

**Humanities 112: The Modern World
Literature Study Guide & Assignment Packet**



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INTERPRETING LITERATURE: FORM & CONTENT

How to analyze and interpret literature: In the visual arts there are many formal elements such as composition, line, light and shade, perspective, color, etc. Literature can also be analyzed according to formal elements. What follows is a partial list of literary elements and tips and questions to consider when evaluating a work of literature. Refer to this guide to answer your homework and study questions.

Close Reading: Do not stray far from the actual text: avoid jumping to meanings that are not suggested at all in the text. You should be able to substantiate any interpretation with actual “evidence” from the text.

Analytical Modes of Evaluating and Interpreting: Never say that a work is “boring,” “good,” “bad,” or “I really like this story,” or “I really hate this story.” These are unsubstantiated, vague statements and do not involve actual analysis. Knee-jerk reactions are not permissible in homework assignments, and you should develop the habit of avoiding them in oral responses as well.

Evaluating and interpreting a film (or any cultural text) involves thoughtful and specific description and analysis of the work. You must walk through the process of identifying, describing and assessing all of the work's elements as described below.

This is not to say that it is incorrect to have a “gut” reaction or overall response to a work. But as a scholar, you should write this down and then determine the various elements that have led you to this response. Interpretation (like writing) is a *process*. More often than not, this process leads you to an enhanced appreciation of or criticism of the work you are responding to.

LITERARY GLOSSARY: What follows are some of the formal elements of literature. Use this list as a means of identifying and interpreting some of the more significant aspects of assigned readings.

Alliteration: The repetition of the same consonants (usually the initial sounds of words or of stressed syllables) at the start of several words or syllables in sequence or in close proximity to each other. In Anglo-Saxon poetry and in some fourteenth century texts such as *Piers Plowman* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* rigid patterns of alliteration were an essential part of poetic form. More recently it is used for expressive or occasionally onomatopoeic effect.

Anaphora: Repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of consecutive syntactic units.

Assonance: Consists of similar sounds (but not exact rhymes), a resemblance of sounds in words, as in: “that dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea” (William Butler Yeats).

Character: How are aspects of the characters established? Through behavior, dialogue, body language, mode of dress? What makes us identify with a main character? What makes us feel alienated from a character? Is the character convincing, believable? What are the characters’

values? Are these values consistent with current social norms? Do they defy social norms? What are the characters objectives or goals? What obstacles present themselves? How does the character deal with obstacles? How do the characters actions reinforce themes of the movie? Given your analysis of the characters, what values does writer want the audience to support or reject? What, in other words, are you being persuaded to feel or think?

Character development: Character can be revealed through the character's actions, speech, and appearance. It also can be revealed by the comments of other characters and of the author.

Certain types of characters appear in literature:

- * The protagonist is the central character (person, animal, or personified object) in the plot's conflict.
- * The antagonist is the force in conflict with the protagonist. It may be society, nature, or fate, as well as another person. It can also be the protagonist's own self, if he or she has an internal conflict.
- * A character foil is a character whose traits are in direct contrast to those of the principal character. The foil therefore highlights the traits of the protagonist. The foil is usually a minor character, although if there are two protagonists, they may be foils of each other.
- * A stereotype is a character possessing *expected* traits of a group rather than being an individual. Using stereotypes is usually considered an indication of poor quality, especially in cases such as members of minority groups, people with disabilities, or women. However, stereotypes can be useful in furthering the story quickly and are acceptable in minor roles if they do not provide hurtful portraits of the groups in question.

Character development is showing the multitude of traits and behaviors that give the literary character the complexity of a human being. The amount of character development affects the quality of the story:

- * A flat character is not fully developed; we know only one side of the character.
- * A round character is fully-developed, with many traits--bad and good--shown in the story. We feel that we know the character so well that he or she has become a real person.
- * Character development is a continuum with perfectly flat characters at one end and very round ones at the other. Every character lies somewhere on this continuum. Round characters are usually considered an indication of literary quality. However, characters in folktales are almost always flat, and flatness is appropriate for minor characters in modern literature for children. A character foil is often flat, even if the protagonist is round.

