



# Strategies for Reading Literature

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# Important:



At the end of this presentation there is a link to a Microsoft Forms quiz. It is recommended that you score an 80% or higher.

Please take your time reviewing and studying this material before you proceed with the quiz.

# Objectives

- Learn different strategies for analyzing some of the elements of a short story.
- Understand the important aspects that play an essential role in short stories.

# Active reading strategies:



→ These strategies can help you remember key plot points or phrases as well as think about its themes, context, and messages.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## Analyzing a theme: key questions

- What are the conflicts in the work?
- Does the writer offer a lesson to be learned or a way of looking at life or the world?

→ Analyzing a theme is essential to understanding and relating the story to our own lives.

**Look for recurring images** - recurring images could be used to explain what the theme might mean. If there are a lot of images representing sadness, like cloudy days or gray colors, the reader can extrapolate more of what this means to the overall story. The repeating images could add up to the smaller themes, and then the student can link them back to the overall theme analysis.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## → Analyzing a theme

**Ask questions (and make note of them)** - questioning what you read is a great skill to master and it will help you make more in-depths analysis.

***For example:*** if the images are dark and depressing, you could question why? What does this bring to the story?

**Identify the different tools the author uses to express the theme** - different literary devices are essential to the theme, and the ones the author selects are there for a reason. The devices add layers to the theme, and once you take notice of them, the analysis will be better.

***For example:*** a student could notice in literary devices multiple mentions of metaphors, and they could ask questions about this. Why are there multiple metaphors throughout the story? What does that mean for the overall theme?

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## → Analyzing a theme

**Keep a notebook of notes while reading, and then compare all once finished reading** - One of the best ways to read a book while trying to analyze different aspects of it, theme specifically, is to keep notes of what you're reading so you can understand the specifics of it.

Things to make a note of are character traits, literary devices, passages the reader likes, imagery, and exciting plot points. the theme is one of the most important aspects of any literary work, so analyzing themes is one of the most important parts of studying literature.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## **Analyze the plot: key questions**

- How do events connect to each other?
- Do some events foreshadow others?
- Is the author responding to an event or recalling some past moment?

→ Analyzing a story's plot involves examining the ways its events unfold and the devices the author uses to advance them. Because a short story must be brief enough to read in one sitting, the plot is often compact, with only a few major characters and expert management of time and pacing.

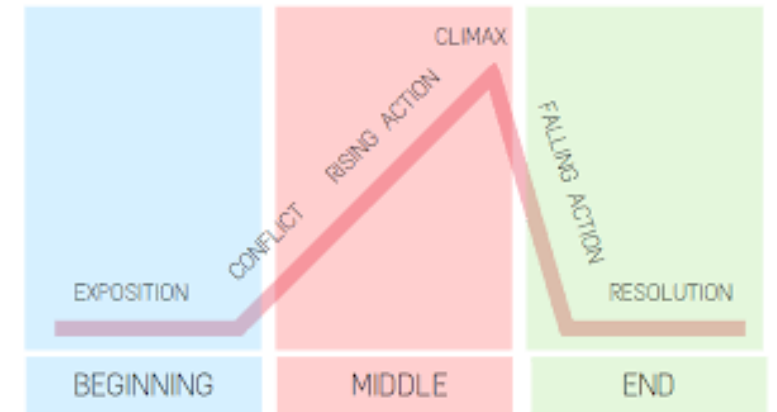


# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## → Analyze the plot

**Examine the Exposition** - within the plot structure, the **exposition** is the initial situation of the characters when the story begins. Short stories often begin in medias res or “in the middle of things,” introducing the main conflict immediately without a backstory.

As you analyze the plot, **look closely at the beginning and determine what events and potential difficulties the characters are facing as the story opens.**



# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

→ **Analyze the plot**

**Trace the Rising Action** - As the story progresses, its major conflict begins to gain tension. A short stories **rising action** includes the events in the story where **things start to get a little more complicated for the characters** and the ending seems uncertain.

As you analyze the plots rising action, **identify each event and how it functions to escalate the conflict**. You can also consider the order of events, analyzing how each one leads to another as the story advances.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## → Analyze the plot

**Investigate the Climax** - The climax is the emotional high point of the action in a story where the characters have entered the point of no return; regardless of what happens after this event, they will be completely changed by it.

Analyze the story's climax by looking at how the preceding chain of events logically leads to it and sets the stage for this **moment of truth**.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## → Analyze the plot

**Analyze the Falling Action** - The falling action of a story is the “fall out” that comes as a result of the climax –the chain reaction. It occurs immediately after the climax and details the consequences – good or bad – that the characters must deal with after the turning point of events. It leads up to the resolution and sets the stage for the final chapter story.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## → Analyze the plot

**Wrestle with the Resolution** - Though the story's resolution involves how the plot literally ends, it also focuses on how the characters respond to its overall events. Some short stories may end with an epiphany, a new level of **insight the character gains from the action**.

As you analyze the ending, consider what epiphany the main character reaches and how it relates to his final actions in the story.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## → Analyze characters: key questions

- Consider characters' actions, thoughts, words, and motives
- Do characters change or stay the same?
- What do characters' actions tell you about the work's theme, the culture, or the time period?

