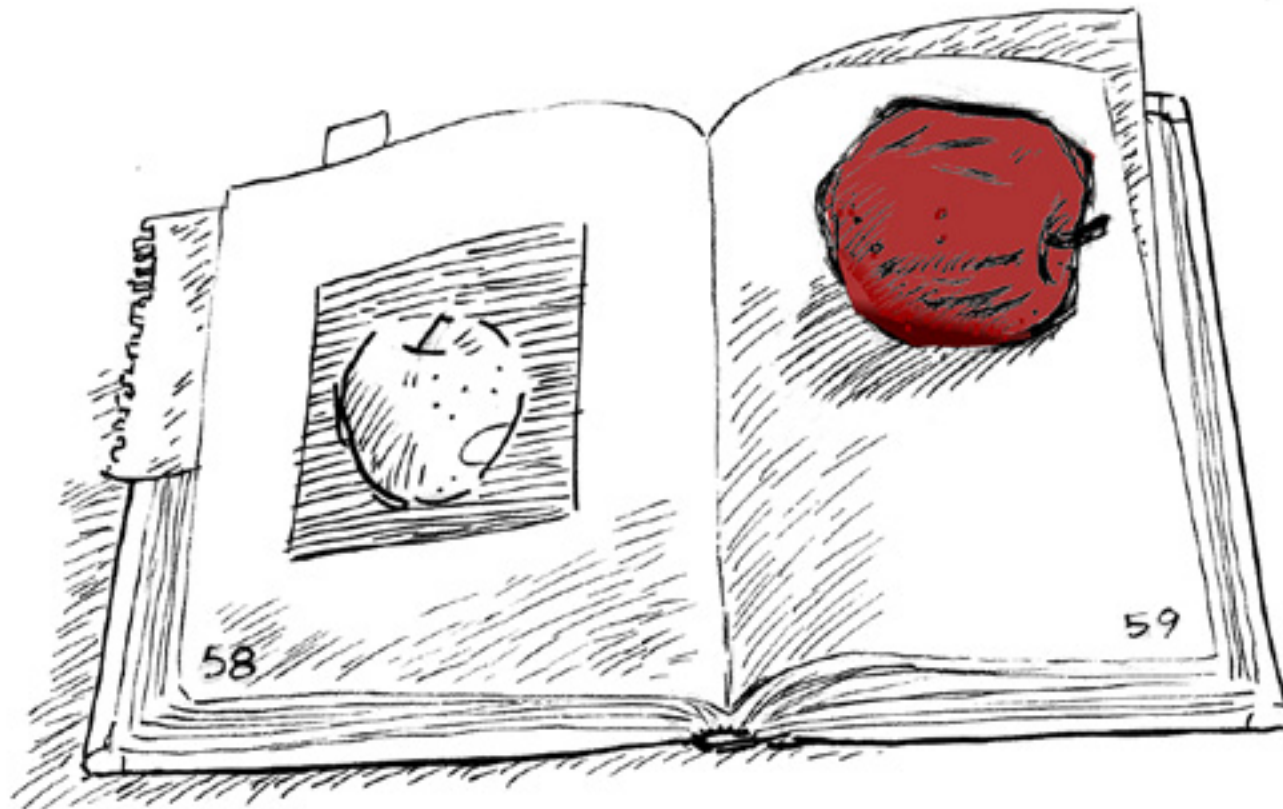


Critical Analysis & the Reading Process



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
- show the understanding of a specific culture
- show possible (dis)connection between the author and the culture
- develop new literature

critical analysis

Some English 1301 Concepts that Still 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.
- Understand the boundaries of the assignment.
- Determine your purpose, audience, tone, point of view.
- Follow all 2009 MLA guidelines from the *Bedford Handbook*.

