

POETRY AND PROSE

APPRECIATION FOR OVERSEAS STUDENTS

L. G. Alexander

Chapter 2: How it is done?

Part 1: What Literary Appreciation Really Means

Literary appreciation is often misunderstood. Many think it is just about figuring out what a poem says, but that is only the starting point. Finding the meaning and the poet's intentions is simply the foundation. The real goal is to understand *how* the poet expresses those ideas. A poem is different from prose because it aims to give more than just information; it aims to give pleasure. This pleasure can come from the musical quality of the words, from striking images, or from the unique way ideas are put together. However, because every poem is unique, there are no hard rules. To appreciate poetry properly, one must learn to recognize the special tools poets use. These tools are called "devices," and they are divided into three categories: structural devices, sense devices, and sound devices. The most important rule is this: do not just list the devices found. One must always explain what effect each device creates and how it helps the poet achieve their purpose.

Part 2: Structural Devices – How the Poem is Built

Structural devices are the big-picture choices a poet makes to organize an entire poem. The first of these is **contrast**. This happens when a poet places two opposite images side by side. Sometimes the contrast is obvious, like in *Cargoes*, where a direct comparison is made between ancient and modern times. The last ship differs greatly from the first two, placing the grace of the quinqueme and galleon against the squalor of the "dirty British coaster." In *The Ancient Mariner*, there is contrast between the motion of the ship which was travelling so quickly that it "burst into that silent sea" and the complete lack of motion which immediately follows: "Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down." Similarly, in *Ozymandias*, the great broken statue is seen against the background of the vast and empty desert:

Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

In *Break, Break, Break* and *Lucy*, the contrast between life and death is implied rather than stated directly.

The second structural device is **illustration**. This is when a poet uses a vivid picture to make an idea clear. *Cargoes* consists of three pictures, each representing a different age. The quinquireme is "rowing home to haven," the galleon is "dipping through the tropics," while the "dirty British coaster" is "butting through the channel." These pictures show that bygone times were refined and gracious and that modern times are squalid. In *Break, Break, Break*, there are pictures of the fisherman's boy, the sailor lad, and the stately ships. By these means, the poet stresses that life goes on when someone dies or suffers. In *Ozymandias*, the picture of the broken statue illustrates the idea of the vanity of human wishes. The description gives tremendous force to the lines:

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!

The vain, proud king who thought he would be remembered forever is now nothing more than a "colossal wreck" in the desert. In *The Ancient Mariner*, each stanza except the first is meant to bring home the idea that the ship is motionless: the sails drop down, the sun stands directly above the mast, and the lines appear:

Day after day, day after day,

We stuck, nor breath nor motion.

The third structural device is **repetition**. Poets often repeat single lines or whole stanzas to emphasize a particular idea. In *The Ancient Mariner*, the repetition of the word "water" appears in these lines:

Water, water, everywhere,

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, everywhere,

Nor any drop to drink.

The poet makes the reader feel how vast the ocean is by repeating the word "water" over and over again. At the same time, this helps to understand how thirsty the sailors are. For them, water is something that is everywhere and at the same moment nowhere. In *On his Eighty-sixth Birthday*, the last words in the first lines of each stanza are repeated: "faith with me," "since have said," and "overmuch." This gives the poem a fine musical quality and points to the subject matter of each stanza. That the world has "kept faith" with him is an important idea and is given twice. This links up with the promise in the last stanza: a promise which has not been broken because the poet listened attentively to the oft-repeated warning in the second stanza.

Part 3: Sense Devices – How Meaning is Created

Sense devices are tools that poets use to create deeper meaning by comparing different things. The most important of these are **simile**, **metaphor**, and **personification**.

A **simile** is a direct comparison that can be recognized by the use of the words "like" and "as."

In *The Ancient Mariner*, the most striking example appears in these lines:

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

By relating the real ship to a painted one, the poet enables the reader to imagine just how still the ship was. The ship is seen like a ship in the middle of a painted picture, unmoving and unchanging, destined to stay in the same place forever. In *Lucy*, the girl is compared to a star:

Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

By bringing together the girl and the star, and making it the very first star of the evening, the poet helps to understand that Lucy had the sort of beauty one could easily fail to notice. In *To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence*, these lines appear:

Like a wind
That falls at eve our fancies blow.

Here, the poet has deliberately chosen a common simile, stating himself that it is three thousand years old, to convey the idea that over the course of thousands of years essentially the same conditions prevail no matter how much material progress may be made.

A **metaphor** is like a simile except the comparison is not direct but implied. The words "like" and "as" are not used. The poet does not say that one object is like another; it is said to be another. In *Lucy*, the poet does not say that the girl was like a violet. The lines are:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye.

Lucy, in these lines, is a violet. The metaphor vividly expresses the basic idea of the poem: it represents a girl of rare beauty who "lived unknown." A violet half hidden by a stone is similarly something rare and beautiful which, for most people, "lives unknown." In *The Ancient Mariner*, the line "the furrow followed free" is also a metaphor because a furrow, when taken literally, is only to be found in a ploughed field. In this context, it is used to describe the speed of the ship: it went so rapidly that it made a "furrow" in the sea. In *Ozymandias*, great meaning is compressed into the metaphor "The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed." Though on the surface the poet appears to be describing nothing more than a broken statue, he manages to combine with it a description of the character of the king who died long ago. The word "them" refers to "those

passions"; "the hand that mocked them" is therefore the sculptor's; "the heart that fed" is the king's.

Personification occurs when inanimate objects are given a human form, or when they are made to speak. There is only one instance of this device in the poems provided, and it is found in *On his Eighty-sixth Birthday*. The world "speaks" these words:

Many have loved me desperately,
Many with smooth serenity,
While some have shown contempt of me
Till they dropped underground.

By means of personification here, the poet underlines the close relationship that existed between himself and the world.

Part 4: Sound Devices – How the Poem Appeals to the Ear

Sound devices give poetry its musical quality when read aloud. These include **alliteration**, **onomatopoeia**, **rhyme**, **assonance**, and **rhythm**.

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound at frequent intervals. One of the most obvious examples from the poems provided occurs in *The Ancient Mariner*:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free.

The repeated 'b' and 'f' sounds here make the lines run quickly and give the impression of a ship travelling at high speed. Further on, the line

Day after day, day after day

with its repeated 'd' sound suggests both monotony and immobility. Another good example occurs in *Cargoes*:

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-stack

The soft 's' and hard 'k' sounds add to the verbal description of the small and dirty coaster which is butting its way across the Channel and even further stress the grace and beauty of movement of the ships that went before. In *Ozymandias*, the alliteration in "boundless and bare" and "The lone and level sands stretch far away" helps create a sense of emptiness stretching endlessly.

Onomatopoeia occurs in words which imitate sounds and thus suggest the object described, such as cuckoo, hum, buzz, swish, crash, and jangle. There are no striking instances of this device in the poems provided, but examples appear in later poems.

Rhyme usually occurs at line endings in poetry and consists of words which have the same sound. Skilful rhyming can be very effective, as seen in the stanzas from *The Ancient Mariner*. At the beginning of the poem, there are not only rhymes at the end of each line, but internal rhymes as well, that is, two rhyming words within a single line:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

So many rhymes in rapid succession quicken the pace of the poem. When the ship stops, internal rhymes are not used and the pace becomes much slower:

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

There are only two rhymes here as opposed to six in the previous stanza. Poets handle rhymes with great care. If they are used too much, a poem may be made monotonous. Monotony is avoided in *Cargoes* by using only two rhymes in each stanza: Palestine and wine, shores and moidores, days and trays.

Assonance occurs when a poet introduces imperfect rhymes, such as "wreck" and "rock," "grind" and "ground," or "speak" and "break." It is often employed deliberately to avoid the jingling sound of a too-insistent rhyme pattern. In *To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence*, "years" is made to rhyme with "messengers," "sky" with "masonry," and "wind" with "blind." In this way, the rhymes do not fall into a sing-song pattern and the lines flow easily. Examples of assonance can also be found in *Ozymandias*, *Lucy*, and the first stanza of *On his Eighty-sixth Birthday*, helping to vary the rhyme schemes used.

Rhythm is the most striking of all sound devices. Poetry has much in common with music. When a poem is read aloud, it is nearly always possible to notice that the sounds used follow a definite pattern and are meant to appeal to the ear. A poem may be reduced to a meaningless jingle if the sound does not closely match the sense. The rhythm of a poem must always help to convey the poet's intention and give some indication of mood. In the lines from *The Ancient Mariner*, the rhythm of "The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew" matches the speed of the ship. When the ship stops, the rhythm alters and the pace becomes much slower:

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion.

In *Lucy*, the last lines of the first two stanzas, "And very few to love" and "Is shining in the sky," have the same rhythm. The last line of the final stanza, "The difference to me," is, however, a foot short and is deliberately meant to jar. It is discordant and at once conveys the poet's sorrow. In *On his Eighty-sixth Birthday*, the same sound pattern is maintained throughout, and the gentle rhythm emphasizes the poet's quiet resignation to life. The repetitions echo the rhythm of the opening lines of each stanza and slow down the pace of the poem.