A character analysis is the process of evaluating the specific traits of a literary character. When analyzing a character, it is important to remain critical, ask concise analysis questions, and base your conclusions about each character being analyzed on the three questions mentioned above.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

→ **Analyze characters**

**Things to look at when completing a character analysis:**

- **Motivation** - What are the underlying reasons for why the character being analyzed acts the way they do? Why do they make the choices they make? Do they act impulsively? Do they act ethically?
- **Actions** - How does the character act? How do their actions affect those around them? Similar to real life, the way that a character acts says a lot about who they are.
- **What do they say** - Does the character appear to have a strong grasp of education? Do they use a lot of slang? Do they use generational phrases?

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## → Analyze characters

### Things to look at when completing a character analysis”

- **Descriptions** - How do those who interact with the character describe them? How does the character describe themselves? These descriptions can be physical, they can be judgemental, even emotional.
- **Names** - Consider a character named “Problem Pete”, what sort of imagery does this convey? Do you find yourself making assumptions based on those names?



# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## Analyze the structure of the work: key questions

- Is it chronological?
- Does it skip around? If so, why?
- Are you given clues by the writer as to what will happen?

To analyze narrative structure, readers need to break the structure down into parts to reflect on the way the author constructed the story. A critical part of identifying a narrative structure is reflecting on the order of events.

- **Linear narrative structure** (is the order of events chronological?)
- **Non-linear narrative structure** (how does author fragment the events?)

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# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## **Analyze the narrator: key questions**

- Who is telling the story?
- Does the narrator tell the reader the characters' thoughts?
- What is the narrator's tone or attitude toward the characters or events?

Narrators are essential because they are the voices that tell the stories readers are engaged with. They are used throughout all types of literature and in all genres. They can also be very different depending on the author's intentions.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## Analyze the narrator

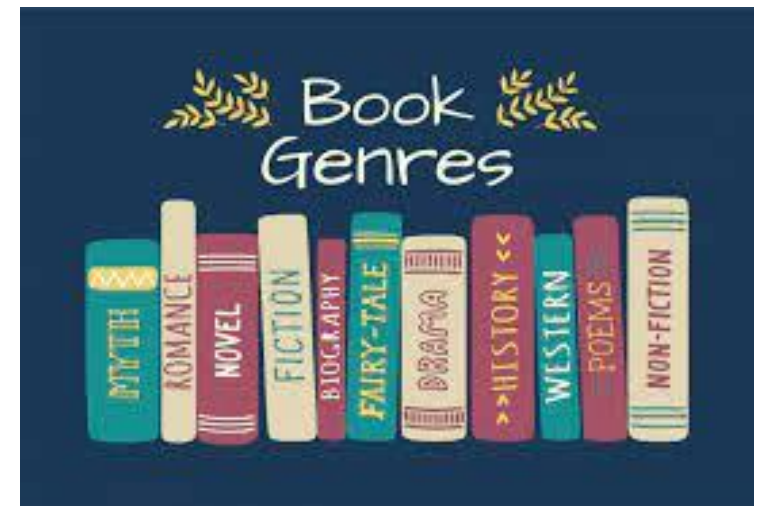
### Types of narrators:

- **First-person narrator** - A narrator who uses 'I' pronouns and is usually involved as a witness or an active participant in the story.
- **Second-person narrator** - A narrator who uses 'You' pronouns. These narrators create ambiguity because the reader is unsure whether they are being addressed directly and cannot easily know how much participation they have. This is very rare in fiction.
- **Third-person limited narrator** - A narrator who uses 'he/she/they' pronouns. They may be invisible, detached, or intrusive, making comments on characters or events in a story.
- **Third person omniscient narrator** - An all-knowing narrator who also uses 'he/she/they' pronouns, but stands outside events and has access to all of the characters' unspoken thoughts and knowledge of events.

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## Look at the type or genre of the work: key questions

- Is it a tragedy?, comedy, sonnet, mystery, or science fiction?
- How does it compare to others of its type?
- Does it use elements common to this type of work?
- Is it an effective example of this type of work?



# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## **Analyze the language: key questions**

- Do the images, rhythms, use of dialogue, or symbolism contribute to its meaning or interpretation?

## **Analyze the historical or cultural background: Key questions**

- How does the work reflect values, social conflicts, or political forces of the time and place in which it is set or in which it was written?

## **Analyze the work in terms of gender, class, or race: key questions**

- How does the work portray women and men?
- How does the work reflect treatment of a particular class or group?
- How does it challenge traditional views of these groups?

# Tips to guide your thinking when analyzing a piece of literature:

## **Focus on the reactions of the audience to the work: key questions**

- How or why have readers responded to this work?
- What are some different types of reactions readers might have?

## **Research the life of the author: key questions**

- What about the author's' life is reflected in this particular work?

## **Resist the obvious meaning of the work: key questions**

- Read skeptically, look for internal inconsistencies, and focus on ambiguities in the work. How would you interpret the work?

# References and works cited

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