Introduction to Literature

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The course deals with literary theory with respect to British and American literature. The students are introduced to various literary terms whose knowledge will be useful for them in their courses of British and American literature. The purpose of the course is improvement of students' abilities of literary analysis.

1. The concept of literature. What is literature. Functions of literature. Analysis of literary work. Literary studies.


3. Narrative genres.

4. Fiction: analysis of literary text.

5. The basic elements of poetry. What is poetry. Figurative language. Denotation and connotation.


8. Poetry: Basic Stanza Forms

9. The basic elements of drama.

10. Drama: major genres.


12. Literary criticism - I.

13. Literary criticism - II. Literary canon.

Literature:


Anthologies:

1.

The concept of literature. What is literature. Functions of literature. Analysis of literary work. Literary Studies.

Wendy Cope

English Weather

January's grey and slushy,
February's chill and drear,
March is wild and wet and windy,
April seldom brings much cheer.
In May, a day or two of sunshine,
Three or four in June, perhaps.
July is usually filthy,
August skies are open taps.
In September things start dying,
Then comes cold October mist.
November we make plans to spend
The best part of December pissed.

Britain has a temperate, humid climate. Its characteristic features are mild winters (Britain has warmer winters than any other country in the same latitude), not very hot summers, no extremes of temperature, abundant rain all the year round, frequent changes of the weather.

The most important factor influencing Britain's climate is the prevalence of south-westerly winds. Blowing from the Atlantic, they are mild in winter, cool in summer, and always heavily charged with moisture. The mild climate is also partly due to the warm Gulf Stream flowing from the Gulf of Mexico to western Europe. But occasional easterly winds in winter may bring a cold, dry, continental type of climate.

Karel Veselý: The English Speaking Countries
How to analyze a story or novel:

A

1. The title of the story, (the date of its original publication)
2. The author's name and basic dates
3. The name (if any) of the central character, together with a description of that character's main traits or features
4. Other characters in the story
5. A short description of the setting
6. The narrator of the story (to identify him or her is, of course, to define the point of view from which the story is told)
7. A terse summary of the main events of the story, given in chronological order
8. A description of the general tone of the story; the author's apparent feelings toward the central character or the main events
9. Some comments on the style in which the story is written (brief illustrative quotations are helpful as space permits)
10. Whatever kinds of irony the story contains, and what they contribute to the story
11. In a sentence, the story's main theme
12. Leading symbols (if the story has any), with a guess at whatever each symbol suggests
13. Evaluation of the story as a whole (your personal view)

B

1. Author and title; date of publication
2. Name (if any) of central character and character's important traits
3. Point of view
4. Setting of action; significance, if any, of setting
5. Summary of plot
6. Nature of conflict
7. Tone
8. Style
9. Central event(s)
10. Theme
11. Evaluation
Analysis of a poem:

1. Author and title; date of publication
2. Speaker
3. Occasion of the poem
4. Setting
5. Formal structure
6. Image patterns
7. Symbols
8. Theme
9. Other noteworthy elements
10. Evaluation

Analysis of a play:

A

1. The playwright's name, nationality, and dates
2. The title of the play and the date of its first performance
3. The central character, with a brief description that includes leading traits
4. Other characters, also described
5. The scene or scenes and, if the play does not take place in the present, the time of its action
6. The major dramatic question (some conflict whose outcome we wonder about, some uncertainty to whose resolution we look forward)
7. A brief summary of the play's principal events, in the order the playwright presents them (in each act or scene)
8. The tone of the play, playwright's apparent feelings toward the characters or what happens to them
9. The language spoken in the play (does language indicate a character's background or place of birth?; brief quotations will be valuable)
10. In a sentence, try to sum up the play's central theme (but plays often contain more themes than one)

11. Any symbols you notice, and believe to matter. What do they suggest?

12. A concise evaluation of the play; what do you think of it?

B

1. Author and title; date of publication
2. Name of central character and character's important traits
3. Other important characters
4. Setting, place and time
5. Summary of plot
6. Nature of conflict
7. Style
8. Central event(s)
9. Theme
10. Evaluation

2.

**The basic elements of fiction: Plot. Character. Setting. Point of view. Theme.**

Text: Ernest Hemingway – A Clean, Well-Lighted Place (short story)

[http://ee.1asphost.com/shortstoryclassics/hemingwaycleanplace.html](http://ee.1asphost.com/shortstoryclassics/hemingwaycleanplace.html)
It was very late and everyone had left the cafe except an old man who sat in the shadow the leaves of the tree made against the electric light. In the day time the street was dusty, but at night the dew settled the dust and the old man liked to sit late because he was deaf and now at night it was quiet and he felt the difference. The two waiters inside the cafe knew that the old man was a little drunk, and while he was a good client they knew that if he became too drunk he would leave without paying, so they kept watch on him.

"Last week he tried to commit suicide," one waiter said.

"Why?"

"He was in despair."

"What about?"

"Nothing."

"How do you know it was nothing?"

"He has plenty of money."