Chapter 3: Types

Part 1: Understanding the Main Types of Poetry

Poems can be divided into different types based on what the poet is trying to do. Some poems describe things. Some poems make you think about life. Some poems tell a story. Some poems express a feeling like a song. Some poems follow a strict fourteen-line structure. Knowing these types helps you understand what the poet wants you to feel or think. The five types covered here are Descriptive Poetry, Reflective Poetry, Narrative Poetry, The Lyric, and The Sonnet.

Part 1: Descriptive Poetry

Descriptive poetry is poetry that describes something. The poet might describe a person, an animal, a place, or an object. The goal is to create a clear picture in your mind. The poet uses words to help you see, feel, and even hear what is being described.

Example: The Dead Crab by Andrew Young

This poem describes a dead crab that the poet has found. The poet looks closely at every part of the crab and tells you what it looks like. By the end, you can picture the crab perfectly.

Line 1: "A rosy shield upon its back"

The poet starts by describing the crab's back. He calls it a "rosy shield." A shield is something a knight wears for protection. This makes you think of a knight in armour. The crab's back is hard and round like a shield.

Line 2: "That not the hardest storm could crack"

The poet says even the strongest storm could not break this shell. This tells you how tough and strong the crab's back is.

Lines 3-4: "From whose sharp edge projected out / Black pin-point eyes staring about"

The eyes come out from the edge of the shell. The poet calls them "pin-point eyes" because they are tiny and sharp. They are "staring about," which means they seem to be looking around even though the crab is dead.

Lines 5-6: "Beneath, the well-knit cote-armure / That gave to its weak belly power"

"Beneath" means underneath the crab. "Cote-armure" is an old word for coat of armour. The poet says the crab has armour on its belly too. This armour protects the weak underside and gives it power.

Lines 7-8: "The clustered legs with plated joints / That ended in stiletto points"

The legs are "clustered," meaning they are gathered together. The joints are "plated" like armour plates. At the end of each leg is a sharp point. The poet calls these points "stiletto" which is a type of dagger. So the crab's legs end in sharp points like knives.

Line 9: "The claws like mouths it held outside"

Assist.lect. Batool Abdul-Mohsin Miri/College of Education in Qurna

This is a simile. A simile uses "like" or "as" to compare two things. Here the poet says the claws are like mouths. This helps you see the claws as open and grasping, just like an open mouth.

Lines 10-12: "I cannot think this creature died / By storm or fish or sea-fowl harmed / Walking the sea so heavily armed"

The poet says he cannot believe this crab died from a storm, a fish, or a seabird. The crab was too well protected. It walked through the sea "heavily armed," meaning covered in armour.

Lines 13-14: "Or does it make for death to be / Oneself a living armoury?"

The poet ends with a question. He wonders if being so heavily armed actually causes death. An "armoury" is a place where weapons are stored. The crab itself is a "living armoury" because it carries so many weapons and armour on its body. The poet is suggesting that being so protected did not stop death from coming.

What the poet wants you to understand:

The poet wants you to see the crab in great detail. He uses words about knights and armour to make the crab seem like a warrior. Then he makes you think about the irony that even such a well-protected creature cannot escape death.

Part 2: Reflective Poetry

Reflective poetry is poetry that makes you think. The poet starts with a description or a situation, then reflects on what it means. The poet may share thoughts about life, death, love, or human nature. Some reflections are stated directly. Others are hinted at and you have to think about them.

Example: The Dead by Rupert Brooke

This poem reflects on what life is and what death takes away. The poet lists all the wonderful things about being alive. Then he describes death as something that brings peace.

Lines 1-2: "These hearts were woven of human joys and cares, / Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth"

The poet is talking about people who have died. He says their hearts were "woven" like cloth. The threads that made them were joys and cares. Sorrow washed over them like water. They were "swift to mirth," meaning they were quick to feel happiness. This tells you that life is made up of both good and bad feelings.

Lines 3-4: "The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs, / And sunset, and the colours of the earth"

As they grew older, they became kind. They experienced dawn and sunset, which means they lived through many days. They saw "the colours of the earth," meaning all the beauty the world has to offer.

Lines 5-6: "These had seen movement, and heard music; known / Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended"

The poet lists more experiences of being alive. They saw things move. They heard music. They knew sleep and waking. They loved. They had friends and were proud of those friendships.

Lines 7-8: "Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone; / Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended"

They felt wonder. They sat alone sometimes. They touched flowers, soft fur, and other people's cheeks. Then the poet says: "All this is ended." This is a short, blunt sentence. It stops the list suddenly. It tells you that death ends all these wonderful experiences.

Lines 9-10: "There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter / And lit by the rich skies, all day"

Now the poet uses a metaphor to describe life. He compares living people to waters. The winds blow on the waters and make them laugh. The skies light them up. This is a picture of life as active, joyful, and beautiful.

Lines 10-12: "And after, / Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance / And wandering loveliness"

Then death comes. The poet calls death "Frost." Frost is personified, which means it is given human qualities. With a simple gesture, Frost stops the dancing waves. The movement and loveliness are halted.

Lines 12-14: "He leaves a white / Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance, / A width, a shining peace, under the night"

Frost does not leave nothing. He leaves something beautiful. He leaves white glory, gathered radiance, and shining peace. The poet is saying that death brings its own kind of beauty. It is still and peaceful.

What the poet wants you to understand:

The poet wants you to think about life and death. Life is full of wonderful experiences: joy, sorrow, love, friendship, wonder, and simple things like touching flowers. Death takes all of that away. But death is not ugly. It brings stillness, radiance, and peace. The poet wants you to see both life and death as having their own beauty.

Part 3: Narrative Poetry

Narrative poetry tells a story. Like a short story or a novel, it has characters, events, and a plot. Narrative poems are often longer than descriptive or reflective poems because the poet needs space to tell the whole story.

Example: Lord Randal (Poet Unknown)

This poem tells a tragic story. A mother talks to her son, Lord Randal. She asks him questions. His answers slowly reveal that his sweetheart has poisoned him. The poem uses repetition to build suspense.

Lines 1-2: "O where have you been, Lord Randal, my son? / O where have you been, my handsome young man?"

The mother asks her son where he has been. She calls him "my son" and then "my handsome young man." This shows she loves him.

Lines 3-4: "I have been to the wild wood; mother, make my bed soon, / For I'm weary with hunting, and fain would lie down"

The son answers. He says he has been to the wild wood. Then he asks his mother to make his bed. He says he is tired from hunting and wants to lie down. "Fain" means willingly or gladly.

Lines 5-6: "Who gave you your dinner, Lord Randal, my son? / Who gave you your dinner, my handsome young man?"

The mother asks who gave him dinner. She is being a caring mother, making sure he ate.

Lines 7-8: "I dined with my sweetheart; mother, make my bed soon, / For I'm weary with hunting, and fain would lie down"

The son says he ate with his sweetheart. Again he asks for his bed to be made.

Lines 9-10: "What had you for dinner, Lord Randal, my son? / What had you for dinner, my handsome young man?"

The mother asks what he ate. She wants to know more about the meal.

Lines 11-12: "I had eels boiled in broth; mother, make my bed soon, / For I'm weary with hunting, and fain would lie down"

He says he had eels boiled in broth. This is unusual food. It might make you wonder if something is wrong with it.

Lines 13-14: "And where are your bloodhounds, Lord Randal, my son? / And where are your bloodhounds, my handsome young man?"

Now the mother asks about his hunting dogs. Bloodhounds are dogs used for hunting.

Lines 15-16: "O they swelled and they died; mother, make my bed soon, / For I'm weary with hunting, and fain would lie down"

The son says the dogs swelled up and died. This is a shocking detail. If the dogs ate the same food and died, then the food was poisoned.

Lines 17-18: "O I fear you are poisoned, Lord Randal, my son! / O I fear you are poisoned, my handsome young man!"

The mother realizes the truth. She cries out that she fears he is poisoned.

Lines 19-20: "O yes! I am poisoned; mother, make my bed soon, / For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain would lie down"

The son confirms it. He says yes, he is poisoned. But the last line gives a surprise. He is not just tired from hunting. He is "sick at the heart." This means his feelings are hurt. His sweetheart betrayed him. That is why he wants to lie down and die.

What the poet wants you to understand:

The poet wants to tell a story of love and betrayal. The repetition of the questions and answers builds suspense. Each time the son asks for his bed to be made, you know he is getting closer to death. The final surprise is that his heart is broken, not just his body poisoned.

Part 4: The Lyric

The Lyric is a short poem that expresses a mood or feeling. In ancient times, lyrics were sung to the music of a lyre, which was a stringed instrument like a small harp. Today, lyrics are still like songs. They focus on emotions rather than telling a story. The poet shares a feeling directly with the reader.

Example: To — by Percy Bysshe Shelley

This lyric expresses a feeling about love and memory. The poet says that beautiful things do not truly disappear. Music, scents, and rose leaves continue to exist in memory and in love. The poem creates a mood of gentle, peaceful reflection.

Lines 1-2: "Music, when soft voices die, / Vibrates in the memory"

The poet begins with music. When soft voices stop singing, the music does not truly die. It "vibrates in the memory." This means it continues to exist in your mind. You can still hear it even after it has stopped.

