

## ***How to Read Literature Like a Professor* (Thomas C. Foster) Notes**

### **Introduction**

Archetypes:

Faustian deal with the devil (i.e. trade soul for something he/she wants)

Spring (i.e. youth, promise, rebirth, renewal, fertility)

Comedic traits:

tragic downfall is threatened but avoided

hero wrestles with his/her own demons and comes out victorious

What do I look for in literature?

- A set of patterns
- Interpretive options (readers draw their own conclusions but must be able to support it)
- Details ALL feed the major theme
- What causes specific events in the story?
- Resemblance to earlier works
- Characters' resemblance to other works
- Symbol
- Pattern(s)

Works: *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Dr. Faustus*, "The Devil and Daniel Webster", *Damn Yankees*, *Beowulf*

### **Chapter 1: The Quest**

The Quest: key details

1. a quester (i.e. the person on the quest)
2. a destination
3. a stated purpose
4. challenges that must be faced during on the path to the destination
5. a reason for the quester to go to the destination (cannot be wholly metaphorical)

The motivation for the quest is implicit- the stated reason for going on the journey is never the *real* reason for going

The **real** reason for ANY quest: self-knowledge

Works: *The Crying of Lot 49*

### **Chapter 2: Acts of Communion**

**Major rule:** whenever characters eat or drink together, it's communion!

Communion: key details

1. sharing and peace
2. not always holy
3. personal activity/shared experience
4. indicates how characters are getting along
5. communion enables characters to overcome some kind of internal obstacle

Communion scenes often force/enable reader to empathize with character(s)

Meal/communion= life, mortality

Universal truth: We all eat to **live**, we all **die**. We all live, we all die.

Works: *Tom Jones*, "Cathedral," *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, "The Dead,"

### **Chapter 3: Vampirism**

We are attracted to danger

Vampirism: key details

1. older figure violates younger woman
2. "vampire" leaves his mark on the victim
3. vampire steals innocence
4. sexual allure
5. older figure= corrupt, outdated values
6. victim= stripping away of youth, stripping away of energy, stripping away of virtue
7. a continuance of the old "vampire's" life-force
8. the death/destruction of the young victim

Symbolism involved in vampirism

1. selfishness
2. exploitation
3. a refusal to respect other people's independence

Ghosts and vampires are ALWAYS about something other than themselves

Ghosts: key details

1. ghost grows in strength by weakening someone else (holds true of vampires, as well)

Types of exploitation:

denial of someone else's right to live in order to satisfy our own needs/desires  
placing one's own desires above someone else's needs

We are ALL vampires, sucking away at other people's force in one way or another.

Works: *Dracula*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, *The Turn of the Screw*, "Daisy Miller", *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Women in Love*

## Chapter 4: Sonnets

Key details:

1. 14 lines
2. iambic pentameter
3. lines have 10 syllables
4. ten syllables long is about as high as fourteen lines in length; square!
5. two sections, two units of meaning
6. there is always a shift between the two units
7. arranged in lines, written in sentences

Petrarchan/Italian Sonnet details:

- First stanza has eight lines and another stanza of six lines
- Rhyme scheme unifies first eight lines and another rhyme scheme unifies the last six lines
- First eight lines have relate to one idea, last six lines relate to another idea

Shakespearean/English Sonnet details:

- First stanza has four lines, second stanza has four lines, third stanza has four lines, last two lines are a couplet
- First three stanzas have their own rhyme schemes and the last couplet has its own

Always pay attention to the shape of a poem. The shape indicates the divisions in subject matter and shifts (mood, tone, setting, etc.).

Works: "An Echo from Willow-Wood"

## Chapter 5: Patterns

Be aware of patterns, archetypes, recurrences! Look for them!

There's no such thing as a truly original work of literature- everything contains elements from somewhere else (not that the writer consciously copied the ideas, but the ideas themselves have become embedded in society's cultural dialogue)

All writing builds on what has come before

authors play on a reader's knowledge of history, culture and literature- they EXPECT the reader to make subconscious connections

Literally EVERYTHING comes from one particular story. ONE story.

Intertextuality= ongoing interaction between poems/stories/literary works

Look for patterns, archetypes, common symbols, literary devices to help understand hidden similarities and general interplay between works

Works: *Going After Cacciato*, *Wise Children*

## **Chapter 6: Shakespeare**

Every writer reinvents Shakespeare in some way

Intertextuality, and the ability to identify it, is key

Good writers cause us to question what we think we already know (as Shakespeare often does)

Why Shakespeare? Great stories, compelling characters, terrific language

Reading (of Shakespeare or anything else) is really just an imaginative activity. The writer imagines something while he/she is writing but leaves it open enough for the reader to tweak while reading.

