thinks, "If I go back to my country, I feel something bad will happen to me." The reader never finds out what ultimately happens and is left feeling dissatisfied and unsettled, and that perhaps is the author's point. By using symbols, setting, plot, and point of view to characterize the narrator, the author helps readers empathize with the plight of teen refugees.

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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 the prompt by analyzing the relationships among thematic development, characterization, point of view, setting, and plot in a literary text.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I cited specific events and details from the text to support my ideas.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling in my response.
-

## 23/24 Honors English 11 B - Analyzing Literary Text

### Point of View

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

[Les Misérables](#)

## Reading Log: Les Misérables



# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze a particular point of view reflected in a literary work from the United States.

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## Key Words

- **first-person point of view** – the perspective of a narrator who is a character in the story and tells the story, using the pronouns *I* and *me*
  - **second-person point of view** – the perspective of a narrator who tells the story to the reader, using the pronoun *you*
  - **third-person limited point of view** – the perspective of a narrator who is outside the story but has access to the thoughts and experiences of only one character
  - **third-person omniscient point of view** – the perspective of a narrator who is outside the story and knows everything about all the characters
  - **voice** – the style or manner in which a narrator tells a story
-

# Analyzing Point of View



Source: Everett Historical. Shutterstock

Imagine having someone in your life who has known you since childhood, who sees you for who you truly are, and can give a clear-eyed account of your past. That person is not necessarily a close friend but also not an outright enemy. Today, we might call that person a *frenemy*. In 1926, when F. Scott Fitzgerald published the story you will read today, that term did not exist, but it is a good description for the story's narrator. As you read, think about how it might feel to have your life scrutinized by a friendly rival.

Author F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) was considered the voice of his generation, the period between the end World War I in 1918 and the Great Depression in 1929, which Fitzgerald himself tagged the Jazz Age. Others refer to it as the Roaring Twenties. For Americans, the 1920s were a period of modernization in which traditional American customs and morals began to evolve as a generation that celebrated youth, freedom, and decadent displays of wealth dominated the culture. Today, you will read an excerpt from Fitzgerald's story "The Rich Boy," which appeared in a collection entitled *All the Sad Young Men*. The excerpt begins with a now famous and often-quoted line about the distinctions between "the very rich" and "you and me."

## Take Notes as You Read

It is easy to overlook the voice of the narrator of a fictional text, in part because, as a reader, you are usually more interested in what the narrator says than in how they say it. Yet the narrator's voice is an essential part of every narrative because it influences every word of the story, just as a singer's voice is inseparable from the song they sing. As you read Fitzgerald's story, think about the voice of the narrator. Consider their style of speaking and their choice of words and how both make you feel. Record your observations about the narrator's voice in your Reading Log.

---

## Useful Vocabulary

1. **compensations:** things that make up for losses or deficits
  2. **constitutions:** a person's physical and mental state
  3. **cynical:** having an attitude of distrust, especially of human nature and people's motives
  4. **deference:** the action of being submissive in order to show respect
  5. **precedence:** the condition of being more important or powerful than others
  6. **preposterous:** absurd or ridiculous
  7. **vulgarity:** bad taste or tastelessness
- 

## Putting Things in Context

The narrator puts Anson Hunter's life in historical context. The story takes place during the height of the Jazz Age, when Hunter is a young man. During this time period, many young American men and women flocked to cities to experience a new sense of social liberation. They met at night clubs where they could drink and dance to jazz music. Women cut their hair short and wore dresses with knee-skimming hemlines. For the first time in American history, women began to find a more equal footing with men,

after having finally won the right to vote in 1920. Anson Hunter's father had come of age a generation earlier, during what author Mark Twain dubbed the Gilded Age. This period, between 1870 and 1890, was in many ways a mirror of the Roaring Twenties. It was a time when certain sectors of the economy were expanding rapidly, generating great wealth. Rich industrialists and corrupt politicians joined forces to shape the nation's laws to their benefit. As you read about the story, think about how these time periods in American history contribute to Anson Hunter's "sense of superiority."

# Analyze the Structure of a Literary Text

## Analyze a Particular Point of View Reflected in an American Literary Work

In the opening paragraphs of a short story, the author establishes the setting and characters. Equally important is the narrative point of view. There are four points of view an author may consider using in a literary text. The most common is third-person omniscient point of view. This narrator exists outside the story and, because they are all-knowing, they can provide a panoramic of the characters and events. This point of view enables the author to explore each character's circumstances and state of mind and show the reader a wide range of experiences.

A narrator with a third-person limited point of view also exists outside the story, but they have access to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of only one specific character at a time. In stories told using stream of consciousness, the narrator's point of view roams from one character to another but can never convey a drone's-eye view of the story.

Other perspectives include first-person point of view and second-person point of view. In a story using first-person point of view, the narrator is a character in the story who sees everything from their own narrow perspective. A first-person narrator is often flawed and biased in a way that makes them unreliable, so readers cannot expect to get a true and complete version of events from them. The use of second-person point of view is relatively rare in fiction because it is difficult to execute well. The narrator directly addresses the reader—either you or some other, specific reader. The effect is to engage directly with the reader, to make them feel as if the narrator knows something about them. As the reader, you may or may not appreciate the narrator's ingratiating approach and knowing attitude.

Authors rarely introduce a story's narrator explicitly, so as a reader you must seek out clues to the narrator's point of view. As you read, be sure to access and evaluate

specific details in the text that help you analyze its point of view. Identify word choices and details that tell you whether the narrator is a character inside the story or an entity outside of the text. In a story such as “The Rich Boy,” the author may deliberately use more than one narrative point of view in order to force you to pay close attention to the story.

Read the opening paragraph from the excerpt from *All the Sad Young Men*. As you read, think about the author’s use of narrative points of view.

## Question 1

What details do you notice in the passage that suggest one or more narrative points of view?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The narrator appears to be a character in the story because they use the pronoun *I* to tell what they know. At the same time, the narrator seems to be speaking directly to me or to someone else, as if in a conversation.

## Question 2

Why it is important for you, as a reader, to access and evaluate the details that may provide clues to a story’s narrative point of view?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: By accessing and evaluating the details, I can try to determine who the narrator is and what their point of view is. Because the author doesn’t tell me directly who the narrator is, I must find and think about clues to figure it out.

As you reread the excerpt from *All the Sad Young Men*, access and evaluate the details that continue to reveal the narrator’s point of view. Consider how the narrative point of view shapes the story—and how that point of view may be a particularly American one. You may wish to ask yourself the following questions about the narrator’s point of view and record your answers in your Reading Log.

- How can I determine who is narrating the story?
- Is the narrative point of view limited or all-knowing?



# Check-In

Reread the excerpt from *All the Sad Young Men* to answer the questions below.

## Activity 1

Compare the narrative point of view in the first paragraph to the narrative point of view in the next two paragraphs.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The narrative point of view in the first paragraph is mostly first-person point of view because the character uses the pronoun *I* to describe things he has seen. Yet at the same time, the narrator also directly addresses “you,” which could be me, the reader, or someone else. In the next two paragraphs, the narrative point of view shifts fully back to first-person point of view, as the narrator recalls his and Anson Hunter’s childhood.

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## Activity 2

Cite specific evidence in the passage that helps you analyze the point of view.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Even though the narrator begins by telling “you” about “the very rich” and making distinctions between them and us, the narrator makes clear that “the only way I can describe young Anson Hunter is to . . . cling stubbornly to my point of view.” The narrator is clearly a character in the story, and in the second

paragraph it is clear that the narrator is someone who has known Anson Hunter a long time and who makes comparisons between Anson's life and his own.

## Activity 3

Explain how you accessed and evaluated information in the passage to determine the point of view of the story.

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I read the passage carefully and looked for details that revealed who was telling the story. I considered the words the narrator used and specific remarks to determine that the story is mostly told using the first-person point of view.

# Practice

Reread the full excerpt from *All the Sad Young Men* and think about its narrative point of view to complete the activity.

## Activity

In two or more paragraphs, analyze the point of view reflected in the full excerpt from *All the Sad Young Men*. Describe how the author chose to blur the lines between different narrative points of view and what effect this choice has on readers. Explain why you think the author made this choice and offer a critique of how effective you think this choice is. Access and evaluate specific details from the text to support your ideas.

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The narrative point of view in F. Scott Fitzgerald's story is difficult to discern at first. The story opens with the narrator telling the reader that the rich "are different from you and me." He explains how the rich are one way, and "we" are another. This distinction suggests that the author has chosen to use a second-person point of view in order to create distance between the narrator and his privileged friend, Anson Hunter. However, the narrator soon settles on using the pronouns *I* and *me* to tell the story from a first-person point of view. He says, "the only way I can describe young Anson Hunter is to approach him as if I were a foreigner." This continues to widen the gap between himself and Anson. The narrator finally confirms the first-person point of view by making clear he will "cling stubbornly to my point of view." The narrator then relates what he knows about Anson Hunter's life in great detail.

The author may have blurred the lines between first-person and second-person points of view deliberately in order to suggest that Anson and the narrator are in fact more alike than the narrator wishes to admit. The narrator may be aligning himself with the reader instead of with Anson to show that he is "hard" rather than "soft" and "trustful" instead of "cynical" and that he does not share Anson's sense

of superiority. The author may have made these choices to make the reader willing to listen to a story about a character—and a narrator—who was “born rich” and therefore may be “very difficult to understand.”

The author’s choices related to the narrative point of view are effective because they keep the reader off balance and yet interested. At first, the reader is not sure why the narrator is addressing them directly. The narrator is, after all, a complete stranger, but he seems to think he knows and identifies with the reader and their circumstances. It seems a bit intrusive but also intriguing. Then, as the narrator shifts his focus to Anson Hunter, the reader feels compelled to pay close attention, out of curiosity about how different the “very rich” really are “from you and me.”

---

## 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 analyzing a particular point of view in a work of literature from the United States.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I identified the author’s choice of point of view and offered a critique of its effect on the text and on the reader.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I cited specific details from the text to support the ideas in my response.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will compare the points of view in two literary texts.

---

## Key Words

- **narrator** – the voice that tells a story
  - **point of view** – the perspective of a narrator in a literary text
-

# Analyze the Structure of a Literary Text



Think of the glass of water shown in the photo as an informal personality test. What you see when you look at the glass is thought to reveal the way you view the world in general. If you perceive the glass to be half full, then you are an optimist, because you focus on the actual contents of the glass; however, if you view the glass as half empty, you are a pessimist or a realist, because you notice only what is missing. The [narrators](#) in stories have their own perspectives, just as readers themselves do. Today, you will read two stories and consider their narrative points of view. You can decide if you think the narrators are “half-full” or “half-empty” types of people.

## Take Notes as You Read

Today, you will read two texts, “Trail of Tears” by Tim Tingle and “There Are Snakes Out There” by Juan Pablo Villalobos. Tingle and Villalobos tell tales with some similarities, but the authors come from different worlds. Tingle is an Oklahoma Choctaw, author, and storyteller, who became a writer in midlife. Mexican author Villalobos is a novelist, who writes ripped-from-the-headlines stories about crime and violence in Latin America. “Trail of Tears” is based on the real-life experiences of one of Tingle’s ancestors, a Choctaw Indian named John Carnes. In 1830, Carnes’s family and community were forced by the U.S. government to leave their homes in Mississippi and walk thousands of miles to Oklahoma. So many Indigenous Americans suffered and died along the way that the route became known as the Trail of Tears. Villalobos’s story “There Are Snakes Out There” is from a collection of his stories about people fleeing Central America. Each story is true and based on interviews with the refugees. Villalobos used fictional techniques to transform their testimonies into compelling stories.

“Trail of Tears” and “There Are Snakes Out There” are not lighthearted adventure stories. They describe the harrowing experiences of characters running for their lives. As you read the stories, think about the authors’ purpose for writing the texts. Consider

what motivates an author to tell a challenging story and what impact the author may hope it has on readers. Record your ideas in your Reading Log.

Reading Log: Trail of Tears

Reading Log: There Are Snakes Out There



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## Useful Vocabulary

1. **federales:** the Mexican federal police
  2. **Zetas:** members of Los Zetas, a crime organization based in Mexico
-

# Compare Points of View

## Compare the Points of View of Two Literary Texts

Narrative point of view is the perspective of the narrator who tells a story. Read the chart to review the narrative points of view an author may use in a literary text:

Types of Narrative Points of View

Narrative Point of View	Characteristics
first-person narration	The narrator is usually an important part of the action, whether a main character or an observer, who tells the story using the pronouns <i>I</i> and <i>me</i> . This narrator is often limited by their perspective and may be flawed, biased, or unreliable. The reader may know more than the narrator does.
second-person narration	The narrator addresses the reader directly, using the pronouns <i>you</i> and <i>your</i> . The implied <i>you</i> may be the reader or a specific character identified by the narrator.
third-person narration	The narrator exists outside the story and tells it using the pronouns <i>he</i> , <i>she</i> , and <i>they</i> . An omniscient

narrator knows everything about all the characters. Limited narration focuses on the experiences of one character.
---

Because every story has a narrator, it can be helpful to compare the narrative points of view of two different texts. Watch the video to see how two students compare the narrative points of view in the stories “Trail of Tears” and “There Are Snakes Out There.”

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Peer Model Video Transcript

Now, use what you learned to complete the interactive.

As you reread “Trail of Tears” and “There Are Snakes Out There,” pay attention to similarities in the narrative points of view. Think about how these points of view affect you as a reader. It may help to ask yourself the following questions and record your ideas in your Reading Log.

- What is each narrator’s perspective on the events they describe?
- How are the narrators’ perspectives or situations similar?
- How do the narrators involve the reader in their stories?

# Check-In

Reread the passages from “Trail of Tears” and “There Are Snakes Out There” to answer the questions below.

## Question 1

What do you notice about the narrative points of view in both stories?

Reveal Answer

Both stories are told by a narrator using first-person point of view.

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## Question 2

What do you notice about the narrators’ perspectives? How are they the same?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both narrators are young and innocent. The narrator of “Trail of Tears” is a child, who has no idea what is happening to his family and village. The narrator of “There Are Snakes Out There” recognizes that he is in a bad situation, trapped in the desert, but he is innocent about what might happen to him if he were to hand himself over to the immigration authorities.

## Question 3

What is something that you know that the narrator in each passage does not know? Why doesn’t the narrator know or understand what is happening?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: I know why the people are saying goodbye to their home in “Trail of Tears.” The government is forcing the Choctaw to leave their village. The narrator is only a child, so he does not understand. In “There Are Snakes Out There,” I know from paying attention to the news that it is likely that the narrator and his cousin will be caught by Immigration and deported back to their homeland.

[Get Help Here](#)

# Practice

Reread the excerpts from “Trail of Tears” and “There Are Snakes Out There.” Then, review the notes you took in your Reading Log and the answers you wrote for the Check-In questions before completing the activity.

## Activity

In one or two paragraphs, compare the narrative points of view in “Trail of Tears” and “There Are Snakes Out There.” Identify similarities in the two narrators’ experiences and ways of telling the stories. Describe the effect of these points of view on readers and why it is effective. Cite details from both texts to support your ideas.

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both texts have narrators that use first-person point of view, which means both are characters within the stories, and both use first-person pronouns to tell what happens. Both narrators are boys, although the narrator in “There Are Snakes Out There” is a teenager and the narrator of “Trail of Tears” is a small child. Both are forced by violence to flee their homes and head toward a new place, facing dangers along the way.

The narrator of “Trail of Tears” tells his story in a straightforward way, sharing his observations and his feelings. He describes each painful event in great detail—from the burning of his home, to his mother’s death, to his near drowning and the loss of his dog, and finally to his own death. Because the narrator is a child, he does not understand why his family must move or why the village elders are “acting crazy.” Nor does he comprehend why his mother won’t let him have a blanket from the soldiers. He believes that his dog found a new home. But the reader understands what has happened and why. The blankets are diseased, and the dog most likely drowned. At the end of the story, the narrative point of view shifts to that of the storyteller. It is he telling the story, not the young boy, who died



tragically along the Trail of Tears. The shift in narrator gives the reader some comfort, knowing that the boy's memory lives on, even though he died long ago. The narrator of "There Are Snakes Out There" is stuck in a desperate situation, caught at the border between Mexico and the United States, with no way to move forward or backward. He tells an equally vivid story about fear and flight, mostly through memories. He recalls the "silly" misunderstanding that has caused him to flee for his life. The only break in the uncertainty and anxiety of the story is the narrator's warm memory of spending time with his father. The story ends before readers find out what happens to the narrator, which leaves the reader feeling disconnected and dissatisfied.

The first-person narration makes the stories feel vivid and relatable, even when the content is unfamiliar or distant from the reader's own experience. It helps draw readers in and make them feel the narrators' pain, uncertainty, and fear. It also helps the readers understand the effects of violence hatred on a group of people in a way that a different narrative point of view might not.

---

## 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 comparing the points of view in two literary texts.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I explained the effects of the narrative point of view in both texts.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I cited specific details from both stories to support my ideas.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling in my response.
-

**Context**

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Les Misérables

## Reading Log: Les Misérables

# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze a particular cultural experience in a foundational work of American literature.

---

## Key Words

- **context** – the setting or background of a story
-

# Analyze Cultural Experiences

Many Americans are fascinated by the Civil War, a four-year conflict that very nearly tore the United States apart in the middle of the 1800s. Some historians argue that people today are still dealing with the deep-seated divisions and slow-healing wounds left by that long-ago war. The authors of many fictional and nonfiction works over the past one hundred and fifty years have recreated and explored the conflict. Today, you will read two stories in which the Civil War plays a key role in shaping the main characters' lives.



