

CP English 12 Summer Reading Assignment:
How to Read Literature Like a Professor by Thomas C. Foster

Assignment: This text is an easy-to-read introduction to the patterns of symbolic meaning in literary texts and is a helpful secondary source for CP English.

For this assignment, you will answer the provided journal questions. Your answers will let you practice your literary analysis. Whenever I ask for an **example from literature** or a **text**, you may use **short stories, novels, plays, films, or TV shows**. Your responses should **NOT** be superficial (do not regurgitate the plot), but in depth with specific responses. **DO NOT USE THE EXAMPLES FOSTER PROVIDES IN THE READING!** Label your journal responses according to the chapter headings. Each chapter response should be half a page (they may be longer), typed, 1" margins, and 12 point Times New Roman.

You will also use your journals in class to participate in Socratic or fishbowl discussions during the first semester. These dates will be given to you the first day of class.

Grading Rubric:

“A” 93-100% - This grade will be awarded to students who follow the directions as outlined above with great care. Their writing will reflect organization, structure, and depth of thought and analysis. Students receiving this grade will also turn in work that is neat and organized in its presentation and that is free of excessive and distracting errors in its technical merit.

“B” 85-92% - This grade will be awarded to students who follow the directions as given above, but may include students who have difficulty producing writing that reflects the organization, structure, and depth of thought found in the “A” grading range. Responses at this level may have slight, but not distracting problems in the area of technical merit.

“C” 75-84% - This grade will be awarded to students who have minor issues in following the directions as outlined above, but who still manage to give attention to and respond to all required reflection prompts. These students may show more significant issues in organization, structure, or analytical depth than those receiving the “B” grade, or may have frequent and repeated problems with the technical merit of their assignment.

“D” 65-74% - This grade will be given to students who fail to complete all required responses or who do not produce focused or coherent responses to the required prompts. Students receiving this grade may also have major and distracting errors in organization, structure, depth of thought, command of language, or technical merit.

“F” 64% or below – This grade will be given to students who submit responses that are mostly incomplete, completely unfocused or incoherent in relation to the required prompts, or that display little to no skill in organization, depth of analysis, command of language, or technical merit.

***How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster – Journal Questions:**

Your answers will let you practice your literary analysis. Whenever I ask for an example from literature, you may use short stories, novels, plays, films or TV shows. Your responses should NOT be superficial (do not regurgitate the plot), but in-depth with specific responses.

Introduction – How'd He Do That?

How do memory, symbol, and pattern affect the reading of literature? How does the recognition of patterns make it easier to read complicated literature? Discuss a time when your appreciation of a literary work was enhanced by understanding symbol or pattern.

Chapter 1 – Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not)

List FIVE aspects of the QUEST and then apply them to something you have read (or viewed) in the form used on pages 3-5. What is Foster's overall point about journeys or trips in literature? Discuss a text that you have read or viewed that includes a quest.

Chapter 2 – Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion

What does "communion" mean? For what reason does Foster suggest that authors often include meal scenes? What does a failed meal suggest in literature? Discuss a text that you have read or viewed that includes a successful or failed meal scene.

Chapter 3 – Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires

What are the essentials of the vampire story and what do they represent? Apply this to a literary work you have read or viewed.

Chapter 4 – Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?

Define "intertextuality". Discuss three examples that have helped you in reading specific works.

Chapter 5 – 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. Re-read pages 39-41 carefully. In these pages, Foster shows how Fugard reflects Shakespeare through both plot and theme. In your discussion, focus on how the theme of the Shakespeare piece connects to your selected text.

Chapter 6 – . . . Or the Bible

Why is the Bible so often alluded to in literature? What are some of the ways that writers allude to the Bible? What's the benefit of knowing/understanding Biblical allusions in literature? Discuss a text that you have read or viewed that includes allusions to the Bible or Biblical references.