They sat together at a table that was close against the wall near the door of the cafe and looked at the terrace where the tables were all empty except where the old man sat in the shadow of the leaves of the tree that moved slightly in the wind. A girl and a soldier went by in the street. The street light shone on the brass number on his collar. The girl wore no head covering and hurried beside him.

"The guard will pick him up," one waiter said.

"What does it matter if he gets what he's after?"

"He had better get off the street now. The guard will get him. They went by five minutes ago."

The old man sitting in the shadow rapped on his saucer with his glass. The younger waiter went over to him.

"What do you want?"
The old man looked at him. "Another brandy," he said.

"You'll be drunk," the waiter said. The old man looked at him. The waiter went away.

"He'll stay all night," he said to his colleague. "I'm sleepy now. I never get into bed before three o'clock. He should have killed himself last week."

The waiter took the brandy bottle and another saucer from the counter inside the cafe and marched out to the old man's table. He put down the saucer and poured the glass full of brandy.

"You should have killed yourself last week," he said to the deaf man. The old man motioned with his finger. "A little more," he said. The waiter poured on into the glass so that the brandy slopped over and ran down the stem into the top saucer of the pile. "Thank you," the old man said. The waiter took the bottle back inside the cafe. He sat down at the table with his colleague again.

"He's drunk now," he said.

"He's drunk every night."

"What did he want to kill himself for?"

"How should I know."

"How did he do it?"

"He hung himself with a rope."

"Who cut him down?"

"His niece."

"Why did they do it?"

"Fear for his soul."

"How much money has he got?"

"He's got plenty."

"He must be eighty years old."

"Anyway I should say he was eighty."
"I wish he would go home. I never get to bed before three o’clock. What kind of hour is that to go to bed?"

"He stays up because he likes it."

"He's lonely. I'm not lonely. I have a wife waiting in bed for me."

"He had a wife once too."

"A wife would be no good to him now."

"You can't tell. He might be better with a wife."

"His niece looks after him. You said she cut him down."

"I know."

"I wouldn't want to be that old. An old man is a nasty thing."

"Not always. This old man is clean. He drinks without spilling. Even now, drunk. Look at him."

"I don't want to look at him. I wish he would go home. He has no regard for those who must work."

The old man looked from his glass across the square, then over at the waiters.

"Another brandy," he said, pointing to his glass. The waiter who was in a hurry came over.

"Finished," he said, speaking with that omission of syntax stupid people employ when talking to drunken people or foreigners. "No more tonight. Close now."

"Another," said the old man.

"No. Finished." The waiter wiped the edge of the table with a towel and shook his head.

The old man stood up, slowly counted the saucers, took a leather coin purse from his pocket and paid for the drinks, leaving half a peseta tip.

The waiter watched him go down the street, a very old man walking unsteadily but with dignity.

"Why didn't you let him stay and drink?" the unhurried waiter asked.
They were putting up the shutters. "It is not half-past two."

"I want to go home to bed."

"What is an hour?"

"More to me than to him."

"An hour is the same."

"You talk like an old man yourself. He can buy a bottle and drink at home."

"It's not the same."

"No, it is not," agreed the waiter with a wife. He did not wish to be unjust. He was only in a hurry.

"And you? You have no fear of going home before your usual hour?"

"Are you trying to insult me?"

"No, hombre, only to make a joke."

"No," the waiter who was in a hurry said, rising from pulling down the metal shutters. "I have confidence. I am all confidence."

"You have youth, confidence, and a job," the older waiter said. "You have everything."

"And what do you lack?"

"Everything but work."

"You have everything I have."

"No. I have never had confidence and I am not young."

"Come on. Stop talking nonsense and lock up."

"I am of those who like to stay late at the cafe," the older waiter said. "With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night."

"I want to go home and into bed."

"We are of two different kinds," the older waiter said. He was now dressed to go home. "It is not only a question of youth and
confidence although those things are very beautiful. Each night I am reluctant to close up because there may be some one who needs the cafe."

"Hombre, there are bodegas open all night long."

"You do not understand. This is a clean and pleasant cafe. It is well lighted. The light is very good and also, now, there are shadows of the leaves."

"Good night," said the younger waiter.

"Good night," the other said. Turning off the electric light he continued the conversation with himself. It is the light of course but it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant. Certainly you do not want music. Nor can you stand before a bar with dignity although that is all that is provided for these hours. What did he fear? It was not a fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanliness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada. Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee. He smiled and stood before a bar with a shining steam pressure coffee machine.

"What's yours?" asked the barman.

"Nada."

"Otro loco mas," said the barman and turned away.

"A little cup," said the waiter.

The barman poured it for him.

"The light is very bright and pleasant but the bar is unpolished," the waiter said.

The barman looked at him but did not answer. It was too late at night for conversation.

"You want another copita?" the barman asked.

"No, thank you," said the waiter and went out. He disliked bars and bodegas. A clean, well-lighted cafe was a very different thing. Now,
without thinking further, he would go home to his room. He would lie in the bed and finally, with daylight, he would go to sleep. After all, he said to himself, it's probably only insomnia. Many must have it.

3.