Source: Brandon Bourdages. Shutterstock

## Take Notes as You Read

Ambrose Bierce (1842–1914) was a teenager when he enlisted in the Union Army in 1862. He fought in several of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, including at Shiloh and Chickamauga. After the war, Bierce moved to California to become a writer. Although he was better known for his journalism, he wrote several collections of stories about his experiences during the war. In 1913, the author, who acquired the nickname Bitter Bierce, disappeared and is believed to have died while observing the events of the Mexican Revolution.

Stephen Crane (1871–1900) was born six years after the end of the Civil War, but the conflict was the setting for his most famous work, *The Red Badge of Courage*. Published in 1895, the novel tells the story of an inexperienced Union soldier’s painful and difficult experience at war. Like Bierce, Crane was more interested in telling real stories than in writing fiction, and he sought to make a career as a journalist. Poor timing, hard living, and money troubles contributed to his death at age 28.

Today, you will read “The Veteran” by Stephen Crane and “A Horseman in the Sky,” by Ambrose Bierce. Both authors use realism to tell their stories, employing language that is vivid and precise to describe the characters, setting, and events. As you read stories, use your imagination to visualize what the characters see, feel, and do. Think about how each story helps you understand how the experience of war tests a person’s values and shapes their character. Record your ideas in your Reading Log.

Reading Log: The Veteran

Reading Log: A Horseman in the Sky

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## Useful Vocabulary for The Veteran

1. **abstractedly**: showing a lack of focus or concentration
2. **boisterous**: rowdy, animated
3. **conflagration**: an extensive fire that destroys large areas of land or property
4. **daunt**: to intimidate or to make someone back down
5. **deferential**: showing respect to one in a higher position
6. **resplendent**: magnificent, splendid

7. **soused:** poured liquid over; drenched
  8. **stanchions:** a frame that holds a cow's head in place while it is being milked
  9. **tittered:** giggled
  10. **tocsin:** an alarm bell
- 

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## Useful Vocabulary for A Horseman in the Sky

1. **acclivity:** an upward slope
  2. **apparition:** the appearance of a ghost or ghostly vision
  3. **bivouac:** a soldier's temporary campsite
  4. **caparison:** an ornamental covering on a horse's saddle or harness
  5. **disposition:** the way in which something is arranged or laid out
  6. **leonine:** resembling a lion
  7. **salient:** a piece of land that juts out
  8. **sublimity:** great beauty or grandeur
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## Putting Things in Context

The American Civil War was a brutal conflict between the northern and southern states that took place from 1861 to 1865. By official count, 620,000 soldiers died, and countless were injured. In 1861, eleven southern states, including Virginia, seceded from the Union over the issue of the expansion of slavery into western territories. The seceded states formed the Confederate States of America, or the Confederacy. The Federal or Union Army fought to keep the United States of America intact as one nation. This army consisted of soldiers from the northern states, including Bierce's native Ohio



and Crane's home state of New Jersey. As you read, notice if the authors betray any bias toward one side over the other.

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# Analyze Cultural Experiences in a Literary Text

## Analyzing Particular Cultural Experiences in a Foundational American Text

A story's context reflects the historical time period as well as the culture in which the author writes. Context informs the author's depiction of the characters, setting, and events, and their formulation of the story's themes. Being familiar with the context can help you interpret the text, as it will enable you to “fill in the gaps” and understand subtle details and meanings. Watch the video to see how one student analyzes a cultural experience reflected in the work of American literature.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Now, answer the questions.

## Question 1

What steps does the student in the video take to analyze a cultural experience that is not familiar to them?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: They do some research by looking up information about Chancellorsville, the site of a Civil War battle that the story's main character fought in as a young man. The student discovers that thousands of men died in that battle, and they draw a conclusion that it was a difficult way for a young soldier to start out.

## Question 2

How does the student in the video use context to help them understand the story?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The student uses context to determine that the author is trying to illustrate a point about what it means to be courageous. The student suggests that the most courageous people admit that they have felt scared, and they learn to deal with it, which makes them true warriors.

## Question 3

What insight does the student's analysis give them into the story?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The analysis helps the student to determine that the old veteran's war experiences prepared him to take decisive actions to save the animals from the barn fire.

Cultural experiences reflect the beliefs, customs, values, and traditions of a particular people in a particular time and place. When you encounter an unfamiliar cultural experience in a fictional text, then consider using the following strategies.

- Take note of unfamiliar or foreign characters, places, references, allusions, and practices in the story. Think about what you may already know about them.
- Seek out information. A text originally written in or near the time of the cultural experience may not provide any clues, as the author likely expected the audience to understand the context implicitly. You may need to do some research by looking at reliable sources of information.
- Use the information you find to make connections and inferences. You may need to infer, or make educated guesses, based on clues in the text about the story's context.

As you reread the stories “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky,” consider how the Civil War shapes each main character’s identity and reinforces their values. Use the strategies outlined above to identify clues, gather information, and make inferences and connections that help you fill in the gaps in the story’s context. Record your inferences and ideas in your Reading Log.

# Check-In

As you read this excerpt from “A Horseman in the Sky” think about how the author uses the cultural experience of the Civil War to spotlight the conflict between Carter Druse and his father. Consider the values each character possesses. Then, answer the questions.

## Question 1

What does Carter Druse choose to do? How does his father react to this decision?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Carter decides to join the Union Army. His father calls him a traitor and entreats him not to tell his mother, who is dying. Carter’s father predicts that if they both survive the war, they “will speak further of the matter.”

## Question 2

Why is Carter Druse’s decision so divisive?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Carter Druse is “a young Virginian,” which means he is a southerner, but he chooses to join the Union or federal or northern army. He and his father will be on opposite sides of the war.

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## Question 3

What values do the father and son both cherish?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both characters value respect and being true to one's sense of duty. Even though Carter is joining the Union Army, he shows respect for his father. He bows "reverently" as he takes his leave. In turn, his father calls his son "sir" and returns "the salute with a stately courtesy which masked a breaking heart."

## Question 4

How does knowing the cultural context help you understand or appreciate the story?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Understanding that the father and son are on different sides of a divisive war helps me understand the story better. It helps me understand that both had convictions about their duty to home and country. They just acted on them in different ways.

# Practice

Now, reread “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky,” paying attention to the impact of the cultural experience of the Civil War on the characters’ lives. Use the strategies you learned to analyze cultural experiences as you complete the activity.

Now, complete the activity.

## Activity

In two or three paragraphs, analyze the cultural experiences reflected in the stories “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky.” Use what you know and have learned from doing research to explain how the experience of war shapes and influences the characters’ actions and values.

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky” feature characters who were or are soldiers in the Civil War. Each character’s initial experience of war tests their courage and their sense of right and wrong, but they emerge stronger for it.

In “The Veteran,” the main character recalls his first experiences as a soldier. He admits to being overcome by fear during his first battle: “I thought the sky was falling down. I thought the world was coming to an end. You bet I was scared.”

While his young grandson is “horror stricken” to learn that his grandfather was frightened, the old man is philosophical, explaining how he learned to become a good soldier. He simply “had to get used to” combat. His war stories are not glamorous or exciting, but they taught the old man important lessons about how to react in an emergency. When his barn goes up in flames, he is the first to act. He risks his life to rescue the horses and the cows. When he realizes that the young colts are still in the barn, he heads back in, losing his life in the process. The author suggests that the experience of war prepared the veteran to risk his life to save others.



Carter Druse, the main character in “The Horseman in the Sky,” is also tested in battle. The reader first meets him as he sleeps at his post, which suggests he is not a good soldier. However, Carter’s memory of telling his father that he wanted to join the Union Army—the enemy’s army—implies that Carter is a man of principle. His father is not pleased but reminds his son “whatever may occur, do what you conceive to be your duty.” Carter suddenly awakens and finds himself face-to-face with a Confederate officer on horseback. Carter knows he should shoot the other man, who has witnessed the Union soldiers camping below, yet Carter does not. A moment later, Carter realizes that his duty is to his fellow soldiers, and he looks back at the man on horseback “through the sights of his rifle.” Recalling his father’s words about duty, pulls the trigger: “Duty had conquered; the spirit had said to the body: ‘Peace, be still.’ He fired.” At the end of the story, the reader discovers that the “courageous gentleman” on horseback was none other than Carter’s father. Carter’s face shows no “sign of emotion;” he had done his duty.

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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 the prompt by analyzing a particular cultural experience in two works of American literature.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I identified a specific cultural experience in the texts and used my research and prior knowledge to analyze its impact on the text.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I cited specific details from the text to support my ideas.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling in my response.
-

# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze how two or more texts treat similar themes and topics.

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## Key Words

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

# Context



Source: tonybaggett. 123rf.com

Literary works written in the same time period may often address similar topics and themes. When looking at why an author chose certain themes in their work, there are a few steps you should follow. Find out what was happening in history when the author wrote the piece. Look up important events, common beliefs, and social rules of that time to see how they might affect the author's views. For example, Stephen Crane's "The Veteran" and Ambrose Bierce's "A Horseman in the Sky" were published in 1896 and 1889, respectively, long after the Civil War. The stories came out at a time when the United States was experiencing anxiety over what some saw as a decline in masculinity. The cultural response to this supposed dwindling influence was to define manliness in terms of physical strength, the willingness to endure hardship, and courage, particularly on the battlefield. Thus, stories about the Civil War romanticized the conflict and glorified individual heroism, devotion to duty, and death in battle. Crane and Bierce countered those views by writing stories that showed the tragic consequences of equating manliness with courage and devotion to duty. Without an understanding of the background of these authors and their historical contexts, an analysis of these stories would be incomplete.

That's why it's important to examine an author's background, like their education, job, or area of expertise, as this can influence what they write about and how they write it. Also, consider the author's ethnicity, nationality, and cultural traditions to see how

these might shape their themes. Historical, disciplinary, and cultural context also affect an author's writing style. Language, art movements, and other writers of that time can influence an author's stylistic choices as well. While reading the text, pay attention to themes that come up often. Look for any references in the text that link to these perspectives. Pay attention to writing techniques, tone, imagery, symbolism, and narrative voice to help you understand how the author's style is shaped by unique perspectives. By putting all this information together, you can understand how an author's surroundings and experiences influence their choice of themes.

As you read this and other pairs of texts from the eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth centuries, look for evidence of common theme that reflect a shared point of view.

## Take Notes as You Read

As you read pairs of texts from different centuries, look for evidence of common themes:

- nature
- devotion to duty
- courage
- leadership
- consequences of actions

Record your examples and thoughts in your Reading Log. You can use the information when it is time to analyze how the texts treat similar themes and topics.

Reading Log: The Veteran

Reading Log: A Horseman in the Sky

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## Useful Vocabulary for A Hymn to the Evening

1. **purl:** to flow like a bubbling, twisting stream
  2. **sable:** black
  3. **zephyr:** a soft, gentle breeze
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## Useful Vocabulary for An Evening Prospect

1. **diurnal:** related to the daytime
  2. **sylvan:** associated with the woods or woodlands
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## Useful Vocabulary for The Veteran

1. **abstractedly:** showing a lack of focus or concentration
  2. **boisterous:** rowdy, animated
  3. **conflagration:** an extensive fire that destroys large areas of land or property
  4. **daunt:** to intimidate or to make someone back down
  5. **deferential:** showing respect to one in a higher position
  6. **resplendent:** magnificent, splendid
  7. **soused:** poured liquid over; drenched
  8. **stanchions:** a frame that holds a cow's head in place while it is being milked
  9. **tittered:** giggled
  10. **tocsin:** an alarm bell
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## Useful Vocabulary for A Horseman in the Sky

1. **acclivity:** an upward slope
2. **apparition:** the appearance of a ghost or ghostly vision
3. **bivouac:** a soldier's temporary campsite

4. **caparison**: an ornamental covering on a horse's saddle or harness
  5. **disposition**: the way in which something is arranged or laid out
  6. **leonine**: resembling a lion
  7. **salient**: a piece of land that juts out
  8. **sublimity**: great beauty or grandeur
- 

---

## Useful Vocabulary for The Most Dangerous Game

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. **debacle**: a total failure
  6. **lascar**: a sailor from Southeast or South Asia
  7. **refectory table**: a long, thin dining table
  8. **tartar**: a fierce, angry person
- 

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## Useful Vocabulary for Call of the Wild

1. **traces**: the side straps on a harness for a dog or horse
-

# Context

## Analyzing Common Themes

### Eighteenth-Century American Texts

For most of the eighteenth-century, the United States was a collection of English colonies hugging the continent's eastern coast along the Atlantic Ocean. Slavery was an accepted institution and practice throughout the colonies, even in northern colonies like Massachusetts. It was to the household of a Boston tailor that young Phillis Wheatley was brought, an enslaved girl from West Africa, where she was born in 1753. By the time Wheatley was thirteen, she had mastered several languages and become an accomplished and widely recognized poet, the first Black woman to become a published writer in the American colonies. Ann Eliza Bleecker was a White woman born a year earlier than Wheatley. Despite marrying a wealthy man who encouraged her to write, she experienced heartache and hardship when she and her family were caught in the crossfire of the Revolutionary War. The language of both women's works reflects their influences and the poetic styles of their day, but their topics and themes are timeless.

As you read excerpts from poems by these two authors, consider how Wheatley and Bleecker use imagery and description to address similar topics and themes.

## Question 1

### Nineteenth-Century American Texts

The Civil War both shaped the men who went into battle and the nation's view of manhood. "The Veteran" is set decades after the Civil War, but Henry Fleming is still defined by his military service. Consider how the themes of courage and heroism are addressed in the following excerpt:

Even when Henry admits to being scared in his first battle, the men gathered in the store still view him as a hero. The fact that he rose to the rank of orderly sergeant is



enough proof for them that he fought courageously in battle. Fleming goes on to tell his audience that he learned to be courageous over time, but that some men, such as Jim Conklin, were courageous from the start—it was as if they were born to be soldiers. Similarly, Carter Druse in “A Horseman in the Sky” is viewed as courageous and heroic because of his military prowess and his devotion to duty:

“Daring and devotion to duty” are qualities generally associated with courage and heroism in warfare. In these excerpts, Fleming, Conklin, and Carter embody the glorified view of soldiers and war that was popular in the late 1800s.

## Question 2

The theme of duty is explicit in “A Horseman in the Sky.” Consider the following excerpt. Although torn by the prospect of shooting the horseman, which Druse now knows is his father, he feels duty bound to protect the five regiments of Union infantry.

Given that the Union soldiers have exposed themselves by bringing their horses out into the open, Druse now feels honor bound to kill his father to prevent him from revealing their location.

Even though he is no longer a soldier, Henry Fleming also has a soldier’s courage and sense of duty, as evidenced in the following excerpt:

When the barn catches fire, Fleming rushes in to save the horses, burning his hair and whiskers and setting fire to his clothes in the process. He returns to the barn repeatedly even after being injured. While the action takes courage, it also illustrates Fleming’s sense of duty. He feels obligated to save the horses because they are under his care.

## Question 3

Twentieth-Century American Texts

“The Most Dangerous Game” is a classic early twentieth-century short story. It 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. His wartime experience is evident in the story’s suspenseful atmosphere, as well as in its themes of life-and-death struggles. His prior profession as a journalist helped him develop clear, concise, and detailed writing skills. The reader experiences his gripping plot, vivid descriptions, and psychological tension. Connell was also well-traveled and adventurous, which likely influenced the setting of his story. These experiences contributed to his stylistic choices in “The Most Dangerous Game.”

Jack London (1876–1916) is the pseudonym of John Griffith Chaney, an adventurer turned author. He is best known for his fictional accounts of gold seekers along the Yukon and Klondike Rivers in the upper northwestern region of North America in the 1890s. His most famous story “How to Build a Fire” dramatizes the struggle to survive in the harsh conditions of the Northwest Territories. London’s human protagonists’ almost always succumb to the relentless forces of nature; however, his canine protagonists have a distinct advantage over their human counterparts in their efforts to survive.

## Question 4

# Check-In

Reread the following excerpt from “The Veteran.” Then, answer Question 1.

## Question 1

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Reread the following excerpt from “A Horseman in the Sky.” Then, answer Question 2.

## Question 2

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

# Practice

Reread “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky” and consult your Reading Log notes and Context and Check-In answers to complete the activity.

## Activity 1

## Activity 2

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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 the entire prompt.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I analyzed the role of a historical, disciplinary, or cultural perspective on the theme of a story.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I analyzed the role of a historical, disciplinary, or cultural perspective on the writing style of a story.
-

# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will evaluate the contribution to society made by works of literature that deal with similar topics and themes.

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## Key Words

- **realism** – a style of writing characterized by the depiction of people, places, and things as they really are
  - **theme** – a central, unifying idea an author is trying to convey in a piece of literature
-

# Context



Source: zeferli. 123rf.com

Some events in a country's history leave an indelible mark on society. The American Civil War (1861–1865) is one of those events. The war was fought over the westward expansion of slavery and brought to a head by the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln to the presidency. Fearful that the incoming Lincoln administration would institute an antislavery policy, seven Southern states seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America in February 1861. By the time Lincoln took office on March 4, the Confederates had begun seizing federal forts in the South. In

April, four more Southern states seceded. Fighting the war took a devastating toll, killing at least 620,000 soldiers on both sides. As you are about to learn, the war sometimes pitted brothers against brothers and sons against fathers.

## Get Ready to Read

You are about to read two short stories associated with the Civil War—"The Veteran" by Stephen Crane and "A Horseman in the Sky" by Ambrose Bierce. "The Veteran" takes place decades after the war, but the war experiences of the main character, Henry Fleming, have a direct bearing on the story. "The Horseman in the Sky" is set in Virginia during the Civil War. Both stories employ common themes.

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## Did You Know?