When we are able to connect Shakespeare's works to other works that came earlier, we are able to add another shade of meaning. When we are able to connect Shakespeare's works to later works, we are able to make meaning.

EVERYONE feeds off of Shakespeare, whether we recognize it or not. You can find Shakespearean elements in everything you read.

Works: *The Tempest*, *Othello*, *Wise Children*, "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock", *Hamlet*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, "Master Harold"

## **Chapter 7: Biblical allusions**

Frequently used biblical archetypes:

garden

serpent

plague

flood

parting of waters (metaphorical or literal)

loaves

fishes

forty days

betrayal

denial

slavery and escape  
fatted calves  
milk and honey  
tongues of flames  
voices from whirlwinds  
Apocalypse  
four horsemen  
fall from grace/loss of innocence  
circle of life  
the Prodigal Son  
tension(s) between brothers

The bible is a literary piece that has been copied/imitated for centuries. It is expected that readers will recognize the allusions

Biblical allusions are not always straight forward- the details may change but the ideas are the same

Archetypes= fancy word for patterns (in characters OR situations)

Works: Bible, *Beloved*, "Araby", *Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Waste Land*, "Yom Kippur, 1984", *The Satanic Verses*, "Why I Live at the P.O.", *Song of Solomon*, "Sonny's Blues"

## **Chapter 8: Situational Archetypes/Patterns**

All literature comes from other literature

Literary cannon= a master list of important works

Easy place to spot archetypes- children's stories

metonymy= a part is used to stand for the whole (literary device)

Common situational archetypes (as found in fairy tales):

1. Lost, young couple
2. Crisis not of their own making
3. Temptation
4. Youngsters must fend for themselves

Why do authors use situational archetypes?

1. To add texture to a tale
2. To emphasize a theme
3. To highlight ironic element
4. To toy with a reader's knowledge of tales

Children's stories/fairy tales contain a ton of irony

While reading, look for patterns and once you find them, ask yourself WHY they are there!

Works: "The Gingerbread House", fairy tales

## Chapter 9: Greek Mythology

Common types of myths:

1. Shakespearean
2. Biblical
3. Folk/Fairy Tales

Myth= shaping and sustaining power of a story and its symbols; our ability to explain ourselves; myths are so deeply ingrained in our cultural memory that they both shape our culture and are shaped by it

Myths matter!

### 3 KEY THINGS TO ASK WHILE READING

1. **How** does the base myth function in a literary context (what does it contribute to the story/writing of the story?)
2. **How** does the use of the myth inform a story/poem?
3. **How** is the myth perceived by the reader?

Fall of Icarus= the youngster who failed to listen to his parent and died as a result

Types of archetypal situations demonstrated by the Icarus myth:

1. Parental attempt to save the child
2. Failure of the attempt and the resulting grief
3. Cure that proves as deadly as the disease
4. Youthful exuberance leads to self-destruction
5. The clash between sober, adult wisdom and childhood's recklessness
6. Terror

In situational archetypes, characters' nobility and courage are tested

4 Human struggles (i.e. situational archetypes):

1. The need to protect one's family
2. The need to maintain one's dignity
3. The determination to remain faithful
4. The struggle to return home

Types of conflict:

1. man vs. nature

2. man vs. supernatural/divine/fate
3. man vs. man
4. man vs. self
5. man vs. society

Every imaginable type of dysfunctional family or personal flaws has some Greek/Roman myth to illustrate it

Why do writers use a mythical base for their stories?

We recognize the pattern/root and that makes the reading deeper, richer and more meaningful

Works: *Song of Solomon*, "Musee des Beaux Arts", "Landscape with Fall of Icarus", *The Iliad*, *The Aeneid*, *Ulysses*, "The Metamorphosis"

## **Chapter 10: Setting & Weather**

Setting establishes mood and foreshadows events to come

Ask yourself **WHY** the weather is what it is in the story. Your answer will provide insight into the story itself.

Great quote: "It's never just rain" (75). It's never JUST snow, JUST thunder, JUST heat, JUST a tornado.