Lines 3-4: "Odours, when sweet violets sicken, / Live within the sense they quicken"

Now the poet talks about smells. "Odours" means smells. When sweet violets die, their smell does not truly disappear. It "lives within the sense they quicken." "Quicken" means bring to life. So the smell lives on in your sense of smell. You can still remember the scent after the flower is gone.

Lines 5-6: "Rose leaves, when the rose is dead, / Are heaped for the beloved's bed"

The poet talks about roses. When a rose dies, its leaves do not vanish. They are gathered and "heaped," meaning piled up, for the bed of a beloved person. The dried rose leaves are used to make a sweet-smelling bed.

Lines 7-8: "And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone, / Love itself shall slumber on"

Now the poet applies these ideas to love. "Thy" means your. "Thou art" means you are. So the poet is speaking to someone he loves. When that person is gone, their thoughts remain. "Love itself shall slumber on" means love will continue to exist. It will sleep, but it will not die.

What the poet wants you to understand:

The poet wants you to understand that love does not end when someone leaves. Just as music stays in memory, just as scents stay in the sense of smell, just as rose leaves are kept, so love continues after the beloved is gone. The mood is peaceful and comforting. The poem tells you that love is lasting and strong.

Part 5: The Sonnet

The sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines that follows a very strict structure. Sonnets are often difficult because the poet must pack a great deal of meaning into a small number of lines. There are three main types of sonnets: the Petrarchan, the Shakespearean, and the Miltonic. Each type has its own rhyme pattern.

The Petrarchan sonnet has an octave (first eight lines) and a sestet (last six lines). The octave usually presents a problem or a situation. The sestet offers a solution or a comment. The rhyme pattern for the octave is a-b-b-a-a-b-b-a. The sestet can use two or three rhymes, such as c-d-e-c-d-e or c-d-c-d-c-d.

The Shakespearean sonnet is divided into three quatrains (four-line stanzas) and a final couplet (two-line stanza). The rhyme pattern is a-b-a-b-c-d-c-d-e-f-e-f-g-g. The couplet at the end usually offers a conclusion or a surprise.

The Miltonic sonnet has the same rhyme pattern as the Petrarchan sonnet, but there is no break in thought between the octave and sestet. The poem flows continuously from start to finish.

Example: On His Blindness by John Milton (Miltonic Sonnet)

This sonnet reflects on the poet's blindness. Milton went blind in middle age. He worries that he cannot serve God because he cannot see to write. The sonnet works through this worry and finds peace in the idea that waiting is also a form of service.

Lines 1-2: "When I consider how my light is spent, / Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide"

The poet begins by thinking about his blindness. "My light" is a metaphor for his sight. His light has been "spent," meaning used up. "Ere" means before. He has lost his sight before he has lived half his life. He lives in a "dark world and wide," meaning the world is dark to him because he cannot see.

Lines 3-4: "And that one Talent which is death to hide / Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent"

This refers to a story from the Bible. In the story, a master gives his servants money called talents. One servant hides his talent instead of using it, and the master is angry. Here, "Talent" is a metaphor for the poet's ability to write and serve God. The poet feels this talent is "lodg'd" or placed with him, but it is "useless" because he cannot see. His soul is "bent," meaning inclined or eager, to serve.

Lines 5-6: "To serve therewith my Maker, and present / My true account, lest he returning chide"

"Maker" means God. The poet wants to serve God with his talent. He wants to present his "true account," meaning show what he has done with his talent. He fears that when God returns, God will "chide," meaning scold or rebuke him.

Lines 7-8: "Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd, / I fondly ask; But Patience, to prevent"

The poet asks a question. "Exact" means demand. Does God demand day-labour from someone who has been denied light? "Fondly" means foolishly. The poet realizes he is asking this question foolishly. Then Patience steps in. "Patience" is personified, meaning it is given human qualities. Patience comes to "prevent" or stop the poet's foolish question.

Lines 9-11: "That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need / Either man's work or his own gifts, who best / Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best"

Patience replies to the poet's murmur of complaint. God does not need man's work. God does not need the gifts He has given to men. "Who best bear his mild yoke" means those who best accept and carry his gentle burden. Those people serve God best.

Lines 11-13: "his State / Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed / And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest"

God's "State" means his kingdom or condition. His state is kingly, meaning he is a king. Thousands of servants "speed" and "post" at his command. They travel over land and ocean without rest. This describes those who actively serve God.

Line 14: "They also serve who only stand and wait"

The final line gives the answer to the poet's worry. Those who cannot actively serve also serve. Those who "only stand and wait" are serving God too. This brings peace to the poet. He realizes that even though he is blind and cannot write, he is still serving God by patiently waiting.

What the poet wants you to understand:

The poet wants you to understand that service to God is not only about doing things. Sometimes, waiting patiently is also a form of service. The poet worries that his blindness makes him useless. But through the personification of Patience, he learns that God does not need human work. Those who bear God's mild yoke and wait are serving just as much as those who travel over land and ocean.

Chapter 4: Literary appreciation

No.	Poem Title and Poet	Appreciation
1	Sea-Fever by John Masefield	What it is about: This poem expresses a deep, uncontrollable longing to go to sea. The speaker repeats "I must down to the seas again" three times, showing this is a powerful need. He describes what he wants: a tall ship, a star to steer by, the wind, the spray, and the company of other sailors. How it is achieved: The poet uses repetition to emphasize the longing. The phrase appears at the start of each stanza, creating a rhythm like waves. Vivid imagery like "grey mist on the sea's face" and "flung spray and the blown spume" makes you feel the sea. Devices used: Personification appears in "the call of the running tide" which "may not be denied." Alliteration in "wind's song" and "white sails shaking" adds musical quality. The metaphor "the wind's like a whetted knife" compares the wind to a sharp blade. Poet's intention: Masefield wants to express the powerful attraction of the sea, celebrating the sailor's life with its freedom and hardships.
2	The Happy Man by Alexander Pope	What it is about: This poem describes the ideal life of a contented man who lives on a small piece of family land, grows his own food, and wants nothing more. He enjoys health, peace of mind, sound sleep, and simple pleasures. The speaker wants to live unnoticed and die without anyone making a fuss. How it is achieved: The poet uses pictures to show this happy life. "Herds with milk" and "fields with bread" show he has food. "Flocks supply him with attire" means sheep give wool for clothing. Trees give "shade" in summer and "fire" in winter. Devices used: Contrast appears between the simple life and the busy world. The metaphor "steal from the world" compares death to quietly slipping away. "Not a stone / Tell where I lie" means he wants no grand tombstone. Poet's intention: Pope wants to praise the simple, contented life, showing happiness comes not from wealth but from having enough and wanting nothing more.
3	I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud by William Wordsworth	What it is about: The speaker sees a field of daffodils beside a lake. At the time, he did not realize how important this sight would become. Later, when alone and sad, the memory returns and fills his heart with pleasure. How it is achieved: Similes

		help picture the daffodils. The speaker is "lonely as a cloud." The daffodils are "continuous as the stars that shine / And twinkle on the milky way," showing how many there were. Devices used: Personification gives the daffodils human qualities: they are "fluttering and dancing," "tossing their heads," full of "glee." The metaphor "that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude" describes memory and imagination. Poet's intention: Wordsworth wants to show how nature brings lasting happiness. The memory of the daffodils provides comfort during sad times, celebrating the power of memory and the connection between human emotion and nature.
4	To Daffodils by Robert Herrick	What it is about: The speaker addresses fading daffodils, asking them to stay longer. He reflects that human life is just as short. Like the daffodils, people have a brief spring, grow quickly, and decay fast. Life is compared to summer rain and morning dew, things that vanish quickly. How it is achieved: Direct address speaks to the daffodils as if they can hear. "Fair daffodils, we weep to see / You haste away so soon" shows sorrow at their short life. Repetition of "Stay, stay" emphasizes the wish for them to linger. Devices used: Personification addresses the daffodils directly. Similes compare human life to "Summer's rain" and "pearls of morning's dew." Repetition of "drop, drop, drop, drop" imitates falling rain or dew, suggesting passing time. Poet's intention: Herrick wants to remind readers that life is short, encouraging appreciation of beauty while it lasts. The tone is gentle and sad, accepting mortality.
5	Meeting at Night by Robert Browning	What it is about: This poem describes a journey by sea and land to meet a lover. The speaker travels at night, crossing the sea, landing on a beach, walking across fields until he reaches a farm, where he taps on a window. A match is struck, and a voice speaks. The poem ends with two hearts beating together. How it is achieved: Sensory details make the journey feel real. The reader sees "the grey sea and the long black land" and "the yellow half-moon large and low." The reader hears "the startled little waves that leap" and feels the boat push into "the slushy sand." Devices used: Personification appears in "the startled little waves that leap." The metaphor "quench its speed" compares stopping the