Did you know that "The Veteran" is not Henry Fleming's first appearance in the writings of Stephen Crane. Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* is about Henry Fleming's wartime experience. Fleming joins the Union army as a teenager looking for glory, but as he waits for battle, he begins to fear death. In his first battle, he fires blindly and then runs from the battlefield when the Confederates launch a new offensive. While wandering with a group of wounded soldiers, Henry runs into Jim Conklin, whom he had asked earlier if he thought many soldiers would run. Conklin, who in contrast to Henry, fought bravely, is dying from his battle wounds. After being hit in the head by a retreating Union soldier, another soldier helps Henry return to his regiment. His fellow soldiers believe he has been injured in battle and tend to his wound. The next day, Henry fights bravely, angered by Jim Conklin's death. This helps him come to terms with his initial cowardly reaction to combat. As you read "The Veteran," pay attention to how the elder Henry recounts his first battle and remembers Jim Conklin.

---

## Take Notes as You Read

As you read "The Veteran" and "A Horseman in the Sky," look for evidence of common themes by evaluating how each story addresses the following issues:

- the psychological impact of combat
- the meaning of duty
- courage
- making difficult choices

Record the evidence and your evaluations in your Reading Log. You can access the information later in the lesson when you are asked to evaluate the stories.

Reading Log: The Veteran

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## Useful Vocabulary for The Veteran

1. **abstractedly**: showing a lack of focus or concentration
2. **boisterous**: rowdy, animated
3. **conflagration**: an extensive fire that destroys large areas of land or property
4. **daunt**: to intimidate or to make someone back down
5. **deferential**: showing respect to one in a higher position



6. **resplendent:** magnificent, splendid
  7. **soused:** poured liquid over; drenched
  8. **stanchions:** a frame that holds a cow's head in place while it is being milked
  9. **tittered:** giggled
  10. **tocsin:** an alarm bell
- 

Reading Log: A Horseman in the Sky

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## Useful Vocabulary for A Horseman in the Sky

1. **acclivity:** an upward slope
2. **apparition:** the appearance of a ghost or ghostly vision
3. **bivouac:** a soldier's temporary campsite
4. **caparison:** an ornamental covering on a horse's saddle or harness
5. **disposition:** the way in which something is arranged or laid out
6. **leonine:** resembling a lion

**7. salient:** a piece of land that juts out

**8. sublimity:** great beauty or grandeur

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# Context

## Evaluating Social Contributions

The Civil War had a great impact on literature in the decades following the conflict. The brutality of the war and the high death toll on both sides undermined romantic views of war that glorified heroism and death in battle and looked at combat in sentimental terms. Writers like Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane were part of the literary movement of realism, which sought to depict everyday experiences truthfully, including the experiences of war, and to explore why people act the way they do when faced with stressful situations. Ambrose Bierce was well-qualified to explore the stresses soldiers face in battle since he served in the Civil War as a Union soldier and was seriously wounded in 1864. As a result, he knew the realities of the war firsthand. Stephen Crane was born after the war but was able to capture the realities of soldiering in his writing. The Civil War stories of both authors focus on the psychological impact of combat and the individual choices soldiers must make. Thus, the writings contribute to society by countering romantic views of the war.

Consider Henry Fleming's description of his war experience:

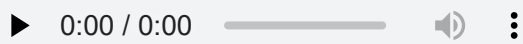
Separated from the war by decades, the grocer and the people in the store have a romanticized view of the Civil War, one in which soldiers lack fear and think only of glory and the cause. Fleming knows the reality of war and is willing to admit that he was scared in his first battle.

Bierce also explores the psychology of combat in the following excerpt:

Although Druse is considered courageous by his comrades, he still struggles deeply with taking a life—a life that turns out to be his father's. This reality makes the choice he faces especially shattering.

Listen to the following podcast, in which two students discuss other shared themes and social contributions in “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky.”

Audio: Courage and Duty



Courage and Duty Transcript

Now answer the questions about the text and the podcast.

## Question 1

What distinguishes the way Bierce and Crane approach the subject of the Civil War from a romantic view of the war?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both Bierce and Crane are part of the literary movement of realism. Thus, they reject the romantic view of war, which glorifies heroism and death in battle and looks at combat in sentimental terms. Instead, Bierce and Crane want to realistically portray the experiences of war and explore the stresses that soldiers face. By focusing on the psychological impact of combat, such as the fear soldiers have in battle and the tough choices they need to make, Bierce and Crane replace the romantic view of the Civil War with a realistic one.

## Question 2

According to the podcast, why is the Civil War important in “The Veteran,” even though the story takes place decades after the war?

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer:

Sample answer: The Civil War is important because Henry Fleming's war experiences shaped his character, including his sense of courage. The courage he eventually developed in the war is the same courage he exhibits when he rushes into the burning barn to save the animals.

## Question 3

According to the podcast, how is duty a theme in both stories?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Duty is a theme in “A Horseman in the Sky” because Druse chooses duty over family when faced with the prospect of killing his father, who might reveal the whereabouts of the Union troops. Duty is also a theme in “The Veteran” because it is a sense of duty that sends Henry Fleming back into the burning barn to try to save the colts.

## Question 4

According to the podcast, how do both stories make a social contribution?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The stories make a social contribution by pointing out that showing courage or doing one’s duty often involves making tough decisions.

As you read “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky” to complete the Check-In questions and Practice activity, access and evaluate more information in the stories that point to common themes.

# Check-In

Read the following excerpts from “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky” to evaluate the information. Then, answer Question 1.

## Question 1

How do the excerpts illustrate the psychological impact of combat on the individual soldier? How does exploring this topic contribute to society?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In the excerpt from “The Veteran,” Fleming makes the point that he did not “see the whites of their eyes,” which makes killing the enemy impersonal. He also describes feeling like every enemy soldier was aiming at him “in particular.” Although Fleming is trying to be funny with the latter comment, he makes two important points about the psychological impact of combat. When the enemy is generally faceless, killing is easier, but the act of being fired upon seems very personal. Carter Druse has a similar revelation. As long as the Confederate horseman had his head turned away, Druse had no trouble with the idea of carrying out his mission. Once the horseman turned his head and “seemed to look into his very face, into his eyes, into his brave, compassionate heart,” killing the man became personal. Discussing this topic contributes to society by acknowledging the stress a soldier feels when interaction with the enemy seems or becomes personal.

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Read the following excerpts from “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky” to evaluate the information. Then, answer Question 2.

## Question 2

What information in the excerpts suggests a similar theme? What is that theme? What is the social value of exploring this theme?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both passages suggest a theme of duty. In the excerpt from “The Veteran,” Fleming is expressing the idea that some men come into combat with a strong sense of duty. Other men develop that sense of duty over time. In the excerpt from “A Horseman in the Sky,” Druse struggles with killing the horseman, but he is clear about what his duty is as a soldier: “the man must be shot dead from ambush.” Exploring the theme of duty contributes to society by making readers consider the psychological consequences of placing duty above all else, including personal safety and family.

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# Practice

Read “The Veteran” and “A Horseman in the Sky.” As you access the information in the short stories, your notes, and your Explain and Check-In answers, evaluate which information helps you complete the activity.

## Activity

In several paragraphs, evaluate how the two stories contribute to society through their shared themes or topics. In your response, cite text evidence for at least three shared themes.

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: “The Veteran” explores the psychological impact of war through Henry Fleming’s admission that he was scared and ran during his first battle.

Henry points out that it seemed like ““they were all shooting at me. Yes, sir, I thought every man in the other army was aiming at me in particular, and only me.

And it seemed so darned unreasonable, you know.”” Similarly, Carter Druse experiences extreme emotions at the prospect of killing the Confederate horseman—he grows pale, shakes and turns faint. Much like Fleming not seeing “the whites” of the enemy’s eyes and firing where the figures appeared thickest, Carter Druse is ready to kill the Confederate horseman until the horseman turns his head and looks into Druse’s “face, into his eyes, into his brave, compassionate heart.” At that point, killing becomes personal and much harder to do. Exploring the theme of the psychological impact of war contributes to society by acknowledging the stress, such as fear and indecision, a soldier feels when interacting with the enemy seems or becomes personal.

The theme of duty in the context of the Civil War is expressed through Fleming’s story of how it took him some time before he “got on to it” and felt comfortable in battle, but that a lot of men seemed “to feel all right from the start,” such as Jim Conklin, who “went into it from the start just as if he was born to it.” The implication is that soldiers either immediately or over time adjust to the idea that they are duty-

bound to fight. The theme of a soldier's duty is even more strongly stated in "A Horseman in the Sky." The narrator notes that Druse knew "the duty of the soldier was plain: the man must be shot dead from ambush—without warning, without a moment's spiritual preparation, with never so much as an unspoken prayer, he must be sent to his account." At the fateful moment, Druse remembers his father's words: "Whatever may occur, do what you conceive to be your duty." This gives Druse the calm he needs to carry out the deed. Exploring the theme of duty contributes to society by making readers consider the psychological consequences of placing duty above all else, including personal safety and family.

The theme of making tough choices is expressed through Fleming's decision to return to the burning barn to rescue the colts that are still inside. Fleming staggers at the thought of going back in, but he makes the tough decision to do so, telling his men, "I must try to get 'em out," even though his men think "it's suicide for a man to go in there!" Druse also makes the tough decision to carry out his duty by killing his father. Once he decides to choose duty over family, his demeanor changes. As the narrator notes, "He was calm now. His teeth were firmly but not rigidly closed; his nerves were as tranquil as a sleeping babe's—not a tremor affected any muscle of his body; his breathing, until suspended in the act of taking aim, was regular and slow. Duty had conquered; the spirit had said to the body: 'Peace, be still.' He fired." Exploring the theme of making tough choices contributes to society by making readers consider how acting out of a blind commitment to duty leads to tough choices, choices that can be detrimental to the individual or to those they love.

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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 the entire prompt.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ I evaluated how the two stories contribute to society through their shared themes and topic.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I cited text evidence for at least three shared themes.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-

## 23/24 Honors English 11 B - Analyzing Literary Text

### Analyzing Literary Text

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

[Les Misérables](#)

## Reading Log: Les Misérables

# Objective

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze a literary text in a group discussion.

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# Participate in Discussion



Source: Stocksnapper. Shutterstock

The novel you have been reading independently, Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, is an epic tale about members of the French underclass trying to survive in a time of great social injustice and political upheaval. Hugo (1802–1885) grew up poor, but through the success of his poems, plays, and novels, achieved great fame and influence. He was a royalist in his youth, but over his lifetime, as French rule violently swung from monarchy to republic to empire to restoration and back again to a republican form of government, Hugo became a supporter of popular self-rule and a champion of the ordinary citizen. When he found himself on the wrong side of those in political power in 1851, he went into exile, where he wrote the novel *Les Misérables*, which translates into “the outcasts.” Hugo ultimately returned to France and was treated as a national hero. After his death, millions of French people lined the streets of Paris to honor his passing.

Readers of a long and often challenging text like *Les Misérables* may find it helpful to analyze the book in a group discussion. Book discussion groups facilitate analysis by providing a forum for readers to process their responses and express their opinions. The structure of a book discussion group enables readers to practice using effective reasoning and communication skills and allows them to be exposed to different opinions and perspectives.

Another way to deepen your appreciation of the text is to learn more about the author and the novel's historical context. The author led a long and interesting life, and gaining insight into how real historical events contributed to the evolution of his political views and writing style may help you better understand the novel and its outsized impact on the French reading public of the mid 1800s. Many readers incorrectly approach the text thinking that it is about the French Revolution, but in fact the setting is a period roughly twenty-five years later, which was no less politically and socially tumultuous for the French people.

Today, you will participate in an online discussion about *Les Misérables* with other students who have read the novel. Your common goal is a thorough analysis of the novel. Your discussion will focus on a prompt that encourages you to analyze the



author's choices about the text's structure, point of view, cultural context, and themes. As you analyze the novel, you will use reasoning by thinking logically about specific details in the text and using your prior knowledge to infer, make connections, and draw conclusions. You will be expected to provide evidence from the text for your inferences and conclusions. Be sure to use information accurately to further the discussion. As a group, you will be assessing the novel and evaluating critically to thoroughly analyze it.

As you discuss the novel, you will demonstrate excellent communication skills by expressing your ideas clearly and by treating other students courteously. Review the following strategies for communicating online:

- Read the entire Discussion Prompt at least twice to make sure you understand all of the different elements you need to address.
- Be prepared to engage in a collegial online discussion by fully engaging with the other participants. It may help to set up rules for discussion at the start and to volunteer for specific roles, such as timekeeper or moderator.
- Take time to review the text and the notes you took about it. Use effective reasoning to make connections and draw conclusions that you can share with the other participants.
- Propel the conversation forward by asking thoughtful and probing questions and by building on others' comments.
- Avoid distractions when others are responding. Stay focused by rereading the discussion thread and taking notes or jotting down comments or questions.
- Use your filter. Be courteous at all times when offering feedback and criticism that is constructive and focuses solely on the content of the other students' ideas.
- Remember that the purpose of a discussion is not to assert yourself intellectually but to collaborate with your peers as you analyze a text to deepen your understanding of it.

# Activity 1

Reflect on previous group discussions you have taken part in, and consider your strengths as a participant. Identify at least two strong communication skills you believe you already practice in group discussions and one that you would like to improve on.

## Reveal Answer

Sample answer: One of my strengths is that I am a logical thinker, and I always make a point of explaining the reasoning behind my thinking, so others understand my ideas. I also always make sure I am prepared for a discussion. One communication skill I'd like to improve on is my tendency to dominate discussions because I really enjoy talking about literature, but I need to let others have more say.

# Activity 2

Explain how you might respond if someone in your group discussion were impolite toward the other participants or mocked their ideas.

## Reveal Answer

Sample answer: If someone were impolite toward one of the participants or mocked their ideas, I would remind them of the rules for a good discussion, that everyone needs to be courteous and keep all remarks constructive.

# Participate in Discussion

## Prepare for the Discussion

It is time for you to prepare to participate in a book discussion group with other students who have read *Les Misérables*. Your discussion will focus on how you, as a modern reader, responded to the story's cultural context and message.

Les Misérables

Complete your reading of the novel, if you have not yet done so. Then, before you read the discussion prompt, take time to consider your overall response to the novel. Think about what you liked or disliked about it and how deeply it engaged you on an emotional or intellectual level. Next, as you review your notes in your Reading Log, focus on the observations you made about the novel's narrative structure, point of view, cultural context, and themes. Use your reasoning skills to analyze the text. Look for specific details in the text to support your reasoning.

Remember, you will interact in writing with the other students in your group, who will likely have different perspectives on the novel. Remain open-minded and receptive to their comments, even if you disagree with them. Try to find points of common thinking and use them to deepen your understanding of the text and of each other.

To see an example of students using effective reasoning in a discussion, read this opening communication among three readers of *Les Misérables*. Then, complete the activity.

#### Discussion Board Sample Answers

<b>Discussion Question</b>	<i>Les Misérables</i> is a wide-ranging epic that, at its core, is about one man's path to redemption in a corrupt world. The novel features an array of characters and parallel plots, and is set against the backdrop of political chaos in early nineteenth-century France. Consider how the novel's specific historical and cultural context shapes the story's structure and its narrative point of view. Use your reasoning to determine what central, unifying messages the author communicates about the plight of a society's "outcasts." Draw on your experience as a reader of American and British literary texts to compare Hugo's masterpiece to other texts you have read.
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Student A Response	One thing that struck me is how complicated and chaotic and full of suffering the novel's setting is. The characters so rarely get to experience happiness or even relief from their duress. I wondered if that approach was intentional.
Student B response to Student A	Good point. I know that epic stories are supposed to be serious books. On some level, <i>Les Misérables</i> reminded me a bit of Steinbeck's Depression-era novel <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> because of how continuously the social and economic forces of the time bear down on the characters, depriving them of not only a chance for a decent life but also hope. I think the relentlessness was deliberate on the author's part because he really wanted readers to feel empathy for the characters.
Student C question	Do you think it's possible that the omniscient narrator is actually Hugo himself? The narrator is so informed about the political and social events of the time, and sometimes, the narrator speaks directly to the reader as if to draw them more deeply into the story. That aspect of the text really struck me.
Student A response to Student C	Yes, I think your analysis is sound. The narrator is the all-knowing voice telling the story, so it makes sense that Hugo would speak to his audience to share his ideas as "a man of the people." The narrator cares so much about the characters, especially those that are struggling to do the morally right thing in a world where corrupt forces constantly conspire to keep them down. It's an epic story, but the message is really straightforward: Do the right thing, and be a good person.

## Activity 3

Explain how well Student A responds to the prompt and initiates the discussion. Identify one thing they might do differently.

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: Student A effectively begins the discussion by sharing their observations about the novel's setting and its effect on the characters. They wonder if the author's approach was intentional. Student A could have been more direct by asking a question or inviting the other students to respond to their idea.

## Activity 4

Describe how Student B and Student C deepen the conversation to make it more constructive.

Reveal Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: Student B deepens the conversation by building on Student A's observation and making a connection to another literary text. Student C moves the conversation forward by asking a question that Student A answers.

# Participate in Discussion

## Discussion Prompt

Begin the discussion by responding to the following prompt:

*Les Misérables* is a wide-ranging story that, at its core, is about one man's path to redemption in a corrupt world. The novel features an array of characters and parallel plots, and is set against the backdrop of political chaos in early nineteenth-century France. Consider how the novel's specific historical and cultural context shapes the story's structure and its narrative point of view. Use your reasoning to determine what central, unifying messages the author communicates about the plight of a society's "outcasts." Draw on your experience as a reader of American and British literary texts to compare Hugo's masterpiece to other texts you have read.

Use your reasoning skills to analyze the text. Post a detailed response to this prompt, citing specific details and evidence from the text to support your reasoning. You may also wish to refer to your research about the author and the novel's historical setting to provide context in your responses. 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 B - Analyzing Literary Text

### Multiple Interpretations

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Les Misérables

## Reading Log: Les Misérables

# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze multiple interpretations of a poem.

