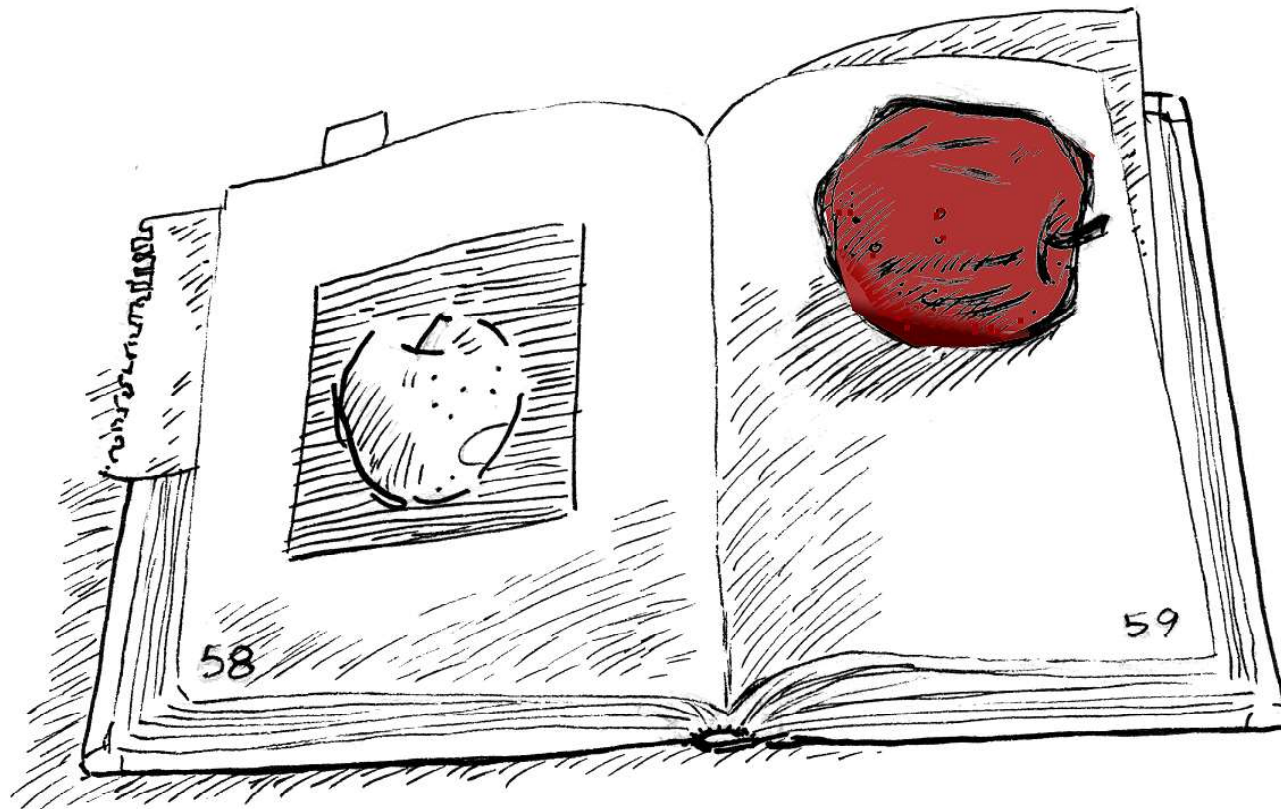


Critical Analysis



introduction

Creative writing remains a focal point of our society—it explains our diversity as humans and enables different ideas to be traded between people and cultures.

critical analysis

Examining past and current literature helps:

- understand the creative process of an individual author or group of authors;
explore how a specific author changed the concepts of the time
- show the understanding of a specific culture from historical perspective;
likewise, show how the contemporary culture has changed over time
- show possible (dis)connection between the author and the culture
- develop new literature from influences of the past

critical analysis

Basic Paper Building Skills that Apply:

- **Pre-write:** ideas need to be developed first and then explored in detail.
- Likewise, **multiple drafts** of a paper need to be created before turning in final product.
- Understand the boundaries of any assignment.
- Determine your purpose, audience, tone, point of view (narrative voice).
- Follow all MLA guidelines detailed by instructor.

critical analysis

Basic Principles of Analyzing a Passage or Full Story

When a story, essay, or passage in a text seem confusing, some of the following ideas can help a reader gain a better understanding of supplied material.