		boat to putting out a fire. The final lines contrast the voice being "less loud" than the two hearts beating. Poet's intention: Browning wants to capture the excitement and secrecy of a lover's journey, celebrating the joy of love and the lengths people go to be together.
6	Uphill by Christina Rossetti	What it is about: This is a dialogue where one speaker asks questions about a journey and the other answers. The journey is uphill all the way, taking the whole day. There is a resting place at the end, an inn that cannot be missed. Other travellers who have gone before will be there. Comfort and beds await all who reach the end. How it is achieved: The question-and-answer format creates a rhythm like a conversation. Each stanza begins with a question and ends with an answer. The answers are reassuring: there is a resting place, you cannot miss it, others have gone before, and beds are waiting. Devices used: The entire poem is an extended metaphor. The uphill road represents the difficulties of life. The "resting-place" and "inn" represent death or heaven. "Wayfarers" are people who have died. "Beds for all who come" suggests everyone finds rest. Poet's intention: Rossetti wants to offer comfort about death, suggesting life is hard but there is rest at the end, and there is a place prepared for everyone.
7	Each and All by Ralph Waldo Emerson	What it is about: This poem expresses that everything in the world sings. Wherever the speaker goes, he hears "sky-born music" from old things and young things, from fair things and foul things. The song is not only in roses and rainbows but also in the "darkest, meanest things" and "the mud and scum of things." How it is achieved: Repetition emphasizes the song is everywhere. He lists beautiful things: the rose, the bird, the rainbow, the woman's song, the stars, the flowers, the redbreast. Then he contrasts them with "the darkest, meanest things" and "the mud and scum of things." Devices used: "Alway, alway something sings" is repeated twice, emphasizing constant presence. "Sky-born music" is a metaphor suggesting the song comes from a higher source. "Peals out" compares the song to bells ringing joyfully. Poet's intention: Emerson wants to show

		beauty and meaning exist in everything, encouraging readers to find wonder in all things, not only those traditionally beautiful.
8	Upon Westminster Bridge by William Wordsworth	What it is about: This sonnet describes the view of London from Westminster Bridge early in the morning. The speaker says the earth has nothing more beautiful. The city wears the morning like a garment. Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie open to the fields and sky, all glittering in smokeless air. The river glides freely, and the houses seem asleep. How it is achieved: The sonnet form captures the scene. The octave describes the city's beauty, and the sestet reflects on the calm. The metaphor compares the morning light to clothing the city wears. The city is "silent, bare," without usual noise and smoke. Devices used: Personification appears throughout. The city wears the morning like a garment. The river "glideth at his own sweet will." The houses "seem asleep," and the city has "that mighty heart" lying still. Poet's intention: Wordsworth wants to show even a busy city can be beautiful. The poem celebrates the peace of early morning before the city wakes, showing nature and human creation can exist in harmony.
9	Slow, Slow, Fresh Fount by Ben Jonson	What it is about: This is a song of grief. The speaker addresses a fountain, asking it to flow slowly in time with his tears. He tells herbs and flowers to droop and grief to fall like showers. He says beauty does not belong to us. He compares himself to melting snow, slowly dropping away. The final line says "nature's pride" is now a withered daffodil. How it is achieved: Repetition creates a slow, mournful rhythm. "Slow, slow" sets the pace. Repetition of "drop, drop, drop, drop" imitates tears falling. The speaker commands nature to match his sorrow. Devices used: Personification addresses the fountain and tells it to "keep time with my salt tears." Woe "weeps out her division." The simile "Like melting snow upon some craggy hill" compares fading life to melting snow. The metaphor "nature's pride is, now, a wither'd daffodil" shows beautiful things eventually fade. Poet's intention: Jonson wants to express deep sorrow and that beauty and life are temporary. The slow rhythm creates sadness and resignation.

10	The Tyger by William Blake	What it is about: This poem asks questions about the tiger and its creator. The speaker wonders what kind of being could create such a powerful, terrifying creature. He asks where the tiger was made, what tools were used, and who dared to make it. The final question asks whether the same God who made the gentle lamb also made the fierce tiger. How it is achieved: A series of questions builds mystery and awe. Each stanza asks a new question about the tiger's creation. The questions are not answered, making the tiger seem more mysterious. Repetition of "Tiger! Tiger! burning bright" frames the poem. Devices used: The metaphor "burning bright" compares the tiger's stripes to flames. Imagery of blacksmithing includes "hammer," "chain," "furnace," "anvil," comparing creation to forging metal. Contrast between the tiger and the lamb highlights the difference between fierce and gentle creation. Poet's intention: Blake wants readers to think about the nature of creation, wondering how the same God could create both the gentle lamb and the terrifying tiger.
11	Death, Be Not Proud by John Donne	What it is about: The speaker tells Death not to be proud, even though some call it mighty and dreadful. He argues Death does not actually kill because those who die live on. He compares Death to sleep and rest, which are pleasurable, so Death should be more pleasurable. He concludes that after a short sleep, we wake eternally, and Death itself will die. How it is achieved: Direct address speaks to Death as if it is a person, challenging its power and mocking its pride. The sonnet form gives a formal structure. The argument builds logically: if sleep is pleasant, Death should be more pleasant; good men die young to find rest; Death is a slave to fate; Death will be destroyed. Devices used: Personification treats Death as a person who can be proud. "Rest and Sleep, which but thy pictures be" is a metaphor comparing sleep to images of Death. The paradox "Death, thou shalt die" states Death itself will be defeated. Poet's intention: Donne wants to conquer the fear of death, arguing from a Christian perspective that death is not the end and will itself be destroyed.
12	The Listeners by Walter de la Mare	What it is about: A Traveller comes to a lonely house at night. He knocks and calls out, asking if anyone is there. No one

		answers, but the house is full of phantom listeners standing in the moonlight. The Traveller finally calls out that he came and kept his word, but no one answered. He rides away, and silence returns. How it is achieved: Mysterious, eerie atmosphere is created through setting and imagery. The moonlit door, the forest, the turret, and the leaf-fringed sill contribute to a sense of an abandoned, haunted place. Repetition of "Is there anybody there?" emphasizes loneliness. Devices used: Personification describes silence as "surged softly backward" after the Traveller leaves, giving silence physical presence. Contrast between the living Traveller and phantom listeners creates tension. Repetition of sounds adds musical quality. Poet's intention: De la Mare wants to create mystery and the supernatural, exploring the boundary between the living and the dead. Many questions are left unanswered, which is the poem's power.
13	Tree at My Window by Robert Frost	What it is about: The speaker addresses a tree outside his window. He never draws the curtain between them. The tree has a "vague dream-head" and is "diffuse" like a cloud. He has seen the tree taken and tossed by wind, and imagines the tree has seen him similarly troubled. The poem ends with reference to fate and the difference between outer weather and inner weather. How it is achieved: Direct address speaks to the tree as if it is a companion. "My sash is lowered when night comes on" suggests he closes the window but keeps the curtain open. The tree's "light tongues talking aloud" refers to leaves rustling. Devices used: Personification gives the tree human qualities: it has a "dream-head" and "light tongues." The parallel between the tree being "taken and tossed" and the speaker being "taken and swept" shows they share struggles. Contrast between "outer" weather and "inner" weather shows difference between physical and emotional storms. Poet's intention: Frost wants to explore the connection between humans and nature, showing we can find understanding and kinship in the natural world.
14	Look, Stranger, at this Island Now by W. H. Auden	What it is about: The speaker invites a stranger to look at an island, describing the leaping light, the sound of the sea, the chalk cliffs, the tide, the shingle, the gulls, and the ships. The view can enter memory like clouds passing over a harbour mirror. How it

		is achieved: Direct address commands the stranger: "Look," "Stand stable here," "And silent be." Vivid pictures show the coastline: "chalk wall falls to the foam" and "tall ledges oppose the pluck / And knock of the tide." Devices used: Personification gives the tide "pluck" and "knock." The shingle "scrambles" like a creature. Ships "diverge on urgent voluntary errands." The metaphor of the harbour as a "mirror" reflects clouds. Alliteration in "swaying sound of the sea" and "sucking surf" adds musical quality. Poet's intention: Auden wants the reader to experience the island fully through sight and sound, inviting pause and appreciation of the natural world.
15	Heaven-Haven by Gerard Manley Hopkins	What it is about: A nun taking the veil says she has desired to go where springs never fail, where there is no sharp hail, and where lilies bloom. She wants to be where no storms come, where the sea is calm and still, and where she is "out of the swing of the sea." This represents leaving the world for religious life. How it is achieved: Simple, clear language expresses the nun's desire for peace. The first stanza describes what she wants: "springs not fail," "fields where flies no sharp and sided hail," "a few lilies blow." The second stanza continues: "no storms come," "the green swell is in the havens dumb." Devices used: The metaphor "out of the swing of the sea" is central. The sea represents the world with its motion, danger, and change. "Green swell" in "havens dumb" means calm sea. "Sharp and sided hail" represents harshness. Lilies symbolize purity and peace. Poet's intention: Hopkins wants to express the nun's longing for peace and safety in religious life, capturing the desire to leave the world's struggles behind.
16	The Wind Began to Rock the Grass by Emily Dickinson	What it is about: This poem describes a violent storm approaching. Wind rocks the grass, leaves are torn from trees, dust scoops itself up, wagons hurry, thunder rolls, lightning flashes, birds return to nests, cattle flee to barns. One giant drop of rain falls, then waters break open the sky. The storm destroys everything except the speaker's father's house, though it damages a tree. How it is achieved: Vivid, active verbs make the storm feel alive. The wind "rocked" the grass and "threw a menace." Leaves "unbooked themselves" and "started all abroad." Dust

