

Annotation 101:

Close Reading and Guiding Questions in Pre-AP English

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2-Day English Conference
November 13-14, 2009
Dallas, Texas

I. Matching. Match the word on the left with its definition on the right. You'll use all the letters once.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. characterization | A. what happens |
| ___ 2. internal conflict | B. where and when it happens |
| ___ 3. external conflict | C. main character; story revolves around this character |
| ___ 4. irony | D. what a character is like; what s/he does to show his/her personality |
| ___ 5. plot | E. THE big moment; the explosion or gunshot or phone call or car wreck that finally ends conflict |
| ___ 6. setting | F. story leads the reader to expect one thing, but the opposite happens |
| ___ 7. suspense | G. quick wrap-up AFTER the climax; just before the credits in a movie; now the whole thing feels finished |
| ___ 8. climax | H. problem or struggle within a character; decision a character must make |
| ___ 9. resolution | J. detailed descriptions of the moments just BEFORE the climax; puts off moment of climax; audience waits and wonders "What'll happen?" |
| ___ 10. protagonist | K. a problem or struggle between two characters or between one character and some outside force, like weather or a negative personality trait |

II. Fill in the blank. Choose from the following list of vocab words to fill in the blanks in the sentences. Each answer is used only once. Each question relates to the story "The Sea Devil."

characterization internal conflict external conflict irony
plot setting suspense climax resolution protagonist

11. The _____ of the story is "the man."
12. A _____ of the man would include a character trait like strong and some evidence from the story to prove that he is strong.
13. The story's _____ causes the reader to ask, "Will he live or will he die?"
14. During the _____, the man looks up and sees a plane flying overhead. His conflict has ended, yet the plane continues to fly as if man has conquered nature. The man knows this is not true.
15. The man experiences _____ when he tries to decide whether to fight longer or breathe the water and end his life.
16. The _____ of this story is "A man goes fishing and almost drowns."
17. The _____ of this story is "When the fisherman goes fishing, we expect he'll catch a fish. Instead a fish catches him."
18. The main _____ of this story is "man vs. sting ray."

characterization internal conflict external conflict irony
plot setting suspense climax resolution protagonist

19. The _____ of the story is off the coast of Florida during a summer night in the present.
20. In the _____ of the story, the rope breaks, and the man is freed.

III. Short Answers. Choose from the following list of vocab words to answer each of the following questions. Each answer is used only once.

characterization internal conflict external conflict irony plot
setting suspense climax resolution protagonist

21. _____ Which term best describes Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” monologue?
22. _____ Which literary term best describes two boxers in a boxing ring?
23. _____ What’s going to happen? How will the characters survive this?
24. _____ Around what character does every story revolve?
25. _____ Which term requires evidence to prove what the character is like?
26. _____ What big event always ends the suspense?
27. _____ How do you know when it’s completely over?
28. _____ What happens in the story?
29. _____ Where and when does every story happen?
30. _____ What does the reader experience when the story leads us to believe that a fisherman will catch a fish, and instead he gets caught by a fish?

IV. REACH. Write a literary term in the first blank. Then combine part of the literary term definition and part of the movie to explain your answer (PROOF).

31. Bruce Wayne = LIT TRM: _____ PROOF _____
32. Two robbers stand in front of young Bruce and his parents in an alley. The camera shows Bruce’s face. We see Bruce’s father. Then the camera shows Bruce’s mother’s face. Then there’s a slow-motion shot of one robber ripping the pearls from her neck. LIT TRM: _____
 PROOF _____
33. The Joker challenges Batman to a duel. Batman vs. Joker. LIT TRM: _____
 PROOF _____
34. Joker falls to his death from the top of Gotham tower. LIT TRM: _____
 PROOF _____
35. The camera shows us the view from the bottom of the stairwell. Batman climbs. He looks up. The camera shows us the Joker pulling the reporter up the stairs. She loses a shoe. Batman finds the shoe as he continues to climb. When he reaches the top, Batman has to walk through all kinds of debris to find the Joker and the reporter. It’s hard to tell where he is. LIT TRM: _____
 PROOF _____
37. Bruce is smart and resourceful, and he wants to help his fellow humans. We know this about Bruce because he finds the chemical formula for the poisons that the Joker has been using.
 LIT TRM: _____ PROOF: _____