- **Create a thesis** to explain what you know / what you do not know;
explain to yourself what the material means
- **Assess word choice** utilized by author (*see page 8*)
- **Describe** briefly what happens in a passage/story, taking a supplied scene and outlining the basic action; underlining character motivation can be revealed in this fashion
- Consider if there are any **hidden meanings** in the text;
all authors have an agenda, some more overt than others

critical analysis

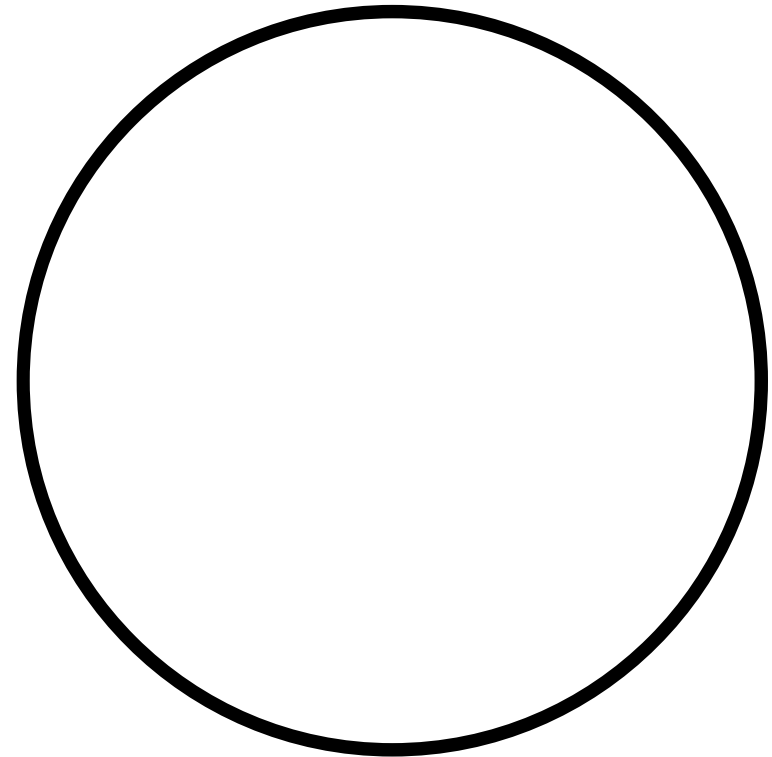
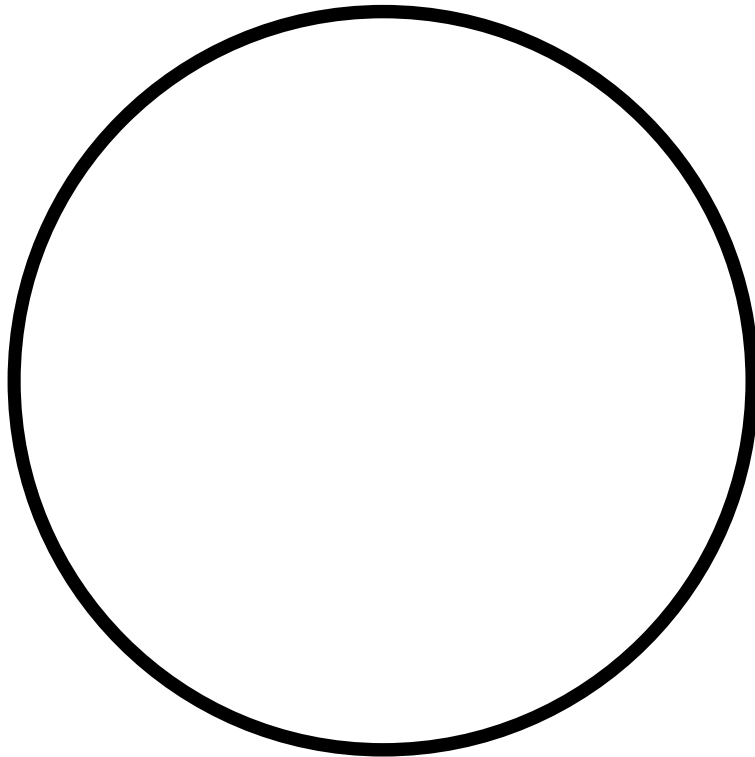
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Collectively, just on a basic level of comprehension, these elements represent a process which helps clarify a text to a reader.

