

Adult Education Program

English I - Reading



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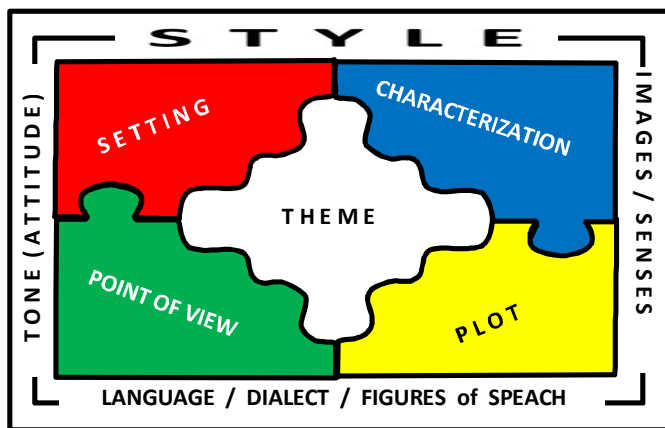
Interpreting Prose Fiction

The fiction passages presented on the Language Arts, Reading Test are taken from either novels or short stories. Both novels and short stories usually present imaginary people and events that imitate life. Novels and short stories are written in **prose**— ordinary spoken language— and share common literary devices and techniques. These devices and techniques will be explored in this section.

By reading fiction, you can enjoy stories about interesting people and situations and gain a greater understanding of life. Your understanding of literature will also aid you as a moviegoer or as a viewer of television, videotapes, or DVDs. Many aspects of literature can be applied to films and television programs because the script is the basis for any of these.

Think of the author as a type of artist who works with a palette. On the palette the artist mixes colors, just as the author mixes together **characters, settings, and plots**. The artist works with an overall purpose for his subject matter just as the author conveys **themes**. The artist and the author speak through a particular **point of view** which may be direct or indirect. In the finished product the artist and the author each convey an attitude toward his or her work through a particular **style** shown. The artist achieves an overall result through a painting or other work of art; the fiction author achieves an overall result through a novel or short story.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF FICTION THE NOVEL AND THE SHORT STORY



Time and Place as Part of Setting

The **setting** of a short story or novel is the **time** (of day or year), **place** in which the action occurs, and the atmosphere, or mood. The **atmosphere**, or **mood**, includes the weather and conditions of the physical place: dark and dirty if in a dungeon, or colorful and bright if at a carnival. The atmosphere, or mood, also includes the feelings of the characters placed in the setting: discouraged or sad, happy or playful, and so on.

Some authors are very direct about revealing their settings. They state early in a work exactly when and/or where

the story is happening:

- "Not long ago there lived in uptown New York, in a small, almost meager room, though crowded with books, Leo Finkle, a rabbinical student in the Yeshivah University."
 - Excerpted from *The Magic Barrel* by Bernard Malamud
- "Every day one summer in Larkin's Hill, it rained a little. The rain was a regular thing, and could come about two o'clock in the afternoon."
 - Excerpted from *A Curtain of Green* by Eudora Welty
- "Miami was hot and muggy and the land wind that blew from the Everglades brought mosquitoes even in the morning."
 - Excerpted from *The Strange Country* by Ernest Hemingway

Inferring Time and Place

In many stories, the time and place are not directly stated. As the reader, you need to read between the lines, or look for clues, to identify a specific time and place. The following exercise will help you practice the skill of inference.

Atmosphere, or Mood, as Part of Setting

An important part of setting is atmosphere, or mood— the sensations and emotions associated with details of the physical setting.

For example, if a story opens with a nighttime setting, a thunderstorm, a castle, and a man approaching the door, the author is creating an atmosphere of mystery or suspense. On the other hand, if a story opens with early morning as the setting and children playing happily in a playground, the atmosphere is lighthearted. The exercise below will help you practice the skill of recognizing atmosphere.

EXERCISE 1

Recognizing Atmosphere or Mood

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the question that follows.

HOW DOES THIS MAN FEEL?

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was— but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. . . I looked upon the scene before me— upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain— upon the bleak walls— upon the vacant eye-like windows— upon a few rank sedges— and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees— with an utter depression of soul. . .

· Excerpted from "The Fall of the House of Usher" by Edgar Allan Poe

Which descriptive words and phrases does Poe use to create an atmosphere of gloom?

Writing Activity 1

Pick a favorite restaurant. Visit it at noon and again in the evening. Describe the decor and how the atmosphere changes from lunchtime to dinnertime. How are the patrons dressed at the two times? Is the service different at those two times? Are the meals offered different? Is there music playing? Notice that a real-life setting often is the basis for fiction.

EXERCISE 2

Identifying Parts of setting

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

HOW DOES THE SEASON AFFECT THE MOOD?

Some of the caddies were poor as sin and lived in one-room houses with a neurasthenic [exhausted, broken down] cow in the front yard, but Dexter Green's father owned the second best grocery store in Black Bear- the best one was "The Hub," patronized by the wealthy people from Sherry Island- and Dexter caddied only for pocket-money.

In the fall when the days became crisp and gray, and the long Minnesota winter shut down like the white lid of a box, Dexter's skis moved over the snow that hid the fairways of the golf course. At these times the country gave him a feeling of profound melancholy- it offended him that the links should lie in enforced fallowness [inactive period], haunted by ragged sparrows for the long season. It was dreary, too, that on the tees where the gay colors fluttered in summer there were now only the desolate sandboxes knee-deep in crusted ice. When he crossed the hills the wind blew cold as misery, and if the sun was out he tramped with his eyes squinted up against the hard dimensionless glare.

- Excerpted from "Winter Dreams" in *All the Sad Young Men* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

- (1) What is the current season (time) of the year?
- (2) Is the action taking place in the present, the past, or the future? (What verb tense is used?)
- (3) In the excerpt, where (place) is Dexter and what is he doing? What details act as clues?
- (4) How does Fitzgerald describe the same setting (place) in fall, in winter, and in summer?
- (5) What is the effect of the scenery on Dexter? What atmosphere, or mood, does the author convey through his character?

Characterization: Who is in the Story

Characters are the fictional people in a novel or short story. **Characterization** is the method by which a writer creates fictional people who seem lifelike and believable. Writers may use any of these different methods to create character:

- describing the character and his or her actions
- revealing the character's speech patterns

- revealing what other characters say about the character
- revealing the character's unspoken thoughts

EXERCISE 3

Inferring Characterization

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

WHAT KIND OF BOY IS HUCK FINN?

You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly- Tom's Aunt Polly, she is- and Mary, and the Widow Douglas, is all told about in that book- which is mostly a true book; with some stretchers, as I said before.

Now the way that the book winds up, is this: Tom and me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich. We got six thousand dollars apiece- all gold. Well, Judge Thatcher, he took it and put it out at interest, and it fetched us a dollar a day apiece, all the year round- more than a body could tell what to do with. The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would civilize [sic] me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out. I got into my old rags, and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied. . . .

- Excerpted from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain

1. Which description best fits Huck's personality?
 - (1) the world's biggest liar
 - (2) an uncaring, uninterested youth
 - (3) a sad orphan adopted by the Widow
 - (4) a somewhat uncivilized boy
 - (5) a very educated future judge
2. In this excerpt, from whom do we primarily learn about Huck's character?
 - (1) Huck's narrative about himself and others
 - (2) Aunt Polly, Mary, and the Widow Douglas
 - (3) Huck's unspoken thoughts
 - (4) Mark Twain's comments in Tom Sawyer
 - (5) Huck shown in action scenes
3. From what we know about Huck, what kind of character do you think his friend Tom is?
 - (1) a saintly, caring lad
 - (2) a highly educated schoolmate
 - (3) a romantic, adventuresome boy
 - (4) a uncertain, conflicted boy
 - (5) a lying, disrespectful youth

Dialogue as an Element of Characterization

Another way an author reveals character is through dialogue.

Dialogue is conversation among characters in a story. Quoting what a character says allows authors to reveal a character's attitudes, feelings, and true personality in the character's own words rather than through descriptions alone.

In novels and short stories, quotation marks are placed around each speaker's exact words. Usually an author will provide transitions such as *he said* and *she replied* to indicate when a character is speaking.

The following sentences illustrate the difference between a speaker's exact words and a restatement of a person's words:

Exact words: "You seem to have a 'frozen shoulder,' so I am recommending physical therapy to improve your range of motion," he said.