Narrative genres

Texts: from L. Perrine’s anthology Literature, Structure, Sound, and Sense (p. 175-179)

Jerome Klapka Jerome – Three Men in a Boat (Chapter III – an extract)


Three Men in a Boat
By Jerome K. Jerome

Chapter III.


SO, on the following evening, we again assembled, to discuss and arrange our plans. Harris said:

“Now, the first thing to settle is what to take with us. Now, you get a bit of paper and write down, J., and you get the grocery catalogue, George, and somebody give me a bit of pencil, and then I’ll make out a list.”
That’s Harris all over – so ready to take the burden of everything himself, and put it on the backs of other people.

He always reminds me of my poor Uncle Podger. You never saw such a commotion up and down a house, in all your life, as when my Uncle Podger undertook to do a job. A picture would have come home from the frame-maker’s, and be standing in the dining-room, waiting to be put up; and Aunt Podger would ask what was to be done with it, and Uncle Podger would say:

“Oh, you leave that to ME. Don’t you, any of you, worry yourselves about that. I’LL do all that.”

And then he would take off his coat, and begin. He would send the girl out for sixpen’orth of nails, and then one of the boys after her to tell her what size to get; and, from that, he would gradually work down, and start the whole house.

“Now you go and get me my hammer, Will,” he would shout; “and you bring me the rule, Tom; and I shall want the step-ladder, and I had better have a kitchen-chair, too; and, Jim! you run round to Mr. Goggles, and tell him, ‘Pa’s kind regards, and hopes his leg’s better; and will he lend him his spirit-level?’ And don’t you go, Maria, because I shall want somebody to hold me the light; and when the girl comes back, she must go out again for a bit of picture-cord; and Tom! – where’s Tom? – Tom, you come here; I shall want you to hand me up the picture.”

And then he would lift up the picture, and drop it, and it would come out of the frame, and he would try to save the glass, and cut himself; and then he would spring round the room, looking for his handkerchief. He could not find his handkerchief, because it was in the pocket of the coat he had taken off, and he did not know where he had put the coat, and all the house had to leave off looking for his tools, and start looking for his coat; while he would dance round and hinder them.

“Doesn’t anybody in the whole house know where my coat is? I never came across such a set in all my life – upon my word I didn’t. Six of you! – and you can’t find a coat that I put down not five minutes ago! Well, of all the – “

Then he’d get up, and find that he had been sitting on it, and would call out:

“Oh, you can give it up! I’ve found it myself now. Might just as well ask the cat to find anything as expect you people to find it.”
And, when half an hour had been spent in tying up his finger, and a new glass had been got, and the tools, and the ladder, and the chair, and the candle had been brought, he would have another go, the whole family, including the girl and the charwoman, standing round in a semi-circle, ready to help. Two people would have to hold the chair, and a third would help him up on it, and hold him there, and a fourth would hand him a nail, and a fifth would pass him up the hammer, and he would take hold of the nail, and drop it.

“There!” he would say, in an injured tone, “now the nail’s gone.”

And we would all have to go down on our knees and grovel for it, while he would stand on the chair, and grunt, and want to know if he was to be kept there all the evening.

The nail would be found at last, but by that time he would have lost the hammer.

“Where’s the hammer? What did I do with the hammer? Great heavens! Seven of you, gaping round there, and you don’t know what I did with the hammer!”

We would find the hammer for him, and then he would have lost sight of the mark he had made on the wall, where the nail was to go in, and each of us had to get up on the chair, beside him, and see if we could find it; and we would each discover it in a different place, and he would call us all fools, one after another, and tell us to get down. And he would take the rule, and re-measure, and find that he wanted half thirty-one and three-eighths inches from the corner, and would try to do it in his head, and go mad.

And we would all try to do it in our heads, and all arrive at different results, and sneer at one another. And in the general row, the original number would be forgotten, and Uncle Podger would have to measure it again.

He would use a bit of string this time, and at the critical moment, when the old fool was leaning over the chair at an angle of forty-five, and trying to reach a point three inches beyond what was possible for him to reach, the string would slip, and down he would slide on to the piano, a really fine musical effect being produced by the suddenness with which his head and body struck all the notes at the same time.

And Aunt Maria would say that she would not allow the children to stand round and hear such language.

At last, Uncle Podger would get the spot fixed again, and put the point of the nail on it with his left hand, and take the hammer in his right
hand. And, with the first blow, he would smash his thumb, and drop the hammer, with a yell, on somebody’s toes.

Aunt Maria would mildly observe that, next time Uncle Podger was going to hammer a nail into the wall, she hoped he’d let her know in time, so that she could make arrangements to go and spend a week with her mother while it was being done.

“Oh! you women, you make such a fuss over everything,” Uncle Podger would reply, picking himself up. “Why, I LIKE doing a little job of this sort.”

And then he would have another try, and, at the second blow, the nail would go clean through the plaster, and half the hammer after it, and Uncle Podger be precipitated against the wall with force nearly sufficient to flatten his nose.