critical analysis

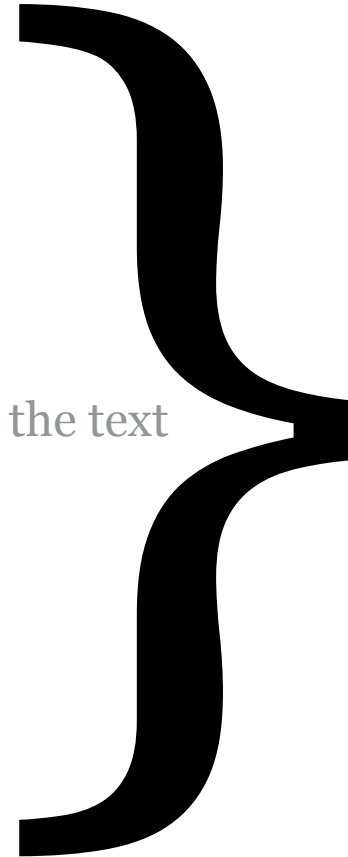
Basic Principles of Analyzing a Passage or Story:

- Create a thesis
- Describe what happens in the passage/story
- Consider if there are any hidden meanings in the text
- Explain what it means
- Assess word choice

critical analysis

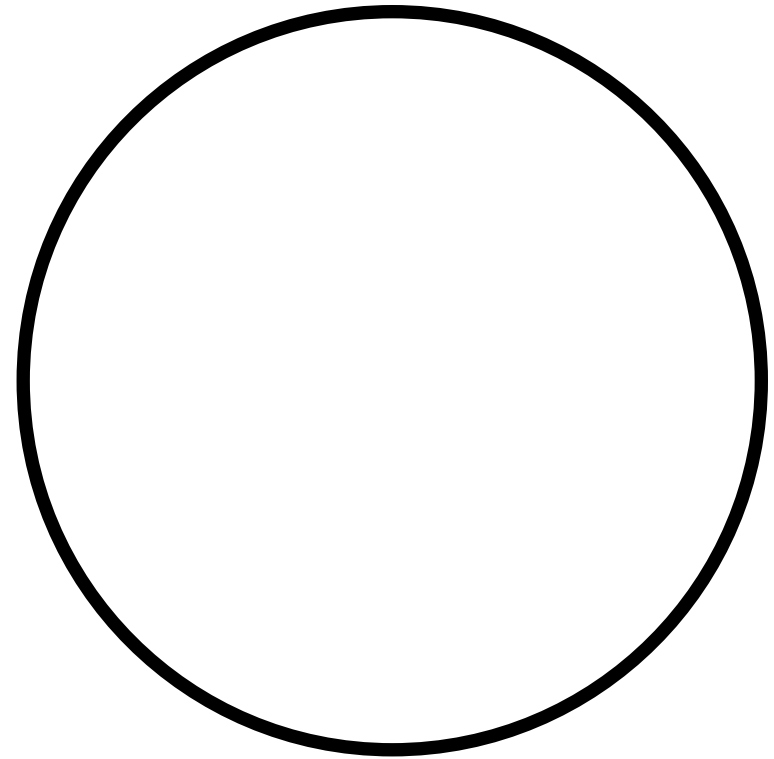
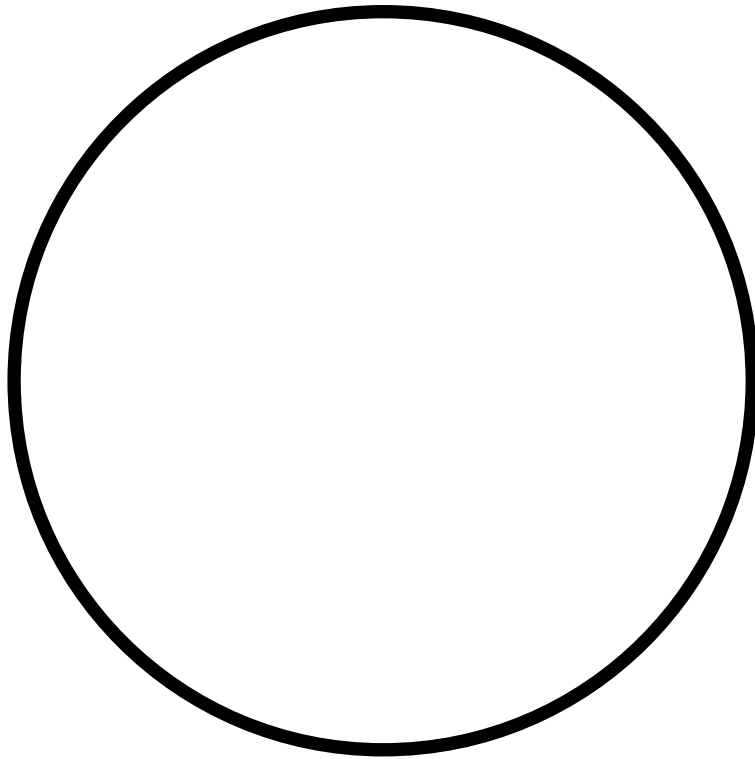
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- Explain what the story or passage means
- Assess word choice