Chapter 7 – Hansel and Gretel

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

Chapter 8 – It's Greek to Me

What does Foster mean by the term "myth"? What are some of the ways that writers allude to mythology? Discuss a text that you have read or viewed that alludes to mythology.

Chapter 9 – It's More Than Just Rain or Snow

How can weather be symbolic in literature? What are some of the common "meanings" of various types of weather? Discuss the importance of weather in a specific text that you have read or viewed, not in terms of plot.

Chapter 10 – Never Stand Next to the Hero

Discuss the differences between round and flat characters. Using Foresters four reasons for why all characters aren't round (86-87), discuss an example of a flat character that you have read about or viewed.

Interlude – Did He Mean That?

What are the reasons Foster provides that lead him to believe that most writers DO NOT accidentally create the symbols, allusions, and patterns we find when we read critically? Whether we believe a writer intended to do something or not, what's the benefit or noticing that it happened anyway? Discuss a text that you have read or viewed that included a symbol, allusion, or pattern. What happened to your reading or viewing of the text once you understood the symbol, allusion, or pattern.

Chapter 11 – . . . More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence

Present examples of the two kinds of violence found in a text that you have read or view. Show how the effects are different.

Chapter 12 – Is That a Symbol?

What's the difference between symbolism and allegory? What, besides objects, can be symbolic? How should a reader approach symbolism in a text? Discuss a text that you have read or viewed that included symbolism.

Chapter 13 – It's All Political

Assume that Foster is right and "it is all political." Use his criteria to show that a novel or short story you've read before (or a movie/TV show you've seen) is political.

Chapter 14 – Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too

Apply the criteria on page 126 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*, *Harry Potter*, and *Gladiator*.

Chapter 15 – Flights of Fancy

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

Chapter 16 – It's All About Sex . . .

What are some of the things that symbolize sex and/or gender? Why does sexual symbolism exist/occur in literature? **(You may combine your response with your response for chapter 17).**

Chapter 17 – . . . Except Sex

When writers write directly about sex, what are they really writing about? Why don't writers usually write actual sex scenes? Choose a novel or movie in which sex is suggested but not described, and discuss how the relationship is suggested and how this implication affects the theme or develops characterization.

Chapter 18 – If She Comes Up, It's Baptism

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

Chapter 19 – Geography Matters . . .

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

Chapter 20 – . . . So Does Season

Find a poem (or a song) that mentions a specific season. Then discuss how the poet uses the season in a meaningful, traditional, or unusual way. (Submit a copy of the poem or song with your analysis).

Interlude – One Story

Write your own definition for archetype. Identify an archetypal story and apply it to a text with which you are familiar.

Chapter 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.

Chapter 22 – He's Blind for a Reason, You Know

What can physical blindness mirror? What is often the irony behind a blind character? How are darkness and lightness related to sight? Discuss a text that you have read or viewed that includes a blind character or deals with blindness.

Chapter 23 – It's Never Just Heart Disease. . . And Rarely Just Illness

What are some of the symbolic possibilities associated with the heart? Why? 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" (222-224). Discuss the effectiveness of the death as related to theme or symbolism.

Chapter 24 – Don't Read with Your Eyes

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 twentieth-first century with how it might be viewed by a reader from that time period. Focus on assumptions that the author makes, assumptions that would not make it in this century.

Chapter 25 – It's My Symbol and I'll Cry If I Want To

What makes a symbol a symbol? Give an example of a symbol from a text and discuss why it is a symbol and what it represents.

Chapter 26 – Is He Serious? And Other Ironies

What does Foster mean when he says, "Irony trumps everything"? How can you tell if something is ironic? What does Foster mean when he says, "Irony doesn't work for everyone"? Discuss an ironic situation in a text that you have read or viewed.

Chapter 27 – A Test Case

Read "The Garden Party" by Katherine Mansfield, the short story starting on page 262. Complete the exercise on pages 282-283, following the directions exactly. Then, compare your writing with the three examples. How did you do? NOTE: Appropriate responses should be around 500 words.