critical analysis



you = *the text*

As students, the analytical process should be habitual for any course and for any reading assignment.

- This is what enables *you* to understand the *text*.

assessing word choice

For example:

In the “Cask of Amontillado” Edgar Allan Poe uses the specific word ‘impunity.’
This deliberate choice does reflect back on the theme of the story.

As a reader you should ask yourself:

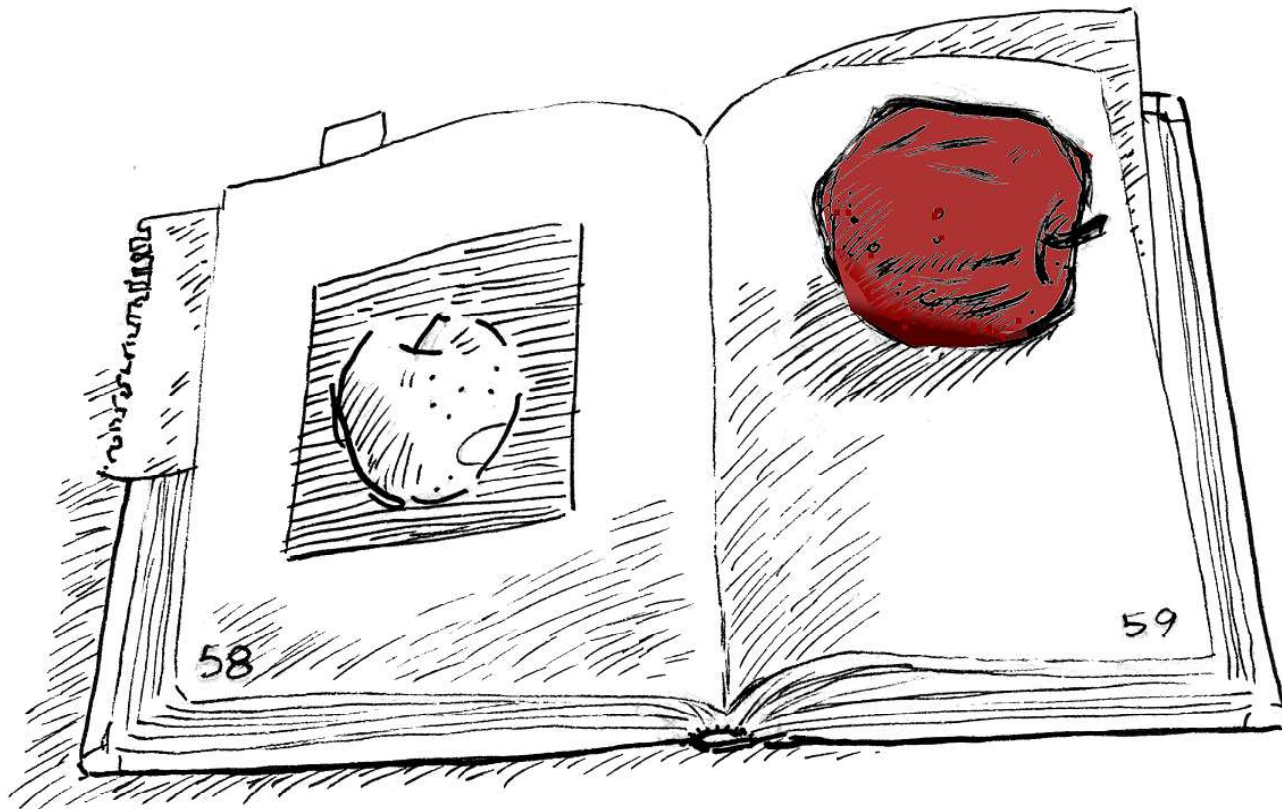
Why does Poe choose this one word for this one particular story?