Then we had to find the rule and the string again, and a new hole was made; and, about midnight, the picture would be up – very crooked and insecure, the wall for yards round looking as if it had been smoothed down with a rake, and everybody dead beat and wretched – except Uncle Podger.

“There you are,” he would say, stepping heavily off the chair on to the charwoman’s corns, and surveying the mess he had made with evident pride. “Why, some people would have had a man in to do a little thing like that!”

Harris will be just that sort of man when he grows up, I know, and I told him so. I said I could not permit him to take so much labour upon himself. I said:

“No; YOU get the paper, and the pencil, and the catalogue, and George write down, and I’ll do the work.”

4.


Text: James Joyce – Araby (short story)

http://www.readprint.com/work-875/James-Joyce
Araby

by James Joyce

NORTH RICHMOND STREET being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers’ School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: The Abbot, by Walter Scott, The Devout Communicant and The Memoirs of Vidocq. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant’s rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan’s sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan’s steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the
point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs’ cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: "O love! O love!" many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to Araby. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar, she said she would love to go.

"And why can't you?" I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

"It's well for you," she said.

"If I go," I said, "I will bring you something."

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that
evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the
work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came
between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word Araby were called
to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern
enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My
aunt was surprised and hoped it was not some Freemason affair. I answered few
questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he
hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I
had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood
between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the
evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me
curtly:

"Yes, boy, I know."

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I left
the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly
raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat
staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the
room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high cold
empty gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the
front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached
me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked
over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing
nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the
lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below
the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs. Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old
garrulous woman, a pawnbroker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious
purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond
an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs. Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry
she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be
out late as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and
down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

"I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord."

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the halldoor. I heard him talking to
himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his
overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I
asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.
"The people are in bed and after their first sleep now," he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

"Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is."

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." He asked me where I was going and, when I had told him a second time he asked me did I know The Arab’s Farewell to his Steed. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous house and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten.

In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name. I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognised a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words Cafe Chantant were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

"O, I never said such a thing!"

"O, but you did!"

"O, but I didn't!"

"Didn't she say that?"
"Yes. I heard her."

"O, there's a ... fib!"

Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

"No, thank you."

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.
The basic elements of poetry. What is poetry. Figurative language. Denotation and connotation.

Archibald MacLeish
(1892 - 1982)

Ars Poetica

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit,

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown-

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds.

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs,

Leaving, as the moon releases
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
Memory by memory the mind-

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs.

A poem should be equal to:
Not true.

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a maple leaf.

For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea-

A poem should not mean
But be.
Simile:

Robert Burns

(1759 - 1796)

A Red, Red Rose

O My Luve's like a red, red rose,
    That's newly sprung in June;
O My Luve's like a melodie
    That's sweetly played in tune.

As fair art though, my bonnie lass,
    So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
    Till a' the seas gang dry.

Lord Alfred Tennyson

(1809 - 1892)

The Eagle

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

Metaphor:

Sylvia Plath

(1932 - 1963)

Metaphors

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrills.
Or red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

Questions: a) To what central fact do all the metaphors in this poem refer?

b) In the first line, what has the speaker in common with a riddle? Why does she say she has nine syllables?
c) How would you describe the tone of this poem? (Perhaps the poet expresses more than one attitude.) What attitude is conveyed in the metaphors of an elephant, “a ponderous house,” “a melon strolling on two tendrils”? By the metaphors of red fruit, ivory, fine timbers, new-minted money? By the metaphor in the last line?

Personification:

Carl Sandburg
(1878 - 1967)
Fog
The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Apostrophe:

William Blake
(1757 - 1827)
The Tiger
Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

.........
Task: Read and note the figures of speech in the following poem. Identify each one: is it a simile, a metaphor, an implied metaphor, a personification? Decide what elements make up the comparison: what is being compared to what?

Nikki Giovanni

(1943)

Woman

she wanted to be a blade of grass amid the fields
but he wouldn't agree to be the dandelion

she wanted to be a robin singing through the leaves
but he refused to be her tree

she spun herself into a web and looking for a place to rest turned to him
but he stood straight declining to be her corner

she tried to be a book but he wouldn't read

she turned herself into a bulb but he wouldn't let her grow

she decided to become a woman and though he still refused to be a man she decided it was all right
6.

Poetry: Symbol, Allegory, Allusion, Speaker, Tone.

Symbol:

Robert Browning
(1812 - 1889)

My Star

All that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

Allusion:

Anonymous - Middle English Lyric
Sumer Is Icumen In

Translation:

Sumer is icumen in
Lhude sing cuccu!
Groweth sed and
bloweth med
And springth the wude nu.
Sing cuccu!

Spring has come in,
Loudly sing cuckoo!
Grows seed and blooms mead
And springs the wood now.
Sing cuckoo!

(extract)

Ezra Pound
(1885 - 1972)

Ancient Music

Winter is icumen in,
Lhude sing Goddamm,
Raineth drop and staineth slop,
And how the wind doth ramm!
Sing : Goddamm.
(extract)

J. V. Cunningham
(1911)

Friend, On This Scaffold Thomas More Lies Dead

Friend, on this scaffold Thomas More Lies Dead
Who would not cut the Body from the Head.