II. Fill in the blank. Each question relates to the story “A Worn Path.”

characterization internal conflict external conflict irony point of view exposition
plot setting suspense climax resolution protagonist first person flashback
3rd person omniscient 3rd person limited chronological order mood antagonist theme

11. The _____ of the story is Phoenix Jackson.
12. A _____ of Phoenix would include a character trait like determined and some evidence from the story to prove that she is determined.
13. The story’s _____ causes the reader to ask, “What is so important that she must walk all this long way?”
14. During the _____, Phoenix decides to buy her grandson a windmill.
15. Phoenix experiences _____ when she tries to decide whether to steal the nickel or let it lie there on the ground.
16. The _____ of this story is “Phoenix goes to town to get medicine for her grandson.”
17. One _____ of this story is “A windmill made out of paper doesn’t seem like much but to her grandson, it will be amazing.”
18. Some possible _____ of this story are “Phoenix vs. her grandson’s illness,” “Phoenix vs. poverty,” and “Phoenix vs. old age.”
19. The _____ of the story is on a worn path near Natchez, Mississippi, probably around 1930.
20. In the _____ of the story, Phoenix finally answers the nurse, letting us know that her grandson is okay. She says, “My little grandson, he is just the same, and I forgot it in the coming.”
11. The _____ of the story is 3rd person, limited to Phoenix’s perspective.
12. There is no _____ in the story because Phoenix doesn’t stop to remember any event that occurred long ago.
13. The story’s _____ can vary from reader to reader. Some are bored; some feel fear.
14. Phoenix faces and overcomes many different kinds of obstacles on her journey, including many that symbolize death. Different events in her journey symbolize different events that can occur in a person’s life. These comments are related to the _____ of the story.
15. If this story were told in _____, using *I* and *me*, we’d know already that Phoenix lived through all the suspenseful parts of this journey, and the suspense wouldn’t be as great.
16. Phoenix has more than one _____ in this story because there are different things that are working against her at different parts of the story.
17. The story is told from the _____ POV.
18. The story could have been told in _____ POV by adding some information from the perspectives of other characters, like the nurse and the hunter.
19. Because this story doesn’t have any flashbacks, it is told in _____.
20. In the first two paragraphs of this story, we meet Phoenix and we see the path on which she walks. A character and the setting of the story are both described in detail. These elements are parts of the _____ of the story.

vocab quiz 1: literary terms

I. Matching. Match the definition on the right with its word on the left. Write the letter on your paper.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. characterization | A. what happens in the story |
| 2. internal conflict | B. details leading up to and putting off a climax |
| 3. external conflict | C. reader thinks one thing will happen, and opposite happens |
| 4. irony | D. the highest point of action |
| 5. protagonist | E. describes what a character is like |
| 6. plot | F. explains where and when |
| 7. setting | G. character's struggle within himself |
| 8. suspense | H. main character |
| 9. climax | J. time for tying up loose ends |
| 10. resolution | K. struggle between two characters or forces in the story |

II. Fill in the Blank. Choose from the following list of vocab words to fill in the blanks in these sentences. Each answer is used only once. On your paper, write the word which best fits the sentence.

characterization internal conflict external conflict irony protagonist
plot setting suspense climax resolution