Weather is always a signal

Keys to weather deciphering in literature: atmosphere and mood

Rain functionality

1. plot device- traps characters together or forces them apart
2. atmosphere- mysterious, murky, isolating
3. equalizer- falls on the just and unjust
4. cleansing
5. transforming
6. restorative
7. fertility

Rain symbolism

1. agent of new life and restoration
2. source of illness and death (think pneumonia)
3. replenishment
4. rain connects directly to Spring

Spring symbolism

1. season of renewal

2. season of hope
3. season of new awakening(s)

#### Rainbow symbolism

1. divine promise
2. peace between heaven and earth
3. stasis between God, humanity and nature

#### Fog symbolism

1. confusion
2. ethical, mental, physical hurdle to clarity

#### Symbolism of snow

1. clean
2. stark
3. severe
4. warm (insulation)... paradox
5. inhospitable
6. inviting
7. playful
8. suffocating
9. filthy
10. unifier

Whenever you read, analyze the weather- how does it impact the story and what does it lend that couldn't be otherwise deciphered?

Works: "The Three Strangers", *Song of Solomon*, *A Farewell to Arms*, "The Dead", *The Waste Land*, *From Ritual to Romance*, *Party Going*

#### **Interlude**

No one really knows what an author was thinking as he/she wrote his/her piece

Modernism: the era around WWI and WWII in the 20th century

Narrative method- tells the story from a personal p.o.v. (not necessarily first person)

Mythic method- uses established mythology as an outline for stories

Use a practical approach to writing: focus on what the author does and what we can discover in the work rather than trying to figure out what the author was actually thinking

Good writing takes a long time and a writer doesn't necessarily know when he/she is pulling from his/her knowledge base of established works



Works: “*Ulysses, Order, and Myth*”, *Ulysses, Absalom, Absalom*

## Chapter 11: Violence

Violence is a personal, intimate act

Functions of violence

1. symbolic
2. thematic
3. biblical
4. Shakespearean
5. Romantic
6. allegorical
7. transcendent

Symbolism of violence

1. Violence is always metaphorical
2. Violence may signal that death lurks in every day tasks
3. Violence illustrates the hostile relationship we have with the universe
4. We ultimately face our mortality alone

Types of violence

1. specific injury that authors cause characters to do to themselves or one another
  2. narrative violence (i.e. authorial violence) causes general harm to characters
- Generally, authorial violence is the death and/or general suffering that authors inject into their work in order to advance the plot or develop a theme. The characters do nothing to cause/spur the violence

Why do authors kill characters?

1. spur action
2. cause plot complications
3. end plot complications
4. trigger stress in other characters

Emotional satisfaction of mysteries (literary)

1. the problem is solved
2. the question is answered
3. the guilty are punished
4. the victim is avenged

Violence is more than literal in literature- it is symbolic. Violence goes beyond simply moving the plot along

Narrative violence should always prompt us to ask, “what does misfortune tell us”? (96)

Questions to ask while reading about a violent act

1. What does this misfortune accomplish thematically?
2. What famous or mythic death does this one resemble?
3. Why was this particular type of violence used instead of another?

Some aspects to consider before answering:

- psychological dilemmas
- spiritual crises
- historical concerns
- social concerns
- political concerns

Works: *Beloved*, "Out, Out-", *Women in Love*, "The Fox", "Barn Burning", *Go Down, Moses*, *Light in August*, *The Hearts and Lives of Men*, *The Satanic Verses*

## Chapter 12: Symbolism

EVERYTHING is a symbol

Ask:

1. What does it mean?
2. What does it stand for?

Symbolism isn't universal- you will see various elements from your own unique perspective. You must be able to **support your interpretations** with the text!

An allegory uses different elements to represent different things. In other words, whereas symbolism usually has one thing representing some idea, an allegory is comprised of a series of symbols that individually represent various ideas

Allegories always strive to convey ONE PARTICULAR message

Allegories are usually easier to decipher than symbols because ALL readers are supposed to interpret allegories the same way

Things that impact our interpretations

1. education
2. gender
3. race
4. class
5. faith
6. social involvement
7. philosophy

Steps to decoding symbols

1. consider our past (allusions)
2. consider the author's particular use of the item (meaning)

3. consider any possible ironic elements
4. reach a conclusion that builds on the the first three steps

#### Caves as symbols

1. connection to humanity's most primitive elements
2. security and shelter
3. getting in touch with deepest levels of consciousness
4. the idea that ALL experiences are individualized rather than generalized (everyone experiences caves somewhat differently)
5. force us into contact with our deepest fears
6. death
7. the great Void

#### Rivers as symbols

1. death
2. escape
3. danger
4. safety
5. path to maturity
6. division
7. connection
8. corruption of modern life
9. collapse of Western civilization

#### Mowing (an action) as a symbol

1. cleansing
2. labor
3. solitary nature of life

Break a work down into manageable pieces rather than trying to decipher it as a whole

#### Group ideas

##### Ask questions:

1. What is the writer doing with this image/object/act?
2. what possibilities are suggested by the movement of the narrative?
3. What does the object/image/act FEEL like it's doing?