(Thomas More /1478-1535/ - representative of an early Renaissance literature, the author of Utopia)

Tone:

William Butler Yeats
(1865 - 1939)

The Coming of Wisdom with Time

 though leaves are many, the root is one;
Through all the lying days of my youth
 I swayed my leaves and flowers in the sun;
Now I may wither into the truth.

Question: Is the poet exulting over a gain or lamenting over a loss?

Exercises:

Identify each of the following quotations as literal or figurative. If figurative, explain what is being compared to what and identify the figure of speech.
Example: "Talent is a cistern; genius is a fountain." Answer: A metaphor. Talent = cistern, genius = fountain.

a) Love's feeling is more soft and sensible
   Than are the tender horns of cockled snails.
   Shakespeare

b) ...Let us sit upon the ground
   And tell sad stories of the death of kings.
   Shakespeare

c) Joy and Temperance and Repose
   Slam the door on the doctor's nose.
   Anonymous
d) What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven?  
Shakespeare

e) It is with words as with sunbeams - the more they are condensed, the deeper they burn.  
Robert Southey

f) The pen is mightier than the sword  
Edward Bulwer-Lytton

g) An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick.  
William Butler Yeats

Which of the following words is the most emotionally connotative?

a) mother b) female parent c) dam

Which of the following words have the more favorable connotations?

a) average b) mediocre
a) adventurer b) adventuress
a) poor b) lower-class
a) phantom b) spirit
a) achieve b) reach

As you read the following poems, decide whether you think them better interpreted symbolically or allegorically.

George Herbert  
(1593 - 1633)

Love

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,  
Guilty of dust and sin.  
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack  
From my first entrance in,  
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning 5  
If I lacked anything.

"A guest," I answered, "worthy to be here."  
Love said, "You shall be he."  
"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,  
I cannot look on Thee." 10  
Love took my hand, and smiling, did reply,  
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marred them; let my shame  
Go where it doth deserve."  
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?" 15  
My dear, then I will serve."  
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."  
So I did sit and eat.
William Blake
(1757 - 1827)

The Tiger

Tiger! Tiger! Burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand forged thy dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

(from The Songs of Experience)

Questions concerning G. Herbert's Love
a) What corresponds to the word "Love"
b) What equivalents does Herbert give each of these words: grow slack, first entrance, "if I lacked anything", guest, "took my hand", Lord, serve, "taste My meat", eat...?
c) What type of poem is it (according to its subject) and why?

Questions concerning W. Blake's The Tiger
a) What images are connected with the tiger? How are related?
b) How is this animal, and the feelings it represents, characterized within the poem?
c) Which animal is contrasted with the tiger? What connotations does it have?
d) What attitude does the speaker seem to have toward the tiger? With what evidence would you support your answer to this question?
e) Why is it essentially religious poem
7.

Poetry: Repetition, Rhythm, Rhyme.

Edgar Allan Poe
(1809-1849)

The Raven
(an extract)

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil!-
By that Heaven that bends above us - by that God we both adore-
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant
Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting-
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! - quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted - nevermore!

Alliteration:

William Langland
/about 1332-1400/

Piers the Plowman's Vision
(opening lines)

In a somer seson,
When softe was the sonne,
I shope me in shroudes
As I a shepe were,
In habit as an hermit,
Unholy of workes.
He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
(Robert Frost: The Eagle)

Allen Ginsberg
(1926-1997)

In the world which He has created according to his will Blessed Praised
Magnified Lauded Exalted the Name of the Holy One Blessed is He!
In the house in Newark Blessed is He! In the madhouse Blessed is He! In the house of Death
Blessed is He!
Blessed be He in homosexuality! Blessed be He in Paranoia! Blessed be He in the city!
Blessed be He in the Book!
Blessed be He who dwells in the shadow! Blessed be He! Blessed be He!
Blessed be you Naomi in tears! Blessed be you Naomi in fears! Blessed Blessed Blessed in
sickness!
Blessed be you Naomi in Hospitals! Blessed be you Naomi in solitude! Blest be your
triumph! Blest be your bars! Blest be your last years' loneliness!
Blest be your failure! Blest be your stroke! Blest be the close of your eye! Blest be the gaunt
of your cheek! Blest be your withered thighs!
Blessed be Thee Naomi in Death! Blessed be Death! Blessed be Death!
Blessed be He Who leads all sorrow to Heaven! Blessed be He in the end!
Blessed be He who builds Heaven in Darkness! Blessed Blessed Blessed be He! Blessed be
He! Blessed be Death on us All!

Edward Lear
(1812-1888)

Limerick

There was an Old Man who supposed
That the street door was partially closed;
But some very large rats ate his coats and his hats,
While that futile old gentleman dozed

Exercise: Which meter is predominant in the following poem?

A. E. Housman
(1859-1936)

When I Was One-And-Twenty

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue."
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

At what place or places in each of these passages does the poet depart from basic iambic meter? How does each departure help underscore the meaning?