- The _____ of "Speed" occurs when the main characters, Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reeves, finally hook up after the bad guy's head has been knocked off and the train has finally stopped.
- One _____ in "Scream" is when Drew Barrymore's character tries to decide whether she should hang up and dial 911 or stay on the line with the murderer.
- Part of Batman's _____ is revealed in the opening scene when he follows a robber and forces him to give back the things he stole. More is revealed when Bruce Wayne remembers his parents' death.
- The _____ of "Saving Private Ryan" is that many soldiers' lives are being sacrificed to save the life of just one soldier.
- The _____ in the movie "Batman" is not Alfred, but Batman himself.
- The _____ of "Speed" is the moment when the bad guy's head is knocked off on top of the moving train. There is no higher point of action in the film.
- One _____ in "Batman" is Batman against The Joker, one man vs. another.
- The _____ of "Armageddon" is this: "A huge asteroid threatens to destroy our planet, and a drilling team is brought in to help. They are trained as astronauts and go into space to intercept the asteroid. Ultimately, they drill into the asteroid and plant a bomb which destroys it. The planet is saved!"
- The _____ of "Star Wars" is "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away."
- "Scream" and "Speed" contain many perfect examples of _____ because they continuously prolong moments of the climax through the use of details.

I. Matching. Match the word on the left with its definition on the right. You'll use all the letters once.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ___ 1. point of view | A. "lesson" about life which the author or director hopes we will learn |
| ___ 2. first person POV | B. feeling, emotion which the story generates in the reader or audience |
| ___ 3. 3 rd pers. omniscient POV | C. present movement of the story is halted and a scene from the past is relived; readers relive the past moment in the present |
| ___ 4. 3 rd pers. limited POV | D. the very beginning of a story; characters, setting, and sometimes the conflict are all introduced in this part of the plot |
| ___ 5. exposition | E. narrator is NOT a character in the story and knows the thoughts and feelings of only one character |
| ___ 6. mood | F. narrator is one of the characters in the story |
| ___ 7. theme | G. the character who works AGAINST the main character |
| ___ 8. antagonist | H. narrator's perspective |
| ___ 9. flashback | J. events of the story occur in the same order in which they happened in "real" life; no flashbacks |
| ___ 10. chronological order | K. narrator is NOT a character but knows EVERYTHING about all of the characters |

II. Fill in the blank. Choose from the following list of vocab words to fill in the blanks in the sentences. Each answer is used only once. Each question relates to the story "The Sea Devil."

point of view first person flashback exposition antagonist theme
3rd person omniscient 3rd person limited chronological order mood

11. The _____ of the story is 3rd person omniscient.
12. The only _____ in the story occurs before the man has begun to fish. He remembers convincing the captain of a boat to release a baby porpoise from the bait well of his boat. The remembered event is retold as if it were happening in this story.
13. The story's _____ can vary from reader to reader. Some feel suspense; some fear.
14. At the very end, the man releases the mullet from the skiff because he now knows what it's like to be dragged into an alien atmosphere. He knows what it's like to feel his life gasping away. These comments are related to the _____ of the story.
15. If this story were told in _____, using *I* and *me*, we'd know ahead of time that the narrator, "the man," lived through the ordeal and the suspense would not be as great.
16. The title of this story spells out who the _____ is.
17. The story is told from the _____ POV.
18. The story could have been told in _____ POV without changing it much.
19. If we were to remove the one flashback, the story would be told in _____.

point of view **first person** **flashback** **exposition** **antagonist** **theme**
3rd person omniscient **3rd person limited** **chronological order** **mood**

20. In the beginning of this story, we meet the man and we see the Florida coast where he stands on the dock, thinking about going fishing. These elements are the _____ of the story.

III. Short Answers. Choose from the following list of vocab words to answer each of the following questions. Each answer is used only once.

21. _____ Where do we first meet the characters and see the setting?
22. _____ Which character have we been taught to hate?
23. _____ Which literary term describes the feeling in the audience as they exit the theater?
24. _____ Which point of view is neither omniscient nor limited?
25. _____ What do we learn from the best movies and stories?
26. _____ What if the story has no flashback?
27. _____ What has happened if the characters get younger with the passage of time?
28. _____ What kind of narrator knows everything, animals' thoughts to children's feelings?
29. _____ Which narrator knows only ONE character's thoughts and feelings?
30. _____ What general term describes the perspective of the narration?

