**Finding Meaning and Enjoyment by Interpreting Literature**

**English Language Arts**

**Grade 12**

**By**

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**B: Overview and Rationale**

The unifying idea of behind this unit is this: in learning how to critically analyze a literary text, students will be able to find deeper meaning and enjoyment in any text they encounter in the future. Students will read material slightly outside of their comfort zone, which will stretch their reading and analytical abilities. This will result in the students growing as readers and thinkers. It will also help make them feel comfortable with taking on richer and more demanding material in the future. Students will learn to enjoy the process of reading and analyzing richer material, because they will see that it is more rewarding than coasting through the average novel or short story. These attitudes are a crucial part of this class as they help create lifelong readers. Also, students will be able to transfer their refined critical thinking skills to help them succeed in any future academic endeavor. Ultimately, students will find meaningful connections between literary texts and their own lives, as well as have new tools to approach all future life experiences with. This will bring greater understanding and fulfillment to the students inside and outside of the classroom.

The logic behind the structure of this class is that students need to start with simple but crucial reading skills, then slowly work their way towards more advanced skills that require the mastery of the previous skills. During the first week of this unit there will be a strong focus on the close reading aspect of critical analysis. The second weeks builds off this and introduces the drawing of basic and meaningful connections between various elements in a text. The third week builds off the prior two and introduces more complex connections that can be made between the elements in a work. These include the discovery of a work’s themes, the meaning of a work in context of its historical period, and the personal meaning a work can have to an individual. The final week solidifies the lessons of the previous weeks by giving students plenty of opportunity to practice and perfect their analysis skills through crafting their own analytical essay. This class is specifically designed for 12th grade students. Presumably, they are at the higher end of the cognitive ability and emotional maturity spectrums. Students at this age should have a firm grasp on the basic needs of this class: an ability to be respectful during class, an ability to focus on a subject for 15-20 minutes at a time, an ability to manage their time wisely, and an ability to take ownership of their work. This unit will take place in 50 minute sessions five days a week for four weeks. This should be plenty of time to get through the six assigned short stories, as well as give students a grasp of the basic analytic tools they will be developing.

The approach I am taking to teaching and learning for this unit is one based on active discussion. Students are more engaged in a lesson when it is discussion based rather than lecture based. Specifically, most of the discussion will launch from my inquiry about elements of a text, the process of analysis, or be in response to their own questions about a topic. I want to give the students plenty chance to think critically and think for themselves, rather than having a ready supply of answers for them when they are unsure of something. Through asking questions, I will model for students how to ask meaningful and revealing questions about a text or topic that will help them in their own process of analysis. The discussion in this class will sometimes include the entire class, and other times be isolated to small groups. This balances the sharing of fewer essential ideas with the entire class, and every student having a chance to discuss their thoughts. Sometimes I will let the students steer the discussion in the directions they find interesting, and other times I will give them a topic to focus on. This will balance the students’ intrinsic motivations with the coverage of the curriculum. Discussion will always be in some way attached to the direct instruction, indirect inquiry, and collaborative learning assignments. However, much care will be taken to assure that discussions do not drag on past their point of usefulness to the students and the advancement of the class material.

This unit has been organized in such a way that the basic tools introduced at the beginning will all help the students build their ability to autonomously analyze and enjoy literary texts. This ability is the essential ability that the Common Core standards for 12th grade English want students to master. There are numerous other standards, which this class will give much attention to, but they are all means to the end goal of having students autonomously graph a text in their designated reading-band. The students in this class will all certainly have the ability to sufficiently develop this ability by the end of the unit, as it is something most of them have been doing for years already. This class just further crystallizes this process, making them more refined as readers and thinkers. Having students master this process is certainly in the best interest of the community as well as the students themselves. The students’ ability to read and think critically about a text, and find fulfillment in this process, directly translates into their ability to think critically outside the text and outside of the classroom. No community could do without more bright, analytical minds.