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## Key Words

- **free verse** – a poem in which the lines do not rhyme and there is no set meter
  - **interpretation** – the act of explaining something or an adaptation or version of a work
  - **structure** – the framework of a poem, including the stanzas, line breaks, punctuation, pauses, meter, and rhyme patterns
  - **syntax** – the rules that govern how words are combined to form phrases and sentences
  - **theme** – a central, unifying idea an author is trying to convey in a piece of literature
-

# Multiple Interpretations

Poetry is open to interpretation. Like art, poetry is meant to make people think and feel. Because people have different experiences and points of view, they often interpret a poem in different ways. However, an interpretation is not simply an opinion; to be valid, interpretations should be based on evidence from the poem. That evidence includes the words and structure of the poem. Interpreting a poem will help you understand and appreciate it on a deeper level.

## Get Ready to Read

You are about to read the poem “My Sweet Old Etcetera” by E. E. Cummings. The poem is set in World War I, although Cummings only identifies it as “the recent war.” Like most of his poems, “My Sweet Old Etcetera” is written in free verse and ignores common rules of syntax and structure. While still in college, Cummings began experimenting with spelling, punctuation, capitalization, line breaks, and the spacing of words to create unique layouts for his poems. Thus, his poetry derives its impact from both the words he uses and how the words appear on the page.

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## Did You Know?

Did you know that Edward Estlin (E. E.) Cummings volunteered with the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Service in France during World War I? Serving as ambulance drivers was a popular way for pacifists and those who wished to avoid the draft to experience war without engaging in combat. While in France, he and another American, William Slater Brown, were arrested and placed in a French prison camp after they were accused of espionage because of antiwar comments Brown made in letters home. Although Cummings had not written the letters that the French intercepted, he was suspected because of his close friendship with Brown and his antiwar sentiments.

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As you read “My Sweet Old Etcetera,” take note of how Cummings uses:

- line breaks and white space
- capitalization and punctuation
- word repetition

Use your Reading Log to record examples and how they might be significant. You can use this information when it is time to analyze multiple interpretations of the poem.

Reading Log: My Sweet Old Etcetera

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## Useful Vocabulary

1. **etcetera:** a number of unspecified things or people
  2. **wrister:** a knitted covering to keep the wrist warm
-

# Multiple Interpretations



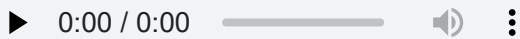
Source: Everett Historical. Shutterstock

## Analyzing Multiple Interpretations

Interpretations of “My Sweet Old Etcetera” focus on both the words and the structure E. E. Cummings uses to get across the poem’s message. In addition, most interpretations consider the historical context in which the poem was written to deepen understanding of the poet’s message. The poem, which was published in 1926, refers to

“the recent war,” meaning World War I, the war in which Cummings served as an ambulance driver. Thus, most interpretations of the poem’s theme focus on the war. Listen to the podcast to learn how two students interpret the poem’s meaning based on historical context and text evidence.

Audio: My Sweet Old Etcetera



Interpretations that take this view of the poem point to what the speaker says about each family member as evidence that Cummings is mocking the glorification of war. Aunt Lucy, for example, is cast as a newsmonger, gathering and repeating claims by the news media and American government that the war is necessary to make the world safe for democracy. The platitudes on the home front—what Cummings would view as fictions—contrast with the reality of war that soldiers face in the trenches and mud of France.

Interpretations of the poem also focus on Cummings's repetition of the word *etcetera*, offering different points of view. Some interpretations note that the word changes its grammatical function over the course of the poem. First, it is used to expand on the adjectives the speaker uses to describe his sweet old Aunt Lucy. Here it implies that Aunt Lucy has other qualities the speaker chooses not to mention. What readers think is left out depends on how they read the poem's message. One interpretation is that the speaker is leaving unsaid the fact that his aunt is gullible because she believes what the news media and the government say to build support for the war. Next, Cummings uses the word to expand on the things the speaker's sister knits, then to expand on the verb *die*, and finally as a noun itself when describing the speaker's sweetheart. Given that nothing that Cummings does in the poem is an accident, the use of *etcetera* in these ways is significant.

Interpretations often mention how the capitalization or lack of capitalization affects the meaning of the poem. Only three words are capitalized, which suggests that the use of capitals is significant. *Isabel* in the fourth stanza is not always capitalized in different printings of the poem, so it might not be significant, but the *Your* before *smile* and the last *Etcetera* always are capitalized, suggesting that the speaker's sweetheart—not achieving glory or honor—is the most important thing on the speaker's mind.



Finally, the line and word breaks and the limited use of punctuation are also addressed in some interpretations, since it makes it possible to read the poem in different ways. For example, *of course* in the fifth stanza can refer to the mother hoping that the speaker died bravely or to the father's insistence that dying for the war effort is a privilege. More interestingly, some interpretations suggest that Cummings uses the line breaks in the final stanza to indicate that the soldier is falling asleep or dying.

## Question 1

How does the student in the podcast use historical context and text evidence to support his interpretation that the poem is a statement against the jingoistic patriotism of the era?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The student uses historical context by pointing out that Cummings was an ambulance driver in World War I and was deeply disillusioned by the war, which he saw as senseless. He backs up his interpretation with text evidence by considering the views of the mother, who hoped her son would die bravely, and the father, who got hoarse saying it was a privilege and he wished he could.

## Question 2

According to the student in the podcast, what does the shift from the home front to the speaker's point of view signify?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Cummings is saying that the glorified view of war is very different from the realities of war. The speaker isn't dreaming of honor and glory, he's dreaming of being back home with the girl he loves.

## Question 3

How does Aunt Lucy's behavior support the interpretation that Cummings is mocking the glorification of war in the poem?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Such interpretations cast Aunt Lucy as a newsmonger because she gathers and repeats claims by the news media and the American government that the war is necessary to make the world safe for democracy.

## Question 4

What is one reason Cummings might have used *etcetera* repeatedly in the poem? In the case of Aunt Lucy, why might Cummings have inserted *etcetera* into her description: “my sweet old etcetera / aunt lucy”?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: One reason Cummings might have used *etcetera* is to signal to readers that some things have purposely been left out of the descriptions, leaving the reader to fill in the blanks. In the case of Aunt Lucy, readers might consider *gullible* to be a good adjective, since she believes everything that the news media and government tell the public about the need for the war.

As you reread “My Sweet Old Etcetera” to complete the Check-In and Practice, think about how the text evidence supports various interpretations of the poem. Ask yourself:

- What descriptions support certain interpretations?
- How does Cummings's use of capitalization and line breaks to support certain interpretations?
- How does the repetitive use of *etcetera* support certain interpretations?

# Check-In

Reread “My Sweet Old Etcetera.” Then, answer the questions.

## Question 1

What little punctuation Cummings uses, he uses for a reason. The same is true for capitalization. Why might Cummings have used commas in the two stanzas about Isabel and, assuming the capitalization was intentional, why might he have capitalized her name? Support your interpretation with text evidence.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: One interpretation is that he uses the commas and the capitalization to separate Isabel from the other family members. Although she is on the home front, she is knitting things for the soldiers that might make their lives a bit better. Cummings might be using the parentheses to draw attention to how industrious Isabel was by emphasizing how many socks she knitted. The only other time Cummings uses commas, parentheses, and capitalization in the poem is when referencing the speaker’s sweetheart. This suggests that the usage is positive, not negative.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

## Question 2

What might the “etcetera” mean in “my / mother hoped that / i would die etcetera / bravely of course”? Cite text evidence to support your interpretation.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Given that Cummings uses *etcetera* to expand on the verb *dies*, he may be leaving unsaid the fact that the speaker's mother would feel pride that her son died bravely in battle for the cause of liberty. The fact that he followed *etcetera* with "of course," reinforces this idea. If he died a coward, she would not be proud.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

## Question 3

How do the lines "my father used / to become hoarse talking about how it was / a privilege and if only he /could" add to your interpretation and understanding of the poem? How do you know that Cummings does not approve of this view of war? Cite text evidence.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The lines support the idea that the speaker's father, just like his mother, glorifies and romanticizes war. The father is lamenting that he is too old to have the honor of giving up his life for the cause. The remainder of the poem makes clear that Cummings does not approve of this view of war. Cummings follows the father's point of view with that of the speaker: "meanwhile my / self etcetera lay quietly / in the deep mud et / cetera / (dreaming, / et / cetera, of / Your smile / eyes knees and of your Etcetera)." The speaker is suggesting that the people on the home front do not really understand the realities of war and that soldiers are not dreaming of honor and glory, they are dreaming of being back home with the girls they love.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

## Question 4

Look at the structure of the last stanza. Because the line breaks are intentional, they have led to two different interpretations. What are those two interpretations, and what about the line breaks support either interpretation?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The line breaks suggest that the speaker is either falling asleep in the trench while dreaming of his sweetheart, or he is thinking of her as he dies. The structure of the lines support either interpretation because of their choppiness. In both cases, the speaker is losing consciousness and his speech is becoming more halting.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

# Practice

Reread “My Old Sweet Etcetera” and consult your Reading Log and Multiple Interpretations and Check-In answers to complete the activity.

## Activity

In several paragraphs, analyze multiple interpretations of the poem. In your response, consider the historical context and the text evidence that supports the interpretations, including the words and descriptions Cummings uses and the line breaks, capitalization, punctuation, and repetition.

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: “My Sweet Old Etcetera” is generally viewed as an antiwar poem set in World War I. The poem was published in 1926, and the opening of the poem references “the recent war,” thereby confirming this interpretation. Historical context also supports this interpretation, since Cummings served as an ambulance driver in the war, which left him disillusioned and believing the war was senseless. The speaker’s descriptions of the views and actions of his family members suggest that Cummings is disapproving of people on the American home front who glorify and romanticize the war by claiming that there is great honor, privilege, and glory in dying to make the world safe for democracy. This interpretation is bolstered because Cummings transitions from the description of the mother having hoped her son “would die etcetera / bravely of course” and the father becoming “hoarse talking about how it was / a privilege and if only he / could” to the speaker saying, “meanwhile my / self etcetera lay quietly / in the deep mud.” This suggests that Cummings sees the home front view as fiction versus and the speaker’s battlefield view as reality. Cummings adds another layer of meaning by suggesting that the speaker is not thinking of honor and glory while he lays in the muddy trench; instead, he is dreaming of his sweetheart.

Interpretations also focus on why Cummings only uses punctuation and capitalization when talking about Isabel and the speaker’s sweetheart. One

interpretation is that Cummings uses the commas, parentheses, and capitalization to set the women apart from the speaker's aunt and parents, thereby indicating they are special. In the case of Isabel, for example, Cummings may be using commas to separate her from the jingoistic patriotism of the aunt and parents, since she is knitting things that might make the lives of soldiers in combat a bit better. The "(and / hundreds)" might be a way of indicating her industriousness. Interpretations also focus on Cummings repetition of *etcetera* by suggesting that Cummings is using it to signal to readers that some things have purposely been left out of the descriptions, leaving the reader to fill in the blanks. Some interpretations also note that the grammatical function of the word changes over the course of the poem. It is first used to expand on the qualities of Aunt Lucy, and depending on how readers view the woman, they might add *gullible* to the list of adjectives the speaker uses to describe her, given that she believes everything that the news media and government tell the public about the need for the war. Similarly, the word is used to expand on the verb *dies* in the description of the mother. This may suggest that Cummings, through the speaker, is leaving unsaid the fact that the mother would feel pride that her son died bravely in battle for the cause of liberty. The fact that Cummings follows *etcetera* with "of course," reinforces this idea. If the speaker died a coward, she would not be proud. Finally, interpretations look at the structure of the line breaks. Some interpretations note that the line breaks (along with the lack of punctuation) make it possible to read the poem in more than one way. For example, *of course* in the fifth stanza can refer to the mother hoping that the speaker would die bravely or to the father's insistence that dying for the war effort is a privilege. However, a more interesting interpretation suggests that Cummings uses the line breaks in the final stanza to indicate that the soldier is either falling asleep in the trench while dreaming of his sweetheart, or he is thinking of her as he dies. The structure of the lines support either interpretation because of their choppy nature. In both cases, the speaker is losing consciousness and his speech is becoming more halting.

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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 the entire prompt.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I analyzed multiple interpretations of the poem.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I considered the historical context.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I considered the text evidence that supports the interpretations, including the words and descriptions Cummings uses and the line breaks, capitalization, punctuation, and repetition.
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-



# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze multiple interpretations of a play.

---

## Key Words

- **interpretation** – the act of explaining something or an adaptation or version of a work
  - **soliloquy** – a speech in a play or drama in which the actor expresses their inner thoughts to the audience instead of to another character
-

# Multiple Interpretations



Source: davehanlon. 123rf.com

Because plays mainly consist of dialogue, they often have multiple [interpretations](#). These interpretations can include differing views on the motives and qualities of characters or the meaning of lines within the play. But they can also include different adaptations of the entire play. William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a good example. It has been staged in a variety of ways in the over four centuries of its existence. In 1936, for example, Orson Welles staged the play for the Negro Theater Unit of the Federal

Theatre Project using an all-Black cast. Twelve years later, Wells produced and starred in a film version of *Macbeth* that was shot on a rather barren and dark stage that was meant to mirror the tormented state of Macbeth's guilt-ridden mind.

## Get Ready to Read

You are about to read an excerpt from *Macbeth*, one of William Shakespeare's shortest tragedies. Written around 1606 and set in medieval Scotland, the play explores the destructive quality of unchecked ambition. Macbeth, a trusted general of the Scottish king Duncan, meets three witches, which Shakespeare calls the Weird Sisters, as he returns from battle. When the witches prophesied that he will become King of Scotland, it spurs Macbeth and his wife, Lady Macbeth, to plot to kill King Duncan to hasten the prophecy's fulfillment. The resulting murder launches the couple into a downward spiral of additional murders, guilt, and eventually death. The excerpt begins with the murder of Duncan at the hands of Macbeth.

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## Did You Know?

Did you know that William Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* during a period of political unrest? King James I, who was Scottish and Protestant, ascended to the throne of England in 1603 upon the death of Queen Elizabeth I. In 1605, in what became known as the Gunpowder Plot, a group of Catholic men planned to blow up Parliament, assassinate King James I and members of his family, and replace him with a Catholic monarch and government. The plot was thwarted at the last moment and the plotters were captured and executed. It is believed that Shakespeare took this incident as inspiration for the play to show support for James I, who was a patron of Shakespeare's theater company, and possibly to protect himself from being implicated in the plot since his family had connections to the plotters.

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Read the excerpt from *Macbeth*, taking notes in your Reading Log about how you interpret specific lines and the actions and motives of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. You can use the information when it is time to analyze multiple interpretations of the play.

Macbeth

Reading Log: Macbeth

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## Useful Vocabulary

1. **dudgeon:** a type of wood used for the handle of a dagger
  2. **gouts:** drops
  3. **Hecate:** the goddess of witchcraft
  4. **palpable:** able to be felt or touched
  5. **posset:** a type of hot drink
  6. **prate:** talk long about; chatter
  7. **sensible:** something that can be perceived by the senses
  8. **Tarquin:** the ruthless last king in ancient Rome
  9. **thane:** a Scottish feudal lord
-

# Multiple Interpretations

## Analyzing Multiple Interpretations

The excerpt from *Macbeth* begins with Macbeth's [soliloquy](#) in which he struggles with his decision to kill King Duncan. The soliloquy opens with Macbeth seeing a dagger before him:

The dagger looks real to Macbeth, but he cannot grab it when he reaches for it. Because he can still see it, he questions whether it is real or a hallucination. When the play is staged, the dagger sometimes hangs in the air in front of Macbeth. In other staging, the actor clutches at the air, clearly indicating to the audience that Macbeth is imagining the dagger. These different interpretations are possible because Shakespeare is not explicit in his wording or his stage directions. “I see before me” can be interpreted in a variety of ways, including having the dagger lie on a table with the handle pointing toward Macbeth. Similarly, the following lines are usually interpreted to refer to the imaginary dagger: “Thou marshal’st me the way I was going; And such an instrument I was to use.” However, given that the lines are uttered after Macbeth draws his real dagger, they could refer to that dagger.

Different interpretations also arise out of reading the play versus seeing it performed on stage or watching a movie version. The actors suggest certain interpretations by the way they deliver their lines and by their facial expressions and body movement.

Consider the following lines from Macbeth’s soliloquy:

When reading the lines, one might interpret that Macbeth is sure that the dagger is not real and is only a figment of his imagination. However, hearing an actor say those lines with anguish and watching him turn away from the dagger as if to hide might lead to the interpretation that Macbeth is deeply tormented by the thought of killing Duncan.

As you watch the following video, observe how the two students analyze and compare interpretations of Lady Macbeth.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

## Peer Model Video Transcript

Now, answer the questions.

### Question 1

According to the video, how do interpretations of Lady Macbeth vary?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Lady Macbeth can be portrayed as an ambitious but loving wife who is trying to keep her husband from going mad after killing King Duncan, or as an ambitious and cruel woman who is pushing Macbeth to clean up the evidence so that he can move on to commit more murders. The video also notes that actors and directors in stage or film productions can also interpret Lady Macbeth differently, such as portraying her as a ruthless villain or as a wife who is attentive to her husband while still encouraging his bloodthirsty ways.

### Question 2

Why are plays like *Macbeth* open to interpretation? Given multiple interpretations, what is the best way to interpret a play like *Macbeth*?

Reveal Answer



Sample answer: Dialogue leaves a lot of room for interpretation, depending on how actors and directors decide to stage the play or deliver the lines. The students conclude that the best approach is to interpret the text on their own based on evidence from the play and then compare their interpretations to those of others.

# Check-In

Reread the following dialogue from *Macbeth*. Then, answer Question 1.