Restatement: He said I had a "frozen shoulder" and recommended physical therapy to improve my range of motion.

Paragraph indenting and quotation marks indicate a new speaker. In longer conversations, he said and she asked may not be used in each sentence. Notice that the speakers are identified only once in this passage:

"Are you looking for anything in particular?" inquired the discrete furniture salesperson.

"We're looking for new bedroom furniture to replace our set that is more than thirty years old," Trine replied. "I like the Italian look with marble tops, but Roy likes the American traditional look."

"Well, let's see if we can find a look that appeals to both of you."

EXERCISE 4

The Sound of Poetry

Directions: Read the beginning stanzas from the poem and answer the questions that follow. Notice how the rhyme, the rhythm, and alliteration add to the experience of the poem.

WHAT MIGHT THE RAVEN REPRESENT?

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore-
While I nodded, nearly napping,
suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping,
rapping at my chamber door.
"Tis some visitor," I muttered,
"tapping at my chamber door-
Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;- vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease* of sorrow- sorrow for the lost Lenore-
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore-

Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me- filled me with fantastic terrors never felt

before; So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door-
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;-
This it is and nothing more."

*surcease means an end
- Excerpted from "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe

- List two different examples of alliteration from stanzas one or two:
a _____
b _____
- What effect does the repetition of the word rapping have?
(1) It uses sound to develop the image of persistent knocking.
(2) It adds to the atmosphere of boredom and isolation.
(3) It creates a bird-like sound through the use of personification.
(4) It lightens the mood of the poem through sound.
(5) It creates alliteration with the poem's title.
- What word best describes the feeling or atmosphere created in the poem by the language, events, and rhythm?
(1) aggressive
(2) eerie
(3) bitter
(4) embarrassed
(5) inexperienced

EXERCISE 5

Using Dialogue as an Element of Characterization

Directions: Read this passage, in which the speakers are not identified. Who could be the four characters in this dialogue? What seems to be the chief interest of each speaker?

- "I'm so excited that the four of us are taking this great trip to London and Paris. What a great way to celebrate our wedding anniversaries. I just have to see Buckingham Palace and have "high tea" at Harrod's department store."
- "Well, I really want to see Westminster Abbey and the artwork at the National Gallery in London. I want to spend more time at the Louvre Museum in Paris where they have the Mona Lisa."
- "I think we ought to start out with the half-day London Tour so we can get an overview of the city. Then we can go back to the Tower of London or anything else we want to see."
- "I don't care what we see as long as I can spend a whole day at the British Museum. I do want to take that tour of Leeds Castle, Canterbury, and Dover. Oh, and I just

realized that we'll see history in action. We're going to be in France on July 14, which is Bastille Day. That's like our Fourth of July."

- Speaker Number 1/Chief Interest _____
- Speaker Number 2/Chief interest: _____
- Speaker Number 3/Chief Interest _____
- Speaker Number 4/Chief Interest _____

Inferring Mood

Mood is very important in poetry. When a poet creates a poem, the words chosen help present an overall feeling. The mood may be humorous and light, somber and serious, or still something else.

Within a poem, the mood sometimes changes. Read the following song from the musical *Cats*. As you read, identify the mood of each part. Circle the word that most accurately describes the mood of the lines.

Memory

Midnight, not a sound from the pavement. 1. (a) optimistic
 Has the moon lost her memory? (b) lonely
 She is smiling alone (c) eager
 In the lamp light the withered leaves
 collect at my feet
 And the wind begins to moan.

Memory. All alone in the moonlight 2. (a) nostalgic
 I can smile at the old days. (b) humorous
 I was beautiful then. (c) afraid
 I remember the time
 I knew what happiness was,
 Let the memory live again.

Daylight. I must wait for the sunrise 3. (a) depressed
 I must think of a new life (b) sarcastic
 And I mustn't give in. (c) hopeful
 When the dawn comes tonight will
 be a memory, too
 And a new day will begin.

Touch me. It's so easy to leave me 4. (a) regretful
 All alone with the memory (b) content
 Of my days in the sun. (c) confused
 If you touch me you'll understand what
 happiness is.
 Look, a new day has begun.

· Excerpted from *Cats: The Book of the Musical* by Trevor Nunn

The first part of the song refers to the moon smiling alone and the wind moaning. The word *lonely* (b) most accurately describes the mood. For the second part, you should have chosen (a) *nostalgic* because the cat (narrator) is smiling and remembering. For the third part, *hopeful* (c) describes the cat anticipating daylight and a new day. The last part sounds final. A new day has begun. *Content* (b) describes the mood. You should see four different moods in this song.

EXERCISE 6

Identifying Characters through Dialogue

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

WHAT RELATIONSHIP IS FORMING?

Looking half out the windshield and half into the compartment, he took out a business card and handed it to her. "Robert Kincaid, Writer-Photographer." His address was printed there, along with a phone number.

"I'm out here on assignment for National Geographic," he said. "You familiar with the magazine?"

"Yes." Francesca nodded, thinking, isn't everybody?

"They're doing a piece on covered bridges, and Madison County, Iowa, apparently has some interesting ones. I've located six of them, but I guess there's at least one more, and it's supposed to be out in this direction."

"It's called Roseman Bridge," said Francesca over the noise of the wind and tires and engine. Her voice sounded strange, as if it belonged to someone else, to a teenage girl leaning out of a window in Naples, looking far down city streets toward the trains or out at the harbor and thinking of distant lovers yet to come. As she spoke, she watched the muscles in his forearm flex when he shifted gears.

· Excerpted from *The Bridges of Madison County* by Robert James Waller

1. How do we know that the two speakers from the excerpt do not know each other?
2. Which character speaks first?
3. Which character is local, and which character is a visitor to the area?
4. Do we know anything of the occupation of either character?
5. How do we know that one character spent part of her youth in a foreign country?
6. What do you think the female speaker is thinking or feeling by the end of the passage?

Writing Activity 2

Find a place to sit in a **shopping mall**. **Observe the physical appearances** of persons who walk by. Note especially the interactions between couples. Describe their expressions as they walk and speak. How are they dressed? What are their hair styles? Are they wearing jewelry? Try to imagine what their personalities are like. Remember that personality is the essence of characterization.

Plot: What Happens in the Story

The events that occur in a story make up the plot. The plot events occur in some time order, or sequence.

To see how events might follow a logical sequence, arrange the plot events below in order. Place the number 1 in the blank before the first event, 2 in front of the second event, and so on. Notice the cause-and-effect relationship between events: one event leads to another, which leads to another, and so on.

- a. ____ Two sisters wrote an outline for the book with sample chapters.
- b. ____ For years, my five sisters and I had discussed writing our own cookbook.
- c. ____ I contacted a publisher about printing the book sometime in the future.
- d. ____ The publisher wanted the material right away.
- e. ____ The cookbook will have to wait to be written when we have more time.
- f. ____ Three sisters got promotions in their work positions and became even busier,

Answer: The order of the sentences should be b, a, c, d, f, and e.

Flashback as an Element of Plot

An author may choose to present events out of order. The events begin sometime in the past, then progress in order until, by the end of the story, the characters have returned to the time and place of the opening scene. One such popular technique is called **flashback**. For example, in the 1960 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee, the main character, Scout, starts the narration with "When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow." Then Scout indicates, "When enough years had gone by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading to his accident." The story then shifts to years past when their father Atticus practiced law in the fictional town of Maycomb.

Parts of a Plot

The events that make up a fiction plot may be grouped and labeled according to their function in a story. The diagram illustrates the basic parts of a plot: **exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution.**



Exposition refers to background information that "sets the stage" for a story. The exposition also introduces setting, characters, and conflict. **Conflict**, or friction between opposing characters or forces, is the basis of every plot. Conflicts are usually stated in this pattern: character or force versus (vs.) character or force.