The amount of change in a character over the course of the story also affects its quality:

- * A static character is one who does not experience a basic character change during the course of the story.
- * A dynamic character is one who experiences a basic change in character through the events of the story. This change is internal and may be sudden, but the events of the plot should make it seem inevitable.

* There is also a continuum of character change in a story, with very static characters at one end, and very dynamic ones at the other. Every character lies somewhere on this continuum. Dynamism in the protagonist is usually considered an indication of quality, but many characters, especially in stories for younger children, have only the mild amount of change, which can be expected from growing and maturing from day to day.

* A character may thus be round and dynamic, round and static, or flat and static. A flat character cannot usually be dynamic, because you do not know enough about the flat character to notice a change. If a character seems flat and yet seems to change, it is usually because the characterization is not well written.

Climax: The turning point in a story, at which the end result becomes inevitable, usually where something suddenly goes terribly wrong; the “dramatic high point” of a story. (Although it is technically a literary element, the term is only useful for identification, as part of a discussion or analysis of structure; it cannot generally be analyzed by itself.)

Closed form (in poetry): Poems can be categorized as open or closed form. In closed form there is an established pattern. For example, a closed poem may have repeated line length, meter, imagery, syntax, stanzas or rhyme.

Conflict: A struggle between opposing forces, which is the driving force of a story. The outcome of any story provides a resolution of the conflict(s); this is what keeps the reader reading. Conflicts can exist between individual characters, between groups of characters, between a character and society, etc., and can also be purely abstract (i.e., conflicting ideas).

Didactic: a quality that refers to literature or other types of art that are instructional or informative. The term "didactic" also refers to texts that are overburdened with instructive and factual information, sometimes to the detriment of a reader's enjoyment. The opposite of "didactic" is "nondidactic." If a writer is more concerned with artistic qualities and techniques than with conveying a message, then that piece of work is considered to be nondidactic, even if it is instructive.

Foreshadowing: This includes instances where future events in a story, or perhaps the outcome, are suggested by the author before they happen. Foreshadowing can take many forms and be accomplished in many ways, with varying degrees of subtlety. However, if the outcome is deliberately and explicitly revealed early in a story (such as by the use of a narrator or flashback structure), such information does not constitute foreshadowing.

Imagery: Think of the kind of imagery a work invokes. What sort of scene or scenes are created? Is it positive, negative, etc? What sort of mood is created and how is that mood established?

Irony: There are different types of irony. As a sub-set of allegory: irony not only says one thing and means another, but says one thing and means its opposite. The word is used often of consciously inappropriate or understated utterances (so two walkers in the pouring rain greet each other with 'lovely day!', 'yes, isn't it'). Irony depends upon the audience's being able to recognize that a comment is deliberately at odds with its occasion, and may often discriminate

between two kinds of audience: one which recognizes the irony, and the other which fails to do so. In situational irony an event occurs which is unexpected, in the sense that it is somehow in absurd or mocking opposition to what would be expected or appropriate. Note: the word “ironic” is frequently misused. Mere coincidence is generally *not* ironic; neither is mere surprise, nor are any random or arbitrary occurrences.

Lyric poetry: a lyric poem expresses the thoughts, perceptions or feelings of the poet (as opposed to those of a character). The lyric poem addresses the reader directly.

Metaphor: The transfer of a quality or attribute from one thing or idea to another in such a way as to imply some resemblance between the two things or ideas: 'his eyes blazed' implies that his eyes become like a fire. Metaphors are similar to similes but they do not use “like” or “as”. Shakespeare’s “all the world’s a stage” is a famous metaphorical phrase.

Mood: The atmosphere or emotional condition created by the piece, within the setting. Mood refers to the general sense or feeling which the reader is supposed to get from the text; it does not, as a literary element, refer to the author’s or characters’ state of mind. (Note that mood is a literary element, not a technique; the mood must therefore be described or identified. It would be incorrect to simply state, “The author uses mood.”) Example: The mood of Macbeth is dark, murky and mysterious, creating a sense of fear and uncertainty.

Motif: A recurring important idea or image. A motif differs from a theme in that it can be expressed as a single word or fragmentary phrase, while a theme usually must be expressed as a complete sentence.