## Question 1

How do you interpret Lady Macbeth's dialogue in this excerpt? What text evidence leads you to this interpretation?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: When Lady Macbeth says, "You do unbend your noble strength to think So brainsickly of things," she is trying to convince her husband not to dwell on the deed he has committed because it will make him weak. Then, when she tells Macbeth to go wash the blood off his hands, she notices that he still has the daggers and orders him to take them back to where the grooms are and smear the grooms with blood to implicate them. It's hard to tell from just the words, but she is probably displeased. After Macbeth refuses to go, she is clearly unhappy. She calls him "Infirm of purpose!" By this she means he is a coward. Lady Macbeth is calling her husband childish when she says, "The sleeping and the dead Are but as pictures. 'Tis the eye of childhood That fears a painted devil." She is clearly angry and, given that she takes the daggers and says that she will "gild the faces of the grooms" with blood, she is also determined.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Watch the video "Understanding Macbeth: King Duncan's Murder." Then answer Question 2.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

## Understanding Macbeth King Duncan's Murder Transcript

### Question 2

How does the actor playing Lady Macbeth interpret Shakespeare's words?

Support your answer with examples from the video. How does the expert at the end of the video help you understand Lady Macbeth?

#### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The actor playing Lady Macbeth makes clear that Lady Macbeth is irritated with her husband. Her facial expressions and body language show her irritation when she sees the daggers, and her voice takes on an exasperated tone. When he refuses to go, she turns away for a moment in disgust and then grabs the daggers. When she says, "Infirm of purpose!" she almost spits the words, then she grabs the daggers and chides Macbeth for being afraid to go by implying only children "fear a painted devil." While she sounds perturbed and determined, the way she looks at the daggers and her shortness of breath suggest that she is willing herself to be strong and is not actually fearless and bloodthirsty. The expert at the end of the video confirms that Lady Macbeth also struggles to carry out the ruthless deeds that result from the murder because it is not in her true nature as a woman.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

# Practice

Reread the excerpt from *Macbeth* and watch the “Understanding Macbeth: King Duncan’s Murder” video. Then, use your Reading Log notes and your answers to the Multiple Interpretations and Check-In answers to complete the activity.

Macbeth

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

# Activity

In one or two paragraphs, analyze multiple interpretations of *Macbeth* by evaluating how reading the play versus watching a performance affects interpretations. In your answer, provide specific examples from the text and the “Understanding Macbeth: King Duncan’s Murder” video.

## Reveal Answer

Sample answer: When reading *Macbeth*, it can sometimes be difficult to interpret details and the intensity of the characters’ feelings. This is due in part to the fact that Shakespeare sometimes chooses words that can be interpreted in different ways and provides little stage direction. For example, in his soliloquy, Macbeth describes seeing a dagger before him and there is no stage direction that indicates the placement of the dagger. This leaves the positioning of the dagger open to interpretation. Consequently, different stage and film productions of the play treat the dagger differently. Sometimes, the dagger appears in the air before Macbeth. This is the way the dagger is treated in the “Understanding Macbeth: King Duncan’s Murder” video. However, some productions do not show the dagger at all, choosing instead to have the actor clutch at the air when reaching for the dagger. This latter interpretation makes it clear to the audience that the dagger is a figment of Macbeth’s imagination. The level of Macbeth’s torment is also difficult to determine when reading the play. However, when viewing the soliloquy, the actor’s tone of voice, facial expressions, and body movements convey the depths of Macbeth’s emotions. In the “Understanding Macbeth: King Duncan’s Murder” video, Macbeth turns away when he sees drops of blood on the imaginary dagger and hides his face as he almost shouts, “There is no such thing!” When he uncovers his face, he rubs it and says in a low tone, “It’s this bloody business which informs thus to my eyes.” He is clearly tormented over what he is about to do.

The same is true when trying to interpret Lady Macbeth’s dialogue. When reading the dialogue, it is difficult to determine the intensity of her feelings from her words.



For example, when Lady Macbeth tells Macbeth to go wash his hands, it can be read as a caring gesture, and her reaction when she sees that he has not left the daggers behind does not necessarily sound angry. But when the actor playing Lady Macbeth in the video says, “Go get some water, and wash this filthy witness from your hand,” she sounds and looks perturbed, and her anger grows once she sees the daggers. She demands that Macbeth take the daggers back to the place where he killed Duncan. When he refuses, she shows her disgust by spitting out the words “Infirm of purpose!” thereby suggesting that Macbeth is a coward. She then grabs the daggers and accuses Macbeth of being childish when she says, “’Tis the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil.” Lady Macbeth’s meaning is clear when reading the words, but the actor adds the intensity that is needed for the audience to understand just how disgusted she is at her husband’s behavior. It also takes the actor’s shortness of breath and the way she looks at the daggers to get across the point that she is forcing herself to do what her husband will not do. The fact that it is not in Lady Macbeth’s nature to be so ruthless is confirmed by the expert at the end of the video, but nothing in the written words conveys this meaning.

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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 the entire prompt.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I analyzed multiple interpretations of *Macbeth* by evaluating how reading the play versus watching a performance affects interpretations.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I provided specific examples from the text.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I provided specific examples from the “Understanding Macbeth: King Duncan’s Murder” video.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.



**Two Media**

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Les Misérables

## Reading Log: Les Misérables

# Objective

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## Objective

In this section, you will compare the text and another media presentation of a story.

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# Comparing a Story in Two Mediums



The following quote is attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), a leading figure of the Italian Renaissance in the fifteenth century: “Painting is poetry that is seen rather than felt, and poetry is painting that is felt rather than seen.” Da Vinci understood that different forms of art inform and shape one another. Visual artists have long drawn inspiration from stories, myths, legends, poetry, and drama. Today, you will analyze a painting that was inspired by a memorable scene from one of William Shakespeare’s greatest plays, *Romeo and Juliet*.

The story behind William Shakespeare’s tragic drama *Romeo and Juliet* was not original to him. The writer, known as “The Bard,” based his drama on a long narrative poem that was itself translated from the French in the 1500s. Shakespeare (1564–1616) took the story and launched it to new linguistic and dramatic heights. The play was written and performed between 1594 and 1596. Considered one of the greatest plays ever written in English, it is still performed more than 400 years later. Over the centuries, it has inspired artists in all genres, including actors and directors, choreographers, playwrights, filmmakers, and painters.

Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797) was an English portraitist and landscape artist best known for his use of shading and light, particularly his uncanny ability to depict a scene lit by moonlight, candlelight, or torches. This effect, which is known as *chiaroscuro*, is a feature of his painting “The Tomb Scene,” which was inspired by Act V, Scene III of Shakespeare’s tragedy.

## Take Notes as You Read

Today, you will read the final scene in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, which includes the climax of the play. If you are not familiar with the events of the play, then take time to do some research. Read a synopsis of the plot and familiarize yourself with the characters. Be prepared to read the scene more than once. At first, you may find Shakespeare’s archaic diction and syntax, as well as his use of iambic pentameter, foreign or off-putting. It may help if you read the words aloud, or, if possible, locate a video of a production of the play and watch Act V, Scene III in its entirety. Then, when

you return to the text, focus on the scene's mood by analyzing how the characters' words and actions affect you, especially at the play's climax. Finally, turn to Wright's painting and consider how the artist's use of light and dark reflect, deepen, or alter the mood of the written scene. Record your observations in your Reading Log.

Romeo and Juliet





Source: Zuri Swimmer. Alamy Stock Photo

Reading Log: Romeo and Juliet

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## Useful Vocabulary for Romeo and Juliet

1. **apothecary:** a person who sold and prepared drugs and medications
2. **conjurations:** magic spells or incantations
3. **enmity:** hostility

4. **inexorable:** impossible to persuade
  5. **jointure:** a legal term for the estate a wife may receive after her husband's death
  6. **liege:** a lord or sovereign
  7. **mattock:** a pickaxe
  8. **obsequies:** funeral rites
  9. **perforce:** by necessity
  10. **scourge:** a source of great trouble and suffering
  11. **sepulcher:** a crypt or monument used for burial of human remains
- 

## Question

What mood do you discern in both the play and in the painting? On what details do you base your response?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The play and the painting convey an eerie or gloomy mood. The scene takes place in a creepy old tomb at night. The setting is mostly dark, except for pools of torchlight.

# Comparing a Story in Two Mediums

## Analyzing Media

Artists use the specific tools of their chosen mediums to tell a story. For example, an author uses words to conjure an imaginary world, while a painter uses color, lines, and shapes. A photographer uses light and framing to capture a solitary image, while a filmmaker uses moving images, music, and sound to tell a story. Each medium engages the audience's attention and fuels their imagination in a different way. Many artists, inspired by the written word, use visuals to recreate and interpret a scene from a text in a meaningful way. Comparing interpretations of a story in two or more different mediums can provide insight into the creative process and into the capabilities and limitations of each art form.

As a reader of a text and as a viewer of a piece of visual artwork, you may analyze how the same scenes can be interpreted in different mediums by different artists. When you analyze two media, draw on the skills you already have developed for analyzing and interpreting a literary text. After reading the text, examine the image carefully to identify key details, images, and themes. Compare and contrast the treatment of these details in both mediums. Consider what you already know about the context or background of each artwork, such as who created it and when. Finally, reflect on how and why each artist interpreted the text as they did. Think about each artist's purpose or intentions.

Keep in mind that there is no one correct response when you analyze a text and its reinterpretation in a different medium. Each artist draws on their unique experiences and perspectives and uses their specific skills and tools to convey a moment or a scene in a way that is meaningful for each artist and their audience.

## Activity 1

Explain how to analyze a representation of a story in two different mediums.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: As a reader and a viewer, one should consider the artists' choices and ask questions about them. One should consider each artist's tools, intentions, and context.

## Activity 2

Support the argument that there are benefits to comparing a text and its representation in a different medium.

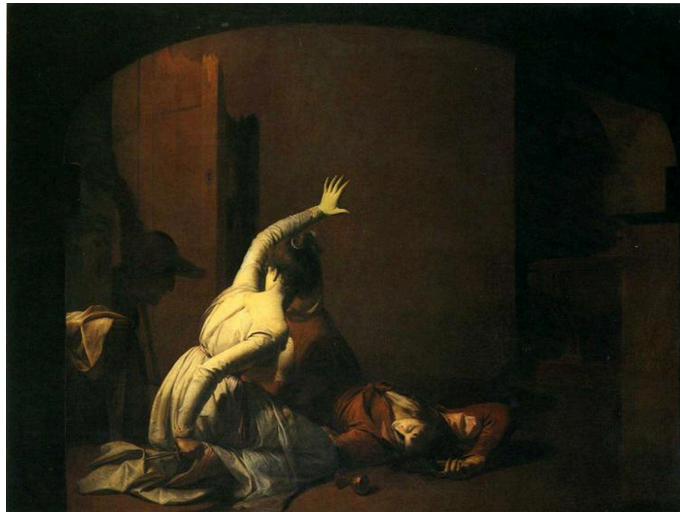
Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Comparing a text and its representation in another artform, such as a painting, enables one to better understand how art is made and how artists transform their ideas into art.

As you reread the final scene of *Romeo and Juliet* and review the painting, use what you have learned to analyze how the story is represented in two different mediums. Compare the details in the text and in the painting, and record your observations in your Reading Log.

# Check-In

Reread the passage from the play and then look once again at the painting to answer the questions.



Source: Zuri Swimmer. Alamy Stock Photo

## Activity 1

Describe the event from the play that is depicted in the painting.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The painting depicts the part of the scene after Juliet has awakened in the tomb and discovered that Romeo and Paris are dead but before she has killed herself. Friar Lawrence has already fled.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

## Activity 2

Identify details that appear in both the passage and the painting.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: As in the play, the painting is set in a dark tomb that is lit only by torchlight. The Friar has fled the scene. Romeo is dead, and Juliet holds a dagger in her hand.

## Activity 3

Evaluate how well the artist interprets the scene's mood in the painting.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The artist effectively renders the eerie or gloomy mood of the scene, which takes place in an old tomb at night. The dramatic way in which Juliet is lit from behind and the vivid gesture of her outstretched hand add to the drama and sense of doom.

## Activity 4

Pose at least two questions you have about the artist's choices in his visual rendering of the scene.

Reveal Answer

Sample answers: Why does the artist show Juliet with her arm outstretched? Why does Friar Lawrence's shadow appear to loom toward Juliet in the background when in the play he has fled in fear? Why did the artist choose to paint Juliet from behind and not show her face? Why does Paris's dead body not appear in the painting? Where is the light that shines on Juliet coming from?

# Practice

Reread the excerpt from Shakespeare's play and analyze how Wright interpreted Shakespeare's work in a visual form. Then, complete the activity.

Romeo and Juliet





Source: Zuri Swimmer. Alamy Stock Photo

## Activity

In one or two paragraphs, compare the excerpt from Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* with Wright's painting "The Tomb Scene." In your response, identify at least one similarity and one difference or omission in the artist's interpretation of the scene. Offer a hypothesis for the reasons behind the artist's choices. Then, offer a critique of the artwork. Cite specific details from the play and the painting in your response.

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The artist Joseph Wright of Derby made specific choices to render the scene's key details effectively and dramatically. The scene focuses on the moment after Juliet has awakened and discovered that Romeo is dead but before she stabs herself and dies. As in the play, the setting is a dark tomb, and the only light comes from torches carried by the characters. The lighting is mostly dim, except for the warm torchlight that seems to come from outside the painting that illuminates Juliet from behind. The artist makes some interesting choices and omissions in the painting. For example, Paris's dead body does not appear in the painting, and Friar Lawrence seems to loom toward Juliet, not flee from her. The latter detail makes the painting's mood feel more ominous. Juliet's outstretched hand seems to warn the friar from approaching, which is different from the play. It's possible that the artist wanted to create a sense of urgency and tension by making

the friar into a threatening presence rather than the bumbling helper he is in the play. As in the play, Juliet holds the dagger in her hand, but in the painting she is not poised to use it.

The artist has made interesting choices in his depiction of one of the most dramatic and memorable scenes in Shakespeare. By focusing on the last moment of Juliet's life, and by altering a few of the details, the painting highlights the character's autonomy as a woman. The painter interprets the scene to show Juliet as a strong, alert, and alive young woman, rather than as a victim of a doomed love affair. By placing Juliet's erect posture and outstretched arm under a spotlight of warm torchlight, the artist conveys a sense of her power. The viewer knows what Juliet will do next in the play; she will kill herself rather than live without her Romeo. However, the painting pauses the action and allows the viewer to imagine a different, less tragic ending for Juliet.

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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 the prompt by analyzing media to compare an excerpt from a play and a painting.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I identified a similarity and a difference in my response.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I cited specific details from the text and the artwork to support my ideas.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
-

# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums.

---

## Key Words

- **context** – the setting or background to a work of art, such as a painting or text
  - **medium** – the material or form used by an artist or writer
  - **mood** – the underlying feeling or atmosphere in a work of art
-

# Two Media



Source: [gelmold](#). [123rf.com](#)

William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has inspired many interpretations in a variety of [mediums](#) over the centuries. Some stage adaptations have stayed close to Shakespeare's intent, but others have altered or even reinvented the story to fit the social and cultural environment in which they were produced. In the 1700s, for example, some productions wrote Rosalind, Romeo's first girlfriend, out of the play, believing that Romeo forsaking Rosalind for Juliet spoke poorly of him as a gentleman. These productions also changed the tomb scene in Act V, Scene III to have Juliet awake

after Romeo has taken the poison but before he dies. This gives Romeo the chance to show a range of emotions from happiness over Juliet being alive to anger over the two families' feud to despair over his impending death. Over the years, the play has been translated into many languages, turned into musicals and films, and staged with a focus on youth violence and intergenerational conflict.

*Romeo and Juliet* has also inspired art in many mediums, including oil, watercolors, and gouache, a type of opaque watercolor. Although much of the art has focused on the romance between Romeo and Juliet, several artists in addition to Joseph Wright of Derby have portrayed the tomb scene in Act V, Scene III. In 1753, for example, Benjamin Wilson painted the tomb scene with Romeo and Juliet both alive. This matched the way the play was often produced at the time. Other artists stayed closer to Shakespeare's vision. In a 1790 painting, James Northcote captured the moment in the play when Friar Laurence enters the tomb to find Juliet waking up and Romeo and Paris dead by her side. In the late 1800s, Lucy Madox Brown Rossetti (1870) and Frank Bernard Dicksee (1882) both focused their tomb paintings on the moment in the play when Romeo finds the supposedly dead Juliet and gazes upon her face.

## Take Notes as You Read

As you reread Act V, Scene III of *Romeo and Juliet* and reexamine the tomb scene painting by Joseph Wright of Derby, look for similarities and differences between the two media. Record the evidence and your thoughts in your Reading Log. You can use the information later when you are asked to analyze the two mediums.

## Romeo and Juliet



Source: Zuri Swimmer. Alamy Stock Photo

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## Useful Vocabulary

1. **apothecary:** a person who sold and prepared drugs and medications
  2. **conjurations:** magic spells or incantations
  3. **enmity:** hostility
  4. **inexorable:** impossible to persuade
  5. **jointure:** a legal term for the estate a wife may receive after her husband's death
  6. **liege:** a lord or sovereign
  7. **mattock:** a pickaxe
  8. **obsequies:** funeral rites
  9. **perforce:** by necessity
  10. **scourge:** a source of great trouble and suffering
  11. **sepulchre:** a crypt or monument used for burial of human remains
-

# Two Media

## Analyzing the Representation of a Key Scene in Two Mediums

When making sense of a work of art that is based on a piece of literature, it is necessary to consider the literary context. Like all art, Joseph Wright's painting of Romeo and Juliet is a moment in time. Understanding the events in the play and the characters involved is an essential element in analyzing Wright's interpretation, including what he has chosen to emphasize or leave out of the painting and how closely he has followed the chronology of events as written by William Shakespeare.