**C: Standards and Intended Learning Outcomes**

**By the end of this unit, students will be able to...**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.10](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/10/)

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently. **(S)**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/1/)

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. **(S)**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/2/)

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. **(S)**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/3/)

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). **(S)**

**Additional Learning Objectives:**

**By the end of this unit, students will be able to...**

* Find enjoyment and value in the process of reading and critical analysis **(A)**
* Ask essential questions about a text that aid in analysis **(S)**
* Trace how a text’s theme arises from the interplay of its literary elements, devices, and content. **(S)**
* Identify the literary elements and devices within a story. **(S)**
* Perform a close reading of a text. **(S)**
* Annotate a text in a complete and organized manner. **(S)**
* Draw connections between the various elements of a text. **(S)**
* Draw connections between a text and their own life. **(S)**
* Draw connections between a text and its corresponding historical period. **(S)**
* Understand how plot structure shapes the mental and emotional impact of a story. **(K)**
* Understand how narration and point-of-view impact the reader’s access to the events of a story. **(K)**
* Understand how good characterization makes readers mentally and emotionally invested in a story. **(K)**
* Understand how the context of a literary work is paramount to understanding its meaning. **(K)**
* Understand how topic and setting set the foundation for a story. **(K)**
* Understand how traditional symbols and literary symbols convey meaning through representation of ideas. **(K)**
* Understand what makes for a strong critical analysis. **(K)**

**D: Main Points**

**Lesson 1: Setting the Stage for Successful Reading**

**Wholeness:** The ability to identify the literary elements and devices employed within a text, read a text with precision, and annotate it, all set the stage for deeper understanding and enjoyment of the text. *“With the development of pure consciousness, a student is able to enjoy… orderliness, greater comprehension, and compactness of literary expressions, which together inspire every phase of speech, thinking, intellect, perception, and activity--all levels of existence.”*

**MAIN POINTS**

**1. Literary elements and devices:** The elements of literature are those that are necessary to tell a fictional story. No work of fiction can exist without these basic elements. On the other hand, literary devices are techniques specially selected by an author to most effectively convey their message to the reader. *“Literary rules arise from the analysis of beautiful works--they don’t give rise to them.”*

**2. Close reading:** The ability to read carefully and notice details such as diction, syntax, and the order in which ideas unfold, are necessary skills for understanding a literary work. *Order is present everywhere. Especially in a text, the order and choice of all the elements are significant to its meaning.*

**3.** **Annotation:** Being able to make note of significant passages, sentences, and ideas in a text in a complete, organized, and accessible manner gives the reader useful starting points for future analysis. It also helps the reader organize his or her own thoughts, and more easily see patterns in the text and their own thinking about the text. *“What makes a work beautiful is its completeness, its expression of the entire mechanics of evolution displayed in contrasting values put close together.”*

**4.** **Prerequisites for effective analysis:** Drawing significant connections between the elements of a story, and between a story and one’s own life, is best aided by the ability to identify those elements.  *Everything in life is connected, as everything is ultimately the flow of consciousness within itself.*

**Lesson 2: Making Meaningful Connections**

**Wholeness:** After doing the basic groundwork necessary for understanding a text, one can begin to make meaningful connections between its various elements. Connections are meaningful when they are backed by textual evidence and logic. *Finding connections requires depth of insight that develops as one becomes familiar with quiet, more orderly levels of thought. We gain this familiarity through Transcendental Meditation.*

**MAIN POINTS**

**1. Textual Evidence:** Textual evidence amounts to any content, elements, or ideas within a work that are communicated by the text itself, rather than ideas born only in the reader’s mind. It is important that one is constantly looking to textual evidence to shape one’s view of a text, otherwise there is the risk of misunderstanding the text and missing the author’s intentions. *The whole is contained in every part. All the particular instances of textual evidence all contain the seeds of the text’s greater ideas.*

**2. Logic:** Making logical connections is done through assembling premises in such a way that a conclusion naturally follows from those premises. *When letting textual evidence be the starting point of your thought process, you are moved to act by making inferences, and these inferences lead to greater understanding and fulfillment.*