Personification: Where inanimate objects or abstract concepts are seemingly endowed with human self-awareness; where human thoughts, actions, perceptions and emotions are directly attributed to inanimate objects or abstract ideas. (Not to be confused with anthropomorphism.) Personification is where an abstract concept, such as a particular human behavior or a force of nature, is represented as a person. The Greeks personified natural forces as gods; for example, the god Poseidon was the personification of the sea and its power over man.

Point of View: Point of view depends upon who the narrator is and how much he or she knows.

A few points of view : First person - uses "I" - A character is telling the story.

Third person - uses "he," "she," or "it" - The author is telling about the characters. There are different types of third person pov:

Third person omniscient: A method of storytelling in which the narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of all of the characters in the story, as opposed to third person limited, which adheres closely to one character's perspective.

Third person limited point of view is a method of storytelling in which the narrator knows only the thoughts and feelings of a single character, while other characters are presented externally.

Rhyme: Words that sound alike *rhyme*. There are different types of rhyme: true rhyme describes words that rhyme with all ending sounds such as trouble and bubble. Slant rhyme describes words that are very similar on the end but do not truly rhyme. For example, quick and look; dizzy and easy are slant rhymes.

Setting: the time, place, physical details, and circumstances in which a situation occurs. Settings include the background, atmosphere or environment in which characters live and move, and usually include physical characteristics of the surroundings. Setting enables the reader to better envision how a story unfolds by relating necessary physical details of a piece of literature. A setting may be simple or elaborate, used to create ambiance, lend credibility or realism, emphasize or accentuate, organize, or even distract the reader. Understanding the setting is useful because it enables us to see how an author captures the attention of the reader by painting a mental picture using words.

Simile: A comparison between two objects or ideas, which is introduced by 'like' or 'as'. The literal object which evokes the comparison is called the tenor and the object, which describes it is called the vehicle. So in the simile 'the car wheezed like an asthmatic donkey' the car is the tenor and the 'asthmatic donkey' is the vehicle. Negative similes are also possible (as in Shakespeare's Sonnet 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun').

Structure: This refers to the manner in which various elements of a story are assembled. A story might be told in a linear or non-linear manner, it may incorporate flashback, and it may follow a traditional Shakespearean five-act plot structure, with exposition in Act I, development in Act II, the climax or turning point in Act III, falling action in Act IV, and resolution in Act V.

Style / Content: Always pay attention to the *style* of writing and the *content* of what is being said. Is the style natural, real, stylized / theatrical, descriptive, minimalist, flowery? How do they affect each other, style and content? Is one a commentary on the other? Are they complementary? Is there contrast between the style and the content?

Syntax: refers to the order of words in a sentence, a phrase or a clause. In literary works the syntax may be used in unconventional ways to create emphasis, mood or to suggest a character's state of mind.

Symbol: a symbol is a word or object that stands for *another* thing or idea. A symbol represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, especially a material object used to represent something invisible. Symbols should not be confused with literal representations. A symbol represents something *other* than what it is literally.

Themes: the themes are often closely related to the work's characters, story and message. Does the story grapple with good versus evil? Overcoming adversity? The joys and pitfalls of love? Social injustices or privileges? Themes are part of a work's ideas and subject matter whether they are explicitly or implicitly demonstrated, but they suggest the ideas of a work rather than just the topic.

A theme is the underlying meaning of the story, a universal truth, a significant statement the story is making about society, human nature, or the human condition.

A story or poem's theme must be described in universal terms, not in terms of the plot. The plot is the way the universal theme is carried out in that particular book. Themes can be applied to the reader's own life or to other literature.

Types of themes:

* An explicit theme is one that is stated openly in the book. It is stated in universal terms in the book itself.

* An implicit theme is one which is not directly stated, but which the reader can infer. Many times, readers will not notice that an explicit theme is directly stated, but they can often infer the theme anyway.

Themes must be clearly stated; one word is not usually enough. To say that a book's theme is "friendship" is not clear. It may mean, "Friends are a person's most valuable possession." It may also mean, "Friends can never be trusted if their own interests are opposed to yours."