As you watch the following video, observe how the students analyze how the painting and scene from the play represent the same subject.



Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Now, answer the questions about the video.

## Question 1

According to the students, what lines in the play does Wright's use of light reference? What purpose does the light play in the painting? What makes the students think this?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: According to the students, the artist's use of light references

Romeo's words: "her beauty makes / This vault a feasting presence full of light."

They think this because Wright's use of light makes it look like Juliet is the source of the light.

## Question 2

According to the students, how is the mood in the painting like the mood in the play?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The mood is dark and gloomy in both the painting and the scene in the play.

## Question 3

According to the students, what moment in Act V, Scene III has Wright captured in his painting?

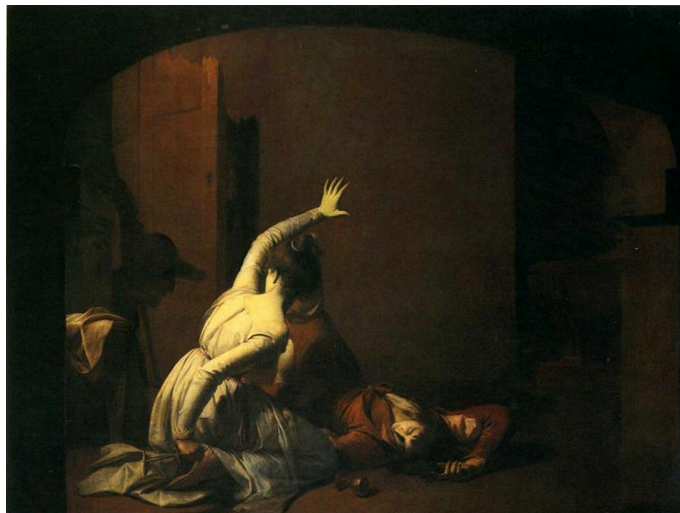
Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Given that Juliet is holding the dagger and there is a shadow in the doorway of someone coming, Wright has captured the moment just before Juliet kills herself with the dagger.

As you revisit the painting and the play, consider whether Wright has faithfully captured the details and chronology of the play, or whether he has chosen to capture the mood.

# Check-In

Study the Wright painting as you reread the lines from Act V, Scene III of *Romeo and Juliet* to analyze the similarities and differences between the treatments in the two mediums.



Source: Zuri Swimmer. Alamy Stock Photo

Reread the following lines from the play. Then, answer the questions.

## Question 1

The shadowy figure at the door wears a hat that is the shape of a capello romano, the type of hat worn by the Catholic clergy at the time Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*. The hat was still worn by Catholic clergy when Wright painted the scene. How does this suggest two possible interpretations of the shadowy figure in the painting? Which interpretation best matches the chronology of the play?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The hat suggests that the shadowy figure could be Friar Laurence. This would mean that Wright did not follow the play's chronology, since Juliet woke after Friar Laurence's arrival and did not have the dagger while he was in the tomb. If the shadowy figure is the watch, then Wright followed Shakespeare's chronology, since Juliet killed herself right before the 1 Watch entered.

Need a little extra support?

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## Question 2

What details in the painting match details that are in the play? What details in the play are absent from the painting?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In both the play and the painting, Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead, Juliet has access to Romeo's dagger, and someone approaches the tomb as Juliet is about to stab herself. The placement of the cup that contained the poison is different in the painting than in the play. In the play, Juliet remarks that the cup is "clos'd in my true love's hand," while in the painting, it appears to be overturned on the floor. In addition, Paris's body is also in the tomb in the play, but it is not pictured in the painting.

Need a little extra support?

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## Question 3

How does Wright's use of light and Juliet's gestures help capture the mood of the scene in the play?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Wright's use of light leaves much of the tomb in the dark. It is as if a torch is lit behind Juliet, placing her in the light and casting light on Romeo's upper body. This creates a dark and gloomy mood that is also evident in the play. Juliet's extended left arm and her right arm clutching the dagger behind her creates a sense of despair and urgency as she hears the shadowy figure approaching. Her raised hand with open fingers almost looks as if she is trying to stop the person who is approaching from entering the tomb. The fact that her face is turned toward the doorway heightens the sense of urgency.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

# Practice

Study the Wright painting as you reread the lines from Act V, Scene III of *Romeo and Juliet*. Then, use your Reading Log notes and your Explain and Check-In answers to complete the activity.



Source: Zuri Swimmer. Alamy Stock Photo

## Romeo and Juliet

### Activity

In one or two paragraphs, analyze the representation of the tomb scene in the painting and the play. In your response include what is emphasized or absent in each media's treatment and how the painting captures the mood of the play. Support your response with specific details from the painting and the play.

#### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Because Wright focuses on one moment in the tomb scene, there is much less detail in the painting. Wright depicts the moment in the play right before Juliet uses Romeo's dagger to kill herself. In the play, Juliet feels a sense of urgency to end her life because she hears the watch approaching the tomb: "Yea, noise? then I'll be brief.—O happy dagger! [*Snatching Romeo's dagger.*] / This is thy sheath [*Stabs herself*]; there rest, and let me die." In the painting, Wright expresses this sense of urgency through Juliet's body language. Her left arm is outstretched with her hand open as if she wants to stop the approaching person. Her right arm is clinching the dagger behind her back. Juliet's head is turned toward the door, which increases the sense of urgency.

Wright includes Romeo dead on the floor, with the cup of poison overturned near his body. In the play, Juliet finds the dead Romeo holding the cup in his hand:



“What’s here? a cup, clos’d in my true love’s hand?” Similarly, Romeo brings Paris’s dead body into the tomb in the play, but his body is not in the tomb in the painting. The shadow in the doorway is also not in the play, instead both Friar Laurence and Juliet comment on the approaching watch. While the shadow in the doorway in the painting may be the approaching watch, which would fit with the play’s chronology, it could also be Friar Laurence, given the shape of the hat, which looks like a capello romano, the type of hat that used to be worn by the Catholic clergy. If this is Friar Laurence, then Wright did not follow the play’s chronology.

Wright captures the mood of the tomb scene by his use of light and Juliet’s gestures. His use of light leaves much of the tomb in the dark. It is as if a torch is lit behind Juliet, placing her in the light and casting light on Romeo’s upper body. This creates a dark and gloomy mood that is also evident in the play. Juliet’s extended left arm and hand and her right arm clutching the dagger behind her creates a sense of despair in addition to the sense of urgency. This despair is even more evident in the play because the audience hears Juliet’s words.

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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 the entire prompt.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I analyzed the representation of the tomb scene in the painting and the play.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I included what is emphasized or absent in each media’s treatment.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I included how the painting captures the mood of the play.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I supported my response with specific details from the painting and the play.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.



## 23/24 Honors English 11 B - Analyzing Literary Text

### Themes and Archetypes

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

[Les Misérables](#)

## Reading Log: Les Misérables

# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will investigate how literary texts allude to themes and archetypes from historical and cultural traditions to develop similar themes and topics.

---

## Key Words

- **allusion** – an unexplained reference to something or someone outside the text, including another literary work
  - **archetype** – an idea, symbol, behavioral pattern, or type of character in a story that conveys a universal meaning
  - **theme** – a central, unifying idea an author is trying to convey in a piece of literature
-

# Themes and Archetypes



Source: olgachernyak. 123RF.com

Have you ever wondered how a play like *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* can so easily be adapted to a modern love story? It is because people, regardless of their culture or the historical period in which they live, exhibit similar emotions and share common challenges and experiences in their daily lives simply because they are human.

For example, all people past and present deal with birth and death, feel love and hate, experience joy and fear, worry about family and survival, and quest for power and understanding. These commonalities give rise to archetypes in literature.

When addressing common themes and topics, authors often allude to archetypes and well-known literary texts, people, or events from earlier historical periods and cultural traditions. This use of archetypes and allusions helps authors develop characters and themes that are easily recognizable to readers.

## Get Ready to Read

You are about to read an excerpt from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, a short story by Washington Irving, first published in 1820. The story's narrator recounts a 30-year-old tale about Ichabod Crane, a teacher from Connecticut who comes to live and work in Sleepy Hollow, a Dutch farming community on the Hudson River in New York. An avid believer in ghosts and witchcraft, Ichabod soon learns that the Dutch residents believe the area is bewitched. Ichabod is fascinated by the ghost stories he hears, but he is also terrified because he believes them to be true, especially the tale of the headless horseman. Impressed by the bounty of the region, Ichabod sets his sights on marrying Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, although he has little chance of winning her heart. In this excerpt, Ichabod has been invited to the Van Tassel farm, where he hopes to impress Katrina.

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## Did You Know?

Did you know that Washington Irving was part of the literary movement of Romanticism. Romantic writers rebelled against the Age of Enlightenment and its emphasis on logic and reason. Instead, Romantics stressed the importance of passion and imagination, championed individualism, and showed interest in the supernatural. They also looked to the past and to nature for inspiration. Irving drew on German and other folktales for inspiration and was fascinated with the Middle Ages in Europe. This look to the past is evident in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, as is Irving's appreciation of nature and the importance of imagination. Ichabod Crane is obsessed with the bountiful food in Sleepy

Hollow, and his overactive imagination when it comes to ghost stories is the key to his downfall.

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## Take Notes as You Read

As you read the excerpt from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, use effective reasoning to investigate how the excerpt alludes to themes and archetypes from historical and cultural traditions. Ask yourself:

- What themes emerge?
- What archetypes are evident?
- What allusions are evident?

Record the evidence and your thoughts in your Reading Log. You can use the information later in the lesson.



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# Useful Vocabulary

1. **apparition:** unusual sight or ghostly figure
  2. **capricious:** unpredictable
  3. **cavalier:** a mounted soldier, such as a knight
  4. **choleric:** easily moved to excessive anger or unreasonableness
  5. **culinary:** related to cooking
  6. **domiciliated:** dwelling
  7. **gallant:** brave; nobly chivalrous; elaborately courteous especially to women
  8. **impunity:** freedom from punishment
  9. **knight-errant:** a knight wandering in search of adventure
  10. **livery:** clothing
  11. **mettle:** strength and vigor
  12. **opulence:** abundance
  13. **sceptre:** British spelling of *scepter*—a staff or baton used by a ruler as a sign of authority
  14. **spectral:** ghostly
  15. **trifles:** things that are not important
-

# Themes and Archetypes

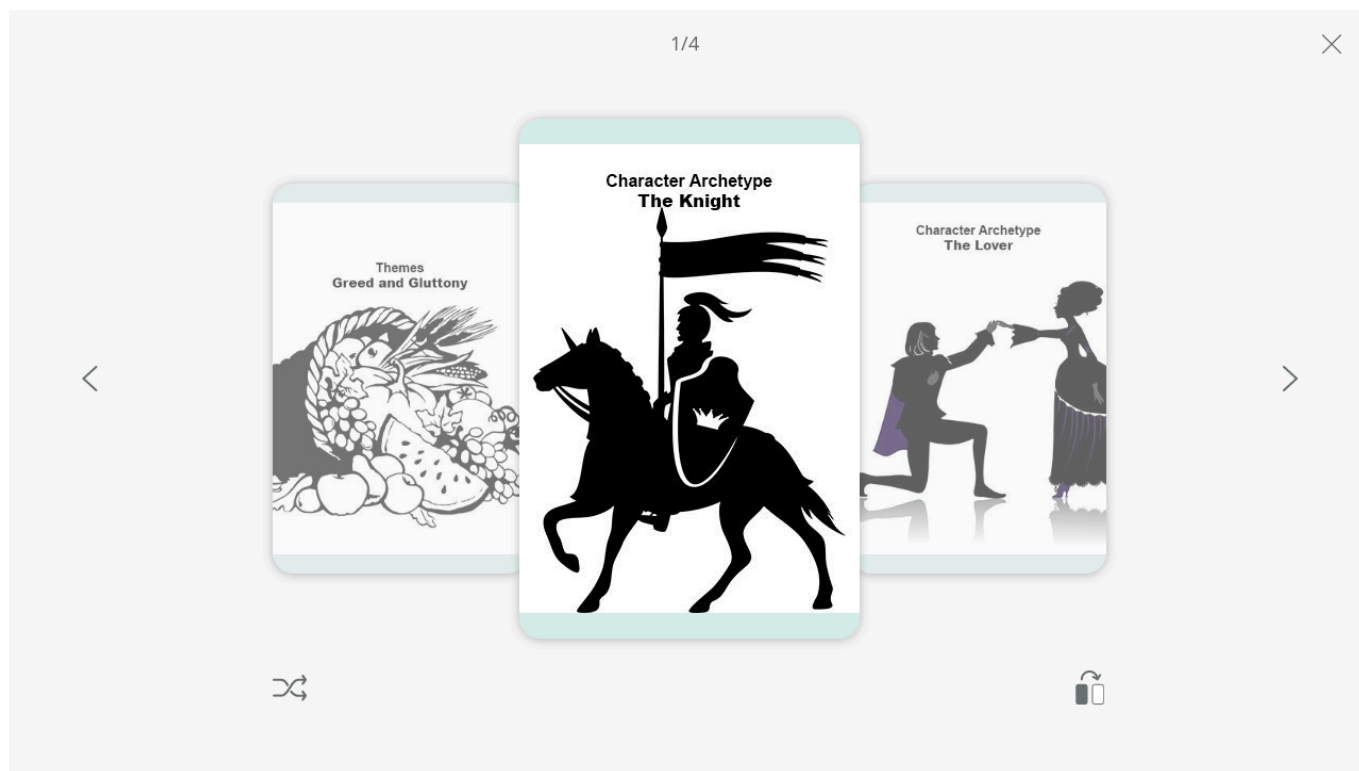
## Investigating Themes and Archetypes

Romanticists looked to an idealized past for inspiration. In *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, Washington Irving chooses to look back to the Middle Ages and cast Ichabod Crane as a knight on a quest:

But Irving is being humorous. He knows his readers will understand the qualities associated with the knight archetype: courage, loyalty, determination, self-sacrifice, and a willingness to fight to the death for love and honor. Thus, Irving quickly makes clear that Ichabod is not anything like the knights of old:

Rather than a gallant knight, Ichabod is an anti-knight and anything but romantic, making him also an anti-lover. Even Ichabod's name suggests that he is not true knight or lover material. *Ichabod* means “no glory” or “inglorious” in Hebrew. The choice of the name is an allusion to 1 Samuel 4:21 in the Bible. When the wife of Phinehas gives birth to a son after her husband's death in battle, she names the baby Ichabod, saying “The glory has departed from Israel.”

Use the flash cards to review how Washington Irving uses historical and cultural archetypes and themes to develop Ichabod Crane as the main character.



Source: cattallina. 123RF; olaola. 123RF; pazhyna. 123RF; artmari. 123RF

Now, answer the questions about the text and the media.

## Question 1

How does Washington Irving look back to earlier historical and cultural traditions in a unique way to build the character of Ichabod Crane? What does this approach allow Irving to do? Make specific references to allusions and archetypes in your response.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Irving looks back to the Middle Ages and uses the archetype of the knight and the quest as the model for Ichabod Crane and his exploits.

However, he makes Ichabod an anti-knight by showing that he lacks the qualities of a true knight on a quest for romance, such as being willing to fight to the death for love and honor. Instead of mounting a fine steed with confidence and grace,

Ichabod rides “with short stirrups, which [bring] his knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle,” and sticks out “his sharp elbows,” making him look like a grasshopper. When his “broken-down plow-horse” jogs down the road, Ichabod’s arms flap like a pair of wings. Using the knight archetype in this way allows Irving to paint a humorous picture of Ichabod Crane that his readers will easily realize is not knight-like. Irving reinforces the idea that Ichabod is anything but knightly by choosing the name Ichabod, which means “inglorious” in Hebrew. The choice of name is an allusion to 1 Samuel 4:21 in the Bible. When the wife of Phinehas gives birth to a son after her husband’s death in battle, she names him Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel.”

## Question 2

How does the story portray the themes of greed and gluttony? What historical or cultural roots does Irving allude to with these themes?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Ichabod Crane sees the bounty of the farmland from the point of view of feeding his insatiable appetite and greed. Washington Irving is alluding to two of the seven deadly sins in Roman Catholic theology. These themes were popular in medieval literature.

## Question 3

Why can Ichabod Crane also be viewed as a failed lover archetype?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Because Ichabod is pitted against Brom Bones for Katrina’s affections, his chances of winning her heart are purely in his imagination. He is not the lover he thinks he is, any more than he is a chivalrous knight.

As you reread the excerpt from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* to complete the Check-In questions and Practice activity, reason effectively to find evidence of cultural and historical themes and archetypes.

# Check-In

Reread the following excerpt from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Then, answer Question 1.

## Question 1

How does Washington Irving use the archetype of the medieval knight to help cast Ichabod Crane as a failed lover? Cite text evidence to support your reasoning.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Irving begins by describing Ichabod as “gallant” and wanting to “make his appearance before his mistress in the true style of a cavalier.” A true knight would be dressed in shining armor and ride in on a fine steed to win the love and honor of a damsel, preferably one in distress. But Ichabod is not a gallant. Irving describes him as having “sharp elbows,” presumably long legs, and a “scanty strip of forehead” with “a small wool hat” resting “on the top of his nose.” He presents a comical sight atop his steed—“a broken-down plow-horse,” which he rides “with short stirrups” with his arms flapping “like a pair of wings.” He has little chance of winning the heart of the women he is pursuing.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Reread the following excerpt from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Then, answer Question 2.

## Question 2

What cultural and historical themes are evident in this excerpt? What cultural and religious traditions does Washington Irving allude to with these themes?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Several historical and cultural themes are evident in this excerpt.