Most stories and novels are centered around one of the following conflicts:

- individual vs. self- inner struggles characters suffer while trying to decide what to do change jobs, get divorced, have children, admit the truth about something
- individual vs. another- disagreements between characters
- individual vs. society- struggles against the rules, conventions, or pressures of living with other humans
- individual vs. nature and other forces- struggles against forces beyond a character's control, such as an earthquake or other natural disaster, or an abstraction such as evil

Another element of plot is **climax**, the point of highest intensity in the plot. The climax of a story occurs when the

conflict comes to a head. The climax of many westerns occurs when the hero and villain meet face-to-face in a gun duel. An example is the classic 1952 film western *High Noon*, in which the lonely town marshall faces the evil gunman. The climax does not always occur at the very end of the story, but it usually occurs in the last part. All of the events and conflicts involving characters must be evident before they can lead to the climax.

Mystery stories have very obvious climaxes. All of the clues come together to provide the answer to "Whodunit?" Several series are good examples of this type: the Sherlock Holmes detective series by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; the murder mysteries with Belgian detective M. Hercule Poirot or elderly principal detective Ms. Jane Marple by Agatha Christie; and the Sam Spade detective series by Dashiell Hammett, whose classic work is *The Maltese Falcon*.

EXERCISE 7

Language, Sound, and Mood

Directions: Read the poem and answer the questions.

WHAT IS THE SPEAKER REFLECTING UPON?

Storm Windows

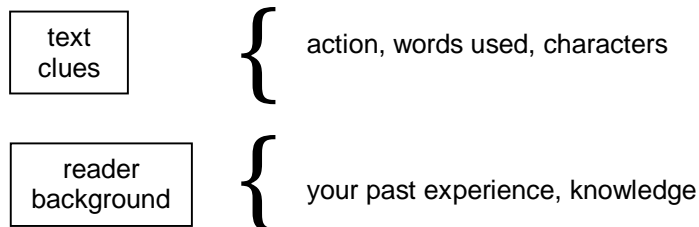
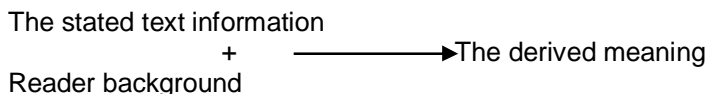
- (1) People are putting up storm windows now,
Or were, this morning, until the heavy rain
Drove them indoors. So, coming home at noon,
I saw storm windows lying on the ground,
- (5) Frame-full of rain; through the water and glass
I saw the crushed grass, how it seemed to stream
Away in lines like seaweed on the tide
Or blades of wheat leaning under the wind.
The ripple and splash of rain on the blurred glass
- (10) Seemed that it briefly said, as I walked by,
Something I should have liked to say to you,
Something . . . the dry grass bent under the pane
Brimful of bouncing water . . . something of
A swaying clarity which blindly echoes
- (15) This lonely afternoon of memories
And missed desires, while the wintry rain
(Unspeakable, the distance in the mind!)
Runs on the standing windows and away.
- Howard Nemerov

- 1. In lines 6-8, the simile that compares crushed grass to seaweed on the tide and wheat . . . under the wind contributes to which recurring images in the poem?
 - (1) winter and summer
 - (2) wind and water
 - (3) doors and houses
 - (4) earth and sky
 - (5) night and darkness
- 2. Which word best describes the mood in the poem?
 - (1) fearful
 - (2) curious
 - (3) foolish
 - (4) forgiving
 - (5) regretful

Interpreting & Analyzing Poetry for Meaning

When you interpret a poem, you rephrase it, putting the poem into your own thoughts and words. You may simply change words around to make a statement more understandable to you. You may guess at the poet's main purpose and ask yourself, "Why is the poet using this comparison?" or "Why does the poet say this?"

To understand poetry, seek the stated information from the text of the poem, but also use your own experience and knowledge to derive meaning and a fuller appreciation of what you have read.



Read the following stanzas from the poem "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning. Browning, like most poets, was interested in enabling a reader to see something revealing within a poem. Use the clues from the text, combined with your own assessment of human beings to answer the questions.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
worked busily a day, and there she stands,
Will't please you sit and look at her?

She had a heart
A heart- how shall I say?- too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace- all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,--good! but thanked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name as if she ranked
With anybody's gift.
· and if she let
Herself be lessened so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
· E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose Never to
stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt, Whene'er I passed her;
but who passed without Much the same smile? This grew; I
gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together. There she
stands As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet the
company below, then . . .
· Excerpted from "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?
(1) Fra Pandolf
(2) the Duke
(3) a visitor
2. What kind of person was the Duchess?
(1) foolish and clumsy
(2) vain and envious
(3) kind and friendly
3. What did the speaker dislike about her?
(1) She treated everyone well.
(2) She talked too much.
(3) She blushed frequently.
4. In addition to discussing a portrait of the Duchess, how is the character of the speaker also portrayed in the poem?
(1) through what the speaker says about the Duchess
(2) through what the speaker is wearing
(3) through what the visitor says to the speaker

For question 1, you should have chosen answer (2) because the speaker states That's my last Duchess. The answer to question 2 is (3) because the poem states *She had a heart . . . too soon made glad and all and each would draw from her alike the approving speech . . .* For question 3, the answer is (1). The Duke is resentful that the Duchess appreciated others' gifts as much as his. Lastly, (1) is the answer to question 4. What the Duke says about the Duchess reveals a great deal about him.

EXERCISE 8 Inferring Meaning

Directions: Read the poem below, looking carefully for clues in the text to answer the questions.

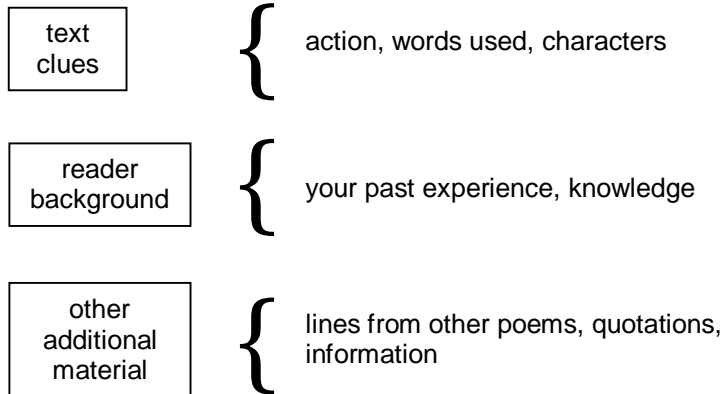
WHAT LANGUAGE CONTRIBUTES TO THE IMAGE OF ROYALTY?

Richard Cory

- (1) Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.
- (5) And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulse when he said,
"Good morning," and he glittered when he walked.
And he was rich- yes, richer than a king-
- (10) And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.
So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
- (15) And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.
· Edwin Arlington Robinson

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?
 - (1) Richard Cory
 - (2) a townspeople
 - (3) Richard Cory's wife
 - (4) a nobleman
 - (5) a small child
2. What word describes the attitude of the townspeople towards Richard Cory?
 - (1) indifferent
 - (2) cautious
 - (3) superior
 - (4) envious
 - (5) distrustful
3. From lines 13 and 14, what can be inferred about the lives of the townspeople?
 - (1) They seldom work.
 - (2) Their lives are hard.
 - (3) Their lives are uneventful.
 - (4) They face many changes.
 - (5) They lead isolated lives.
4. What is the overall theme of the poem?
 - (1) Wealth can rarely buy love.
 - (2) Money is often the root of all evil.
 - (3) Love and life will find a way to thrive.
 - (4) The grass is always greener on the other side.
 - (5) Things are not always what they seem.

The stated text information
 + → The derived meaning
 Reader background
 + → The derived meaning
 Other additional material



The excerpt that follows comes from a poem written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The poem is written about the explorer Ulysses, who has traveled for many years across the ocean in his ship.

Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.
 Death closes all; but something ere* the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
 Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
 The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
 Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends.
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
 Of all the western stars, until I die.
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
 And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
 Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are,
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

*ere means before
 · Excerpted from "Ulysses" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Before you try to answer the next two questions:

- Think about the text clues in this excerpt from Tennyson.
- Think about your own knowledge and experience with human beings.
- Think about the meaning of the quotations.

Combining Ideas Together to Develop Meaning

Questions on the Language Arts, Reading Test require you to comprehend, apply, and analyze thoughts in poetry as well as in other literature. Additionally, you will sometimes be asked to consider another source of information in relation to the poem you read. You will be **synthesizing**, combining pieces of information together to arrive at an idea. To do that, you will want to understand the poem you read, think about what makes sense to you in view of your own knowledge and experience, and consider the other additional information you are given.