**3.** **Avoid fallacy:** “Intentional fallacy” is a term used to describe the problem inherent in trying to judge a work of art by assuming the intent or purpose of the artist who created it. This is perhaps the most common mistake of blossoming literature students. Build your connections from textual evidence and logic rather than assumption. *Purification leads to progress. Avoiding bad habits of analysis will progress your understanding of the text.*

**Lesson 3: Seeing the Big Picture**

**Wholeness:** The deepest levels of meaning and enjoyment one can attain from a text are found through the process of meaningful analysis, where all the dots are connected to reveal a grand picture. This picture can be framed in relation to 1) the text’s own era, 2) the reader’s life, and/or 3) life as a whole. Enjoyment is a product of the new understanding the student obtains about the text and life itself. “*When the contrasting values [in literature] are expressed on the level of meaning, they create joy in the intellect and expand it. It’s the enlivenment of the intellect that is a joy to one’s ego.”*

**MAIN POINTS**

**1. Connecting all the dots:** This is where the reader takes a step back and looks at all the particular elements of a story, as well as the meaningful connections they have already made between those elements. With these held in mind, the reader begins to piece together how these elements and connections all work towards the conveying of more abstract themes and ideas. *The whole is contained in every part. Each of the elements come together to create a meaningful whole.*

**2.** **Meaning:** The meaning of a text is closely associated with its theme(s), or the overarching idea(s) and message(s) conveyed by the entirety of the text. However, new levels meanings can be arrived at through relating the theme, and other elements of the text, to the era it was written in, the reader’s life, or life as a whole. *Life is found in layers. In the same way, the meaning of a text is found in layers--meaning in terms of historical context, personal meaning to the individual reader, and meaning in light of pure consciousness.*

**3.** **Enjoyment:** One can enjoy literature for a number of reasons, including its entertaining and moving stories, and the beauty of the speech expressed in it. However, the deepest enjoyment comes from the growth of understanding of a text and the resulting growth of in understanding about life. This understanding is reached through meaningful analysis. *“The comprehensive vision of a literary writer sees evolution in everything, and since evolution is one’s own nature, one sees oneself in everything. This reference to the Self makes everything enjoyable.”*

**E. The course overview chart for the whole unit or course. This chart should follow the calendar format that we learn, including themes of the week, assessments, major activities, and field trips.**

**F: Unit Evaluation Plan**

**Grade Distribution**

Presentation on Context/Essential Idea: 5%

Reflections: 5%

Quizzes: 10%

Class Discussion/Participation: 10%

Short Story: 10%

Group Poster: 10%

Exam: 20%

Essay: 30%

Extra Credit: 5% possible boost

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**A** (90% - 100%) Excellent, exceptional

**B** (80% - 89.9%) Good - basic comprehension of course concepts and proficiency in course ……………………....competencies

**C** (70-79.9%) Fair - meets minimal expectations for passing

**NC** (below 70%) No Credit - did not obtain course objectives at a minimal level

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**Criteria for Major Assignments:**

**Quizzes:** Several of our class sessions will begin with a short, 5 question selected-response quiz. These quizzes should take no more than 5 minutes, and a few more minutes will be dedicated to going over them as a class. The **criteria** for these quizzes is simply that the answers be correct.

**Class Discussion/Participation:** Class discussion is where the magic happens. Most of this class is based off of a discussion model, with the rationale being that it is an extremely powerful learning tool. There will be some form of discussion that happens every class, so please be prepared for them. Discussions will generally follow the completion of a text, during and after a lesson is presented, after individual student presentations, and during and after group presentations. During these discussions students are free to ask questions and share insights with the class. Responding to a particular student’s question or insight and carrying on a discussion with them is also encouraged. Many of these discussion will take place in small groups. The **criteria** for these class discussions is that you read the assigned material, complete homework that is essential for class discussion, and make a regular effort to participate in class and group discussion. This does not mean you have to contribute to class discussion on a daily basis, but please try to make your voice heard a few times during the entirety of the unit. If you feel you may have a problem fulfilling this requirement, please speak to me personally so I can give you other options.