Not every good book has a significant theme; some books' value lies in the pleasure they give, rather than the message they bring. Books of humor, for instance, may or may not have a significant theme.

Tone: Tone is the author's attitude toward what he or she writes, but it may be easier to understand if you think of it as the attitude that you (the reader) get from the author's words. It is the hardest literary element to discuss; often we can recognize it but not put it into words. The easiest tone to recognize is humor. In describing tone, use adjectives: humorous, mysterious, creepy, straight-forward, matter-of-fact, exciting, boring, etc.

Unreliable narrator: one who gives his or her own understanding of a story, instead of the explanation and interpretation the author wishes the audience to obtain. This type of action tends to alter the audience's opinion of the conclusion. An author quite famous for using unreliable narrators is Henry James. James is said to make himself an inconsistent and distorting "center of consciousness" in his work, because of his frequent usage of deluding or deranged narrators. They are very noticeable in his novella *The Turn of the Screw*, a story based solely on the consistency of the Governess's description of the events that happen. Being aware of unreliable narrators are essential, especially when you have to describe the characters and their actions to others, since the narrator, unreliable as they are, abandons you without the important guidance to make trustworthy judgments.

STUDY & HOMEWORK QUESTIONS: What follows are questions for literary and critical essay reading assignments that will be handed out in class. These are primary readings *not* included in the textbook. Some will be assigned as homework, some will be the focus of presentations and some are for in-class discussion only, but you should always come to class prepared to discuss your responses according to the due date.

Homework Guidelines: Your homework is an integral part of this class' learning objectives, and it significantly contributes to your preparedness for class exams and discussions. Unlike the writing you do in your exam essays, the homework can be prepared *in advance*, and thus it should reflect a great degree of thoughtfulness and preparation. Here are a few reminders regarding your homework:

- Responses to homework questions must be numbered and must be typed. No un-typed or late responses will be accepted.
- Make sure your name and the class time is indicated on the homework.
- No e-mail submissions will be accepted. You must print out and submit a hard copy.
- Missing class is not an excuse for ignorance of homework assignments or due dates; it is your responsibility to find out what you missed any time a class or a part of class is missed.
- Use the homework as a showcase of your thinking and your responses to the assigned material. Thoughtfully prepared, insightful responses do much to enhance your grade.
- Proofread you writing carefully before you submit your work. Look for and correct misspellings, typos, missing words, syntax problems, etc. Read your sentences out loud to catch mistakes.
- You must develop your own responses. Copied work (from a classmate or otherwise) will not receive credit (neither student will receive credit in such a scenario where copying is apparent).
- If you have any questions about the homework generally or in regards to specific questions, you should see me (preferably in person during office hours or via e-mail well in advance) *before* the assignment is due.
- Avoid quoting the assigned text excessively. Though it is a good idea to occasionally refer to specific passages to make your point, these references should be brief and you should sum up any ideas *in your own words*. If you use quotes from the reading material, the quotes must be accompanied by your own explanation of what the quote means.

“The Tell-Tale Heart,” Edgar Allan Poe (1843)

Refer to the explanations of literary elements on previous pages to assist you in answering these questions.

- A. Describe the main character of the story. How is his character developed? Would you describe him as a static or dynamic character?
- B. Describe the tone / or overall style of writing. What creates this tone / style?
- C. Describe how the story begins and how it ends. Compare the story’s beginning to its ending.
- D. How does he create a sense of unity (very important to Poe) throughout the work?
- E. How can we relate this literary work to other aspects of Romanticism such as the visual arts or general attitude of Romanticism?
 1. What is the story’s point of view (POV) and when is this first established?
 2. Identify one example of an *anaphora* in the story.
 3. Identify one example of a *simile* in the story.
 4. Identify one example of *personification* in the story.
 5. Identify at least one *theme* of the story and explain at least one way the theme emerges.
 6. Identify one example of a symbol and explain what you think the symbol represents.