1. Earlier in the poem, the speaker states: "I am a part of all that I have met." In what way is this line consistent with the rest of the poem?

- (1) It adds to the image of a sailing ship.
- (2) It suggests that each individual is incomplete.
- (3) It reminds us of how our experiences shape our lives.
- (4) It adds to the tone of suspense.
- (5) It emphasizes the uncertainty of the future.

2. The poet T. S. Eliot in his poem, "East Coker," states, "Old men ought to be explorers."

How does this quotation relate to the poem Ulysses?

- (1) It reaffirms the poem's theme that exploration is lifelong.
- (2) It also suggests that a new world is needed.
- (3) It recreates the fears and fantasies of people.
- (4) It reinforces the idea that youth is wasted on the young.
- (5) It predicts that travel opportunities are limited.

For question 1 the answer is (3). To be a *part of all* encountered suggests experience affects one's development. This is similar to the poem's theme of exploration bringing about experience. The answer to question 2 is (1). The speaker of the poem states *Old age hath yet his honor and 'Tis not too late to seek. . .*, echoing the idea expressed in the quotation from Eliot's poem.

EXERCISE 9

Interpreting a Poem

Directions: Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.

WHAT DOES NATURE HAVE TO OFFER?

Leisure

- (1) What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
- (5) No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
- (10) And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

· W. H. Davies

1. If the speaker of the poem were hired for a new job, predict what company benefit would have the greatest appeal.

- (1) profit-sharing
- (2) life insurance
- (3) child care

- (4) overtime work
- (5) paid vacation

2. What effect does line 10, "And watch her feet, how they can dance" have on the poem?

- (1) It reinforces the wonder of
- (2) beauty and enjoyment
- (3) activity and practice
- (4) nature and learning
- (5) complexity and design
- (6) art and progress

3. Which piece of advice would the speaker of the poem give, based on the overall attitude the speaker expresses?

- (1) Work hard if you wish to succeed.
- (2) Take time to smell the roses.
- (3) Laugh and the world laughs with you.
- (4) If at first you don't succeed, try again.
- (5) Time flies when you're having fun.

Writing Activity 3

Pick a favorite sporting event and watch it on television to its conclusion. (Or better yet, attend the event in person if you can.) Identify at least two points of view from which the event can be described. Write a summary of the event two different ways. Different points of view for real events can be the basis for fictional accounts later.

Theme: What the Story Means

Behind all of the action in a story or movie is the writer's or director's purpose or focus. The creator of a work wants it to have meaning for the audience. The main idea, or **theme**, may be an insight into life, a viewpoint about a social issue, a new view of an old problem, or a positive or negative look into human nature.

In successfully written fiction, as in effective films, the theme is rarely stated directly. Instead, it is implied or suggested. The reader or viewer is expected to interpret the meaning from all elements presented. For example, since the early 1980s, many writers and filmmakers have given us stories about problematic, dysfunctional families. Typically family members no longer understand or support each other. Some examples are *The Bridges of Madison County*, by Robert J. Waller or *American Beauty*, by Alan Ball. Often, the theme is possible reconciliation. Another common theme is the search for true love as is seen in 1990s films such as *Sleepless in Seattle*, *You've Got Mail*, and *Runaway Bride*.

EXERCISE 10

Inferring Theme

Directions: Read the passage below and choose the best answer to each question that follows.

WHAT CONCERNS EDDY, MR. NEWMAN, AND DANNY?

"Eddy, for your courage in facing and breaking your own personal sound barrier, I give you the gift of sound- a collection of tapes for your headphones that represent the best music ever recorded in all styles except disco, which does not qualify as music."

We laughed as he handed Eddy a box about the size of a shoebox. A label was pasted to the lid which listed the songs on each numbered tape. Rhea peeked over Eddy's shoulder and cried with delight, "Oh, all the music in the world."

"Not quite," Mr. Newman said, "but it's a good start. In addition I award you a report card with the 'A' you earned in my course of life, and another well-deserved certificate, a diploma."

He handed Eddy one of the high school's report cards and a diploma, complete with the leather cover and Mrs. Voss's signature. Eddy started to cry. Rhea handed the box of tapes to my Dad, who was closest to her, and hugged Eddy, patting him on the back and saying, "There, there," the way someone had probably taught her in The Home.

Then Mr. Newman turned to me. "Danny, your pain was more than physical, although that was bad enough, and for a few days, we thought we might lose you. Sometimes I wasn't even sure what your assignment was. It didn't really matter because eventually it became a matter of survival. Beyond that, you also graduated. The report cards won't be mailed home until tomorrow; however, I managed to get an early copy printed out by the computer at school. There are quite a few 'D's' here, but I do see one well-earned 'A' in English, no less. At the bottom, a check mark and initials are clearly seen in a space marked 'Requirements completed for graduation.' You already have your diploma. I also have an envelope for you. It contains two reference letters, one by me and one by Mrs. Voss to introduce you to an admissions counselor we both know at the junior college, who can expedite matters for you if you heed our encouragement and look more carefully at your education."

- Excerpted from The Newman Assignment by Kurt Haber!

1. Two of the conflicts resolved within this passage involve Eddy, the school custodian, and Danny, a high school senior. Which of the following is not a probable conflict?
- (1) Eddy overcomes his fear of speaking in front of others.
 - (2) Danny survives physical injuries from an accident.
 - (3) Eddy and Danny each pass the Newman assignment.
 - (4) Eddy and his wife Rhea have marital problems.
 - (5) Danny overcomes personal and physical difficulties to graduate.

2. The theme of the passage is best stated in which of these ways?
- (1) Barriers can be overcome through effort and sacrifice.
 - (2) The purpose of hard work is to win achievement awards.
 - (3) Good intentions do not always make up for difficulties.
 - (4) The truth will always emerge in the proper time and setting.
 - (5) Mental suffering is the way to build personal character.

"I know Vevey," said my wife. "We were there on our honeymoon."

"Were you really? That must have been lovely? . . . Where did you stop there?"

"We stayed at the Trois Couronnes," said my wife.

"It's such a fine old hotel," said the American lady.

"Yes," said my wife. "We had a very fine room and in the fall the country was lovely."

"Were you there in the fall?"

"Yes," said my wife.

We were passing three cars that had been in a wreck. They were splintered open and the roofs sagged in.

"Look," I said. "There's been a wreck."

The American lady looked and saw the last car. "I was afraid of just that all night," she said. "I have terrific presentiments about things sometimes. I'll never travel on a rapide again at night. There must be other comfortable trains that don't go so fast."

- Excerpted from "A Canary for One" by Ernest Hemingway

1. If the author read this excerpt, how would his voice sound?
- (1) uninterested and mocking
 - (2) angry and bitter
 - (3) tragic and depressed
 - (4) serious and grave
 - (5) astonished and amazed
2. What is the author's attitude toward the American lady? She should be
- (1) congratulated for her strength
 - (2) respected for her high ideals
 - (3) tolerated and sympathized with
 - (4) imitated for her special graces
 - (5) exposed for her false values
3. The American lady apparently opposed the marriage of her daughter to a Swiss, but was seemingly taking the canary to her, probably to console her. This probably creates what feeling for the daughter on the part of the reader?
- (1) indifference
 - (2) sympathy
 - (3) annoyance
 - (4) gratitude
 - (5) disbelief

Dialect as an Element of Style

Dialect is the pattern of speech characteristic to a certain region. From their accents, we can sometimes tell if people are from the Deep South or New England in the United States or perhaps from England or Ireland. Regional expressions, word

choices, and pronunciation contribute to dialect.

For example, think about how this expression conveys the lack of integration of people from one part of the country to another: "You can put kittens in the oven, but that doesn't make them biscuits." In other words, kittens will never be biscuits, just as Northerners will never be Southerners. In England, a sign that reads Police Enforcement Cameras means that traffic is being monitored by radar. When a travel official says, "We'll collect you" that means that you will be notified and taken to the appropriate spot (such as a bus stop). "No busking" in the metro stations means you cannot play music for donations.

Writers of fiction may have their characters speak in dialects. Below are two examples of how the dialect of an area and time period are used in novels. The first example is from "Over the Border" from a 1935 collection, *The Quiet Man and Other Stories*, by Irish writer Maurice Walsh.

"Hould her, you devil, Jureen!" he warned as he sprang up on his own side, but the mare did not even flick an ear.