Shadwell alone of all my sons is he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretense,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

(John Dryden, Mac Flecknoe)

Note: Speech of Flecknoe, prince of Nonsense, referring to Thomas Shadwell, poet and playwright.

******************************************

A needless Alexandrine ends the song
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.
(Alexander Pope, An Essay on Criticism)

In which of the following pairs of quotations is sound more successfully adapted to sense? As precisely as possible, explain why. (The poet whose name is given is in each case the author of the superior version.)

1. a) Go forth - and Virtue, ever in your sight,
   Shall be your guide by day, your guard by night.

   b) Go forth - and Virtue, ever in your sight,
   Shall point your way by day, and keep you safe at night.
   (Charles Churchill)

2. a) Your talk attests how bells of singing gold
   Would sound at evening over silent water.

30
b) Your low voice tells how bells of singing gold
Would sound at twilight over silent water.

(Edwin Arlington Robinson)

Create a short poem consisting of two lines at least with the end rhymes.

8.

Poetry: Basic Stanza Forms

Couplet:

Hard he laboured, long and well:
Over his work the boy's curls fell.

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

(Robert Browning)

Heroic couplet:

True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.

(Alexander Pope: "Essay on Criticism")

Terza rima:

Percy Bysshe Shelley
(1792-1822)

Ode to the West Wind
(extract)

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,   a
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead b
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing, a
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,   b
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou, c
Who chariostest to their dark wintry bed   b
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow  
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odours plain and hill:  
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and Preserver; hear, oh hear!

Ottava rima:

George Gordon Byron  
(1788-1824)  
Don Juan

He turned his lips to hers, and with his hand  
Called back the tangles of her wandering hair;  
Even then their love they could not all command,  
And half forgot their danger and despair:  
Antonia's patience now was at stand-  
'Come, come, 'tis no time now for fooling there,'  
She whispered, in great wrath - 'I must deposit  
This pretty gentleman within the closet.'

Sonnet:

William Shakespeare  
(1564-1616)  
Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun,  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red,  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;1  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damask'd,2 red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks,  
And in some perfumes is there more delight,  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know,  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go,  
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.  
And yet by heaven I think my love as rare  
As any she beli'd with false compare.

1 of dark colour 2 deep-pink or rose

32
Zrak paní mé se k slunci rovnat nedá,
korál jí zahanbí rty ruměné,,
je-li sniž bílý, její hruď je snědá,
má černé vlasy jako drátěné.
Znám hebké růže, červeně i bílé,
ale ty nekvetou jí na líčích,
jsou vůně rozkošnější, než když milé
se linou s dechem z ústek mluvících.
Rád poslouchám ji, ale musím říci,
že sladší hudba zvučí houslemi,
bohyni neviděl jsem vzlétající,
má paní šlapá různě po zemi.
A přesto každou krásku by má milá
bez falešných těch příkras převyšila.

(Překlad Jarmila Urbánková)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning
(1806-1861)

Sonnet from the Portuguese, XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,- I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!- and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Jak miluji tě? řeknu ti, jak asi.
S hloubkou i výší, kterých dosahuje
má duše, když se slepě pohybuje
u hranic života a věčné krásy.
S potřebou chleba, jenž po všechný časy
pokrmem našich dnů i večerů je
Čistě jak ten, kdo pýchu zavrhuje
volně jak ten, kdo o právo se hlásí.
S vášní v mých starých žalech ležící,
s důvěrou, již jsem v dětství znala dát,
s láskou mým dávným svatým patřící,
slzami, smíchem, dechem - nastokrát
svým životem! - A dá-li Bůh, já chci
po smrti lépe jen tě milovat.

(překlad Hana Žantovská)

Exercise:
Read the following poem and recognize which kind of sonnet it is. What is its central topic? Analyze the composition of the poem.

Edna St. Vincent Millay
(1892-1950)

What Lips My Lips Have Kissed, and Where, and Why

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply,
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:
I cannot say what loves have come and gone,
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.

Blank verse:

William Wordsworth
(1770-1850)

from The Prelude

O there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that, while he fans my cheek,
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy he brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Free verse:

Walt Whitman
(1819-1892)

Song of Myself

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loaf and invite my soul,
I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, formed from this soil, this air
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten¹
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

¹Creeds...forgotten: Certain creeds and schools of thought for a while sufficed, but are now retiring to the back of the poet's mind

For discussion: What does the poet celebrate? The poet's fresh sight, originality. Form of the lines. Parallelisms.

Poems for interpretation:

Kenneth Patchen
(1911-1972)

An Easy Decision

I had finished my dinner
Gone for a walk
It was fine
Out and I started whistling

It wasn't long before

I met a
Man and his wife riding on
A pony with seven
Kids running along beside them
I said hello and
Pretty soon I met another
Couple
This time with nineteen
Kids and all of them
Riding on
A big smiling hippopotamus
I invited them home

1) Form of the poem
2) Is there any difference if we rewrite the text in the form of an informative letter?