“The Tyger,” William Blake (c. 1794)

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
 In the forests of the night,
 What immortal hand or eye
 Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
 Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
 On what wings dare he aspire?
 What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
 And when thy heart began to beat,
 What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
 In what furnace was thy brain?
 What the anvil? What dread grasp
 Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
 And water'd heaven with their tears,
 Did He smile His work to see?
 Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
 In the forests of the night,
 What immortal hand or eye
 Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

** See questions on the next page.*

“The Tyger,” William Blake (c. 1794)

1. What is the subject matter (note both explicit and implicit subjects)?
2. Note a significant theme of the poem.
3. Are there any examples of symbolic meaning or do any subjects appear to represent larger meanings? Explain.
4. Describe the style and structure of poem (refer to your literary terms and identify at least two literary elements). What is the effect of the style and structure, or why might Blake use this style?
5. What moods are expressed and how ?
6. What are some of the images that he creates and how are they described?
7. How is nature described?
8. How does this poem reflect a Romantic sensibility?
9. Compare this poem to one other Romantic era work in terms of its style, subject matter or content.

**excerpt from "Auguries of Innocence,"
William Blake**

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.

A robin redbreast in a cage 5
Puts all heaven in a rage.
A dove-house fill'd with doves and pigeons
Shudders hell thro' all its regions.
A dog starv'd at his master's gate
Predicts the ruin of the state. 10
A horse misused upon the road
Calls to heaven for human blood.
Each outcry of the hunted hare
A fibre from the brain does tear.
A skylark wounded in the wing, 15
A cherubim does cease to sing.
The game-cock clipt and arm'd for fight
Does the rising sun affright.

Every wolf's and lion's howl
Raises from hell a human soul. 20
The wild deer, wand'ring here and there,
Keeps the human soul from care.
The lamb misus'd breeds public strife,
And yet forgives the butcher's knife.
The bat that flits at close of eve 25
Has left the brain that won't believe.
The owl that calls upon the night
Speaks the unbeliever's fright.
He who shall hurt the little wren
Shall never be belov'd by men. 30
He who the ox to wrath has mov'd
Shall never be by woman lov'd.
The wanton boy that kills the fly
Shall feel the spider's enmity.
He who torments the chafer's sprite 35
Weaves a bower in endless night.
The caterpillar on the leaf
Repeats to thee thy mother's grief.
Kill not the moth nor butterfly,
For the last judgment draweth nigh. 40
He who shall train the horse to war

Shall never pass the polar bar.
The beggar's dog and widow's cat,
Feed them and thou wilt grow fat.
The gnat that sings his summer's song 45
Poison gets from slander's tongue.
The poison of the snake and newt
Is the sweat of envy's foot.
The poison of the honey bee
Is the artist's jealousy. 50

The prince's robes and beggar's rags
Are toadstools on the miser's bags.
A truth that's told with bad intent
Beats all the lies you can invent.
It is right it should be so; 55
Man was made for joy and woe;
And when this we rightly know,
Thro' the world we safely go.
Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine. 60
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.
The babe is more than swaddling bands;
Throughout all these human lands
Tools were made, and born were hands, 65
Every farmer understands.
Every tear from every eye
Becomes a babe in eternity;
This is caught by females bright,
And return'd to its own delight. 70
The bleat, the bark, bellow, and roar,
Are waves that beat on heaven's shore.
The babe that weeps the rod beneath
Writes revenge in realms of death.
The beggar's rags, fluttering in air, 75
Does to rags the heavens tear.
The soldier, arm'd with sword and gun,
Palsied strikes the summer's sun.
The poor man's farthing is worth more
Than all the gold on Afric's shore. 80
One mite wrung from the lab'rer's hands
Shall buy and sell the miser's lands;
Or, if protected from on high,
Does that whole nation sell and buy.
He who mocks the infant's faith 85
Shall be mock'd in age and death.

He who shall teach the child to doubt
 The rotting grave shall ne'er get out.
 He who respects the infant's faith
 Triumphs over hell and death. 90

The child's toys and the old man's reasons
 Are the fruits of the two seasons.
 The questioner, who sits so sly,
 Shall never know how to reply.

He who replies to words of doubt 95
 Doth put the light of knowledge out.
 The strongest poison ever known
 Came from Caesar's laurel crown.
 Nought can deform the human race
 Like to the armour's iron brace.

100

When gold and gems adorn the plow,
 To peaceful arts shall envy bow.
 A riddle, or the cricket's cry,
 Is to doubt a fit reply.