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

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

Guidelines for Reading

Elements Which Enhance Developments of Stories:

1. characters' actions
 2. characters' intentions
- }
3. plot rhythms— combination of protagonist's journey, flow of information and literary modes
 4. story structure— also referred to as Freytag's Pyramid
 5. points of view— or Narrative Voice

- *Always be aware of these elements within every story we read in the course.*

**You should
read
material
three
times.**

Guidelines for Reading

The first reading acts on an *emotional* level.

- Concentrate on the actions of characters and the basic plot.
- Try to enjoy the material as much as possible.

First Reading

A. Read first for enjoyment, without interruption

1. notice the use of language and word play
2. consider the actions of the characters
3. note the setting and the atmosphere of the scene

B. Afterwards, as soon as possible, determine the impact

1. Do you have any unanswered questions?
2. Did you like the story?
3. Did you relate to any of the characters?

Second Reading

The second reading acts on an *analytical* level.

- Likewise, material you may have missed on the first reading can be explored in better detail.
- Resolves unanswered questions.

Second Reading

A. Concentrate on the plot details:

1. to answer any possible questions
2. to confirm what you already know

B. Determine:

1. theme
2. conflict type
3. How do these two elements affect the developments
and actions of the characters?



Third Reading

The third reading specifically targets a higher level of *critical* analysis.

- Since you can predict what will happen, you can analyze *in closer details* why characters act or react in the manner they do.
- Newer insights can be gained regarding the author's strategy.
- Hidden symbols are easier to recognize.
- You can determine influences and inspirations for the author.

Third Reading

A. It is important to be open to the entire work.

1. consider how it relates to other readings
2. discover what sets it apart from other writings



B. Ask yourself:

1. What images are used in the story?
2. What literary devices are used in the story?
3. Is this an analogy?
4. What is the author's main goal for telling me this story?
5. Who do the characters resemble? What symbolic images are used?
6. Ask yourself: where have I seen this situation before?

What inspirations or obvious emulations did the author use?

Guidelines for Reading

What is important about number six:

Literature grows out of other literature. This is nothing new.

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

intertextuality

The Top Four Literature which are referenced, reworked, reinvented :

1. Biblical stories
2. Shakespearean plays
3. Greek/Roman myths
4. Fairy tales

Why do you think this is the case?

Look for these emulations; they establish mood, atmosphere, scenery, and theme
— consciously and *subconsciously*.

Review of Reading Points

- 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.

Literary Devices & Terminologies

- **plot:** main course of action
- **setting:** the landscape of the story
- **conflict:** clash of opposing views, needs, actions
- **protagonist:** main character; focal point of action
- **antagonist:** a person the protagonist struggles against, or competes with;
an adversary
- **climax:** the ultimate scene of action; the decisive moment in a novel or play,
results in the conclusion/resolution
- **subplots:** minor secondary story lines behind the scene of main action

Literary Devices & Terminologies

- **points of view:** (voice/narration) thoughts and feelings which motivate story
- **irony:** an event deliberately contrary to what the reader expects
- **foreshadowing:** hints of a future development through elements of the story
- **motifs:** reoccurring symbols which appear throughout the story
- **paradox:** conflicting/contradictory statement
- **exposition:** establishment of setting, prepares the fictional world for reader
- ***in medias res*:** latin: “in the middle of.” Many short stories use this technique.