##### Three keys to interpreting symbols:

1. Creativity
2. Feelings
3. Instincts

Works: *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Passage to India*, "Parable of the Cave" [a.k.a. *The Allegory of the Cave*], *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Bridge*, *The Waste Land*, "Mowing", "After Apple Picking"

## Chapter 13: Political Angles

A parable intends to change the reader and through the reader, to change society

Political writing “can be one-dimensional, simplistic, reductionist, preachy, dull” (110).

What is political writing?

- Writing that addresses the realities in its world, including human problems (both social and political), and expresses the rights of humanity and the wrongs of those in control (power).

Steps to understanding the political angles:

1. understand context of story (social, political)
2. understand author’s background
3. understand author’s goal
4. understand HOW the work engages with its specific time period

Writers expect readers to be interested in the world around them

Political issues:

1. power
2. classes (socioeconomic)
3. justice
4. rights
5. gender
6. relationship between gender and race
7. relationship between gender and ethnicity

Generally, political works engage the reality of the world and examine the humanity’s problems in the sociopolitical environment

Works: *A Christmas Carol*, *Women in Love*, “The Masque of the Red Death”, “The Fall of the House of Usher”, “Rip Van Winkle”, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Mrs. Dalloway*

## Chapter 14: Archetypes/Christ Figures

All works are influenced by its dominant cultural religious beliefs (whether the author believes in them or not).

Values and principles of the dominant religion will inform the literary work itself

Possible religious principles:

1. individual’s role in society
2. humanity’s relationship with nature
3. involvement of women in public life

Christ archetypal qualities:

1. crucifixion (hand, foot, side, head wounds)
2. agony
3. good with children
4. self-sacrificing
5. loaves, fishes, water, wine
6. 33 years old
7. carpentry
8. very basic modes of transportation
9. walking on water
10. outstretched arms
11. time alone in the wilderness
12. tempted by the devil
13. in the company of thieves
14. creator of parables/aphorisms
15. arose from the dead on the third day
16. disciples (notably 12, of varying degrees of devotion)
17. forgiving
18. came to save an undeserving world

Analysis: identify features and see how they are being used in the text

Themes associated with Christ figures:

1. triumph over adversity
2. value of hope and faith
3. attainment of grace

Christ Checklist (i.e Christ figures in literature):

1. 33 years old
2. unmarried and/or celibate
3. wounded/marked in hands, feet, side (a crown of thorns would be spectacular)
4. sacrifices self in some way for others (not necessarily voluntarily)
5. tempted by some devil in the forest

<eg>

No archetype is an exact match to characters in a literary work

Why do writers use Christ-figures?

- to make a point
- to deepen our sense of sacrifice
- relates to hope
- relates to redemption
- relates to miracles
- to make a character look smaller (to be used in an ironic way)

Works: *The Old Man and the Sea*

## Chapter 15: Flight

If you drop a person and a bowling ball off the top of the Tower of Pisa, both will hit the ground at the same time.

If someone can fly, he/she is a superhero, a ski jumper, insane, a work of fiction, a circus act, suspended on wires, an angel, heavily symbolic

Major flight archetypes in literature:

- Daedalus & Icarus- Daedalus flew too close to the sun and plummeted into the ocean
- flying Africans- Africans flew out of Africa and when they were dropped, they were dropped into slavery
- Aztecs- Quetzalcoatl was a god with the body of a snake and feathered wings
- Christians- Christ was tempted by flight

What does flight symbolize?

1. Freedom
2. Escape
3. Return home
4. A thriving spirit
5. Love

Flight IS freedom

Interrupted flight always signifies something negative

Falling and surviving is as symbolic as the flight itself

Things to consider when character survives a "flight":

1. What does it mean to survive certain death?
2. How much does survival alter one's relationship to the world?
3. Do the characters' responsibilities to themselves or to life change?
4. Is the survivor the same as she/he was before the fall?

Works: *Song of Solomon*, *Nights at the Circus*, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings", *Hearts and Lives of Men*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, "The Wild Swans at Coole", "Birches", *Hamlet*

## Chapter 16: Sex

Freud established a number of symbolic representations of sexuality based on the sexual leanings of the subconscious.

- tall buildings= male sexuality

- rolling landscapes= female sexuality
- stairs= sexual intercourse
- falling down stairs= rape, loss of virility, loss of erection

#### Sexual symbols

1. lance, keys, swords, gun= penis
2. chalice/holy grail, lock, bowl= vagina
3. waves= sexual intercourse
4. trains entering tunnels= intercourse
5. wrestling= sex act

In older literature, sex is usually hidden in metaphors but if you examine the language and rhythm carefully, you can discern what is REALLY happening

The search for the Holy Grail: crops are failing, drought, , livestock and people are dying, kingdom is becoming a wasteland and fertility must be restored. How? Send a knight with his big lance to seek out the fertile chalice.