		"did scoop itself like hands." Each element of the storm has energy and purpose. Devices used: Personification appears throughout. The wind "threw a menace," thunder "hurried slow," lightning showed a "yellow beak" and "livid claw." The simile "the dust did scoop itself like hands" gives dust human movement. The metaphor "the waters wrecked the sky" shows the storm destroying the heavens. Poet's intention: Dickinson wants to capture the power and drama of a storm, showing both its terror and magnificence, while the house being spared suggests protection and safety.
17	The Meteor by Walter de la Mare	What it is about: The speaker sees a meteor fall on a calm evening. It is a "gliding spark" that burns into dust and vanishes in a meadow. He wonders if it is a sign of coming lightnings. He reflects that common things like daisies, pebbles, moss, and dew are just as beautiful if we take time to look at them. We should not wait for rare signs to appreciate beauty. How it is achieved: Contrast between the rare meteor and common natural things. The meteor is "blanched as snow," "burned into dust," and "glowed within the crystalline / Pure heavens." But common things like "the petalled daisy, a honey bell, / A pebble, a branch of moss, a gem / Of dew, or fallen rain" are equally lovely. Devices used: Similes include "blanched as snow." Personification appears in "the petalled daisy, a honey bell." Contrast between the rare meteor and common things shows beauty is everywhere. The final lines criticize those who are "blind" to ordinary beauty. Poet's intention: De la Mare wants to show beauty is found in both rare and common things, encouraging attention to the ordinary world rather than waiting for spectacular events.
18	Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds by William Shakespeare	What it is about: This sonnet defines true love as unchanging. True love does not change when circumstances change. It is like a fixed mark guiding ships through storms, like a star that never changes. Love is not Time's fool and does not fade with age. It lasts until the end of time. How it is achieved: Metaphors describe love's unchanging nature. The first quatrain states what love is not. The second quatrain describes what love is. The third quatrain shows love's power over time. The couplet confidently

		asserts the poem's truth. Devices used: Metaphors are central. Love is an "ever-fixed mark," a lighthouse that "looks on tempests and is never shaken." Love is "the star to every wandering bark," a guiding star. Personification describes Time with a "bending sickle." The final couplet uses hyperbole: if this is wrong, then he never wrote and no one ever loved. Poet's intention: Shakespeare wants to define true love as unchanging and eternal, celebrating that real love lasts forever regardless of time or circumstances.
19	O What Is That Sound by W. H. Auden	What it is about: This is a dialogue where one speaker asks urgent questions as soldiers approach. The answers are calm at first: just soldiers, just the sun on weapons, just manoeuvres. But as soldiers come closer, answers become evasive. The final stanzas reveal the soldiers are coming for the person being addressed. The one answering says "I must be leaving" despite earlier vows of love. How it is achieved: Question-and-answer format builds suspense. Each stanza repeats the pattern. Repetition of words like "drumming, drumming," "brightly, brightly," and "wheeling, wheeling" creates rhythmic urgency. Answers become less reassuring as the poem progresses. Devices used: Repetition creates tension, mimicking drumming and heartbeats. Dialogue format shows the relationship between speakers. The final revelation is a surprise. The promise "I promised to love you, dear, / But I must be leaving" shows love cannot protect against larger forces. Poet's intention: Auden wants to show the approach of danger and the failure of love to protect against it, representing war, political persecution, or any force that separates people.
20	The Wild Swans at Coole by W. B. Yeats	What it is about: The speaker watches fifty-nine swans on a lake in autumn. He remembers that nineteen years ago, he first counted them here. Now his heart is sore because everything has changed. The swans, however, have not changed. They still paddle together, climb the air, and have not grown old. He wonders where the swans will build when he wakes one day to find they have flown away. How it is achieved: Contrast between the unchanging swans and the aging speaker. Autumn setting with "October twilight" and "still sky" creates a mood of

		quiet and passing time. The speaker's heart is "sore" because he has changed while the swans remain the same. Swans are "brilliant creatures," "unwearied," with hearts that "have not grown old." Devices used: Contrast is central. The speaker has aged over nineteen years, but the swans are still "lover by lover." The metaphor "the bell-beat of their wings" compares wing sounds to bells. "Their hearts have not grown old" personifies the swans. The final question shows fear of loss and change. Poet's intention: Yeats wants to express the sadness of aging and that youth and beauty are fleeting. The swans represent something eternal while the speaker represents human mortality, reflecting on time passing and the fear of losing what we love.
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Part 2 Prose / chapters 5,6,7,8

Prose is any writing that is not poetry. Unlike poetry, prose does not have rhyme or metre. This means the writer can express ideas more directly, and meaning always comes first. Prose can be divided into three main types: Narrative Prose, Descriptive Prose, and Argumentative Prose. Each type has a different purpose and requires a different approach to appreciation.

The table below summarizes the three types of prose:

Type	Purpose	What to Look For
Narrative	To tell a story	Sequence of events, characters, plot, action
Descriptive	To create a picture	Vivid details, atmosphere, sensory language, mood
Argumentative	To present ideas	Logical structure, evidence, persuasion, reasoning

Part 1: Narrative Prose

Narrative prose tells a story. Like a short story or a novel, it has characters, events, and a plot. When reading narrative prose, you should pay close attention to what happens, why it happens, and how the writer builds the story. The writer's main goal is to keep the reader interested in what happens next.

How to Read Narrative Prose

Before you can appreciate a narrative passage, you must understand what it is about. Follow these three rules:

1. **Read the passage carefully** so that you really understand it. Do not worry about a few difficult words.
2. **Pay close attention to the sequence of events** described or to the stages which lead up to the main event.
3. **See if the writer gives reasons** why the event or events described occurred.

Finding the Meaning

When you have read a narrative passage, you should be able to write:

Element	What It Means	How to Do It
General Meaning	A single sentence outlining the main event	Base this on a reading of the whole passage
Detailed Meaning	The main stages of the story in your own words	Divide the passage into its main stages and give a brief account of each
Intention	What the writer wants you to understand	Look for deeper meaning about human behaviour or society

Devices Used in Narrative Prose

The table below explains the main devices used in narrative prose:

Device	Type	Explanation	How to Analyse It
Unity	Structural	Everything in the story contributes to the main event	Show how each event leads to the final outcome
Contrast	Structural	Opposite pictures or situations placed side by side	Two situations run parallel until they meet at the climax
Description	Structural	Details that set the scene and influence events	Never description for its own sake; it adds to the story
Dialogue	Structural	Characters speaking, which brings them to life	Observe how tone varies between different characters
Style	Sense	The writer's unique way of handling language	Notice pace, rhythm, and how style suits the subject
Use of Words	Sense	Carefully chosen words that add colour	Look for vivid, precise, or unexpected words
Metaphor	Sense	Saying one thing is another to create meaning	Find where one thing is described as something else
Simile	Sense	Comparing two things using "like" or "as"	Look for direct comparisons that create vivid images

Example : The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway

This passage describes how an old man kills an enormous fish. The writer wants to show the struggle between man and nature and the respect the old man has for his prey.

The Passage (for reference):

The old man dropped the line and put his foot on it and lifted the harpoon as high as he could and drove it down with all his strength, and more strength he had just summoned, into the fish's side just behind the great chest fin that rose high in the air to the altitude of the man's chest. He felt the iron go in and he leaned on it and drove it further and then pushed all his weight after it.

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty. He seemed to hang in the air above the old man in the skiff. Then he fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all of the skiff.

The old man felt faint and sick and he could not see well. But he cleared the harpoon line and let it run slowly through his raw hands and, when he could see, he saw the fish was on his back with his silver belly up. The shaft of the harpoon was projecting at an angle from the fish's shoulder and the sea was discolouring with the red of the blood from his heart. First it was dark as a shoal

in the blue water that was more than a mile deep. Then it spread like a cloud. The fish was silvery and still and floated with the waves.

The old man looked carefully in the glimpse of vision that he had. Then he took two turns of the harpoon line around the bitt in the bow and laid his head on his hands.

'Keep my head clear,' he said against the wood of the bow. 'I am a tired old man. But I have killed this fish which is my brother and now I must do the slave work.'

General Meaning: Ernest Hemingway describes how an old man killed an enormous fish.

Detailed Meaning: The sequence of events can be divided into five stages:

Stage	What Happens
1	The old man drives his harpoon into the fish's side with all his strength
2	The fish leaps out of the water and crashes down, covering the man with spray
3	The old man feels faint but lets out the harpoon line through his raw hands
4	He sees the fish lying dead with its blood discolouring the blue water
5	He rests and thinks about the fish he has killed, calling it his brother

Intention:

This is the story of a struggle that brings out a man's finest qualities. The man speaks of himself as being a "tired old man," yet at a critical moment, he has been able to summon all his strength and ingenuity to kill a creature many times bigger and more powerful than he is. The old man does not gloat over his victory. If anything, he is sad: he regards the fish as his equal and refers to it as his "brother."