One theme is the bounty of nature. Irving spends time describing the local crops that are available for market and meals—the apples, Indian corn, pumpkins, and buckwheat. The abundance of nature is a common theme in agrarian cultures through time. The excerpt also alludes to the themes of greed and gluttony—two of the seven deadly sins in Roman Catholic theology. The seven deadly sins were popular themes in medieval literature.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

# Practice

Reread the excerpt from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and use your Reading Log notes and your Explain and Check-In answers to effectively reason about the historical and cultural themes and archetypes in the selection as you complete the activity.

## Activity

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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 the entire prompt.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I investigated how the excerpt alludes to historical and cultural themes and archetypes.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I included examples of one theme, one allusion, and two archetypes and explained how Irving uses them.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I cited text evidence to support my reasoning..
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-



# Objective and Key Word

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze the influence of mythic, classical, and traditional literature on foundational works of American literature.

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## Key Words

- **allusion** – an unexplained reference to something or someone outside the text, including another literary work
  - **archetype** – an idea, symbol, behavioral pattern, or type of character in a story that conveys a universal meaning
  - **classical literature** – the literature of ancient Greece and Rome or other ancient civilizations
  - **symbol** – something that stands for something else
  - **theme** – a central, unifying idea an author is trying to convey in a piece of literature
-

# Themes and Archetypes



Source: lienemannnicole. 123rf

Authors often draw on literature from the past when crafting stories. Alluding to characters, settings, or plots in earlier works can add depth of meaning to a story and help authors make connections. This is particularly true when the allusion is widely understood. For example, suppose an author compares their character to Hercules. In that case, readers immediately assume certain qualities, such as bravery and strength, but also a self-destructive bent, since Hercules is an archetype of the tragic hero in Greek classical literature. Similarly, if an author describes a setting as Eden-like, readers likely understand the reference is to a paradise-like setting because of how the Garden of Eden is described in the Bible.

Romantic writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries often drew on Greek and Roman classical literature and the Bible for allusions. So too, did the slightly later Dark Romantic, or Gothic, writers, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. Classical literature and the Bible are effective sources for allusions because they deal with many universal themes and references are often readily understandable.

## Get Ready to Read

You are about to read an excerpt from Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Maypole of Merry Mount." The story is set in Massachusetts in the early 1600s. The colonists of Merry Mount are fun-loving free spirits who enjoy music, merriment, and ancient pagan folk traditions like dancing around the Maypole, much to the horror of their solemn and religiously strict Puritan neighbors. The excerpt focuses on the wedding of Edgar and Edith, a young couple who are serving as "the Lord and Lady of the May."

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## Did You Know?

Did you know that Nathaniel Hawthorne's story "The Maypole of Merry Mount" is based on historical events? In 1624, Thomas Morton and Captain Richard Wollaston sailed to Massachusetts from England with 30 indentured servants for the purpose of establishing a permanent colony, which they named Mount Wollaston. After Captain

Wollaston went to Virginia with most of the indentured servants, Morton took over the colony and renamed it Mount Ma-re, which became known as Merrymount. Morton was a friendly, free-thinking man who welcomed anyone to his colony, including Indigenous Americans. He blended his Anglican religious beliefs with ancient pagan beliefs to create a colony in which poetry, dancing, music, and general merriment were encouraged. In 1627, he erected a Maypole in the colony, which further angered his Puritan neighbors, who were already unhappy about the colony trading guns for furs with Indigenous Americans. The Puritans banished Morton, but he returned several years later. This time the Puritans burned Merrymount to the ground and arrested Morton, exiling him to England.

---

## Take Notes as You Read

As you read the excerpt from “The Maypole of Merry Mount,” analyze the influence of earlier literature on the story. Ask yourself:

- What allusions to classical Greek or Roman mythology does the author make?
- What allusions to the Bible does the author make?
- Why does Hawthorne make these allusions?

Record the evidence and your thoughts in your Reading Log. You can use the information later in the lesson.

## Useful Vocabulary

1. **cadence**: rhythm
2. **canonically**: like a member of the clergy
3. **chaplet**: a wreath worn on the head
4. **cittern**: a Renaissance stringed instrument similar to a guitar but with a pear-shaped body
5. **ensign**: a sign or symbol of something
6. **faun**: a figure in Roman mythology that is half human and half goat, similar to the Greek satyr but more gentle
7. **girdled**: encircled
8. **heathen**: a disparaging way to refer to a person who does not practice Christianity, Judaism, or Islam
9. **morrice-dancer**: performer of a ritual folk dance done in costume
10. **nymph**: a minor female deity of nature found in classical mythology
11. **pagan**: a person who follows a polytheistic religion like the people of ancient Rome or Greece
12. **salvage man**: a man dressed in foliage to represent a savage, found in medieval and Renaissance pageantry
13. **similitude**: a visible likeness
14. **venerable**: calling forth respect because of age, character, or experience

**15. venerated:** greatly respected

**16. verdure:** greenness, especially of growing vegetation

**17. viol:** a bowed stringed instrument from the 1500s to 1600s

**18. votaries:** devout worshippers

---

# Themes and Archetypes

## Analyzing Influences

Nathaniel Hawthorne made several allusions to figures in Greek or Roman mythology in “The Maypole of Merry Mount,” sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. The first reference is in the first paragraph of the story:

While Hawthorne could be merely personifying the month of May, he is likely alluding to the Greek or Roman goddess Maia, for which the month of May is named. The Roman goddess Maia was a fertility goddess and was associated with spring. The Romans celebrated Maia on May 1 and 15. The Greeks also celebrated Maia in May.

The second paragraph ends with another allusion that could have more than one meaning:

The reference to the “Golden Age,” makes it sound like an allusion to Greece or Rome. However, for Hawthorne, the Golden Age referred to the time before humans fell from grace through sin. While this is a common theme in many cultures through time, Hawthorne was raised in a family with strong Puritan roots; thus he is likely making a biblical reference to the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The third paragraph contains an allusion to Greek mythology:

When Hawthorne describes the “wild throng” at the Maypole, he calls them “Gothic monsters” but suggests they could be “of Grecian ancestry” and likens them to “the fauns and nymphs . . . driven from their classic groves and homes of ancient fable.” With this reference, Hawthorne could be alluding to the festivals associated with Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, fertility, and ecstasy, which were held in spring and involved theater and merriment. In Greek myths, Dionysus was raised by nymphs and is often pictured in the company of animals or half-animal creatures, such as satyrs.

In the fourth paragraph, Hawthorne makes a direct reference to Comus, the son of Dionysus in Greek mythology:

Comus served as Dionysus's cupbearer and as the god of festivity, revelry, and merrymaking. As you watch the following video, observe how the student analyzes this allusion to Comus.



Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Now, answer the questions about the text and video.

## Question 1

According to the text, how does Hawthorne allude to classical mythology?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In the first paragraph, Hawthorne refers to May in a way that suggests that he is alluding to the Greek or Roman goddess Maia, for which the month of May is named. In the third paragraph, Hawthorne likens the “wild throng” at the Maypole to “the fauns and nymphs . . . driven from their classic groves and homes of ancient fable,” which could be a reference to the festivals associated with Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, fertility, and ecstasy.

## Question 2

According to the text, what biblical reference does Hawthorne make in the second paragraph?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Hawthorne makes an indirect reference to the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

## Question 3

According to the student in the video, what reference to Greek mythology does Hawthorne make? What biblical reference does the student note?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Hawthorne makes a reference to Comus, the Greek god of revelry and festivity when he writes, “Had a wanderer bewildered in the melancholy forest heard their mirth and stolen a half-affrighted glance, he might have fancied them the crew of Comus.” The student references a second mention of Comus when Hawthorne characterizes the English priest as the “Comus of the crew.” Hawthorne

makes a biblical reference when he notes that the Puritans compared the masques to “devils and ruined souls.”

As you reread the excerpt from “The Maypole of Merry Mount” to complete the Check-In questions and Practice activity, find evidence of additional influences.

# Check-In

Reread the following excerpt from “The Maypole of Merry Mount.” Then, answer Question 1.

## Question 1

How is this excerpt influenced by classical literature? How does this allusion help Hawthorne make a point?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Hawthorne references Comus, the god of festivity, revelry, and merrymaking in Greek mythology. Hawthorne’s readers at the time this story was first published would likely have been familiar enough with classical Greek mythology to understand the reference to Comus and to be aware of the traits that the god possessed. Thus, the allusion helped Hawthorne cast the English priest in a negative light.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Reread the following excerpt. Then, answer Question 2.

## Question 2

How does this excerpt draw from biblical literature? What is Hawthorne trying to say with this allusion?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Hawthorne is comparing the change in the young couple’s perspective on Merry Mount and their life of merriment to the biblical story of Adam

and Eve and their banishment from the Garden of Eden because they gave into temptation and ate fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In this case, the young couple's true love for one another has opened their eyes to the fact that truly loving someone leads to "care and sorrow and troubled joy." Like Adam and Eve, Edgar and Edith have lost their innocence. Thus, they no longer have a place at Merry Mount.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

# Practice

Reread the excerpt from “The Maypole of Merry Mount” and review your Reading Log notes and your Explain and Check-In answers. Then, complete the Practice activity.

## Activity

---

### 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 excerpt from “The Maypole of Merry Mount” is influenced by classical literature and the Bible.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I discussed allusions to classical Greek or Roman mythology and to the Bible.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I discussed why Hawthorne makes these allusions.
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-

## 23/24 Honors English 11 B - Analyzing Literary Text

### Source Material

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

[Les Misérables](#)

## Reading Log: Les Misérables



# Objective and Key Words

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## Objective

In this section, you will analyze how an author draws on source material in a specific literary work.

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## Key Words

- **allusion** – an unexplained reference to something or someone outside the text, including another literary work
  - **first-person narrator** – the voice telling the story is a character in the story, using the pronoun *I* to narrate events
  - **motif** – important pattern and feature in a literary work
  - **plot** – the sequence of events that make up a story
  - **source material** – original or authoritative material an author uses for ideas and information
  - **theme** – central, unifying idea in a piece of literature
-

# Source Material



Source: fonafona. 123RF.com

William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* is the timeless story of two young lovers from feuding families, doomed by the forces of family and society that conspire to keep them apart. Romeo and Juliet are the archetypal star-crossed lovers. As such, Shakespeare's story of their forbidden love has served as [source material](#) for countless retellings and adaptations in the centuries since the play first appeared,

including many modern stories in film and print. Some of these stories are faithful to Shakespeare's tragic ending, and others are inspired by elements in the play.

## Get Ready to Read

You are about to read an excerpt from *Shame the Stars* by Guadalupe García McCall. *Shame the Stars* draws from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to frame the love story between Joaquín del Toro and Dulceña Villa, two eighteen-year-old Mexican Americans living in Texas in 1915. The effects of the Mexican Revolution serve as a backdrop for the love story. Friends since childhood, the two face a forced separation when their families feud over how to react to the violence and discrimination toward Mexican American resulting from Texas Rangers and local law enforcement fighting Tejano insurgents siding with the Mexican revolutionaries.

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## Did You Know?

Did you know that William Shakespeare borrowed the idea for *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* from earlier sources? The story of star-crossed lovers dates back to ancient fables like Pyramus and Thisbe. But one of Shakespeare's key sources for the play was Arthur Brooke's narrative poem, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, published in 1562. The poem, in turn, is based on a popular European folktale that appeared in various versions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including a version contained in Matteo Bandello's *Novelle*. In Brooke's poem, Romeus and Juliet's romance takes place over nine months. Shakespeare intensified the impact of the story by condensing the romance into five days, lowering Juliet's age from barely 16 to not yet 14, and adding some new characters and plot twists.

---

## Take Notes as You Read

As you read the excerpt from *Shame the Stars*, analyze how Guadalupe García McCall draws on source material from *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Record the text

evidence and your thoughts in your Reading Log. You can use the information later in the lesson.

Reading Log: Shame the Stars

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## Useful Vocabulary

1. **conjunto:** a type of Mexican American music influenced by the music of German immigrants to Texas
  2. **ojitos:** Spanish word for eyes; to make eyes at someone is to ogle or show interest in them
  3. **quince:** shortened form of *quinceañera*, a Latin American celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday symbolizing her transition to adulthood
-

# Source Material

## Drawing on Source Material

*Shame the Stars* is not a direct retelling of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Instead, Guadalupe García McCall uses plot elements, themes, and motifs from William Shakespeare's play to frame and enhance her story. Unlike the play, the story is told by Joaquín del Toro from the perspective of a first-person narrator. And, although there are tragic moments in the book, the young lovers eventually prevail in fulfilling their wish to be together, as tensions in the community ease and the two families reunite. However, the motifs, such as light versus dark and youth versus age, and themes, such as forbidden love, secrecy, the individual against society, and death and violence, are found in both tales.

The excerpt you have just read is heavily influenced by Shakespeare's play. Like Romeo in Act 1, Scene V of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Joaquín crashes a party being held by Dulceña's extended family for the quinceañera of her cousin, Lupita. Again, like the play, the party is a masked affair, allowing Joaquín to attend without alerting Dulceña's parents.

Between the plumed masks and the reference to "Juliets," Guadalupe García McCall leaves little doubt about the source of her allusions.

Guadalupe García McCall continues to draw on Shakespeare's play as she writes about Joaquín's interaction with Dulceña at the quinceañera. Select the image. Then, select each number to learn what happens in the corresponding situation in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*.

Source Material – Drawing on Source Material Hot Spot

Plus Select Format Default View

1

Her cousin, Irma, put her hand on Dulceña's shoulder and whispered something in her ear. Dulceña's lips parted and her teeth sparkled as she smiled that generous, full smile I had grown to love. My pulse quickened. Without taking her eyes off me, she pushed the girl away gently, lifted her skirt to keep the hem off the dance floor, and started to inch around other guests in the crowded room.

2

I moved forward too, slowly, until we were face-to-face in the center of the dance floor amid an array of couples waying to a gentle waltz. There were so many people that we didn't have to work at getting close.

3

"Are you my Julieta?" I asked. Grinning, I offered her my hand. She smiled and giggled nervously before taking it. "I don't know," she said. "Are you my Romeo?"

## Question 1

What are some examples of themes and motifs that *Shame the Stars* and the *Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* share?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Both tales share the motifs of light versus darkness and youth versus age and themes like forbidden love, secrecy, the individual against society, and death and violence.

## Question 2

How does Guadalupe García McCall draw on her source material when crafting events at the quinceañera?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The author makes the quinceañera a masked dance, which allows Joaquín to sneak into the dance without Dulceña's parents realizing he is there.

This parallels the Capulet's masked ball in Act I, Scene V of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, where the wearing of masks helps Romeo sneak into the ball and meet Juliet. Joaquín's reaction to seeing Dulceña across the room is similar in its passion to Romeo seeing Juliet across the room and remarking on her beauty. Joaquín and Dulceña meeting each other on the dance floor also mirrors Romeo's first encounter with Juliet, while Joaquín and Dulceña's questions "Are you my Julieta?" and "Are you my Romeo?" are a direct allusion to the play.

As you reread the excerpt from *Shame the Stars* to complete the Check-In questions and Practice activity, find additional evidence of how Guadalupe García McCall draws on William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*.

# Check-In

Reread the following excerpts from *Shame the Stars* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Then, answer the Question 1.

Romeo and Juliet

## Question 1

What similar plot element do you see in both excerpts?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In both excerpts, the main character is going to the party so that they can see someone out of feelings of love. Joaquín is willing to crash the quinceañera because he has arranged to meet Dulceña there. Romeo is willing to crash the Capulet's feast in hopes of see Rosaline there, a girl Romeo pines over before he meets Juliet.



Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

Reread the following excerpts from *Shame the Stars* and *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Then, answer the Question 2.

Romeo and Juliet

## Question 2

Compare the two excerpts. How has Guadalupe García McCall borrowed a plot detail and theme from *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The plots are similar. In *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo is trying to avoid detection at the Capulet ball, but when he speaks aloud of Juliet's beauty, Tybalt hears him and recognizes his voice. Angered that a Montague has

crashed the party, Tybalt wants to kill him. In the case of Joaquín and Dulceña, they are trying to avoid being caught by Dulceña's parents, since the two young people are not supposed to be seeing one another. However, Madame Josette has already figured out that Joaquín is at the party. This speaks to the shared themes of secrecy and danger.

Need a little extra support?

[Get Help Here](#)

# Practice

Reread the excerpt from *Shame the Stars* and review your Reading Log notes and your Explain and Check-In answers. Then, complete the Practice activity.

## Activity

In one or two paragraphs, analyze how Guadalupe García McCall draws on source material from William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. In your response, answer the following questions:

- What specific plot details from *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* does Guadalupe García McCall use in the excerpt?
- What themes and motifs does the excerpt share with *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*?

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Guadalupe García McCall sources several plot details from *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Like Romeo and Juliet, Joaquín and Dulceña are in love and conspire to see one another, even though their parents have forbidden them to do so because the families are feuding. In addition, the author chooses a similar setting for the two young lovers to meet—an elaborate party with dancing. In the case of *Shame the Stars*, the setting is the quinceañera of Dulceña's cousin Lupita. For Romeo and Juliet, the setting is the Capulet ball. Both celebrations feature masks, which helps both sets of young lovers hide their identities. Like Romeo with Juliet, Joaquín is struck by Dulceña's beauty when he sees her across the room at the quinceañera. Both young men meet their objects of desire and talk. And like Romeo and Juliet, Joaquín and Dulceña getting together runs the risk of being caught. Romeo is detected by Tybalt, who wants to kill him, and Dulceña and Joaquín worry that her mother and father will discover they have been dancing, since Madame Josette has already figured out that Joaquín is at the party.

Guadalupe García McCall also borrowed several motifs and themes for *Shame the Stars*. The motif of youth versus age is evident in the excerpt. Just as Romeo and Juliet face opposition from their parents, Joaquín and Dulceña are forbidden to see each other because their parents are feuding. The excerpt and the play also share the themes of forbidden love and secrecy.