Works: *The Interpretation of Dreams*, various films, “Janus”, *Lady Chatterly’s Lover*, “The Rocking-Horse Winner”, *Our Mutual Friend*

### **Chapter 17: Sex that isn’t Sex**

Describing sex acts in a literal sense is wholly unrewarding so most writers opt to cloak sex in symbolism and/or metaphors. They talk about sex by *not* talking about sex.

When writers write about sex, they’re really writing about something else

- freedom
- individuality
- espionage
- personal sacrifice
- psychological neediness
- desire for power
- fulfillment
- liberation
- failure of liberation
- religious subversion
- artistic subversion
- political subversion
- self-expression
- exertion of control
- birth
- pleasure
- sacrifice
- submission
- resignation

- supplication
- domination
- enlightenment

--Deconstructing symbolism in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*--

90 seconds between the time the man picked up the woman, carried her to the bed and had sex with her. What does THAT mean? Choose most likely scenario

1. shortcomings of Victorian men in the sexuality department - highly unlikely
2. ridicules his hero - highly unlikely
3. make a point about male sexual inadequacy - highly unlikely
4. make a point about the fallibility of desire - possible
5. accentuate the incongruity between the sex act and its consequences from a time perspective (the act is quick, its repercussions are not) - most likely
6. the hero is daunted by the consummation of his love which represents the 20th century - sounds very possible

sex symbolizes individual freed from convention (and perhaps freedom for the writer from censorship)

Works: *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Alexandria Quartet*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Lolita*, *Wise Children*

## Chapter 18: Baptism

Possible reasons for drowning:

1. wish fulfillment
2. exorcism of primal fear
3. exploration of the possible
4. handy solution to messy plot trouble
5. control

Meaning of water rescues

1. passivity
2. good fortune
3. indebtedness
4. luck
5. serendipity
6. rebirth

Baptism (i.e. someone goes into the water and comes out alive) Symbolism

1. rebirth
2. pain
3. charge
4. religious association



5. death (not literal)

Purpose of baptism

- revelation
- thematic development of violence
- thematic development of failure
- thematic development of guilt
- plot complication
- plot denouement

Rain is restorative and cleansing

Baptism and drowning always represent something- you must figure out the purpose/ meaning in the individual piece

Symbolism of rivers= constantly shifting nature of time (Heraclitus)

Works: *Ordinary People*, *Love Medicine*, *Song of Solomon*, *Beloved*, "The Horse Dealer's Daughter", *The Unicorn*, "The River", *A Map of the World*, *Rabbit, Run*

## **Chapter 19: Geography/Setting**

Questions to ask about setting

1. What does it mean to the novel that its landscape is high or low, flat or sunken, steep or shallow?
2. Why did this character die where he/she did?
3. Why is this piece set where it is?
4. Why does the author use specific geographic settings so often?
5. What does geography mean to a work of a literature?

What should be considered while analyzing the geography of a story?

1. rivers
2. hills
3. valleys
4. buttes
5. steppes
6. glaciers
7. swamps
8. mountains
9. prairies
10. chasms
11. seas
12. islands
13. people
14. economics
15. politics

- 16.history
- 17.attitude
- 18.psychology
- 19. finance
- 20.industry

Geography also takes theme, symbolism, and plot into account

Geography/setting can foreshadow, set the mood and tone of the piece, develop characters

Environment and a character's response to the environment serve as characterization-geography must impact behavior in some way

Generally, when authors send their characters south, it's so they can "run amok". Often, they **engage in these behaviors because they are having raw, direct encounters with the subconscious.**

General representations:

Low areas:

- swamps
- crowds
- fog
- darkness
- fields
- heat
- unpleasantness
- people
- life
- death

High areas:

- snow
- ice
- purity
- thin air
- clear views
- isolation
- life
- death

Works: *The Old Man and the Sea*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Napoleon Symphony*, "The Fall of the House of Usher", *Bean Trees*, *Song of Solomon*, *Going After Cacciato*, *A Room with a View*, *The Alexandria Quartet*, *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness*, "Bogland", "In Praise of Limestone", "The Snows of Kilimanjaro", *Women in Love*

## Chapter 20: Seasons

scansion: how the stressed and unstressed syllables function in lines of poetry

Ages and Seasons

Spring= Childhood and youth

Summer= Adulthood, romance, fulfillment, passion

Fall= Middle age, decline, tiredness, harvest

Winter= Old age, resentment, death

Emotional component to seasons

summer= passion and love

winter= anger and hatred, cynicism, worldly, emotionally reserved, totally dependent on the opinion of others

spring= youth, freshness, directness, openness, naiveté, flirtation,

fall= exhaustion, reflective, benefitting only from our efforts

Harvests= personal harvests, results of our endeavors

Works: *Sonnet 73*, *Daisy Miller*, "In Memory of W.B. Yeats", "After Apple Picking", "Fern Hill"

## Interlude

There's only one story and different ways of telling that one story

Why do we keep telling the same story?