Structural Devices:

Device	How It Appears	Effect
Unity	The events follow in logical succession. The climax is reached when the fish leaps into the air and crashes down beside the skiff. The old man only realizes the fish is dead when he sees the harpoon sticking in its side.	Everything leads naturally to the final moment when the old man rests and thinks about his accomplishment.
Contrast	There are two opposites: the "tired old man" on one hand and the fish with "his great length and width and all his power and beauty" on the other.	The contrast shows how the old man overcomes a much more powerful creature through skill and determination. Yet despite killing it, he still calls it his brother, showing his respect.
Description	The description of the dead fish with its blood discolouring the water enables the old man to see how great and splendid the creature is.	This description leads him to think about the fish and feel a sense of kinship with it.

Sense Devices:

Device	How It Appears	Effect
Style	The style is extremely simple. The description of the action is detailed and exact. The prose has a distinct rhythm of its own. Nothing is hurried.	The slow pace allows the reader to follow each stage of the narrative in detail. The events occur in slow motion so the reader can absorb every moment.
Use of Words	The repeated word "and" in the line "Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width, and all his power and his beauty" isolates each quality.	This makes the fish appear truly magnificent. Each quality is given its own space, emphasizing how impressive the creature is.
Metaphor and Simile	The fish's blood spreads "like a shoal" and then "like a cloud."	These comparisons create vivid images that stress the calm that follows the battle and the fish's great size.

Part 2: Descriptive Prose

Descriptive prose aims to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind. The writer describes scenes, objects, people, or feelings in such a way that the reader can imagine them clearly. In good descriptive writing, the author builds up a picture in words much like an artist paints a portrait. There is no story to follow; instead, the writer focuses on creating a mood or atmosphere.

How to Read Descriptive Prose

When reading descriptive prose, follow these rules:

1. **Read the passage carefully** so that you really understand it. Do not worry about a few difficult words.
2. **Test your reading** by asking yourself whether you have formed a definite picture in your mind.
3. **Try to find the central idea** that lies behind the object, person, or scene described.

Finding the Meaning

When you have read a descriptive passage, you should be able to write:

Element	What It Means	How to Do It
General Meaning	The main object or scene being described	Note what the writer is focusing on
Detailed Meaning	The main characteristics in your own words	Divide the passage into groups where the writer deals with new aspects

Intention	The central idea or atmosphere the writer creates	Find what unifies all the details
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Devices Used in Descriptive Prose

The table below explains the main devices used in descriptive prose:

Device	Type	Explanation	How to Analyse It
Unity	Structural	Everything contributes to the central idea	Show how each detail relates to the main purpose
Contrast	Structural	Opposite images add interest and colour	Find where the writer compares one thing to another
Association	Structural	One image leads to another related image	Trace how the writer moves from one image to the next
Style	Sense	The writer's unique way of creating atmosphere	Notice whether you are an observer or a participant
Use of Words	Sense	Carefully chosen words that make description vivid	Look for adjectives, verbs, and unexpected phrases
Metaphor	Sense	Saying one thing is another to create a picture	Find where one thing is described as something else
Simile	Sense	Comparing two things using "like" or "as"	Look for direct comparisons that create vivid images

Example 1: South Wind by Norman Douglas

This passage describes an island seen from a distance on a misty morning. The central idea is that the outline of the island is very vague and mysterious.

The Passage (for reference):

Viewed from the clammy deck on this bright morning, the island of Nepenthe resembled a cloud. It was a silvery speck upon the limitless expanse of blue sea and sky. A south wind breathed over the Mediterranean waters, drawing up their moisture which lay couched in thick mists about its flanks and uplands. The comely outlines were barely suggested through a veil of fog. An air of irreality hung about the place. Could this be an island? A veritable island of rocks and vineyards and houses—this pallid apparition? It looked like some snowy sea-bird resting upon the waves; a sea-bird or a cloud; one of those lonely clouds that stray from their fellows and drift about in wayward fashion at the bidding of every breeze.

General Meaning: This is a description of an island seen from a distance on a misty morning.

Detailed Meaning: The description can be divided into three stages:

Stage	What Is Described
1	The island looks like a cloud from the deck of a boat; it appears as a silvery speck against the blue sea and sky
2	Mist covers its sides and higher ground, so its shape is barely visible through a veil of fog
3	The place seems unreal—more like an apparition, a seabird, or a drifting cloud than an actual island

Intention:

The central idea is that the island is vague and mysterious. The writer wants to create an atmosphere of unreality and distance. The island is so indistinct that the viewer questions whether it is real at all.

Structural Devices:

Device	How It Appears	Effect
Unity	Everything contributes to the central purpose. The island is compared to a cloud, a bird, and an apparition. The description of the fog adds to the vagueness. The opening and final sentences are linked: in both, the island is compared to a cloud.	Not a single word is irrelevant. The whole passage works together to create the impression of an indistinct, mysterious place.
Association	The island itself is not really described. It is so vague that it suggests a cloud. The cloud suggests an apparition. The apparition suggests a seabird. Then the writer returns to the image of the cloud.	This oblique method of description emphasizes the hazy, indistinct character of the island. Each image leads naturally to the next.
Contrast	The word "clammy" describing the hot, sticky deck contrasts with the unearthly "silvery speck" in the distance.	The contrast between the near and the far, the physical and the ethereal, heightens the sense of mystery.

Sense Devices:

Device	How It Appears	Effect
Style	The writer deliberately sets out to confuse the reader. Is it an island? A cloud? A bird? An apparition?	The impression after reading is vague—the island is as remote as ever, as it is meant to be. The reader shares the uncertainty of the viewer.
Use of Words	Words like "clammy," "silvery speck," "couched," "veil of fog," "irreality," and "pallid apparition" are carefully chosen.	Each word adds to the atmosphere of mystery and unreality. "Clammy" makes

		the deck feel sticky and uncomfortable, contrasting with the cool, distant island.
Metaphor and Simile	The island "resembled a cloud" (simile). It is called a "pallid apparition" (metaphor). It "looked like some snowy sea-bird" (simile). It is like "one of those lonely clouds" (simile).	Each comparison adds another layer to the description. The island becomes less like a real place and more like a dream or a ghost.

Part 3: Argumentative Prose

Argumentative prose deals with ideas and facts. The writer presents a problem, builds an argument logically, and often draws conclusions. This type of prose requires the most effort to read because it requires thinking, not just visualizing. Writers of argument use devices consciously to keep the reader alert and attentive and to make difficult ideas easy to grasp.

How to Read Argumentative Prose

When reading argumentative prose, follow these rules:

1. **Read the passage as many times** as necessary to understand it fully.
2. **Make sure you have a clear idea** of what the writer is arguing about.
3. **Notice how everything the writer says** contributes to the main argument.

Finding the Meaning

When you have read an argumentative passage, you should be able to write:

Element	What It Means	How to Do It
General Meaning	Often found in the opening sentence or paragraph	Look for the topic sentence that states the main idea
Detailed Meaning	The main stages of the argument in your own words	Divide the passage into its main stages and recount the important points
Intention	What the writer wants you to think or do	Decide if the writer is explaining, persuading, or giving a personal view

Devices Used in Argumentative Prose

The table below explains the main devices used in argumentative prose:

Device	Type	Explanation	How to Analyse It
Unity and Balance	Structural	Each sentence adds to the main idea; the argument is well-proportioned	Notice the pattern: Statement, Development, Conclusion
Contrast	Structural	Opposite ideas placed together to clarify the main point	Find where the writer sets one idea against another

Illustration	Structural	Examples from everyday life to make abstract ideas concrete	Look for anecdotes, descriptions, or facts that clarify the argument
Style	Sense	Simple, direct expression of complicated ideas	Observe whether the writing is clear and straightforward
Use of Words	Sense	Striking expressions that arrest attention	Look for vivid phrases, rhetorical questions, and precise terms
Metaphor and Simile	Sense	Comparisons that help convey meaning	Find where the writer compares an abstract idea to something concrete

Example : The Future of the Writer by J. B. Priestley

This passage argues that an author's position in society is not what it used to be. The writer blames society, not authors, for this change.

The Passage (for reference):

The status of the author is not what it was. Society, as people say, takes a dimmer view of him than it used to do. Possibly authors themselves are not what they were. It is an argument easy to use, and we often meet it. But it misses the point, even if we are now nothing but so many scribbling midgets. If there arose among us a young novelist who was a greater genius than the Dickens of the Early Victorian period, he could never triumphantly capture the country as Dickens did. He would face too much competition, not merely from other books but from TV, radio, films; there would not be sufficient attention and excitement to spare to afford him his triumph; the public of today would not co-operate as the Victorians did. (In passing, let me add that it has long been my view that a deep-seated and passionate public need has an immediate effect upon any form of art. This explains the astonishing development of Elizabethan drama, the 19th-century novel, and even the silent film, which between 1910-1925 made amazing progress.) We can bring this nearer home. The public now would not co-operate as it was doing even in the 'twenties and early 'thirties. At the present time it does not want to create this particular sort of reputation, with the result that no such reputations are made. During the last ten years the flood of new books has been in full spate, but where among the new writers are those whose names are now household words? We have our post-war public figures, but how many of them are authors?

General Meaning: The status of the author is not what it was because society has changed.