IV. REACH. The following questions relate to a movie we previewed in class. Fill in the blanks. Some answers will be terms from Vocab Lesson 1.

31. At the end of the opening credits, part of the _____ flashes as a subtitle at the bottom of the screen: "South America _____ 1936."
32. The _____ is the first character we see, even though we see him only in silhouette.
33. As Indiana Jones he exits the cave, the _____ greets him, laughs at Indy's misfortune, and takes the idol from him.
34. In the beginning, there is a lot that helps to set the _____ of this film. We see men trekking through the jungle, hacking through the shrubs and consulting maps and landmarks to find their way. One of the "natives" finds a frightening mask and runs screaming from it, leaving the rest of the expedition behind. Two others in the expedition talk about the fact that they would be killed if someone knew they were in this part of the jungle. All the while, the music is eerie and helps to make us feel the fear that these men must be feeling.
35. From the start of the film, we see Indy's bravery and resourcefulness as he makes it through all the dangers of the cave, outwit his enemy at the cave entrance, and outruns the natives. He makes it back to the plane where he is safe...until he finds the snake in the seat with him, and this is the first time we see his fear. All of these incidents help to create Indy's _____ .
36. Indy gets through all of the dangers of the cave, and he escapes the natives' poison darts, so we know he's very brave, but when he gets into the plane and says he's afraid of snakes, the pilot tells him to "show a little backbone." Because we know that Indy HAS BEEN showing backbone since the opening of the movie, this comment from the pilot is _____.

37. The following statement is an example of _____ : Indiana is brave, and we know this because even after witnessing death, he still went forward to get the idol.

38. When Indy finally reaches the chamber that houses the golden idol, the movie slows down considerably. It takes a long time before we get to see Indy at the idol finally picking it up. First there's a shot of one step. Then we see the masks that line the walls of the chamber. Another shot shows Indy step and wobble and almost fall. The camera cuts to his assistant who gasps when Indy almost falls. Then there's a shot of the idol itself. We see a shot of another step on the floor. Then we're at the idol with Indy. The music is intensifying all along, through zoom in on Indy, Indy rubs face, thinks, shot of assistant, slowly zoom out from Indy, he pulls out sandbag, judges the weight, and drops some sand. Then there's another shot of the idol. Indy gets ready, and we see a shot of the assistant, rubbing his fingers together. Finally, Indy swaps out the sandbag for the idol. The director took a lot of time getting to the idol in order to heighten the _____ of this part of the story.

Finish the following characterization with one piece of evidence from each sequence we watched in class:

Indiana is smart, and we know this because

39. EVIDENCE FROM SEQUENCE 1 (the cave) _____

_____ and

40. EVIDENCE FROM SEQUENCE 2 (the school) _____

41. Define FACT and use the text of question 38 above to give an example of a fact:

42. Define INFERENCE and use the text of question 38 above to give an example of an inference:

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS PAPER!

vocab quiz 2: literary terms

I. Matching. Match the definition on the right with its word on the left. Write the letter on your paper.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. point of view | A. story is told as it happened, without flashback |
| 2. third person omniscient POV | B. a character's inner struggle |
| 3. third person limited POV | C. beginning of plot; characters & conflicts introduced |
| 4. flashback | D. hints of what will happen next |
| 5. exposition | E. the narration of a story, the perspective from which it is told |
| 6. theme | F. a narrator who knows everything, but is not a part of the story |
| 7. first person POV | G. details leading up to a climax in the story or play |
| 8. mood | H. narrator who is part of the story; uses I/me/my to refer to self |
| 9. foreshadowing | J. the main idea of a story or play, the lesson it hopes to teach |
| 10. antagonist | K. least expected thing happens; words have opposite meanings |
| 11. chronological order | L. character's struggle with some force or person outside herself |
| 12. irony | M. the character who is against the main character |
| 13. suspense | N. movement backward in time, to reveal an earlier event |
| 14. internal conflict | P. narrator is not in the story; understands one character's feelings |
| 15. external conflict | Q. the "feeling" of a story or scene |