- work acquires depth with retelling
- work resonates because of its ties to other works
- work acquires weight from the patterns set by earlier tellings
- work is more comforting because we already know it

Intertextuality -> everything is connected

We carry the qualities of pieces we've read before, the qualities we learned by reading other people's work (even if we don't remember it); we then tie those qualities to our own writing

Archetype= pattern

archetypes gain power with repetition

Works: *The Maltese Falcon*, *A Brief History of Time*

## **Chapter 21: Markings**

Physical qualities, shapes, always tell us something about characters

In literature, physical deformities mean something thematically, metaphorically, psychologically or spiritually

In Shakespeare's works, physical deformity indicated moral deformity

Deformity= different, a projection of the perils of man seeking to play God which will ultimately consume the power seeker

In folktales or mythology, the hero is always marked in some way- the marking sets him/her apart from everyone else

Often, the deformity is metaphorical. Blindness, for example.

Injury: symbolic of the destruction of possibilities, spiritual and physical.

Scarred characters may reflect the imperfections of the reader

Works: *Song of Solomon*, *Beloved*, *Oedipus Rex*, *The Waste Land*, "Big Two-Hearted River", *A Farewell to Arms*, *Alexandria Quartet*, *Frankenstein*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

## **Chapter 22: Blindness**

Blindness is a physical representation of a metaphorical blindness to circumstance

An author includes blindness in order to emphasize other levels of sight and blindness (other than physical)

Start by asking questions- you are only then able to answer them

Why is the character blind? What does it represent? What does it foreshadow?

When literal blindness, sight, darkness and light are introduced into a story, it is usually an indication that metaphorical sight and blindness are at work.

Authors tend to introduce important information early in the piece

Works: *Oedipus Rex*, "Araby", *Waiting for Godot*, *Blindness*, *Oedipus at Colonus*

## **Chapter 23: Heart Disease**

The heart is the symbolic vessel of emotion. Heart trouble indicates emotional burdens.

### General meanings of heart disease

- bad love
- loneliness
- cruelty
- pederasty
- disloyalty
- cowardice
- lack of determination
- pain
- suffering
- regret
- something amiss at the center of things

### Symbolism of the heart

1. loyalty
2. trust
3. courage
4. fidelity
5. honesty

Works: *The Good Soldier*, *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Remorseful Day*, *The Wench is Dead*, "The Man of Adamant", *Lord Jim*, *Lolita*

## Chapter 24: Illness

Illness is a reflection of some emotional/psychological weakness

Physical paralysis= emotional paralysis, moral paralysis, social paralysis, spiritual paralysis, intellectual paralysis, political paralysis

General rules:

1. Not all diseases are equal. Authors tend to choose diseases that aren't ugly unless that ugliness is part of the message
2. Diseases should be picturesque. Authors often make use of diseases that give their sufferers an ethereal quality
3. Diseases must have strong symbolic or metaphorical possibilities. The type of disease has to speak to the theme or character of the work

Tuberculosis: chosen because many authors suffered from the disease themselves or watched friends deteriorate, wasting disease

The Plague: widespread societal devastation

Malaria: bad air signifying malicious gossip, hostile opinion, feverish decisions, overheated state that leads to poor decision making

Smallpox: sign of divine judgement against vanity and/or marital lapse (in certain plots)

AIDS: lies dormant and turns every victim into an unknowing carrier, high mortality rate, disproportionately appears in younger people, devastated people in developing countries, gay community was initially hardest hit, became a symbol of tragedy, despair, courage, resilience, compassion, political angle, religious angle

Fever: represents the randomness of fate, the harshness of life, the unknowability of God

Venereal disease was hidden in other illnesses: signified bad behavior, intergenerational tensions, irresponsibility, misdeeds

Issues addressed through illness in literature:

1. how a person confronts the devastation of illness
2. the isolation caused by the disease
3. the uncertainty caused by the disease
4. the random nature of infection
5. the despair faced by the physician/loved ones/patients in the face of an unstoppable illness
6. the desire to act to cure the illness even when one recognizes the futility