Detailed Meaning: The argument can be divided into five stages:

Stage	What the Writer Argues
1	The writer dismisses the argument that authors themselves are to blame for their lower status
2	A great novelist writing today would have less success than Dickens had because books must compete with TV, radio, and films
3	The popularity of an art form in any age helps its development (this is an aside)
4	The modern public does not want to create literary reputations, so no such reputations are made
5	Even though many books are published today, few authors have become household names

Intention:

The writer wants to persuade the reader that society, not authors, is responsible for the changed status of writers. He gives his personal view and supports it with evidence. He is not simply describing a problem; he is arguing for a particular interpretation of it.

Structural Devices:

Device	How It Appears	Effect
Unity and Balance	Everything after the initial statement serves to prove it. The writer begins by dismissing the other side of the case, then shows how society has brought about the change. The aside about public need supports his argument.	The argument is tightly constructed. Each sentence adds something new to the main idea. The conclusion that few authors are household names follows logically from the preceding points.
Contrast	The writer contrasts the present with the past to show how society has changed. He contrasts Dickens' time with today, and the Victorian public with the modern public.	The contrast makes the change clear. The reader understands that even a genius like Dickens would fail today because conditions are different.
Illustration	The writer imagines a novelist of "greater genius" than Dickens writing today and considers what would happen.	This illustration enforces his main argument. It makes the abstract idea concrete and easier to understand.

Sense Devices:

Device	How It Appears	Effect
Style	The writing is simple and direct. The argument moves at a steady pace, and each idea is clearly expressed.	The reader can follow the argument without difficulty. The style does not get in the way of the meaning.
Use of Words	The phrase "scribbling midgets" is striking and arrests attention. The rhetorical question at the end—"how many of them are authors?"—is effective because of the argument that has preceded it.	These expressions make the writing memorable. The rhetorical question forces the reader to think about the answer.

Metaphor and Simile	The phrase "the flood of new books has been in full spate" is a metaphor comparing the number of books to a river in flood.	This creates a vivid image of overwhelming quantity. The reader understands that there are too many books for any single author to stand out.
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Part 3 Drama

Drama is a form of literature meant to be performed on stage. Unlike poetry or prose, which are read alone, drama comes alive through actors, dialogue, and action. When we read a play, we must imagine how it would look and sound in performance. The playwright (the person who writes the play) uses specific techniques to create characters, advance the plot, and engage the audience.

The table below summarizes the key differences between drama and other literary forms:

Form	How It Is Experienced	Key Elements
Poetry	Read alone or aloud	Rhyme, metre, imagery, devices
Prose	Read alone	Narrative, description, argument
Drama	Performed on stage	Dialogue, action, character, spectacle

Part 1: Understanding Drama

What Makes Drama Different

Drama is written to be performed. This means:

Feature	Explanation
Dialogue	Characters speak to each other; the audience learns about the story through what they say
Stage Directions	Instructions written by the playwright about setting, movement, and tone
Action	Events happen in front of the audience; showing is more important than telling
Spectacle	Costumes, lighting, scenery, and sound all contribute to the experience
Audience	The play is meant to be watched by a live audience who react in real time

The Structure of a Play

Most plays are divided into acts and scenes:

Element	Explanation
Acts	Major divisions of a play, like chapters in a novel
Scenes	Smaller divisions within acts, usually marked by a change in location or time
Lines	What the characters speak; may be in prose or verse

Types of Drama

There are two main types of drama, though many plays combine elements of both:

Type	Purpose	Ending	Examples
Comedy	To amuse and entertain	Happy ending; often with marriage	Shakespeare's comedies
Tragedy	To arouse pity and fear	Unhappy ending; death of the protagonist	Shakespeare's tragedies

Part 2: How to Read a Play

Reading a play is different from reading a novel or a poem. You must imagine the performance in your mind.

Rules for Reading Drama

1. **Read the stage directions carefully.** These tell you where the scene takes place, how characters move, and how they speak.
2. **Pay attention to who is speaking.** Notice when characters speak alone (soliloquy) or when they speak to the audience (aside).
3. **Imagine the action.** Visualize the characters moving on stage, entering and exiting, and reacting to each other.
4. **Listen to the language.** Notice how characters speak differently. Is their language formal or casual? Poetic or plain?
5. **Look for conflict.** Drama depends on conflict between characters, between a character and society, or within a character's mind.

Part 3: Key Elements of Drama

The table below explains the key elements you need to analyse in any play:

Element	What It Means	What to Look For
Plot	The sequence of events	Exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement
Character	The people in the play	Motivation, development, relationships, consistency
Theme	The central ideas	What the play says about life, society, or human nature
Dialogue	What characters say	Subtext, tone, rhythm, purpose
Setting	Where and when the action takes place	Atmosphere, historical context, symbolic meaning
Structure	How the play is organized	Acts, scenes, unity of time and place
Dramatic Devices	Techniques used by the playwright	Soliloquy, aside, dramatic irony, suspense

Part 4: Dramatic Devices Explained

Dramatic devices are techniques that playwrights use to create effect on stage. The table below explains the most important ones:

Device	Definition	Example	Effect
Soliloquy	A speech by a character alone on stage, speaking their thoughts aloud	Hamlet's "To be or not to be"	Reveals inner thoughts; creates intimacy with audience
Aside	A brief remark by a character that other characters on stage are not supposed to hear	A character says to the audience, "He doesn't know what I've done"	Creates dramatic irony; involves the audience
Dramatic Irony	When the audience knows something that the characters do not know	The audience knows the villain is hiding behind the door, but the hero does not	Creates suspense; makes the audience feel involved
Foreshadowing	Hints about what will happen later	A character says, "I have a bad feeling about this journey"	Builds anticipation; prepares the audience
Comic Relief	A humorous scene or speech in a serious play	The porter scene in Macbeth	Releases tension; provides contrast
Suspense	The feeling of uncertainty about what will happen	A ticking clock; a character about to be discovered	Keeps the audience engaged
Climax	The moment of greatest tension	The protagonist confronts the antagonist	The turning point of the action
Denouement	The resolution after the climax	Loose ends are tied up; order is restored	Provides closure

Part 5: Analysing a Play

When analysing a play, you should follow a systematic approach. The table below outlines the steps:

Step	What to Do	Questions to Ask
1. Read	Read the play carefully, imagining the performance	What happens? Who are the characters?
2. Understand the Plot	Identify the sequence of events	What is the exposition? Where is the climax? How does it end?
3. Analyse Characters	Examine the characters' motivations and development	What do they want? How do they change?
4. Identify Themes	Find the central ideas	What is the play about beyond the surface story?
5. Examine Language	Study the dialogue and stage directions	How do characters speak? What does their language reveal?
6. Consider Dramatic Devices	Look for techniques used by the playwright	How does the playwright create suspense, irony, or emotion?
7. Evaluate Structure	Analyse how the play is organized	Are the acts and scenes balanced? Does the structure serve the story?
8. Form an Interpretation	Develop your understanding of the play's meaning	What is the playwright trying to say?

Part 6: Example Analysis

To help you understand how to analyse a play, here is a detailed analysis of a famous scene. While the original source material contains many poems and prose passages for analysis, the principles of drama analysis are demonstrated through this example.

Example: The Opening Scene of a Tragedy

Let us analyse the opening of a tragedy. The scene is set at night. Soldiers are on guard duty, waiting for a ghost to appear. They are nervous and tense. The atmosphere is cold and ominous. Two soldiers speak in short, sharp sentences, showing their fear. They are soon joined by a third man, who doubts their story. Then the ghost appears.

Plot:

Stage	What Happens
Exposition	Soldiers on guard discuss what they have seen; they are frightened and uncertain
Inciting Incident	The ghost appears for the first time
Rising Action	The soldiers try to speak to the ghost; it disappears; they decide to tell the prince
Climax	The ghost appears again as they speak of the prince

Falling Action	The ghost disappears again; the men swear to keep what they have seen secret
Conclusion	The scene ends with the men leaving to find the prince

Character Analysis:

Character	Traits	Purpose in the Play
Soldier 1	Nervous, superstitious, sees things	Introduces the supernatural element
Soldier 2	Skeptical, brave, loyal	Provides contrast to the fearful soldier
Scholar	Intelligent, educated, cautious	Connects the ghost to political events
The Ghost	Silent, majestic, terrifying	Represents unresolved conflict; drives the plot

Language Analysis:

Character	Language Style	Effect
Soldiers	Short sentences; questions; repetition	Shows their fear and uncertainty
Scholar	Longer sentences; formal language	Shows his education and authority
The Ghost	No speech in this scene	Silence creates mystery and power

Dramatic Devices:

Device	How It Is Used	Effect
Atmosphere	Night setting; cold weather; nervous guards	Creates tension and foreboding
Suspense	The ghost appears and disappears; the audience waits to see what it will do	Keeps the audience engaged and uncertain
Dramatic Irony	The audience knows something mysterious is happening; the characters are trying to understand it	Makes the audience feel involved in the mystery
Foreshadowing	References to the former king and recent events	Hints at the political conflict to come

Themes:

Theme	How It Is Developed
Appearance vs Reality	The ghost may or may not be real; the soldiers cannot agree on what they saw
The Supernatural	The ghost represents forces beyond human understanding
Mystery	The audience does not know why the ghost has appeared; this creates curiosity
Loyalty	The soldiers are loyal to the dead king and to the prince

Structure:

Element	Analysis
Acts	This is the opening scene of the first act
Unity of Time	The scene takes place in a single night
Unity of Place	The scene takes place in one location
Pacing	The scene begins slowly with quiet conversation, then builds to the ghost's appearance

Part 7: Types of Drama

Tragedy

Tragedy presents serious actions that lead to the downfall of a noble character. The protagonist (main character) suffers because of a flaw in their character, often called a "tragic flaw."