II. Fill in the Blank. Choose from the following list of vocab words to fill in the blanks in these sentences. Each answer is used only once. On your paper, write the word which best fits the sentence.

flashback exposition chronological order point of view foreshadowing
third person omniscient POV third person limited POV first person POV
irony suspense mood theme antagonist climax internal conflict

16. The man has been trying for quite some time to disconnect himself from a sting ray. He finally frees himself when the rope breaks across some sharp barnacles on a post which marks the entrance to the bay. What do we call the moment when the rope breaks?
17. Leading up to the moment when the rope breaks, the author reveals many details, and it's these details which prolong the scene and create _____.
18. Most Edgar Allen Poe stories and poems have a sad, dark, sometimes frightening feeling to them. On the other hand, most of Walt Whitman's poetry was much more upbeat, sometimes even excited. What literary term describes the feeling in all of these literary works?

flashback exposition chronological order point of view foreshadowing
third person omniscient POV third person limited POV first person POV
irony suspense mood theme antagonist climax internal conflict

19. At the beginning of a movie, we see a man walk into his house. The house is empty, except for a few overturned chairs, and some pieces of clothing and papers on the floor. The man has gray hair. He walks around, picks up a book off the floor and begins to read it. The scene fades out, and when we see the man again. He no longer has gray hair, indicating that he is younger now. He is back in the same house, but his wife and children are with him, and no chairs are overturned. Everything seems to be in its place. What literary term can we use to describe what has happened?
20. If the scene in #19 is the scene in which we find out who the characters are and what their conflicts are, we call that scene the _____.
21. In “The Sea Devil,” “a school of sardines surfaced suddenly” as if they were scared, and this line gives the reader a hint of approaching danger before the sting ray jerks the man from his skiff. What is this hint called?
22. “The Sea Devil” is told in _____ (narration). We know this because the narrator is not a part of the story, and s/he seems to know something about all of the characters in the story.
23. If the man is considered the main character of “The Sea Devil,” what is the sting ray?
24. At the end of “The Sea Devil,” the man has just barely escaped death at the hands of Nature. He looks up at the night sky and sees a plane flying high overhead. It is ironic for him to notice the plane because the plane is an example of humankind’s conquer of Nature, but the man has just experienced his own powerlessness against Nature. If the story wants to teach us that we should respect the power of Nature, we call this “lesson” the _____ of the story.
25. A fisherman goes to catch a fish, and instead he’s caught by a fish. This is an example of _____.
26. “The Banana Tree” is told in _____ (narration). We know this because the narrator is not a part of the story, and s/he seems to understand only Gustus’s perspective.
27. There is only one type of narrator who refers to him/herself in the story, and that is a narrator.
28. When Gustus’s father asks him what’s wrong, Gustus has to decide whether he’ll tell his father or not. This decision-making time inside a character is called a/an _____.
29. The perspective from which a story is told is called its _____.
30. If the flashback about the capture of the baby porpoise were removed from “The Sea Devil,” the story would be told in _____.

from "The Sea Devil"
by Arthur Gordon

A

The skiff, flat-bottomed, was moored off the sea wall. He would not go far, he told himself. Just to the tumbledown dock half a mile away. Mullet had a way of feeding around old pilings after dark. If he moved quietly, he might pick up two or three in one cast close to the dock. And maybe a couple of others on the way down or back.

He shoved off and stood motionless for a moment, letting his eyes grow accustomed to the dark. Somewhere out in the channel a porpoise blew with a sound like steam escaping. The man smiled a little: porpoises were his friends. Once, fishing in the Gulf, he had seen the charter boat captain reach overside and gaff a baby porpoise through the sinewy part of the tail. He had hoisted it aboard, had dropped it into the bait well, where it thrashed around, puzzled and unhappy. And the mother had swum alongside the boat and under the boat and around the boat, nudging the stout planking with her back, slapping it with her tail, until the man felt sorry for her and made the captain let the baby porpoise go.