—or—

How does this wording affect the main theme?

impunity: to escape punishment for a crime committed

Intertextuality & the Reading Process



intertextuality

Literature grows out of other literature.

No idea is absolutely original— *nothing is original in the creative process*; borrowing from other established authors is frequent, consciously and in some cases even subconsciously.

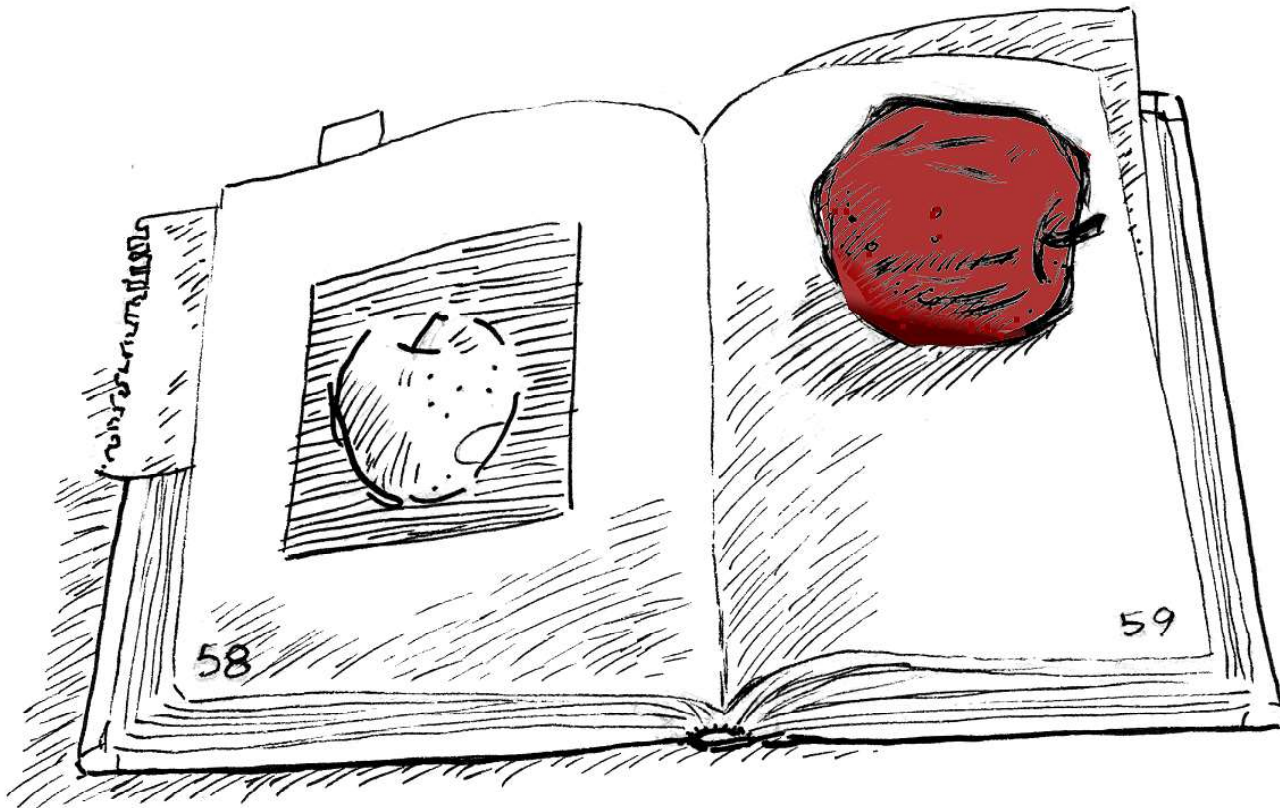
intertextuality: the reinvention, insertion of situations and conflicts in a new sequence of thought to present a new idea; creation of something new out of an older concept.