Dear Mike,
I had finished my dinner. Gone for a walk. It was fine out, and I started
whistling. It wasn't long before I met a man and his wife riding on a pony, with
seven kids running along beside them. I said hello and went on. Pretty soon I met
another couple, this time with nineteen kids, and all of them riding on a big smiling
hippopotamus. I invited them home.
With best wishes,
Peter

3) Why did the author place the adverb "out" into the 4th line though grammatically and
   semantically it belongs to the 3rd line?
4) Explain the other breaks of grammar structure. E.g. I met a/Man and his wife riding
   on/A pony with seven...
5) What is the relation between the image of the people with a pony and that of other
   people with a hippopotamus?
6) Why did the speaker invite the second group of people home?
7) How is certain carelessness and colloquiality of the speaker expressed in language?
8) Loud reading of the poem

W. H. Auden
(1907-1973)

The Unknown Citizen

(To JS/07/M/378
This Marble Monument
Is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned world, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to his advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year:
When there was peace, he was for peace; when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his
generation,
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

1) Read the three-line epitaph at the beginning of the poem as carefully as you read what follows. How does the epitaph help establish the voice by which the rest of the poem is spoken?

2) Who is the speaker?

3) Try to characterize "The Unknown Citizen."

4) What is the speaker's and the poet's attitude toward the subject? By what is the poet's attitude made clear?

5) In the phrase "The Unknown Soldier" (of which "The Unknown Citizen" reminds us), what does the word unknown mean? What does it mean in the title of Auden's poem?

6) What tendencies in our civilization does Auden satirize?

7) How would you define a "Modern Man", if a phonograph, a radio, a car, and a refrigerator are "everything" a Modern Man needs?

8) Compare Patchen's and Auden's poems. What do they have in common? What is the difference in their tone?
9.

Basic elements of drama

Text: William Shakespeare – Hamlet (an extract)

10.

Drama: major genres.

Text: Arthur Miller – Incident at Vichy (an extract)

11.

Non-Fiction (Faction). Essayism.

Text:

12.

Literary criticism - I.

Text: Edgar Allan Poe – The Philosophy of Composition

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/poe/composition.html

Edgar Allan Poe

THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION

(1846)

CHARLES DICKENS, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of "Barnaby Rudge," says- "By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his 'Caleb Williams' backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done."

I cannot think this the precise mode of procedure on the part of Godwin- and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens' idea- but the author of "Caleb Williams" was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its denouement before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only
with the denouement constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention. There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis- or one is suggested by an incident of the day- or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative-designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or aurorial comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent. I prefer commencing with the consideration of an effect. Keeping originality always in view- for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest- I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect. I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone- whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone- afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect. I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would- that is to say, who could- detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say- but, perhaps, the aurorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers- poets in especial- prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy- an ecstatic intuition- and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought- at the true purposes seized only at the last moment- at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view- at the fully-matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable- at the cautious selections and rejections- at the painful erasures and interpolations- in a word, at the wheels and pinions- the tackle for scene-shifting- the step-ladders, and demon-traps- the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, constitute the properties of the literary histrio. I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner. For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions, and, since the interest of an analysis or reconstruction, such as I have considered a desideratum, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analysed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the modus operandi by which some one of my own works was put together. I select 'The Raven' as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition- that the work proceeded step by step, to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem. Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, per se, the circumstance- or say the necessity- which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste. We commence, then, with this intention. The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression- for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and
everything like totality is at once destroyed. But since, ceteris paribus, no poet can afford to
dispense with anything that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there
is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no,
at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones- that is to
say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such only insomuch
as it intensely excites, by elevating the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal
necessity, brief. For this reason, at least, one-half of the "Paradise Lost" is essentially prose- a
succession of poetical excitements interspersed, inevitably, with corresponding depressions-
the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important
artistic element, totality, or unity of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary
art- the limit of a single sitting- and that, although in certain classes of prose composition,
such as "Robinson Crusoe" (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously
overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a
poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit- in other words, to the
excitement or elevation-again, in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it
is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of
the intended effect- this, with one proviso- that a certain degree of duration is absolutely
requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not
above the popular, while not below the critical taste, I reached at once what I conceived the
proper length for my intended poem- a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a
hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I
may as well observe that throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of
rendering the work universally appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate
topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the
poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration- the point, I mean, that Beauty is the
sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real
meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure
which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure is, I believe, found in
the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely,
not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect- they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure
elevation of soul- not of intellect, or of heart- upon which I have commented, and which is
experienced in consequence of contemplating the "beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the
province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made
to spring from direct causes- that objects should be attained through means best adapted for
their attainment- no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation
alluded to is most readily attained in the poem. Now the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the
intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable to a
certain extent in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a
precision, and Passion, a homeliness (the truly passionate will comprehend me), which are
absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement or pleasurable
elevation of the soul. It by no means follows, from anything here said, that passion, or even
truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem for they may serve
in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast- but the true artist
will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and,
secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the
essence of the poem.
Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation— and all experience has shown that this tone is one of sadness. Beauty of whatever kind in its supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a keynote in the construction of the poem— some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects— or more properly points, in the theatrical sense— I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the refrain. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the refrain, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone— both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity— of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten the effect, by adhering in general to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of the application of the refrain— the refrain itself remaining for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the nature of my refrain. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied it was clear that the refrain itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence would, of course, be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best refrain.