Characteristics of Tragedy:

Characteristic	Explanation
Tragic Hero	A noble character who is neither completely good nor completely bad
Tragic Flaw	A weakness in the hero's character that leads to their downfall
Reversal	A turning point where the hero's fortune changes from good to bad
Recognition	A moment when the hero understands their mistake
Catharsis	The audience feels pity and fear, then is purged of these emotions
Unhappy Ending	The hero dies or suffers greatly

Example of Tragic Structure:

Stage	What Happens
1. Exposition	We meet the hero; we learn of their greatness
2. Inciting Incident	Something happens that begins the conflict
3. Rising Action	The hero makes choices based on their flaw
4. Climax	The hero reaches a point of no return
5. Reversal	The hero's fortune turns
6. Recognition	The hero understands their mistake
7. Falling Action	Events move toward the ending
8. Catastrophe	The hero dies or suffers the final blow
9. Denouement	Order is restored; we reflect on what happened

Comedy

Comedy presents amusing situations that lead to a happy ending. The protagonist overcomes obstacles and often ends up married or successful.

Characteristics of Comedy:

Characteristic	Explanation
Happy Ending	The play ends with celebration, often marriage
Ordinary Characters	Characters are not noble; they are like everyday people
Humour	The play uses wordplay, situations, and characters to amuse
Mistaken Identity	Characters are mistaken for others; confusion abounds
Young Lovers	Young people face obstacles to their love
Social Commentary	Comedy often mocks foolish behaviour in society

Other Types of Drama

Type	Description	Examples
Tragicomedy	Mixes tragic and comic elements	Plays with serious themes but happy endings
Melodrama	Exaggerated emotions; clear heroes and villains	Sensational plots with moral lessons
Farce	Fast-paced, physical humour; ridiculous situations	Slapstick comedy
Absurdist Drama	Meaningless situations; questions about existence	Plays where logic and language break down
History Play	Based on historical events	Plays about kings and political events

Part 8: Analysing Characters

Characters are the people in a play. They drive the plot and express the themes.

Types of Characters

Type	Definition	How to Identify
Protagonist	The main character	The one the story follows; often the hero
Antagonist	The character who opposes the protagonist	The one who creates obstacles
Foil	A character who contrasts with another	Highlights the qualities of the protagonist
Round Character	Complex; has many traits	Shows development; surprises us
Flat Character	Simple; has one or two traits	Easy to describe; does not change
Static Character	Does not change through the play	Remains the same from beginning to end
Dynamic Character	Changes through the play	Learns; grows; develops

Questions for Character Analysis

1. **What does the character want?** (Their motivation)
2. **What obstacles stand in their way?** (Conflict)
3. **What does the character do to overcome obstacles?** (Action)
4. **How does the character speak?** (Language)
5. **What do other characters say about them?** (Reputation)
6. **How does the character change?** (Development)
7. **What is the character's flaw?** (Tragic flaw, if applicable)

Part 9: Analysing Language in Drama

The language of drama is not just what characters say; it is how they say it.

Types of Dramatic Language

Type	Description	Effect
Verse	Poetic language with rhythm and sometimes rhyme	Elevates the language; used for serious or noble characters
Prose	Ordinary language without rhythm	Used for comic or common characters; natural speech
Blank Verse	Unrhymed iambic pentameter	Combines the dignity of verse with natural speech
Rhyme	Words that sound alike at the ends of lines	Creates musical effect; can signal ending or emphasis

What to Notice in Dialogue

Feature	What to Look For
Length of Speeches	Who speaks the most? When are speeches short or long?
Questions and Answers	Who asks questions? Who gives answers?
Interruptions	Who interrupts? When?
Repetition	What words or phrases are repeated?
Images	What pictures are created by the language?
Contrast	How do characters speak differently from each other?
Subtext	What is left unsaid? What do characters mean beneath their words?

Part 10: Analysing Structure

The structure of a play is how it is organized.

Traditional Five-Act Structure

Many plays, especially tragedies, follow a five-act structure:

Act	Purpose
Act I	Exposition; introduces characters, setting, and conflict
Act II	Rising action; complications develop
Act III	Climax; turning point; point of no return
Act IV	Falling action; consequences of the climax
Act V	Resolution; catastrophe and denouement

Alternative Structures

Structure	Description	Examples
Three-Act	Setup, confrontation, resolution	Modern plays and films
One-Act	A single continuous action	Short plays
Episodic	Loose structure; scenes that can stand alone	Some modern drama
Circular	Ends where it begins	Some absurdist drama

Part 11: Analysing Themes

Themes are the central ideas in a play. They are what the play is about beyond the surface story.

Common Themes in Drama

Theme	Explanation
Ambition	The desire for power and its consequences
Love	Romantic love, family love, friendship
Revenge	The desire to punish wrongs
Justice	What is fair and right
Fate vs Free Will	Are we controlled by destiny or by our choices?
Appearance vs Reality	The difference between how things seem and how they are
Order vs Chaos	The struggle between structure and disorder
Death	Mortality, grief, the meaning of life
Identity	Who we are; how we find ourselves
Society	Social structures, class, politics

How to Identify Themes

1. **Look for repetition.** What ideas come up again and again?
2. **Look at the ending.** What does the ending suggest about life?
3. **Look at character changes.** What do characters learn?
4. **Look at conflicts.** What are the characters fighting about?
5. **Look at symbols.** What objects or images carry meaning?

Part 12: How to Write an Appreciation of a Play

When writing an appreciation of a play, follow this structure:

Suggested Paragraph Structure

Paragraph	Content
1. Introduction	State the title, playwright, and type of play. Give the general meaning: what is the play about?
2. Plot	Summarize the main events. Identify the exposition, rising action, climax, and resolution.
3. Characters	Analyse the main characters. What do they want? How do they change? How do they relate to each other?
4. Language	Examine the dialogue. How do characters speak? What do their speeches reveal about them?
5. Dramatic Devices	Identify the techniques used. Soliloquy? Aside? Dramatic irony? Foreshadowing? Explain their effect.
6. Themes	Discuss the central ideas. What is the play saying about life or human nature?
7. Structure	Comment on the organization. Are the acts and scenes balanced? How does the structure serve the story?
8. Conclusion	Summarize your main points. What is the playwright's overall achievement?

Part 13: Key Vocabulary for Drama Analysis

The table below defines the most important terms you will need when analysing drama:

Term	Definition
Act	A major division of a play
Antagonist	The character who opposes the protagonist
Aside	A character's remark to the audience that other characters do not hear
Catharsis	The emotional release experienced by the audience at the end of a tragedy
Climax	The moment of greatest tension; the turning point
Comedy	A play with a happy ending that amuses the audience
Conflict	The struggle between opposing forces
Denouement	The resolution after the climax
Dialogue	Conversation between characters
Dramatic Irony	When the audience knows something the characters do not
Exposition	The opening section that provides background information
Foil	A character who contrasts with another to highlight qualities
Foreshadowing	Hints about what will happen later
Monologue	A long speech by one character to other characters
Motivation	The reason a character acts as they do

Plot	The sequence of events in the play
Protagonist	The main character
Scene	A smaller division within an act
Setting	The time and place of the action
Soliloquy	A speech by a character alone on stage
Stage Directions	Instructions in the text about movement, tone, and setting
Subtext	The meaning beneath the spoken words
Suspense	The feeling of uncertainty about what will happen
Theme	The central idea or ideas of the play
Tragedy	A play with an unhappy ending that arouses pity and fear
Tragic Flaw	The character weakness that leads to the protagonist's downfall

Part 14: Sample Analysis Outline

Here is a template you can use when analysing any play:

General Meaning

- What is the play about in one sentence?

Detailed Meaning

- **Plot:** What happens? Identify the main stages.
- **Characters:** Who are the important characters? What do they want?
- **Setting:** Where and when does the action take place?

Structure

- How is the play organized into acts and scenes?
- What is the function of each act?
- Is the structure unified?

Dramatic Devices

- Are there soliloquies or asides? What do they reveal?
- Is there dramatic irony? How does it affect the audience?
- Is there foreshadowing? What does it hint at?
- How does the playwright create suspense?

Language

- Do characters speak in verse or prose?
- How does language reveal character?
- Are there important images or patterns?

Character Development

- Does the protagonist change? How?
- What is the protagonist's flaw?
- How do other characters contrast with the protagonist?

Themes

- What are the central ideas?
- How are they developed through plot, character, and language?

Conclusion

- What is the playwright's overall achievement?
- How does the play affect the audience?