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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 the entire prompt.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I analyzed how Guadalupe García McCall draws on source material from William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I analyzed specific plot details from *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* that Guadalupe García McCall uses in the excerpt.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I analyzed what themes and motifs the excerpt shares with *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*.
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
-

# Objective and Key Words

---

## Objective

In this section, you will analyze how an author transforms source material in a specific literary text.

---

## Key Words

- **allusions** – passing references to a well-known person, place, historical event, or character from literature or work of art
  - **first-person narrator** – the voice telling the story is a character in the story, using the pronoun *I* to narrate events
  - **motifs** – important patterns and features in a literary work
  - **themes** – central, unifying ideas in pieces of literature
-

# Analyze How an Author Transforms Source Material



Source: Nadiia Forkosh. 123RF

Young love is and probably always will be an appealing subject for authors and artists. Tales about young people experiencing the intense emotional turmoil of their first romantic relationship have drama, tension, and suspense built right into their structure. One of the most famous love stories in the English language is William Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. It essentially became the blueprint for stories about forbidden love written in the last four hundred years. Each retelling puts its own

special twist on Shakespeare's version. Today, you will read an excerpt from a modern retelling of the story, *Shame the Stars* by Guadalupe García McCall.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) wrote *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* between 1594 and 1596. Considered one of the greatest plays ever written in English, it is still performed more than 400 years later. Over the centuries, it has inspired authors and artists in all genres to tell the story of two lovers who defy the wishes of their feuding families and who ultimately meet a tragic end. Some retellings of this classic tale may be thinly veiled reinterpretations that follow the plot of Shakespeare's play very closely. Some versions even make direct allusions to Shakespeare's characters so that readers make no mistake about the source of the story.

Author Guadalupe García McCall was born in Mexico and grew up in Texas, so she knows first-hand the culture and geography that serve as the backdrop for her own version of the Romeo and Juliet story. García McCall's version is set in a Texas town near the border between Mexico and the United States in 1915. At that time, the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) was well underway, with fierce fighting between rebel factions seeking independence from dictator Porfirio Díaz. The families in García McCall's story live in Texas, and even though they sympathize with the rebels' cause in their native Mexico, as Mexican Americans, they are divided about how to respond. One family chooses not to show their support for the rebellion out of fear of retaliation from the Texas Rangers and other local law enforcement. One effect of the tensions between the families causes issues for the young lovers.

## Take Notes as You Read

As you read *Shame the Stars*, Guadalupe García McCall's interpretation of Shakespeare's famous play about star-crossed lovers, notice any direct allusions to the play as well as details about the characters and plot that she has adapted to a more modern setting. Also, pay attention to the story's narrative point of view and consider the effects of using a first-person narrator to tell the story. Think about how that point of view must be different from the original play and how it affects your understanding of events in the story. Record your observations in your Reading Log.

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## Useful Vocabulary for Shame the Stars

1. **ojitos:** Spanish word for eyes; to make eyes at someone is to ogle or show interest in them
  2. **quince:** shortened form of *quinceañera*, a Latin American celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday, symbolizing her transition to adulthood
-



# Analyze How an Author Transforms Source Material

## Comparing *Shame the Stars* and Its Source Material

Most readers approach a text by reading the blurbs on the cover or in the online description to find out who wrote it and what it is about. Some texts borrow ideas from other texts. *Shame the Stars* is an explicit retelling of another text, but others are more subtle. In either case, it's up to the reader to determine how, why, and to what effect the author has adapted and transformed the source material.

As a careful reader, you can analyze the details in a text to determine how they are similar to or different from a source text. Do some research to find out as much as you can about the original source. You may even wish to read the original text, if time allows. Asking thoughtful questions, such as, “How closely do the setting, characters, and plot in this text mirror those in the original? Why did the author think the existing text was a good foundation for telling a more modern story?” By comparing the two texts and considering how the author transformed their source material, you can gather insights into the creative process. You can also determine what ideas, motifs, or themes have remain relevant and intriguing to readers over time.

Watch the video about two student who discuss and analyze the source material for *Shame the Stars*. Then, answer the questions.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

## Question 1

What similarities do the students in the video notice between *Shame the Stars* and its source material, Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*?

Show Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: Both stories have a scene in which a boy and a girl spend time together at a dance. Both have supportive friends who encourage the relationship, and both must keep their feelings a secret because their families are mortal enemies.

## Question 2

What differences do the students in the video notice between *Shame the Stars* and its source material?

Show Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: In Shakespeare's play, Romeo and Juliet meet and fall in love instantly at a party. In *Shame the Stars*, the main characters already know each other. The play is set in Italy in the 1300s, and the story is set in Texas in 1915.

As you reread the excerpt from *Shame the Stars*, notice other ways that the author has transformed the source material in her retelling. Use the following strategies and record your observations in your Reading Log:

- Consider which elements of the source material the author borrowed to create this text.
- Review what you know about this source material and what more you would like to discover.
- Explain how the author transforms the source material and what effect this transformation has on the story and the reader.

# Check-In

Reread the excerpt from *Shame the Stars* and then read an excerpt from the original source material to answer the questions.

## Question 1

Based on the two passages, how do you know that *Shame the Stars* is based on Shakespeare's play?

Show Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: The characters in *Shame the Stars* make allusions to the play.

The narrator asks Dulceña, "Are you my Julieta?", and Dulceña answers by asking, "Are you my Romeo." In addition, there are many details that are similar in *Shame the Stars*.

Need a little extra support?

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## Question 2

What similarities do you notice in the excerpt from *Shame the Stars* and in the source material?

Show Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: Both scenes are set at a party, and in both scenes the two young people talk quietly to each other while surrounded by friends, families, and enemies.

## Question 3

What is one way the author of *Shame the Stars* transforms the original source material?

Show Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: The author of *Shame the Stars* updates the language and changes the point of view. The story is told from Joaquín's first-person perspective. Also, Joaquín and Dulceña know each other already. In Shakespeare's play, Romeo has never met Juliet before, but he is struck instantly by Juliet's beauty and falls in love. Unlike in the story, the two hold hands and kiss.

Need a little extra support?

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## Question 4

What is one effect of the transformation of the source material in *Shame the Stars*?

Show Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: The updated language and style of writing make the story feel somewhat modern, although the characters in Shakespeare's play are less inhibited—they hold hands and kiss after knowing each other only a few minutes, while in the story, the characters are much more modest.

# Practice

Reread *Shame the Stars* and use what you know about that story and Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* to complete the activity.

## Activity

In a paragraph, analyze how contemporary author Guadalupe García McCall transforms the source material, William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, in her novel *Shame the Stars*. In your response, identify details that García McCall borrows and explain how she transforms them.

Consider the narrative techniques that García McCall uses in her version of the story and cite them to explain the effects of the author's choices.

Show Answer

Hide Answer

Sample answer: In *Shame the Stars*, author Guadalupe García McCall borrows heavily from her source material, William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. She even has her characters allude to Shakespeare's characters.

However, she updates the language and changes the setting and the characters to show what life was like during another period in history. Unlike the play *Romeo and Juliet*, which was set in Italy in the 1300s, *Shame the Stars* takes place in a town at the border between Texas and Mexico during the years of the Mexican Revolution.

The main characters in both texts are young people who fall in love despite the wishes of their feuding families. Shakespeare's drama has no narrator, as the characters speak and act out the events, but the narrator in *Shame the Stars* is Joaquín, the "Romeo" figure, which means readers only see things from his perspective. In the play, the two characters meet and instantly fall in love; in the story, the characters have known each other for a while and cautiously meet while masked at Dulceña's party. Although *Shame the Stars* is set more than one hundred years ago, the author chooses to have the characters speak in a modern way, sprinkling in Spanish words to help anchor the characters in their setting. At the same time, *Shame the Stars* feels old-fashioned. The characters are more

modest in their words and actions than the original Romeo and Juliet, and the action of the story is more slowly paced. The newer version of the story seems more sedate, more thoughtful, and also more detailed because of the author's use of description, setting, and first-person narration.

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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 the prompt by analyzing how *Shame the Stars* transforms its source material.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ I identified details borrowed from the source material and explained how the author transformed them and to what effect.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ I cited specific details from the text to support my ideas.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ I used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
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## 23/24 Honors English 11 B - Analyzing Literary Text

### Analyzing Literary Text Apply

# Unit Reading Information

In this unit, you will read *Les Misérables* unless otherwise directed by your teacher.

Select the links to access the text and reading log.

Les Misérables

## Reading Log: Les Misérables

# Analyzing Literary Text: Apply

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## Objective

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

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## Show What You Know

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

- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to overall structure and meaning.
- Analyze relationships among thematic development, characterization, point of view, significance of setting, and plot.
- Compare point of view from two literary texts, and analyze a particular point of view reflected in a work of literature from the United States.
- Analyze how two or more texts treat similar themes and topics and evaluate the contribution of these texts to society.
- Analyze multiple interpretations of a play and a poem.
- Compare the text and another media presentation of the story.
- Analyze the representation of a subject or key scene in two different artistic mediums.
- Investigate how literary texts allude to themes and archetypes from historical and cultural traditions.
- Analyze how a particular culture experience is reflected in, as well as the influence of mythic, classical and traditional literature on, foundational

works of American literature.

- Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific literary work.

Now, you will have an opportunity to show what you have accomplished and apply your learning to the unit text, *Les Misérables*. 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.

- In one or two sentences, sum up your opinion of *Les Misérables*, touching on your most significant impression and main takeaway.
- Many people consider reading the entirety of the novel an arduous task. Convince them otherwise by offering some strategies that helped you complete the reading.
- Consider the value of other “classic” texts you’ve read in this course, such as the works of Shakespeare, and then determine where, in your opinion, *Les Misérables* stands in the pantheon of other works deemed by scholars to be of literary and historical significance. What aspects of the novel impact your placement?
- Reflect on the adaptation of *Les Misérables* as a musical by evaluating how well the medium could potentially do justice to the historical significance of the text and the weightiness of the themes. In your opinion, does popularization of such a weighty text demand that the text be simplified—and even altered—to suit a widespread audience? Does such an alteration reflect the significance of the text, or does it disparage it?
- Discuss Hugo’s lengthy discourses on French history. How did they impact your understanding of the events as well as your enjoyment of the story?

How might the original French version have rendered meaning that might be altered in translations and adaptations?

- Compare and contrast Jean Valjean, Fantine, and Cosette in terms of their dreams and aspirations, their suffering, and their spirit. Explain how they are similar to or different from real people from other eras or cultures.

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

# Analyzing Literary Text: Apply

## Show What You Know

Reread the opening section of Volume V, Book First, Chapter 1 of *Les Misérables*. (By this point in the story, Jean Valjean is on his way to join the rebels at the barricades.) Then, assess your application of the learning goals from this unit by answering the questions that follow.

Les Misérables

### Question 1

Hugo begins and ends the passage with a description of the barricades behind which the rebels are defending themselves. How does the author's decision to frame the passage with a description of these two architectural structures contribute to aesthetic impact as well as to meaning?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The descriptions of the massive barricades as “memorable” and “fearful masterpieces of civil war” allow readers to visualize not only the enormous size of the structures but the imposing nature of that size. The barricades were clearly meant to appear threatening. In addition, the device has a symbolic purpose: Metaphorically, the structures keep the people imprisoned in their oppressed state. The structures themselves convey the looming presence of French history, which explains the nationalistic pride that fuels the fervor of the revolutionaries.

## Question 2

The English language translation of *Les Misérables* was extremely popular in the United States during the time of the Civil War. However, one Southern publisher chose to release a version that had been heavily censored for Confederate readers. Why might the text have been so popular during this time in American history, and why might a Confederate publisher have chosen to censor it?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: Given that the United States was in the midst of a civil war, readers could likely relate to the struggle between two sides that both believe are fighting for a just cause. However, Victor Hugo was known to support abolition, and both the passage and the larger novel condemn the idea of oppression of the lower classes—or any people—by those in power and control. Thus, *Les Misérables* was likely seen as an attack on slavery, and due to the revolutionary spirit it inspires, it may have been censored out of fear that Southern audiences would be offended.

## Question 3

Select the interactive to answer the question.

## Question 4

Consider the characters of Thénardier and his wife. In the novel, Victor Hugo portrays them as despicable and cruel, while in the musical version of the story, they are considered the comic relief—their actions are presented in a way that is still malicious, but also often humorous and over the top. Explain the purpose of this alteration and its effect on the audience, linking it to the visual and auditory experience of the theater.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The creators of the musical used the Thénardiers as a tool to inject humor into what was otherwise a tragic story. This allowed the new work to remain true to the original material while entertaining the audience at the same time. The dazzling experience of live theater is intended to highlight the themes and messages of a story, however grim, while at the same time keeping the audience enchanted and entertained. The malicious intent of the couple was not lost on the audience, but rather heightened, as the humor called attention to their abhorrent behavior in an entertaining way.

The excerpt below is from the first chapter of Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel *The Jungle*. The story focuses on how the terrible conditions of the meatpacking industry in Chicago during the early 20th century left workers—many of whom were immigrants or first-generation Americans—impoverished and endlessly struggling to survive. As you read this excerpt, which takes place at a wedding, think about the perspective the narrator takes and how it might compare to that of the passage from *Les Misérables*.

## Question 5

Compare and contrast the excerpts from *The Jungle* and *Les Misérables* in terms of their narrative point of view and theme. How do these elements in each passage reflect the culture in which they were written?

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In both passages, an omniscient narrator conveys the magnificence of the lower classes. Both describe the indelible spirit of these people



through their suffering, although Hugo lends more melodrama to his description by interjecting philosophical statements that stress the tragedy of the situation. This is characteristic of French romanticism. In *The Jungle*, Sinclair uses a more familiar style of language that reflects the less formal American lifestyle and world view.

## Question 6

The passage from *The Jungle* quotes lyrics from the song “In the Good Old Summertime.” How do the lyrics help to characterize the scene, and what message do they convey about the human experience? How is this message similarly conveyed in *Les Misérables*?

### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: The upbeat and hopeful tone of the song lyrics represent the American dream to the partygoers; they express the undying will to overcome hardship and suffering to have a better life. The scene is jovial, which shows that the people, although oppressed, allow themselves moments of escape from their suffering. They experience joy despite having to struggle to survive, which attests to the same strength of will as demonstrated by the characters in *Les Misérables*.

Earlier in the unit you read an excerpt from *Macbeth*, Shakespeare’s classic tragedy that tells the tale of the trusted general Macbeth and the actions he takes to fulfill a prophecy stating that he will become King of Scotland. Reread the excerpt as needed.

## Macbeth

Now, watch a clip from a short video summary of *Macbeth*.

Video cannot be displayed on Print Preview

Shakespeare Today Macbeth - Act 2 Summary Transcript

## Question 7

Contrast the interpretations, analyzing the effect of each on the audience.

Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In Shakespeare's text, we don't actually see Macbeth murder the king or Lady Macbeth frame the guards; instead, we hear about each event after it happens through the characters' descriptions. Our perceptions of the events are shaped solely by these descriptions and by the characters' reactions to what is said. In the video, however, we see both events in the moment as they occur. This adds a frightening tone that shapes our interpretation of the events, as we see firsthand just what degree of violence and deceit Macbeth and his wife are capable of.

Read the poem below to yourself several times. Then, record yourself reciting the poem aloud with feeling.

## I saw a man pursuing the horizon

by Stephen Crane

1. I saw a man pursuing the horizon;
2. Round and round they sped.
3. I was disturbed at this;
4. I accosted the man.
5. "It is futile," I said,
6. "You can never —"
7. "You lie," he cried,
8. And ran on.

## Question 8

Reread the poem and listen to your recording of it. How does your interpretation of each version differ? Explain how individual readings of the poem might render different meanings and evoke different emotions.

#### Reveal Answer

Sample answer: In the poem, the “horizon” the man is chasing represents hopes and dreams that are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. When I read the text of the poem, my perspective tends to align with the speaker—their point of view is that the man is deranged for pursuing an impossible dream. However, when I listen to the recording, I hear the determination in the speaker’s voice to continue chasing his dream. Meaning, as well as emotion, is conveyed through tone and inflection, pauses and pace, which explains how different readings can reflect different interpretations of the same poem and affect readers in different ways. One reading might reveal the speaker’s frustration, for example, while another might reveal their excitement or optimism.

#### 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.

### Compare to Grow

Question Missed	Section to Review
1	Structure and Plot
2	Context
3	Structure and Plot
4	Two Media
5	Point of View, Context
6	Context, Themes and Archetypes
7	Multiple Interpretations
8	Multiple Interpretations

# Analyzing Literary Text: Apply

## Try This

### Activity 1

Since *Les Misérables* was first published, it has been adapted for theater, film and TV, and even video games. Consider how you might draw from a small portion of the novel to create an adapted work for a particular medium. In a few paragraphs, describe the work you would create and the way in which you might transform Hugo's work to make it your own.

### Activity 2

The chapter title of the passage excerpted from *Les Misérables* likens the two barricades to Scylla and Charybdis, figures from Greek mythology. Take a few minutes to research Scylla and Charybdis and identify the ideas and themes they represent. Then, in an essay of 450 to 500 words, discuss the significance of the chapter title and the symbolism of the two barricades, explaining how Hugo's description of the war between them characterizes a theme of the novel as a whole. Use your analysis to evaluate the relevance of this theme as it applies to understanding the experiences of the characters of Jean Valjean, Fantine, and Cosette.

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.

Analyzing Literary Text Apply Rubric



**Analyzing 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.

[View Learning Coach Guide](#)

## 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?

[View Learning Coach Guide](#)

## 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.

[View Learning Coach Guide](#)

## 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.

## **23/24 Honors English 11 B - Analyzing Literary Text**

### **Analyzing Literary Text Unit Test**