The emmet's inch and eagle's mile
 105

Make lame philosophy to smile.
 He who doubts from what he sees
 Will ne'er believe, do what you please.
 If the sun and moon should doubt,
 They'd immediately go out. 110

To be in a passion you good may do,
 But no good if a passion is in you.
 The whore and gambler, by the state
 Licensed, build that nation's fate.
 The harlot's cry from street to street
 115

Shall weave old England's winding-sheet.
 The winner's shout, the loser's curse,
 Dance before dead England's hearse.
 Every night and every morn
 Some to misery are born, 120

Every morn and every night
 Some are born to sweet delight.
 Some are born to sweet delight,
 Some are born to endless night.
 We are led to believe a lie 125

When we see not thro' the eye,
 Which was born in a night to perish in a
 night,
 When the soul slept in beams of light.

God appears, and God is light,
 To those poor souls who dwell in night; 130
 But does a human form display
 To those who dwell in realms of day.

“You Are Just Like a Flower,” Heinrich Heine (1827)

You are just like a flower
 So fair and chaste and dear;
 Looking at you, sweet sadness
 Invades my heart with fear.
 I feel I should be folding
 My hands upon your hair,
 Praying that god may keep you
 So dear and chaste and fair.

1. Compare the notion of femininity conjured by Heinrich Heine’s “You Are Just Like a Flower” (Romantic era) to Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” (Realist). How do these two works represent their respective artistic movements?
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“I’m nobody! Who are you?,” Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

I’m nobody! Who are you?
 Are you nobody, too?
 Then there’s a pair of us — don’t tell!
 They’d banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
 How public, like a frog
 To tell your name the livelong day
 To an admiring bog!

1. Identify as many literary elements as you can. Provide an example of each.
2. Are there any elements of satire or irony in this poem? Explain.
3. What readers would respond best to this poem’s theme? Who would feel validated by it?
4. Once you have read “The New Dress” compare the narrator of this poem to the character of Mabel. Do they seem similar? Different? Explain in detail.
5. Compare the sentiments expressed in this poem to our own contemporary culture, one in which we are encouraged to post our (self constructed) identity online in various venues.

“The Story of an Hour,” Kate Chopin (1894)

A. Describe the setting of the story (where the story takes place). How does the setting affect the story or relate to its themes?

B. Consider the characters in terms of what they represent on a larger level. What does Josephine represent in the story? What does Richards represent?

C. What kind of relationships do the Mallards have? Is Brently Mallard unkind to Louise Mallard, or is there some other reason for her saying "free, free, free!" when she hears of his death? How does she feel about him?

D. Mrs. Mallard closes the door to her room so that her sister Josephine cannot get in, yet she leaves the window open. Why does Chopin make a point of telling the reader this? What might the open window represent? Do other words in the story relate to this idea?

E. What view of marriage does the story present? The story was first published in 1894; does it only represent attitudes toward marriage in the nineteenth century, or could it equally apply to attitudes about marriage today?

1. Describe at least one example of irony in “The Story of an Hour”. Explain what makes the example ironic and identify which type of irony (see above) this exemplifies.

Note: Irony is sometimes used in literature to surprise the reader with an unexpected twist. Irony involves a contrast between what is expected and what actually happens. There are three major types of irony in literature:

a. Verbal irony occurs when a character states one thing and means another.

b. Dramatic irony occurs when the reader knows more about a situation or character than the characters in the story do.

c. Situational irony is a contrast between what the reader expects to happen and what actually happens.

2. What is the nature of Mrs. Mallard's "heart trouble," and why would the author mention it in the first paragraph? Is there any way in which this might be considered symbolic ?

3. Cite at least one theme of the story and explain one example of how the theme emerges in the work (remember the distinction between “theme” and “subject matter”).

4. Cite at least one other example of symbolism . Explain what the symbol represents and how this relates to the story.

“The New Dress,” Virginia Woolf (1927)

A. How does the author provide insights into the thinking of the main character, Mabel?

B. Describe the story’s main character.

C. Can you identify any examples of symbolism? Explain.

1. What seems more important to the story – the plot or the character? Explain your response.

2. Identify the prevailing theme of this story and provide one example of when and how it emerges. How can you relate this to the significance of this story?