"Here, lad!" I called, and felt for a shilling.

"Thank you, sir, and God spare you!"

"Hup, mare!"

The next passage is from Zora Neale Hurston's 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. It is written in a dialect that was spoken by some rural southern African Americans of the time.

"What she doin' coming back here in dem overalls? Can't she find no dress to put on?· Where's dat blue satin dress she left here in?· Where all dat money her husband took and died and left her?· What dat ole forty year ole 'oman doin` wid her hair swingin' down her bak lak some young gal?· Where she left dat young lad of a boy she went off here wid?"

Figures of Speech as an Element of Style

Figures of speech are not meant to be taken literally. They are expressive ways of describing. You hear figures of speech in spoken English every day. While figures of speech are often particularly associated with poetry and drama, figurative language is used in fiction writing to create vivid pictures and original descriptions.

There are many kinds of figures of speech. In literature, especially in poetry, you can find specific figures of speech called **similes**, **metaphors**, and **personification**. A brief explanation of each will help you recognize the use of this type of descriptive language.

A **simile** (sim'-ih-lee) is a comparison that shows a likeness between two unlike things. A simile uses the words **like**, **than**, or **as**.

An author's choice of words and phrasing reflects his or her attitude. What tone is presented in the paragraphs below? Write a few words that describe the tone of this passage:

Our first-born was a lovely, intelligent girl whose first real sentence at the age of six months was

"Me baby." All things on four legs including lions and tigers were "Doggie." She read valentines sent to her by her preschool classmates and invented names for her baby brother including "Little Daddy" and "Oil Can Harry." As she grew, she developed a love for words and started writing her own poems.

Our second (and last)-born was a boy who as a toddler could spend hours arranging his little Matchbox cars or painting houses at a small easel. If the house scene had a fireplace, he would be sure to draw in every brick. Advice from his preschool teacher was to provide him with art materials but not to try to channel (and possibly

"kill") his interest in art. It was very predictable that his art later in life turned into a talent for architectural design.

You might have written nostalgic, light, retrospective, funny, or humorous. The author is a parent looking back on a daughter and a son whose interests and talents were evident at an early age. The author's tone is not sad or resentful, but full of fond, humorous memories.

To determine the tone of a passage, ask yourself the following questions:

- What subject is the author describing?
- How does the author feel about the subject?
- What language or descriptive details reveal the author's attitude?

EXERCISE 11

Detecting Style and Tone

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

WHAT IS THE AUTHOR'S TONE?

"Americans make the best husbands," the American lady said to my wife. I was getting down the bags.

"American men are the only men in the world to marry."

"How long ago did you leave Vevey?" asked my wife.

"Two years ago this fall. it's her, you know, that I'm taking the canary to."

"Was the man your daughter was in love with a Swiss?"

"Yes," said the American lady. "He was from a very good family in Vevey. He was going to be an engineer. They met there in Vevey. They used to go on long walks together."

Writing Activity 4

Read the front page of your area newspaper for a few days. Each day identify the major issues represented by the stories. What insights or viewpoints about human nature are represented by the stories? Remember that a theme can be the reason for selection of stories or series of stories and that fictional accounts often follow such events.

Style: Tying All the Elements Together

Style refers to the author's unique use of the language- the choice and arrangement of words. Style includes the author's **tone**, the attitude revealed or displayed toward the subject of the work of fiction or toward the characters. Style is what makes the writing unique. An author's style may contain long, complex sentences, everyday spoken language, dialect, or figures of speech. Style is what holds all the elements together.

Types of Styles

Authors who publish many works often become known and appreciated for their styles as well as their themes and characters. Ernest Hemingway, for example, is known for a terse (short, tight) writing style of few words. On the other hand, Charles Dickens is known for a narrative style characterized by long sentences and vivid descriptions. Edgar Allan Poe often used long, complex sentences, the repetition of words, and many dashes, exclamation points, and italics to add emotion and suspense to his stories. He opens the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" with: "True!- nervous- very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am! But why will you say that I am mad?" In her 1931 novel *The Good Earth*, Pearl S. Buck uses a vivid, graphic style to describe the China in which she lived for forty years in the early twentieth century.

Tone and Style: The Author's Attitude

When reading, you must infer the author's tone. The **tone** of a novel or short story is the overall attitude that an author conveys toward his or her subject. When listening to a person speak, you can infer the person's attitude by the sound of his or her voice. The tone tells you whether the person means to be sarcastic, bitter, serious, funny, amazed, sympathetic, or something else. The author conveys the intended tone through use of the dialogue among word choice, characters, sentence structure, figures of speech, and punctuation.

The moon came out of the earth like a round flame.
Then his mind blanked like a TV suddenly switched off.
His wife's smile is as pretty as a field of roses in bloom.
The prospector was madder than a caged coyote.

A metaphor (met'-uh-for) is a comparison that does not contain like, than, or as. A metaphor implies that one thing is something else.

Her legs got those dark blue rivers running all over them.
The vision of the two hats, identical, broke upon him with the radiance of a brilliant sunrise.

Personification (per-sahn-ih-fih-kayi-shun) attributes some human activity or quality to an animal or thing.
. . . the ocean has been singing to me, and the song is that of our life together.

For two days, the earth drank the rain, until the earth was full.

See Page 15, Interpreting Poetry, and Page 20, Interpreting Drama, also Pages 13-14 for more explanation and examples of figures of speech.

EXERCISE 12

Noticing Figures of Speech

Directions: Read the following fiction passages and underline all the expressions that are figures of speech.

IS THE FOG ALIVE?

Fog was outdoors, hanging over the river, creeping in and out of alleyways and passages, swirling thickly between the bare trees of all the parks and gardens of the city, and indoors, too, seething through cracks and crannies like sour breath, gaining a sly entrance at every opening of a door. It was a yellow fog, a filthy, evil-smelling fog, a fog that choked and blinded, smeared and stained.

· Excerpted from *The Woman in Black* by Susan Hill

WHAT DOES THE TEENAGED GIRL SEE?

No, looking at herself in the plate glass windows she passed, she was very content with what she saw: under the large hat her neck looked slender and reedlike, a blossom's stem; her eyes were shadowed, her entire aspect gentle, and even, she thought, mysterious.

· Excerpted from "Cress Delahanty" by Jessamyn West

EXERCISE 13

Identifying Images as Part of Overall Style

Directions: Read the passage below. Underline all descriptions and images that appeal to your senses of sight and hearing. (Other senses of smell, taste, and touch are not emphasized in this selection.)

WHAT IMAGES DOES THE WRITER CALL TO MIND?

In agony the brakes cried, held: the scene, dizzy with color, rocked with the car, down a little, back up, giddily, helplessly, while dust exploded up on all sides. "Mommy!" Timmy screamed, fascinated by the violence, yet his wail was oddly still and drawn out, and his eyes never once turned to his mother. The little Mexican boy had disappeared in front of the car. Still the red dust arose, the faces at the bus jerked around together, white eyes, white teeth, faces were propelled toward the windows of the bus, empty a second before. "God, God," Annette murmured; she had not yet released the steering wheel, and on it her fingers began to tighten as if they might tear the wheel off, hold it up to defend her and her child, perhaps even to attack.

A woman in a colorless dress pushed out of the crowd, barefooted in the red clay, pointed her finger at Annette and shouted something gleefully. She shook her fist, grinning, others grinned behind her; the bus driver turned back to his bus. Annette saw now the little boy on the other side of the road, popping up safe in the ditch and jumping frantically- though the sharp weeds must have hurt his feet- laughing, yelling, shouting as if he were insane. The air rang with shouts, with laughter. A good joke. What was the joke? Annette's brain reeled with shock, sucked for air as if drowning.

· Excerpted from "First Views of the Enemy" in Upon the Sweeping Flood and Other Stories by Joyce Carol Oates

How to Read Fiction on Your Own

You have learned about the basic elements of fiction illustrated in the puzzle on page 1. In both the novel and the short story, the elements contribute to the whole. While your examination of each element of fiction contributes to your understanding, it is the whole, not its parts, that represents a work of art. Use the tips that follow to guide your reading of literature.

TIPS ON READING FICTION

As you read a short story or novel, ask yourself:

- What is the setting (time and place)? What is the atmosphere (or mood)?
- Who are the characters?
- Are they named or described?
- Do the characters use special dialogue?
- What is the plot?
- What is the exposition (or background information)?
- Is flashback used?
- What is the conflict?
- What is the climax?
- What is the resolution?