Works: "The Sisters", *Dubliners*, *Oedipus Rex*, *The Plague*, *Daisy Miller*, *A Doll's House*, *Alexandria Quartet*

## **Chapter 25: Put it in Context**

A reader must know the historical/political/social context of the piece in order to understand all of the levels of meaning

A reader must not add interpretative data that wasn't available when the piece was written or the interpretation will be flawed

Read with perspective that matches the historical context- understand the social, historical, cultural, personal backgrounds

Deconstruction

- question EVERYTHING in the work
- demonstrate that the work is controlled and reduced by the values/prejudices of its time rather than by the author

Focus on what the writer is focused on

"Last chance for change" story characteristics

1. character is old enough to have faced the opportunity to grow, reform, or live well but doesn't
2. character is presented with the chance to educate him/herself in the area where he/she has heretofore not grown
3. his/her possibilities for growth are limited and time is running out

Theme of "last chance for change" stories: Can this person be saved?

The lessons found in literature hold through the ages even if the lifestyles and details do not

Adopt the writer's perspective in order to understand his/her point but do not abandon your own perspective completely

Readers must adopt the worldview the work assumes of its audience or we will misinterpret themes, ideas, plot points

Works: "The Dead", "Sonny's Blues", *The Iliad*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Cantos*

## Chapter 26: Irony

Irony occurs when something other than what is expected occurs. It isn't a "surprise" but a way an author can turn expectations upside down in order to make a point. Irony forces our expectations to work against us.

Irony trumps everything else- when irony is used, the other rules don't apply

Irony is a deflection from the readers' expectations

Plot paths:

journey

quest

self-knowledge

Paths exist in literature only so characters can travel them. The failure to follow those paths illustrates the failure to engage in life

Ironic mode= characters struggle futilely with forces that the reader might be able to overcome. The characters are not our equals.

Rain's literary cycle:

rain-> life -> birth -> promise -> restoration -> fertility -> continuity

Observe characters who have a lower degree of autonomy, self-determination or free will than ourselves because these characters usually end up at the heart of the lesson

eiron= in Greek comedy, the character who seems weak, subservient, ignorant

alazon= in Greek comedy, the character who seems pompous, arrogant, clueless

In ironic pieces, the reader has a sort dual awareness stemming from the dislocation between what we expect and what actually exists in the work

Irony doesn't work for everyone- not everyone understands the irony

Works: *Waiting for Godot*, *A Farewell to Arms*, "The Arrow of Heaven", *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Howard's End*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Unicorn*, *A Clockwork Orange*

## **Chapter 27: Test**

Key questions to ask as you read:

1. What does the story signify?
2. How does it signify?

Rules for analysis:

1. Read very carefully (no skimming)
2. Use interpretive strategies as you read
3. Don't use outside sources to guide your interpretation
4. Take notes as you read

Readers need to deal with the obvious material before moving on. Once the reader understands the obvious information, the noumenal level will need to be addressed

Noumenal level= the spiritual or essential level of being

Remember to consider the pattern of images and allusions as you read

Your analysis may not resemble anyone else's but as long as you can support it with the text and logic, you are correct

Both the instructor and student analyses of the work in this chapter are fantastic and will be a great tool to help you learn to use the information provided in this book!

Works: "The Garden Party", *Ulysses*

## **Envoi**

Look for templates, patterns, associations as you read

Once you become accustomed to reading for symbols and patterns, it will become second nature



Hint: one mention of something is an occurrence, two references may be coincidence, but three references is a definite point/message

Read! You can read whatever you want but complex texts usually have more to offer the analytical process

### **Appendix: Reading List**

1. "Musee does Beaux Arts" by W.H. Auden
2. "In Praise of Limestone" by W.H. Auden
3. "Sonny's Blues" by James Baldwin
4. *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett
5. *Beowulf*
6. *Water Music* by T. Coraghessan Boyle
7. "The Overcoat II" by T. Coraghessan Boyle
8. *World's End* by T. Coraghessan Boyle
9. *Hotel du Lac* by Anita Brookner
10. *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll
11. *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll
12. *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter
13. *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter
14. *Wise Children* by Angela Carter
15. "Cathedral" by Raymond Carver
16. *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
17. *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad
18. *Lord Jim* by Joseph Conrad
19. "The Gingerbread House" by Robert Coover
20. *The Bridge* by Hart Crane
21. *The Remorseful Day* by Colin Dexter
22. *The Old Curiosity Shop* by Charles Dickens
23. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
24. *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens
25. *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens
26. *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
27. *Ragtime* by E.L. Doctorow
28. *The Alexandria Quartet* by Lawrence Durrell
29. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot
30. *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot
31. *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich
32. *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner
33. *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner
34. *Absalom, Absalom* by William Faulkner
35. *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding
36. *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding
37. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
38. *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford

