Elements of Literature

Character Study

- What does this character do?
- What does this character say?
- How does this character think?
- How does this character react to the surroundings?
- How do other characters react to this character?
- To what extent does this character change over the course of the story?
- To what extent does this character stay the same over the course of the story?
- To what extent is this character consistent/inconsistent? (Do parts of this character study contradict other parts, or do all of the parts re-enforce each other?)
- What kinds of conflicts does this character get involved in?
  o Internal conflicts?
  o Conflicts with nature?
  o Conflicts with other characters?
  o Conflicts with society (or a group)?
- Why does this character act, say, think or react to the world in the ways that the character does?

Elements of Literature

Setting Study

- When does this story take place
    o Time of day?
    o Month/season?
    o Year?
    o A "timeless" time?
- How influential is when the story takes place on the story?
- How much time passes during the story?
- How influential is the passage of time on the story?
- Is the story told chronologically or in some other order? Why?

-Where does the story take place?

- How does where the story takes place influence the story?

- What are the geographical features of where the story takes place?

- How do these geographical features affect the characters in the story?

- How does the history of the story's setting affect the story?

- How many different settings are there in the story?

    - if one setting, why?

    - if more than one setting, how are these settings similar and different?

- What do the different settings in the story represent? How? Why?

Elements of Literature

Tone

Definition – tone is the mood being conveyed by the text.

Mood is typically conveyed through word choice.

To discover the mood of a section of the text, go through the sentences looking for words that have some kind of emotional content. Circle these words or write them down on a sheet of paper.

Construct a two or three word tonal statement from these words that is more complex than "happy" or "sad."

As the reader constructs the tonal statement, the reader should be sure to pay attention to context. The tonal statement should never come from one word or sentence. It must always try and represent the mood of the whole section rather than a single part of that section.

A good reader will look for places in the story where tone shifts.

Questions we ask after we have identified the tone of a section:

- How does the author create the tone in this section?
- Why does the author use this tone in this section?
- To what extent is the tone of this section consistent?
- How does the use of tone affect the reader's understanding of setting?
- How does the use of tone in this section affect the reader's understanding of the characters?
- How does the use of tone in this section affect the reader's understanding of the theme being expressed?

Elements of Literature

Figurative Language

Definition – any language used by the author that is not literal.

After the reader has determined that the language is not literal, the reader should try and identify what kind of figurative language it is. It might fit into one of the following categories:

Categories of Figurative language:

- Hyperbole – purposeful exaggeration
- Simile – comparison using "like" or "as"
- Metaphor – comparison
- Personification – giving inanimate objects animate qualities
- Paradox – an apparent contradiction on the surface that gives way to a deeper truth
- Verbal irony – saying one idea while meaning the opposite
- Dramatic Irony – the audience/reader knows more than the character
- Symbol – any concrete object that has greater significance in an abstract way

Questions we ask after we have identified the category of the figurative language:

- How is the author using this figurative language?
- Why is the author using this figurative language?
- How does this use of figurative language affect the reader's understanding of the characters?
- How does this use of figurative language affect the reader's understanding of the setting?
- How does this use of figurative language affect the reader's understanding of tone?