3. Consider the story as a form of social commentary. What does it reveal about women’s Roles, fashion, social mannerisms, and social expectations? How do these compare to our own time?

"Soldier's Home," Ernest Hemingway (1925)

1. What kind of person was Krebs before the war? What does the description in the first paragraph tell you about him? Why does the narrator mention that the fraternity brothers were all "wearing exactly the same height and style collar"?

2. How does the vision of Germany and the Rhine in the second paragraph contrast with the description in the first paragraph? What does this tell you about his experience?

3. Look closely at the language in this passage (or any other passage in the story):

Nothing was changed in the town except that the young girls had grown up. But they lived in such a complicated world of already defined alliances and shifting feuds that Krebs did not feel the energy or the courage to break into it. He liked to look at them, though. There were so many good-looking young girls. Most of them had their hair cut short. When he went away only little girls wore their hair like that or girls that were fast. They all wore sweaters and shirt waists with round Dutch collars. It was a pattern. He liked to look at them from the front porch as they walked on the other side of the street. He liked to watch them walking under the shade of the trees. He liked the round Dutch collars above their sweaters. He liked their silk stockings and flat shoes. He liked their bobbed hair and the way they walked".

What words or sentence patterns are repeated? What is conveyed by this repetition, and how does it help you to understand Krebs? What does he focus on as he watches the girls? Why does he find the "already defined alliances and shifting feuds" too "complicated" for him?

4. Krebs thinks a lot about "lies" in this story. What kinds of lies does he tell or refuse to tell? Why do they nauseate him? In what way might this be connected to his war experiences?

5. What is Krebs's relationship with his sister like? How does he respond differently to her than to the other girls or women in the story? What does she represent for him?

6. The scene with Krebs and his mother parallels the earlier scene with his sister, but his mother's demands provoke a very different reaction from him. What does she want from him? What is she afraid has happened to him? How does she seek to control him? Does she succeed?

7. Although Krebs's father is mentioned, all of the encounters shown in the story are those with women. Why might Hemingway shape the story in this way? What is the effect of this on the story?

8. Why isn't Krebs grateful for the use of the car?

9. Describe the style of writing and how it relates to the subject matter or content of the story.

“We Wear the Mask,” Paul Laurence Dunbar (1895)

WE wear the mask that grins and lies,
 It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
 This debt we pay to human guile;
 With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
 And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
 In counting all our tears and sighs?
 Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
 To thee from tortured souls arise.
 We sing, but oh the clay is vile
 Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
 But let the world dream otherwise,
 We wear the mask!

1. Identify the subject matter of this poem. What do you believe Dunbar is alluding to with “the mask”?
2. What are the consequences and effects of a masked life based on what the poem suggests?
3. What poetic techniques are used in this poem. Refer to literary elements and identify as many poetic formal elements as possible.
4. How are the form and sequence of the stanzas used to reinforce the poem's meaning?
5. Describe the poem’s ending in terms of its form and its effect.
6. How can you relate the subject matter or a theme of this poem to ideas or works of art discussed in class?

“Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” from *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois (1903)

1. What is the so-called veil that Du Bois refers to in paragraph 2?
2. How does this veil affect the lives of African Americans?
3. How does Du Bois react to his discovery of this veil?
4. What are the sources of the double consciousness Du Bois describes (paragraph 3)? Is this a completely negative condition? Explain.
5. According to Du Bois, what is the relationship between this “great republic” and the Negro Problem”? Describe the relationship between the two and how DuBois believes they impact each other.
6. Du Bois is writing this in the early 20th century. Do you think his description of “the souls of black folk” is valid today? Explain. Are his ideas relevant and valid for other ethnic groups, and if so, how? Do you think his writing makes a generalization about an ethnic group, one that does not necessarily describe the conditions of all African Americans, or do you believe it describes the situation of an entire group?