**Short Story:** The purpose of this writing assignment is twofold. First, it is to get you to view literature through a more creative lens, giving you a greater understanding and appreciation for the subject. Second, it is to give you a chance to enhance your comprehension of the basic literary elements and devices by employing them in a story of your own. To write this two-three page story, you may choose from a class generated prompt, a prompt that I provide, a prompt that you find online, a prompt that you created, or simply to rewrite a section of a selected text while significantly altering some of the literary elements and/or devices within it. The **criteria** for this assignment is that you put an appropriate amount of thought and effort into it, as well as display an understanding of how the essential literary elements and devices impact a story.

**Group Poster:** This project allows you to dive deep into a selected story and understand the importance of a particular element within it, and how this element interacts with the rest of the story. Students will be divided into groups, and each group assigned a selected story. Each member of the group will choose two literary elements or devices within the story to examine. Students then create a visual representation, along with an explanation, of their findings. The groups then share their findings and connect their visual elements on a poster board. These elements will be put together in a logical manner that reflects how the layers of a story all inform the overall experience and meaning (themes) of the story. Examples from previous classes will be shown before you are asked to piece together your poster. Groups will then share their posters with the class. The **criteria** for this project includes that students contribute to their teams in discussion and action, and write a summary of what they contributed to the group. Students must also complete their individual elements of focus and display comprehension of how their elements impact the story.

**Exam:** The final exam for this unit will be a mixture of selected-response, short answer, and short essay. This test will include questions that require you to recall basic elements from the selected short stories, the essential literary elements and devices, as well as the procedures to successfully analyzing a text. The short answer and essay questions will test your ability to apply this knowledge. Specifically, you will be asked to identify a literary element or device in a couple of the stories, and explain why it is significant to the story. You are allowed to reference your copy of the selected text for the essay question portion if you desire. The **criteria** for this exam includes the correctness of selected response questions, and correctness of short answer questions with objective answers. Short answer questions with more subjective answers must display logical thinking and grasp of the concepts being worked with. The short essay responses require the use of textual evidence and logical thinking.

**Essay:** This project is weighed the most out of all the assignments because it is the most effective tool for solidifying and sharpening your analysis skills. You will generate one meaningful prompt on any of the short stories studied during this unit. It can pertain to the use of a literary element or device within the story, expand on an unresolved issue in the text, or try to tackle the essential meaning or theme of the text. Avoid prompts that have obvious solutions, and prompts that disinterest you. This essay will be 5-7 pages in length, in MLA format. No research outside of the reading of your story, or the reviewing your notes, should be done for this project. I want to see your own independent thinking on display. **Criteria** for this assignment include: the generation of a meaningful prompt, that the structure of the paper is logical and effective, a clear position is being argued for, display of logical and insightful thinking backed by textual evidence. Your paper should be virtually free of grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors.

**G: General Teaching Strategies**

The teaching strategy that will be considered the home-base for this unit is indirect discussion. There will be chances for discussions involving the entire class, as well as small focused group discussions, at the end of every assigned reading, every instance of direct discussion, and every group project. Indirect discussion, whether it involves only a few students in a group, or the entire class, is a powerful tool for helping students become independent thinkers. It also trains students to rely on inquiry as a method of discovery rather than waiting for information from the teacher or another source. However, much use will be made of direct instruction as well. This will be especially important in giving the students a solid understanding of the knowledge components of the objectives, as well as the essential steps for the skills section of the objectives. These steps will be internalized by the students when using them to perform various assignments, such as: individual reading, short story writing, essay writing, and all group work assignments. The focus on inquiry in this class is especially important, as the asking of meaningful and revealing questions is a great tool in understanding literature. During direct discussion, there will be many times where I will introduce a topic by asking students about it. Other times I will answer their questions with questions of my own, giving them a chance to generate their own independent thought rather than rely on my instruction. This question asking will also model an ability in the students to be inquisitive and ask important questions while doing work on their own. This method also helps keeps students engaged as discussion requires more alertness and participation from the students, and is generally more rewarding, compared to lecturing. Indirect inquiry will be unitized in having students inquire about texts during their individual reading time, as well as in group projects. Collaborative learning will be included at the end of every major project by having students present their project to the class teach students about their topic and experience. It will also be used in having students present on the context, and essential ideas, of a selected text.