39. *A Room with a View* by E.M. Forster
40. *Howard's End* by E.M. Forster
41. *A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster
42. *The Magus* by John Fowles
43. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles
44. "After Apple Picking" by Robert Frost
45. "The Woodpile" by Robert Frost
46. "Out, Out-" by Robert Frost
47. "Mowing" by Robert Frost
48. "The Pedersen Kid" by William H. Gass
49. "In the Heart of the Heart of the Country" by William H. Gass
50. *Blindness* by Henry Green
51. *Living* by Henry Green
52. *Party Going* by Henry Green
53. *Loving* by Henry Green
54. *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett
55. "The Three Strangers" by Thomas Hardy
56. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy
57. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy
58. "Young Goodman Brown" by Nathaniel Hawthorne
59. "The Man of Adamant" by Nathaniel Hawthorne
60. *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
61. *The House of Seven Gables* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
62. "Bogland" by Seamus Heaney
63. "Clearances" by Seamus Heaney
64. *North* by Seamus Heaney
65. *In Our Time* by Ernest Hemingway
66. "Big Two-Hearted River" by Ernest Hemingway
67. "Indian Camp" by Ernest Hemingway
68. "The Battler" by Ernest Hemingway
69. *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway
70. "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway
71. *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway
72. "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" by Ernest Hemingway
73. *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway
74. *The Iliad* by Homer
75. *The Odyssey* by Homer
76. *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James
77. "Daisy Miller" by Henry James
78. *Dubliners* by James Joyce
79. *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce
80. *Ulysses* by James Joyce
81. "The Metamorphosis" by Franz Kafka
82. "A Hunger Artist" by Franz Kafka
83. *The Trial* by Franz Kafka
84. *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver

85. *Pigs in Heaven* by Barbara Kingsolver
86. *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver
87. *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence
88. *Women in Love* by D.H. Lawrence
89. "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" by D.H. Lawrence
90. "The Fox" by D.H. Lawrence
91. *Lady Chatterly's Lover* by D.H. Lawrence
92. *The Virgin and the Gypsy* by D.H. Lawrence
93. "The Rocking-Horse Winner" by D.H. Lawrence
94. *Le Morte D'arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory
95. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
96. *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison
97. *A Severed Head* by Iris Murdoch
98. *The Unicorn* by Iris Murdoch
99. *The Sea, the Sea* by Iris Murdoch
100. *The Green Knight* by Iris Murdoch
101. *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov
102. *Going after Cacciato* by Tim O'Brien
103. *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien
104. "The Fall of the House of Usher" by Edgar Allan Poe
105. "The Mystery of the Rue Morgue" by Edgar Allan Poe
106. "The Pit and the Pendulum" by Edgar Allan Poe
107. "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe
108. "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe
109. "The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe
110. *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon
111. "In Praise of Prairie" by Theodore Roethke
112. *The Far Field* by Theodore Roethke
113. *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
114. *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare
115. *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare
116. *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare
117. *King Lear* by William Shakespeare
118. *Henry V* by William Shakespeare
119. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare
120. *Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare
121. *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
122. *A Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare
123. *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare
124. *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare
125. Sonnet 73
126. *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
127. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
128. *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles
129. *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles
130. *Antigone* by Sophocles

131. *The Faerie Queen* by Sir Edmund Spenser
132. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson
133. *The Master of Ballantrae* by Robert Louis Stevenson
134. *Dracula* by Bram Stoker
135. "Fern Hill" by Dylan Thomas
136. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
137. *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* by Anne Tyler
138. *The Accidental Tourist* by Anne Tyler
139. "A & P" by John Updike
140. *Omeros* by Derek Walcott
141. *The Hearts and Lives of Men* by Fay Weldon
142. *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf
143. *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf
144. "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by William Butler Yeats
145. "Easter 1916" by William Butler Yeats
146. "The Wild Swans at Coole" by William Butler Yeats
147. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* by M.H. Abrams
148. *How Does a Poem Mean?* by John Ciardi
149. *Aspects of the Novel* by E.M. Forster
150. *Anatomy of Criticism* by Northrop Frye
151. *Fiction and the Figures of Life* by William H. Gass
152. *The Art of Fiction* by David Lodge
153. *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry* by Robert Pinsky
154. *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*