“Harlem,” Langston Hughes (1951)

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore--
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over--
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

“My Lost City,” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack –Up* (New York: New Directions, 1945)

1. Though “My Lost City” is more of a personal essay by the author rather than a fictional short story, it is nonetheless written with many literary stylistic elements. Note what aspects of the essay seem literary.
2. What kinds of contrasts are established in the essay? Provide at least two examples and explain what they contribute to the essay.
3. Choose one, perhaps your favorite, visual description and explain why you think it is an effective description of what Fitzgerald is trying to convey.
4. Are there any character transformations in the essay? If so, describe the transformation and how it relates to the overall piece.
5. Cite at least one example of a symbol and explain its importance.
6. What is the author’s relationship with the city he describes? Does it change? Does his perception of it change or remain the same? Explain.
7. This is semi-autobiographical essay and is based on a real city in a real period of American history. What glimpses of life do you see through the author’s eyes ? Based on his account, what is your understanding of this specific place and time?
8. At certain points he describes the city in positive terms. What years do he appear to be describing? How does he characterize them?
9. Consider the works of art we have examined in class recently from this same time period and culture. Cite at least one work of art that can be compared to this essay and explain how or why.
10. How can this essay be compared and contrasted to Hemingway’s short story “Soldier’s Home”? Provide specific examples.
11. On a broader level, what do you think is meant by the title “My Lost City”? What is lost and why? Find a specific passage in the essay that best supports your explanation.

“Ornament and Crime,” Adolf Loos, 1908 (trans. To English, 1913)

Students: In this short but passionate essay the modern Austrian architect and social theorist Adolf Loos puts forth his theories regarding modern design. This essay is a good example of how deeply philosophical the issues regarding modern architecture and design were to the modernists. They did not simply see Modern style as a matter of style, but they related it to significant social issues. As you read this, try to understand the way in which Loos relates modern design to social or economic concerns. Can you relate his ideas about Modern design to contemporary styles or consumer culture?

* Useful terms to be discussed in class: universal, timeless, systematic obsolescence

1. How does Loos characterize the modern aesthetic he favors and the ornamental aesthetic? What does he think of each? What kinds of metaphors does he use in his descriptions of either styles?
2. How does Loos describe the “primitive” person versus the modern? What aesthetic does he associate with primitives and with children?
3. How would you compare Loos’ apparent opinions about the primitive and the childlike to those of Romantic era thinkers, or Post-Impressionists such as Gauguin or Surrealists (addressed in your text and to be discussed in class)?
4. At one point in the reading Loos addresses the labor involved in making shoes. What point is he making with this story?
5. Loos mentions various composers / artists such as Beethoven and Voltaire. Choose one of the artists he mentions and explain *why* Loos mentions the artist in relation to his argument or what point he tries to make by citing their work.
6. Choose an example of modern architecture (from your textbook or from class discussion) that you think Loos would approve of and explain why you think Loos would like the chosen example.

* *These terms are not necessarily used in the reading, but they are relevant to Loos’ ideas.*

Frank Lloyd Wright's essays on "Organic Architecture" and other architectural principles

1. What does Wright mean by "organic architecture"? Be as specific and comprehensive as possible.
2. What aspects of these readings can be compared to Adolf Loos' ideas in "Ornament and Crime"? Provide at least one specific examples of a similarity or difference between the two architects and their ideas.
3. What is Wright's attitude about household appliances and other household accessories?
4. We will discuss in class a kind of "one size fits all" attitude among certain Modernist architects (an attitude which became famously associated with International Style architects) . Do you think Wright shares this approach? Why or why not?
5. How does Wright generally describe the Middle West (sometimes referred to as "prairie" by Wright) and the type of architecture that best suits it? How should architecture relate specifically to this region?
6. Compare and contrast Wright's architectural ideas to at least one other architect or architectural style discussed in your textbook or in class (it can be a recent example or one mentioned earlier in class).
7. Wright refers to the "machine" in various writings. By the "machine" do you think he is referring to modern technologies used to make architecture or to a machine aesthetic, or both? Explain and describe Wright's attitude about the "machine".
8. Choose at least one of the building techniques or innovations addressed by Wright and explain how that resulted in a new look or space in his designs.
9. Explain what Wright means when he describes architecture that is constructed "from within outward".
10. What styles or structures does Wright associate with the past? What belongs to new, modern architecture?