

Thomas C. Foster's *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* Assignment

Directions: This assignment introduces you to reading strategies that will be helpful to you during the year. It also requires you to check your understanding of the material and apply these concepts to your own experiences with literature, while refining your writing skills, specifically in writing literary analysis. While you read, respond to the following questions / prompts thoughtfully, using complete sentences in paragraph form.

Writing Tips: Ignoring these tips will result in a loss of points!!

- ❖ Each response should be at least ½ page in length and labeled by chapter
- ❖ Remember to restate the question and/or rephrase the prompt as part of your response (perhaps as the topic sentence of your paragraph).
- ❖ Remember to use specific examples whenever possible. Don't write in general terms.
- ❖ Remember that grammar, usage, and mechanics are important.
 - ✓ Avoid such pronoun problems as vague pronouns. Make antecedents clear (who is he?)
 - ✓ Make sure pronouns agree in gender and number (Students = they, Everyone = he/she)
 - ✓ Capitalize and punctuate titles properly for each genre (novel titles are underlined, poem titles are in quotes, etc.)
 - ✓ Even though this is analytical writing, you may use "I." Remember, however, that most uses of "I" are just padding. For example, "I think Prince Charming is the most significant archetype in any fairy tale" is padded. Cut out "I think" and make it a declarative sentence rather than a qualified opinion.

Introduction: “How’d He Do That?”

Identify the three items that “separate the professional reader from the rest of the crowd.” How do these items affect the reading of literature? How does the recognition of patterns make it easier to read complicated literature? Describe a time when your appreciation of a literary work was enhanced by understanding symbol or pattern.

Chpt. 1: “Every Trip is a Quest (Except When It’s Not)”

List the five aspects of The Quest, including the real reason for a quest, and then apply them to something you have read (or viewed) in the form used on pages 3-5.

Chpt. 2: “Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion”

Choose a meal from a literary work and apply the ideas of Chapter 2 to this literary depiction. Be sure to explain its significance.

Chpt. 3: “Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires”

What are the essentials of the Vampire story? Apply this to a literary work you have read or viewed (not a literal vampire story like Twilight).

Chpt. 4: “If It’s Square, It’s a Sonnet”

*See Poetry

Chpt. 5: “Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?”

Define “intertextuality”? Discuss three examples that have helped you in reading specific works.

Chpt. 6: “When in Doubt, It’s from Shakespeare...”

Discuss a work that you are familiar with that alludes to or reflects Shakespeare. Show how the author uses this connection thematically. Read pages 44-46 carefully. In these pages, Foster shows how Fugard reflects Shakespeare through both plot and theme. In your discussion, focus on theme.

Chpt. 7: “...Or the Bible”

*See Allusions Assignment

Chpt. 8: “Hansel and Gretel”

Think of a work of literature that reflects a fairy tale. Discuss the parallels. Does it create irony or deepen appreciation?

Chpt. 9: "It's Greek to Me"

*See Allusions Assignment

Chpt. 10: "It's More Than Just Rain or Snow"

Discuss the importance of weather in a specific literary work, not in terms of plot.

Chpt. 11: "...More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence"

Present examples of the two kinds of violence found in literature. Show how the effects are different.

Chpt. 12: "Is That a Symbol?"

*See "Araby" assignment

Chpt. 13: "It's All Political"

Assume that Foster is right, and "it is all political." Use his criteria to show that one of the major works previously assigned to you in high school is political on some level.

Chpt. 14: "Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too"

Apply the criteria on page 119 to a major character in a significant literary work. Try to choose a character that will have many matches. This is a particularly apt tool for analyzing film – for example, *Star Wars*, *Cool Hand Luke*, *Excalibur*, *Malcolm X*, *Braveheart*, *Spartacus*, *Ben Hur*, *Gladiator*, *Matrix Trilogy*, *The Green Mile*, *Chronicles of Narnia* and *Lord of the Rings*.

Chpt. 15: "Flights of Fancy"

Select a literary work in which flight signifies escape or freedom. Explain in detail.

Chpt. 18: "If She Comes Up It's Baptism"

Think of a "baptism scene" from a significant literary work. How was the character different after the experience? Discuss.

Chpt. 19: "Geography Matters..."

Discuss at least four different aspects of a specific literary work that Foster would classify under "geography."

Chpt. 20: "...So Does Season"

*See Poetry

Chpt. 21: "Marked for Greatness"

Figure out Harry Potter's scar. If you aren't familiar with Harry Potter, select another character with a physical imperfection and analyze its implications for characterization.

Chpt. 22: "He's Blind for a Reason, You Know"

Explain/discuss Foster's ideas from this chapter and apply them to a literary work you have read.

Chpt. 23: "It's Never Just Heart Disease..." and

Chpt. 24: "...And Rarely Just Illness"

Recall two characters who died of a disease in a literary work. Consider how these deaths reflect the "principles governing the use of disease in literature" (215-217). Discuss the effectiveness of the death as related to plot, theme, or symbolism.

Chpt. 25: "Don't Read with Your Eyes"

After reading Chapter 25, choose a scene or episode from a novel, play or epic written before the twentieth century. Contrast how it could be viewed by a reader from the twenty-first century with how it might be viewed by a contemporary reader. Focus on specific assumptions that the author makes, assumptions that would not make it in this century.

Chpt. 26: "Is He Serious? And Other Ironies"

Select an ironic literary work and explain the multivocal nature of the irony in the work.

Chpt. 27: "A Test Case"

Read "The Garden Party" by Katherine Mansfield, the short story starting on page 245. Complete the exercise on pages 265-266, following the directions exactly. Then compare your writing with the three examples. How did you do? What does the essay that follows comparing Laura with Persephone add to your appreciation of Mansfield's story?

Terms to Know:

1. archetype (intro.)
2. doppelganger (Chpt. 3)
3. metonymy (Chpt. 8)
4. and any other literary terms used that you are unfamiliar with ☺

Allusions Assignment-

Chpt. 4-Sonnet (Poetry)

Chpt. 7-Bible (Trans. To Poetry & Allusions)

“Read “Araby,” a short story by James Joyce. Discuss Biblical allusions that Foster does not mention. Look at the example of the ‘two great jars.’ Be creative and imaginative in these connections.”

Chpt. 9-Greek (Poetry & Allusions)

“Find one poem about one of the following subjects: Icarus, Helen of Troy, Sirens, Ulysses, or another mythological subject derived or inspired by characters or situations from Greek mythology. Discuss the impact of the myth on the poem’s theme.”

“Write a free verse poem derived or inspired by characters or situations from Greek mythology. Be prepared to share your poem with the class.

Chpt. 20-(Poetry)

Find a poem that mentions a specific season. Then discuss how the poet uses the season in a meaningful, traditional, or unusual way.