B

The skiff moved on. At last, ten feet apart, a pair of stakes rose up gauntly out of the night. Barnacle-encrusted, they once had marked the approach from the main channel. The man guided the skiff between them, then put the paddle down softly. He stood up, reached for the net, tightened the noose around his wrist. From here he could drift down upon the dock. He could see it now, a ruined skeleton in the starshine. Beyond it a mullet jumped and fell back with a flat, liquid sound. The man raised the edge of the net, put it between his teeth. He would not cast at a single swirl, he decided; he would wait until he saw two or three close together. The skiff was barely moving. He felt his muscles tense themselves, awaiting the signal from the brain.

Behind him in the channel he heard the porpoise blow again, nearer now. He frowned in the darkness. If the porpoise chose to fish this area, the mullet would scatter and vanish. There was no time to lose.

C

A school of sardines surfaced suddenly, skittering along like drops of mercury. Something, perhaps the shadow of the skiff, had frightened them. The old dock loomed very close. A mullet broke water just too far away; then another, nearer. The man marked the spreading ripples and decided to wait no longer.

D

He swung back the net, heavier now that it was wet. He had to turn his head, but out of the corner of his eye he saw two swirls in the black water just off the starboard bow. They were about eight feet apart, and they had the sluggish oily look that marks the presence of something big just below the surface. His conscious mind had no time to function, but instinct told him that the net was wide enough to cover both swirls if he could alter the direction of his cast. He could not halt the swing, but he shifted his feet slightly and made the cast off balance. He saw the net shoot forward, flare into an oval, and drop just where he wanted it.

E

Then the sea exploded in his face. In a frenzy of spray, a great horned thing shot like a huge bat out of the water. The man saw the mesh of his net etched against the mottled blackness of its body and he knew, in the split second in which thought was still possible, that those twin swirls had been made not by two mullet, but by the wing tips of the giant ray of the Gulf Coast, *Manta birostris*, also known as clam cracker, devil ray, sea devil.

F

The man had heard the tremendous slap of the great mammal's tail and the snorting gasp as it plunged away. He felt the line go slack again, and he raised his dripping face, and he reached for the bottom with his feet. He found it, but now the water was up to his neck. He plucked at the noose once more with his lacerated hand, but there was no strength in his fingers. He felt the tension come back into the line as the ray began to move again, and for half a second he was tempted to throw himself backward and fight as he had been doing, pitting his strength against the vastly superior strength of the brute.

But the acceptance of imminent death had done something to his brain. It had driven out the fear, and with the fear had gone the panic. He could think now, and he knew with absolute certainty that if he was to make any use of this last chance that had been given him, it would have to be based on the one faculty that had carried man to his preeminence above all beasts, the faculty of reason. Only by using his brain could he possibly survive, and he called on his brain for a solution, and his brain responded. It offered him one.

He did not know whether his body still had the strength to carry out the brain's commands, but he began to swim forward, toward the ray that was still moving hesitantly away from the channel. He swam forward, feeling the rope go slack as he gained on the creature.

G

The man took one last deep breath, and he went down under the black water until he was sitting on the bottom of the bay. He put one foot over the line so that it passed under his bent knee. He drove both his heels into the mud, and he clutched the slimy grass with his bleeding hand, and he waited for the tension to come again.

The ray passed on the other side of the stake, moving faster now. The rope grew taut again, and it began to drag the man back toward the stake. He held his prisoned wrist close to the bottom, under his knee, and he prayed that the stake would not break. He felt the rope vibrate as the barnacles bit into it. He did not know whether the rope would crush the barnacles, or whether the barnacles would cut the rope. All he knew was that in five seconds or less he would be dragged into the stake and cut to ribbons if he tried to hold on, or drowned if he didn't.

He felt himself sliding slowly, and then faster, and suddenly the ray made a great leap forward, and the rope burned around the base of the stake, and the man's foot hit it hard. He kicked himself backward with his remaining strength, and the rope parted, and he was free.