- Are there subplots?
- From whose point of view is the story told? Is there first-person, third-person, or author-third person narration? What are clues to the theme?
- What is the author's style like?
- What is the author's tone?
- Are there special elements such as dialect or figures of speech?

Interpreting Poetry

Poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive and widely effective mode of saying things, and hence its importance.

- Matthew Arnold
All poetry is difficult to read,
- The sense of it is, anyhow.
- Robert Browning

Do you find that you agree with the Matthew Arnold quotation above or the Robert Browning quotation above? Perhaps you feel that there is truth to each of these. For centuries, poetry has served as a means to provoke thought, honor an individual, express emotion, amuse a reader, commemorate an event, evoke a memory, or plead love. **Poetry** is language that expresses ideas and emotions in a tightly controlled and structured way. Simply put, poetry is the best words in their best order.

Poetry is compressed. **Imagery** (word pictures that appeal to the five senses) and figures of speech enable the poet to convey ideas in just a few words. Some poems are written in **rhyme**, the repetition of a sound at the end of two or more words, like say and hay. **Sounds and rhythms**, or the "beat," arouse feelings and evoke thoughts. All of these characteristics of poetry make it a distinct form of literature.

On the Language Arts, Reading Test, you will be expected to demonstrate your understanding of a poem's meaning. You should be able to read a poem, spend a few minutes interpreting it, and answer questions about the theme. Idea and Emotion in Poetry

The following poems are about human relationships. The first poem is a song. The second poem is a sonnet, a 14-line poem that follows a particular form. Both poems express similar emotions and ideas.

EXERCISE 14

Understanding Idea and Emotion in Two Poems

Directions: Read each poem aloud and answer the questions that follow.

WHAT ARE THE POETS SAYING AND HOW ARE THEY SAYING IT?

I know not whether thou hast been absent:
I lie down with thee, I rise up with thee,
In my dreams thou art with me.
If my eardrops tremble in my ears,
I know it is thou moving within my heart.
· Aztec Love Song

Sonnet 43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints- I love thee with the breath, Smiles,
tears, of all my life!- and, if God choose, I shall but love
thee better after death.
· Elizabeth Barrett Browning

- Which theme is found in both poems?
 (1) separation
 (2) sacrifice
 (3) beauty
 (4) romantic love
 (5) wisdom
- On the basis of the emotion expressed in these two poems, which one of the following words would best describe the speakers' feelings?
 (1) devoted
 (2) proud
 (3) sad
 (4) amused
 (5) scornful

TIPS ON READING POETRY

- Read the title as a clue to the meaning.
- Read the whole poem to get the general ideas and mood.
- Ask yourself, what is this about? What is the poet saying? What does the poem mean? What IS the theme?
- Note the use of any objects or events that might serve as symbols to represent meaning. What feelings and ideas do you associate with those symbols?

- Reread the poem using the punctuation as a guide. (Stop where there's a period or other end mark, not at the end of a line.)
- Notice how lines are grouped together and if lines are repeated. What is the poet stressing by repeating words and lines?
- Notice the language used and unusual word choices, comparisons, imagery, and figures of speech.
- Read the poem aloud so you can hear it, especially if words rhyme.
- To understand the poem's tone and theme summarize in your own words what the poem is saying.

The Shape of Poetry

The structure and form of poetry distinguish it from other types of literature. Many poets choose a highly structured format, in which they shape their ideas using rhyme, rhythm, and stanzas. A **stanza** is a group of lines that work together to express an idea. A new stanza signals that a new idea is being introduced in a poem. Often, stanzas are separated by a blank space.

The following poem contains two stanzas:

Dreams

- | | |
|----------|---|
| stanza 1 | Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly. |
| stanza 2 | Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.
· Langston Hughes |

When you sing a song, you may sing a verse, a chorus, the second verse, the same chorus, the third verse, a chorus, and so on. A **verse** is any piece of poetry that is arranged in a pattern. Many songs were poems before they were set to music, and song lyrics often have many of the characteristics of poetry.

The term **free verse** refers to verses without a regular rhythmic pattern and usually without rhyme. Much of today's poetry is free verse.

Capitalization and Punctuation

In poetry a comma or a dash means "pause." A period means "stop." If the poem contains capitalization and punctuation, it should be read in sentences, not just one line at a time. Sometimes the reader may have to run two or more lines together. For example, in the poem "Child of the Americas," which follows, lines 4 and 5 are *read I am a U.S. Puerto Rican Jew, a product of the ghettos of New York I have never known.*

The use of capital letters in poetry can vary. Sometimes a poet capitalizes each line. Sometimes a poet capitalizes a word for emphasis.

EXERCISE 15

The Shape of Poetry

Directions: Read aloud the poem below and answer the questions that follow. Notice the capitalization and punctuation as you read.

WHY DOES THE SPEAKER DESCRIBE HERSELF AS A CHILD?

Child of the Americas

(1) I am a child of the Americas,
 a light-skinned mestiza of the Caribbean,
 a child of many diaspora,* born into this continent at a crossroads.
 I am a U.S. Puerto Rican Jew,
 (5) a product of the ghettos of New York I have never known.
 An immigrant and the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants.
 I speak English with passion: It's the tool of my consciousness,
 a flashing knife blade of crystal, my tool, my craft.
 I am Caribe a, island grown, Spanish is in my flesh,
 (10) ripples from my tongue, lodges in my hips:
 the language of garlic and mangoes,
 the singing in my poetry, the flying gestures of my hands.
 I am Latinoamerica, rooted in the history of my continent:
 I speak from that body.
 (15) I am** not african. Africa is in me, but I cannot return.
 I am not taina. -fain° is in me, but there is no way back.
 I am not european. Europe lives in me, but I have no home there.
 I am new. History made me. My first language was spanglish.
 I was born at the crossroads
 (20) and I am whole.

*diaspora means migration or scattering of people
 **am was an in the original

1. There are three lines in the first stanza. How many sentences are there? (Notice periods.)

2. List at least three details that contribute to the speaker's description of herself as born "at the crossroads" where many ways come to meet together.
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
3. In which stanza does the speaker announce that she is proud of her heritage? Give the clue word you find.

4. To what does she compare English?

5. What do the emotions and ideas expressed in the poem invite a reader to do?
 - (1) study American history
 - (2) learn another language
 - (3) appreciate multiculturalism
 - (4) research family background
 - (5) plan a family reunion

The Language of Poetry

You were introduced to descriptive language in the fiction section of this book. While figures of speech contribute greatly to style in short stories and novels, poetry relies even more heavily on this special language. This is because of the compression of ideas that a poem requires. In this section you will review some of the devices introduced in the fiction section and analyze how they are used in poems to arouse the mind and emotions.

IMAGERY

A poet relies on readers' abilities to create images, or pictures, in their minds from the words on a page. Images may appeal to any senses, enabling readers to experience the emotions and ideas conveyed. For this reason, the poet must choose the perfect word to convey a thought. When a poem appeals to your senses and enables you to imagine a scene, the poem is rich in **imagery**.

Dawn Over the Mountains

- (1) The city is silent,
 Sound drains away,
 Buildings vanish in the light of dawn,
 Cold sunlight comes on the highest peak,
- (5) The thick dust of night
 Clings to the hills,
 The earth opens,
 The river boats are vague,
 The still sky·
- (10) The sound of falling leaves.
 A huge doe comes to the garden gate,
 Lost from the herd,
 Seeking its fellows.

· Tu Fu

Can you "hear" the silence in line 1 and then the *sound of falling leaves* in line 10? Can you "feel" the *cold sunlight in line 4* and see a *huge doe . . . at the garden gate* in line 11?

PERSONIFICATION

Recall that **personification** is a form of imagery in which human activities or qualities are attributed to an animal or a thing. In other words, a nonhuman thing comes "alive" as it is given human abilities.

Carl Sandburg used personification to immortalize a city in his famous poem "Chicago." Notice that he addresses the city as a person. Here are the opening lines:

Chicago

· Robert Bly

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

· Excerpted from "Chicago" by Carl Sandburg

The names Sandburg calls the city in the first three lines refer to the commerce and industry Chicago was known for. Chicago is personified- made human- when the poet calls it by a name normally associated with people.