The question now arose as to the character of the word. Having made up my mind to a refrain, the division of the poem into stanzas was of course a corollary, the refrain forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt, and these considerations inevitably led me to the long o as the most sonorous vowel in connection with r as the most producible consonant. The sound of the refrain being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had pre-determined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact it was the very first which presented itself.

The next desideratum was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I had at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the preassumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a human being— I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a non-reasoning creature capable of speech, and very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended tone. I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven, the bird of ill-omen, monotonously repeating the one word "Nevermore" at the conclusion of each stanza in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object— supremeness or perfection at all points, I asked myself— "Of all melancholy topics what, according to the universal understanding of mankind, is the most melancholy?" Death, was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length the answer here also is obvious— "When it
most closely allies itself to Beauty: the death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore." I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying at every turn the application of the word repeated, but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending, that is to say, the effect of the variation of application. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover- the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"- that I could make this first query a commonplace one, the second less so, the third still less, and so on, until at length the lover, startled from his original nonchalance by the melancholy character of the word itself, by its frequent repetition, and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it, is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character- queries whose solution he has passionately at heart- propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture- propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which reason assures him is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modelling his questions as to receive from the expected "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrows. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me, or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction, I first established in my mind the climax or concluding query- that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer- that query in reply to which this word "Nevermore" should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have had its beginning- at the end where all works of art should begin- for it was here at this point of my preconsiderations that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us- by that God we both adore,
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven- "Nevermore."

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover, and secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza, as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able in the subsequent composition to construct more vigorous stanzas I should without scruple have purposely enfeebled them so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected in versification is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere rhythm, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite,
and yet, for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an
original thing. The fact is that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no
means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be
elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its
attainment less of invention than negation.
Of course I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the "Raven." The former
is trochaic- the latter is octametre catalectic, alternating with heptametre catalectic repeated
in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrametre catalectic. Less pedantically
the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short, the
first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet, the second of seven and a half (in effect
two-thirds), the third of eight, the fourth of seven and a half, the fifth the same, the sixth three
and a half. Now, each of these lines taken individually has been employed before, and what
originality the "Raven" has, is in their combination into stanza; nothing even remotely
approaching this has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is
aided by other unusual and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the
application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.
The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven-
and the first branch of this consideration was the locale. For this the most natural suggestion
might seem to be a forest, or the fields- but it has always appeared to me that a close
circumscription of space is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident- it has the
force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the
attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.
I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber- in a chamber rendered sacred to him by
memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished- this in
mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true
poetical thesis.
The locale being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird- and the thought of
introducing him through the window was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in
the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a "tapping" at
the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire
to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark,
and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.
I made the night tempestuous, first to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and
secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.
I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble
and the plumage- it being understood that the bust was absolutely suggested by the bird- the
bust of Pallas being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and
secondly, for the sonorosity of the word, Pallas, itself.
About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view
of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic- approaching as
nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible- is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in "with
many a flirt and flutter."

Not the least obeisance made he- not a moment stopped or stayed he,
But with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out:-

Then this ebony bird, beguiling my sad fancy into smiling
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore, 
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no 
craven, 
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore— 
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore?" 
Quoth the Raven— "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly, 
Though its answer little meaning— little relevancy bore; 
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being 
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door— 
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door, 
With such name as "Nevermore."

The effect of the denouement being thus provided for, I immediately 
drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness— this 
tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, 
with the line,

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests— no longer sees anything 
even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanour. He speaks of him as a 
"grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels 
the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of 
thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar 
one on the part of the reader— to bring the mind into a proper frame 
for the denouement— which is now brought about as rapidly and as 
directly as possible.

With the denouement proper— with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final 
demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world— the poem, in its obvious phase, that of 
a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, everything is within the limits 
of the accountable— of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," 
and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence 
of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams— the chamber— 
window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved 
mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the 
bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who 
amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor's demeanour, demands of it, in jest and 
without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, 
"Nevermore"— a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, 
who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by 
the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is 
impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by 
superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the 
luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer, "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the 
extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has 
a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real. 
But in subjects so handled, however skillfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, 
there is always a certain hardness or nakedness which repels the artistical eye. Two things are
invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness—some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that richness (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term), which we are too fond of confounding with the ideal. It is the excess of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under-current of the theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind), the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem—their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The under-current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the line—

"Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"

Quoth the Raven "Nevermore!"

It will be observed that the words, "from out my heart," involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, "Nevermore," dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza that the intention of making him emblematical of Mournful and never ending Remembrance is permitted distinctly to be seen:

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon that is dreaming,
And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore.

13.

Literary criticism - II. Literary canon.

Text will be specified