H

He came slowly to the surface. Thirty feet away the sea devil made one tremendous leap and disappeared into the darkness. The man raised his wrist and looked at the frayed length of rope dangling from it. Twenty inches, perhaps. He lifted his other hand and felt the hot blood start instantly, but he didn't care. He put his hand on the stake above the barnacles and held on to the good, rough, honest wood. He heard a strange noise, and realized that it was himself, sobbing.

High above, there was a droning sound, and looking up he saw the nightly plane from New Orleans inbound for Tampa. Calm and serene, it sailed, symbol of man's proud mastery over nature. Its lights winked red and green for a moment; then it was gone.

Slowly, painfully, the man began to move through the placid water. He came to the skiff at last and climbed into it. The mullet, still alive, slapped convulsively with its tail. The man reached down with his torn hand, picked up the mullet, let it go.

He began to work on the slipknot doggedly with his teeth. His mind was almost a blank, but not quite. He knew one thing. He knew he would do no more casting alone at night. Not in the dark of the moon. No, not he.

How to Write Effective Guiding Questions

The important thing is not to stop questioning.
—Albert Einstein

Annotation

Evidence

mark the passage

Guiding Questions

Textual Reference

language

diction

repetition

adjectives

short sentences

Commentary

So what?

Literary Term

tone—how author feels

foreshadowing—hint at
what will happen

heightened suspense

Elements that will help Guiding Questions work...

PASSAGE

transparency

Paper copies for students must look exactly the same as transparency.

READ ALOUD

Let them hear it the way it was supposed to be heard...as they are reading along...probably with the guiding question in mind, so they can be marking as they listen and read.

“If I write it, you write it.”

These are the words I use to train my students out of asking that infernal question: “Do we have to write this down?” Then any time I’m writing on the overhead projector, they know that they have to write it too.

GUIDING QUESTION

Craft your guiding question to direct students to specific textual feature (repetition of a particular word, short sentences, vivid verbs, linking verbs, word choice, unusual adjectives, et al) and link it to some literary term or greater meaning. (See chart on previous page.)

You might decide to give students the guiding question before reading the passage or after. It depends on what you’re trying to accomplish. Just make sure you make a definite choice.



Do I want a spanking?
Is that some kind of trick question?
--Saturday Evening Post

The Prison-Door

A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes. The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison. In accordance with this rule, it may safely be assumed that the forefathers of Boston had built the first prison-house, somewhere in the vicinity of Cornhill, almost as seasonably as they marked out the first burial-ground, on Isaac Johnson's lot, and round about his grave, which subsequently became the nucleus of all the congregated sepulchres in the old churchyard of King's Chapel. Certain it is, that, some fifteen or twenty year after the settlement of the town, the wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age, which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front. The rust on the ponderous ironwork of its oaken door looked more antique than any thing else in the new world. Like all that pertains to crime, it seemed never to have known a youthful era. Before this ugly edifice, and between I and the wheel-track of the street, was a grass-plot, much overgrown with burdock, pig-weed,

apple-peru, and such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilized society, a prison. But, on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him. This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it,—or whether, as there is fair authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson, as she entered the prison-door,—we shall not take upon us to determine. Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers and present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral blossom, that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow.

My Name

Sandra Cisneros *The House on Mango Street*

In English, my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number one. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.

It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse—which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female—but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name—Magdalena—which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza.

I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.

from *Huck Finn* From page 171 (ch 30-36)

And got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me, all the time, in the day, an din the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a floating along, talking, and asinging and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of hi'n, 'stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and suchlike times, he would always call me honey, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had small-pox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim had ever had in the world, and the only one he's got now; and then I happened to look around, and see that paper.

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: "All right, then, I'll go to hell"—and tore it up. It was awful thoughts, and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head; and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, begin brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a started, I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.

from *Of Mice and Men*, page 25

His eyes passed over the new men and he stopped. He glanced coldly at George and then at Lennie. His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his hands closed into fists.