You should have underlined these similes: *I am wrapped in my joyful flesh,/as the grass is wrapped in its clouds of green.; I have suffered and survived the night,/Bathed in dark water, like any blade of grass.; and we shall sit at the foot of a plant,/And live forever; like the dust.*

Recall that a metaphor is an implied or suggested comparison between two things. A metaphor does not contain like, than, or as. With a metaphor, one thing is the second thing to which it is being compared.

The Langston Hughes poem "Dreams," presented on page 13, contains this metaphor:

Life is a barren field/Frozen with snow.

This metaphor presents an image of land that is empty; nothing can grow. Life without dreams is a wasteland.

Note the comparison between hope and a bird in "Hope" by Emily Dickinson. Underline all the words that contribute to the metaphor.

Hope
Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,
And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.
I've heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

· Emily Dickinson

The metaphor of hope as a bird is extended and developed throughout the poem. You should have underlined the following words: *feathers, perches, sings, bird, crumb.*

EXERCISE 16

The Language of Poetry

Directions: Write **imagery** if a line evokes an image or **personification** if it attributes a human quality to an inanimate object.

- Line 1: Midnight, not a sound from the pavement. _____
- Line 2: Has the moon lost her memory? _____
- Line 3: She [the moon] is smiling alone. _____
- Line 4: In the lamp light the withered leaves collect at my feet. _____
- Line 5: And the wind begins to moan. _____

· Excerpted from Cats: The Book of the Musical by Trevor Nunn

SIMILE AND METAPHOR

A **simile** is a comparison of two unlike things. You will recall from Chapter 1 that a simile uses words such as *like, than, or as* to compare two unlike things. Poet Robert Bly uses similes in the following poem, "Poem in Three Parts." What things are being compared with one another? Underline the three similes.

Poem in Three Parts

I
Oh, on an early morning I think I shall live forever!
I am wrapped in my joyful flesh,
As the grass is wrapped in its clouds of green.

II
Rising from a bed, where I dreamt
Of long rides past castles and hot coals,
The sun lies happily on my knees;
I have suffered and survived the night,
Bathed in dark water, like any blade of grass.

III
The strong eaves of the box-elder tree,
Plunging in the wind, call us to disappear
Into the wilds of the universe,
Where we shall sit at the foot of a plant,
And live forever, like the dust.

EXERCISE 17

Review of Figurative Language and Theme

Directions: Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.

HOW DOES THE SPEAKER VALUE BEAUTY?

BARTER

- (1) Life has loveliness to sell,
All beautiful and splendid things,
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,
Soaring fire that sways and sings,
- (5) And children's faces looking up,
Holding wonder like a cup.
Life has loveliness to sell,
Music like a curve of gold,
Scent of pine trees in the rain,
- (10) Eyes that love you, arms that hold,
And for your spirit's still delight,
Holy thoughts that star the night.
Spend all you have for liveliness,
Buy it and never count the cost;
- (15) For one white singing hour of peace
Count many a year of strife well lost,
And for a breath of ecstasy
Give all you have been, or could be.

- Sara Teasdale

1. What idea is suggested by the simile in stanza 1 that compares a child's face to a cup?
 - (1) Cups and children are both wonderful.
 - (2) Children's faces are filled with much emotion.
 - (3) Children are often thirsty.
 - (4) Faces are shaped like cups.
 - (5) Children are full of energy.
2. To what does the poet compare music in stanza 2?
 - (1) the scent of pine trees
 - (2) the rain
 - (3) eyes that love
 - (4) arms that hold
 - (5) a curve of gold
3. Which word best describes thoughts as they are identified in the metaphor, "Holy thoughts that star the night" in stanza 2?
 - (1) distant
 - (2) pointed
 - (3) late
 - (4) isolated
 - (5) bright

The Sound of Poetry

Poets rely on many devices to communicate their messages to readers. Most poetry is written to be read aloud. As the poet writes the words, he or she is aware of the sound of the poem. Many poets use "sound words" to enhance the imagery and message of their poetry. Three common poetic devices are

rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration.

Nursery rhymes introduce the literature of language to children. **Rhyme** is the repetition, in two or more words, of the stressed vowel sound and of the syllables that follow that sound.

Star light, Star bright, first star I see tonight

Just as word choices produce a desired effect in poetry, so does the beat, or rhythm, of a poem. **Rhythm** is the rise and fall of stressed words and syllables. If the rhythm is regular, or ordered strictly, the poem is said to have **meter**.

The repetition of consonant sounds, usually at the beginning of words, is **alliteration**. *Susie sells seashells down by the seashore* is an example of alliteration. Nursery rhymes contain much alliteration, and advertising slogans and jingles incorporate this technique frequently.

WORDS THAT STAND FOR SOUNDS

Another device sometimes used in poetry is the choice of a word to imitate a natural sound. **Onomatopoeia** (ahn-'uh-mah'-tuh-pee'-uh) refers to the use of words whose sounds imitate their meanings. Sound-imitating words include *buzz*, *screech*, *boom*, and *crash*. *Whisper* is also a sound word.

EXERCISE 18

The Sound of Poetry

Directions: Read the beginning stanzas from the poem and answer the questions that follow. Notice how the rhyme, the rhythm, and alliteration add to the experience of the poem.

WHAT MIGHT THE RAVEN REPRESENT?

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore-
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
" 'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door-
Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;- vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease* of sorrow- sorrow for the lost Lenore-
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me- filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
" 'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door-
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;-
This it is and nothing more." *surcease means an end

- Excerpted from "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe

EXERCISE 20

Interpreting Drama

All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players.
 · William Shakespeare

What is drama?

Drama is a form of literature that uses action to tell a story. The story is performed by actors who portray various characters who become involved in **conflict**, a struggle between opposing forces in a plot. The main character in a drama is called the **protagonist**, and the conflict with which he or she struggles may be external or internal. We encounter drama, not only with plays, movies, and TV, but also every day in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

The requirements for interpreting drama on the Language Arts, Reading Test are similar to the requirements for interpreting prose fiction and poetry. For example, on the test you may be asked to read an excerpt from a play and interpret the meaning or tone of the characters' speech. You will need to think about the text you read as well as your own knowledge and experience of human behavior.

Reading a play differs from reading a novel or short story in some ways. A play is designed to be performed. It is a set of instructions for a stage production. For example, the instructions tell an actor what to say, a set designer how to prepare the setting, a costume designer which costumes are needed. The people involved in the production of a play will generally collaborate with the playwright or director to create the performance. However, when you are reading a play, you must create the performance by using your imagination to envision the production. It is important to picture the action, characters, and setting in your mind. You need to read carefully to infer setting, characterization, and theme, just as you do when you read prose and poetry.

One of the greatest playwrights of all time is William Shakespeare. An excerpt from his play, *Hamlet*, follows. In the play set several hundred years ago, Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark. Read the dialogue on page 638. Try to visualize the scene and identify the conflict.

WHAT DOES HAMLET LEARN?

Act I, Scene v

GHOST: My hour is almost come
 When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
 Must render up myself.
HAMLET: Alas, poor ghost!
GHOST: Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
 To what I shall unfold.
HAMLET: Speak, I am bound to hear.
GHOST: So art thou to revenge, when thou shall hear.
HAMLET: What?
GHOST: I am thy father's spirit,
 Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
 And for the day confined to fast in fires,
 Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
 Are burnt and purged away: but that I am forbid
 To tell the secrets of my prison house,
 I could a tale unfold whose lightest word

Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
 Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
 Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
 And each particular* hair to stand on end,
 Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.
 But this eternal blazon* must not be
 To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, oh, list!
 If thou didst ever thy dear father love-
HAMLET: Oh, God!
GHOST: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.
HAMLET: Murder!
GHOST: Murder most foul, .
 *particular means individual
 *eternal blazon means description of eternity
 · Excerpted from Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Now we can see the start of the conflict Hamlet faces. What should he do? Should he believe his own eyes and ears? Should he trust the ghost is telling the truth? Should he seek revenge for the death of his father? What would you do in his position? To learn about all the other complications, complexities, and considerations involved, you would have to read on in the play.

EXERCISE 21

Comprehending a Play

Directions: The previous passage from *Hamlet* could be written in the form of narrative fiction. Fill in the blanks below to complete the narrative.