- *With a third reading, it is easier to spot intertextuality and the different literary devices used by the author.*

Reading Process

- The first reading acts on an *emotional* level.
- The second reading acts on an *analytical* level.
- The third reading targets a *higher level of critical* analysis.

Narration Types



Narration

- **Third Person Point of View:**

The narrator acts as an unseen character who does not participate in the plot as an actor, but does let the reader know what the process of the characters' thoughts and goals. Hidden motivations are often disclosed to the audience, although hidden from participants in the plot.

Renowned curator Jacques Saunière staggered through the vaulted archway of the museum's Grand Gallery. He lunged for the nearest painting he could see, a Caravaggio. Grabbing the gilded frame, the seventy-six-year-old man heaved the masterpiece toward himself until it tore from the wall and Saunière collapsed backwards in a heap beneath the canvas.

Brown, Dan. *The Da Vinci Code*. New York: Doubleday. 2003. Print.

Can be presented as *objective* (un-biased) or *subjective* (emotive).

Narration

- **First Person Point of View:**

In the first person point of view, the narrator participates in the action of the story. *It is important to consider whether the narrator can recount events in a non-biased manner. Likewise, the reader must question the trustworthiness of the account itself.*

Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who was usually very late in the mornings, save upon those not infrequent occasions when he was up all night, was seated at the breakfast table. I stood upon the hearth-rug and picked up the stick which our visitor had left behind him the night before. It was a fine, thick piece of wood, bulbous-headed, of the sort which is known as a “Penang lawyer.” Just under the head was a broad silver band, nearly an inch across. “To James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H.,” was engraved upon it, with the date “1884.” It was just such a stick as the old-fashioned practitioner used to carry—dignified, solid, and reassuring.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. New York: Signet Classic. 2001. Print.

Narration

With first person narratives, the reader examines *two* different strands of information:

- the reader learns details about circumstances of an event from a participant in the story
- the reader learns how the narrator perceives the action (which adds another level of characterization)

Even if the narrator is unreliable, the story itself is still communicated to the reader. An unreliable narrator does not lessen the story's value—but does deepen the meaning of the story, and makes the story more complex.

By looking through the character's eyes, the reader sees the author's intentions through the choice of language. This is an example of **dramatic irony**.

As readers we can see events in manner the character does not.

- The “Cask of Amontillado” uses this device very successfully.

Narration

- **Omniscient Third Person Point of View:**

The narrator knows *everything* about *all* the characters and reveals thoughts and motivations of each actor in the story.

Lily, the caretakers daughter, was literally run off her feet. Hardly had she brought one gentleman into the little pantry behind the office on the ground floor and helped him off with his overcoat than the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again and she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest. It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also. But Miss Kate and Miss Julia had thought of that and had converted the bathroom upstairs into a ladies' dressing-room. Miss Kate and Miss Julia were there, gossiping and laughing and fussing, walking after each other to the head of the stairs, peering down over the banisters and calling down to Lily to ask her who had come.

Joyce, James. "The Dead." *Dubliners*. New York: Penguin Books. 1986. Print.

Narration

- **Limited Omniscient Third Person Point of View:**

The narrator's knowledge focuses attention on one character, major or minor, revealing *everything* about that character's thoughts and motivations in the story.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

Chopin, Kate. "The Story of An Hour." *The Awakening*. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions. 1995. Print.

Narration

- **Stream of Consciousness:**

The story replicates the thought processes of the narrator. Best described as interior monologues, this narration copies the notion of an internal voice in a character's mind as the character goes about their day to day life.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me!
I must not let her find me writing.

She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

There is one that commands the road, a lovely shaded winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

Gilman, Chrlotte Perkins. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. New York: Feminist Press. 1973. Print.