He stiffened and went into a slight crouch. His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious. Lennie squirmed under the look and shifted his feet nervously. Curley stepped gingerly close to him. “You the new guys the old man was waitin’ for?”

“We just come in,” said George.

“Let the big guy talk.”

Lennie twisted with embarrassment.

George said, “S’pose he don’t want to talk?”

Curley lashed his body around. “By Christ, he’s gotta talk when he’s spoke to. What the hell are you gettin’ into it for?”

“We travel together,” said George coldly.

“Oh, so it’s that way.”

George was tense, and motionless. “Yeah, it’s that way.”

Lennie was looking helplessly to George for instruction.

“An’ you won’t let the big guy talk, is that it?”

“He can talk if he wants to tell you anything.” He nodded slightly to Lennie. “We jus’ come in,” said Lennie softly.

Curley started levelly at him. “Well, nex’ time you answer when you’re spoke to.” He turned toward the door and walked out, and his elbows were still bent out a little.

Never answer their questions!

When you are leading the discussion about the passage (or about anything else, for that matter) do not answer their questions.

Do not even say Yes! or No. or Sorry. When you say, “Yes!” to one student, all the others will shut down. They don’t need to think anymore because the “right” answer has been discovered.

Instead, have a few “extending questions” on hand, questions like:

What do YOU think?

Why?

Why not?

Really?

Tell me more about that.

What evidence supports that?

Who else has an answer?

What other answers could we come up with?

So what?

Prove it!

Some Guiding Questions for the Passages in the Packet:

- **For any introductory passage:** What literary terms are operating in this passage?
- **“Sea Devil” passage A:** How does setting foreshadow future events, even from the very first paragraphs of the story?
- **“Sea Devil” passage B:** How does the setting contribute to suspense?
- **“Sea Devil” passage C/D:** How does diction foreshadow future events?
- **“Sea Devil” passage E:** How does sentence structure contribute to suspense?
- **“Sea Devil” passage F:** How does sentence structure indicate the climax?
- **“Sea Devil” passage G:** This passage is one complete arc of Freytag’s Pyramid, with suspense, building to climax. How does this suspense help to heighten the climax?
- **“Sea Devil” passage H:** How does the intense description of the man’s internal conflict contribute to suspense?
- **“Sea Devil” passage K:** How does the diction of this passage heighten suspense?

And a follow-up question: Why would suspense need to be especially intense in this particular passage?

- **“Sea Devil” passage L:** How does the language of this passage (compared to earlier passages) indicate that we have reached the denouement?
 - **“Prison Door” passage from *The Scarlet Letter*:** How does contrast in this short and early passage successfully deliver—really—the entire story in a nutshell?
 - **“My Name” passage from *The House on Mango Street*:** What evidence can you find in this passage that Esperanza will not in fact be like her grandmother?
 - **passage from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:** How does the irony of this passage effectively deliver Twain’s message about the evils of a society that would condone slavery?
- ...or if you don’t want to give away a theme, ask it this way:**
How does the irony of this passage effectively deliver Twain’s message about slavery?
- **passage from *Of Mice and Men*:** How does tension and easing in this dialogue foreshadow the tragic end of this novel?

Levels of Questions

What is this story about?

Level One

Level One questions can be answered using facts in the text or easily accessible information in other texts. They are fact-based.

I tell my students,
“If it’s a Level One question, you can literally put your finger on the answer in the text.”

What item do the boys take from Sally?

Level Two

Level Two questions can be answered after interpreting or analyzing text. They are inference-based. The answer is an inference.

I tell my students, “If it’s a Level Two question, you can put your finger on the evidence to support your answer.”

Why doesn’t Sally want to be saved?

Level Three

Level Three questions are open-ended. They ask us to go beyond the text, to bring our own personal experience into the discussion in addition to evidence from the text. These questions will provoke discussion of an abstract idea or issue.

I tell my students,
“You don’t have to have read the piece to answer a Level Three question,
but it helps”

How do people get beyond a great embarrassment?

Now answer the question again: What is this story about?