Hamlet was outside when a _____
 The ghost began to _____. At first, Hamlet
 _____ for the ghost. The
 ghost claimed to be _____. The ghost wanted
 Hamlet to _____ Hamlet felt

Reading a Play or Script

DIALOGUE

Drama contains **dialogue**, the exchange of conversation among the characters. Dialogue in a play and the way the lines are said reveal a great deal about the characters. Reading dialogue can sometimes be challenging because a playwright may write the dialogue to imitate speech. The spelling of words may be nonstandard in an attempt to imitate the pronunciation that different people give speech. Some clues are available, however, to help you understand the dialogue that you read.

Clue #1: The speakers are identified each time one speaks. In the scene at the beginning of this section the clues HAMLET and GHOST indicate who is speaking. The names and the use of the colon [:1 help to distinguish which character says what.

Clue #2: Punctuation marks are used to end a character's speech. In the Language Arts, Writing section of this book, you reviewed punctuation. Notice the end marks, especially for

questions (?) and exclamations (!). Punctuation is used in drama to show volume of voice and emotion. Dashes (-) and ellipses (. . .) are also used to show pauses. Dashes are used to show a break in thought, while ellipses indicate that there is a pause in the action or that one character is being interrupted by another character.

Clue #3: Line spacing between lines of dialogue indicates who is speaking.

A more obvious visual clue that indicates when a different speaker is talking is the white space between lines of dialogue.

HOW DRAMA DIFFERS FROM OTHER FORMS OF LITERATURE

Although drama has much in common with the two other forms of literature you have studied- poetry and fiction- each of the three forms of literature treats its subject differently. Illustrated below are differences in the way each form of literature treats the same subject- a marriage proposal.

Prose: The young couple, John and Mary, went for a midnight boat ride on the Mississippi River. John gave Mary a diamond ring, and she accepted his proposal of marriage.

Poetry: Lovers in the moonlight
Aboard the *Delta Miss*
Exchanged a ring and promises
And sealed them with a kiss.

Drama: [*John and Mary, board the Delta Miss for a midnight cruise.*]

JOHN: [*Embracing Mary*] I love you. [*He gives her a*

MARY: [*Surprised*] What's this?

JOHN: It's a symbol of our future together- if you agree to marry me next month.

MARY: [*Opening the package and seeing a diamond ring*] Oh, John!

JOHN: [*Slipping the ring on her finger*] Don't ever take it off.

MARY: No . . . [*flustered*] I mean yes! I mean *no* I won't take it off . . . Yes, marry you. [*They kiss.*]

EXERCISE 22

Noticing Dialogue and Punctuation

Directions: Read the dialogue below and notice the punctuation. Then complete the sentences that follow.

[*The scene begins in a nineteenth-century parlor as Catherine, Edward and Victoria's daughter, enters with tea*]

CATHERINE: Would you like some tea and . . .

EDWARD: Not now- Can't you see we're talking?

VICTORIA: You're talking- I'm not!

EDWARD: Oh- a little irritable, are we?

VICTORIA: No- just bored- with you.. .

CATHERINE: [Mumbling] I'm leaving. [She exits.]

Catherine interrupts _____

_____ asks two questions.

_____ is rude to Catherine.

Victoria is upset with _____

STAGE DIRECTIONS

Stage directions are used to assist the actors and director in interpreting the writer's intentions and purpose and to help the reader follow the imagined actions. In the brief scene in Exercise 2, the stage directions are the introductory words [*The scene begins in a nineteenth-century parlor as Catherine, Edward and Victoria's daughter, enters with tea*] and the directions [*Mumbling*] and [*She exits*].

In this example notice that the playwright has inserted the directions within the dialogue. In the scene above, the stage directions tell the reader who Catherine is and why she leaves. A play excerpt later in this chapter will require you to follow the action as well as the words.

EXERCISE 23

Inferring Mood from Dialogue

Directions: Choose the best answer to the questions that follow.

1. Which of the following words best describes the mood of the scene in Exercise 2?

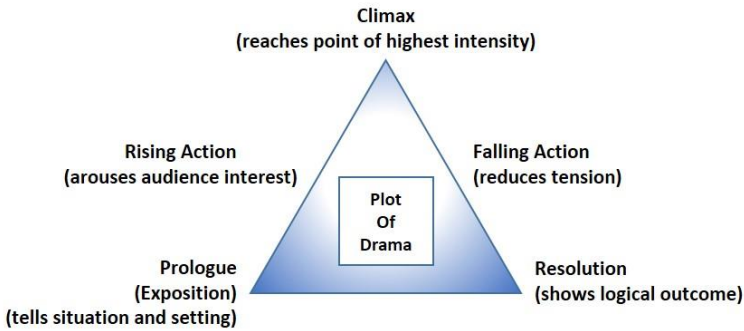
- (1) tense
- (2) happy
- (3) suspenseful
- (4) nostalgic
- (5) humorous

2. What does the use of the dash [-] imply in the dialogue in Exercise 2?

- (1) fast speech
- (2) a brief pause
- (3) rudeness
- (4) humor
- (5) shyness

STRUCTURE OF DRAMA

A play is composed of acts- the major divisions of a dramatic work. Acts are composed of scenes. Scenes show an action that occurs in one place among characters. Shakespeare developed and refined the structure of drama as we know it today. He presented his plots in five acts. These acts are subdivided into numbered scenes. The diagram below shows the relationship between the acts and the corresponding elements of a traditional plot.



A **prologue** begins classical drama. Because there was no scenery in early drama, the audience needed to know when and where the story was taking place and what circumstances caused the upcoming action. An actor would come on stage and introduce the play by explaining the setting and some of the plot.

The **epilogue** ends classical drama. At the end of the play an actor would come on stage and deliver a summary poem or speech. Although the prologue and epilogue are not as common in drama today, some television dramas and movies use them to help the audience understand the plot.

ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

Plot, setting, characterization, and theme are all elements which apply to drama. As you can see from the diagram on page 19, the plot in drama is tightly structured. As in a short story, there is **exposition** that orients the audience to the dramatic situation and setting.

The **rising action** is made up of all of the events that create suspense and arouse the audience's interest. We wonder *What will happen next? What will the main character do?* All of these events and conflicts lead to the **climax**, the point of highest intensity in the play.

The **falling action** may be brief. The conclusion or **resolution** is the logical outcome of the plot. As in fiction, the resolution ties up all of the loose ends of the plot.

INTERPRETING A SCENE

The following scene from *West Side Story* has been included to give you practice in reading plays. The more comfortable you are with following the format of a play, the better your understanding of it will be. Read the following scene and try to imagine the characters, setting, mood, and action.

EXERCISE 24

Interpreting a Scene

Directions: Read the excerpt from a scene in a play. Answer the questions that follow.

TO WHOM DOES MARIA OWE LOYALTY?

Act I, Scene iv

(1) [. . . It is at this moment that Tony and Maria—at opposite sides of the hall—see each other. They have been cheering on their respective friends, clapping in rhythm. Now as they see each other, their voices die, their smiles fade, their hands (5) slowly go to their 5 sides. The lights fade on the others, who disappear into the haze of the background as a delicate cha-cha begins and Tony and Maria slowly walk forward to meet each other. Slowly, as though in a dream, they drift into the steps of the dance, always looking at each other, completely lost in each other; unaware of anyone, any 10 place, any time, (10) anything but one another.]

TONY: You're not thinking I'm someone else?

MARIA: I know you are not.

TONY: Or that we have met before?

MARIA: I know we have not.

(15) TONY: I felt, I knew something-never-before was going to happen, had to happen. But this is-

MARIA: [interrupting] My hands are cold. [He takes them in his.] Yours, too. [He moves her hand to his face.] So warm. [She moves his hands to her face.]

(20) TONY: Yours, too.

MARIA: But of course. They are the same.

TONY: It's so much to believe- you're not joking me?

MARIA: I have not yet learned how to joke that way. I think now I never will.

(25) [Impulsively, he stops to kiss her hands; then tenderly, innocently, her lips. The music bursts out, the lights flare up, and Bernardo is upon them in an icy rage.]

BERNARDO: Go home, "American."

TONY: Slow down, Bernardo.

30 BERNARDO: Stay away from my sister!

TONY: . . . Sister?

BERNARDO: [to Maria] Couldn't you see he's one of them?