**Major Learning Activities**

Some of the regular patterns of activity during this unit include the beginning of each class, after a text has been completed, with a short quiz. These quizzes are 5 questions short, and selected response. They should take no more than 5 minutes to complete, and a couple more minutes to discuss. Their main purpose is to ensure that the students are completing the assigned readings. Following the quiz will be a class discussion on the prior night’s readings. These will generally begin with a reader-response element, either with students sharing their initial reactions to the text with the class, talking about them briefly in small groups, or writing a reflection. The discussion questions that they generated for homework will come into play either by being shared with the class (and answered by the class), in a small group, or by having the questions redistributed to the class to give them a chance to write a response. Students will always have opportunities to answer these questions themselves, only relying on me as a resource when necessary. When the discussion lulls, has gone off track, or is not holding the students attention, I will infuse direct instruction. These sessions will not generally last longer than 10 to 20 minutes, as longer discussions might sacrifice the covering of essential unit material. After the discussion, direct instruction will be used to present the lesson of the day. This may simply be a verbal presentation with the whiteboard to accompany me, or may include various types of media. It will also be interactive and give the students opportunity for discussion, or another kind of active learning strategy to solidify the lesson. After the lesson, students assigned to investigate the context and essential ideas of a selected work will present, giving their classmates the essential knowledge they will need going into their new reading assignment. The remainder of the class period will be dedicated to sustained silent reading, giving students a head start on their homework, and potentially a better place to read than their home environment. This also gives the class a nice balance between group discussion and individual activity.

Each week is rounded off by the introduction and/or completion of a project, and presented to the class on the following Monday. The first week’s project is a 2-3 page original short story written by the students individually. This project gives them a chance to access a different part of their mind, find deeper appreciation for the process of writing that creates all literature, as well as giving them a chance to work with the essential literary elements and devices. They will use these devices to create a certain feel, impact, and meaning to their story, and in doing so will better understand how these elements and devices shape all literature. Students have a wide range of prompts to pick from: one of their own, one they find online, one generated by myself, one generated by the class, or a reworking of one of the selected texts with altered literary elements and/or devices. Students will begin work on their stories on Friday, and finish by Monday morning in time to present them to the class. The second week’s project is a group poster on the literary elements and devices found in a story, and explanation of how they interact to impact the overall experience and meaning of the story. Students will break into groups of 5, each tackling one of the 5 short stories read by the class. Each student will choose two literary devices or elements to investigate, and make visual representations of. Students may bounce ideas off each other during this entire process, but each individual is ultimately responsible for their two contributions to their group’s poster. The groups will then discuss how these elements impact the story, especially in generating the story’s themes, and decide how to best present their findings visually on a poster board. Students will complete their poster by Monday morning so they can present it to the class.

The third week ends with students generating the prompt for their essays, and beginning work on them. These essays will be 5-7 pages in length, in MLA format. Students can choose to write an analytical essay on any of the stories covered in class, on just about any topic they can think of. The general rule for topic generation is that the topic be something the student is interested in, and something worth arguing about (not something with an obvious answer). Students must then argue for a position using textual evidence to support their reasoning. Also, this is not a research paper. It is a chance for students to dive deep into deep analysis of their selected story and display their internalization of the skills introduced in this unit. The final major learning activity students will perform before their final exam is a class review game. This game will be similar to Jeopardy in style, as there will be a board presented to the class that has different categories of knowledge, and varying degrees of difficulty. The difficulty range on the easiest side of spectrum includes questions that can be answered by rote-memorization, while the more difficult questions require application of knowledge and skills to new scenarios. These questions will be short answer rather than the typical “who is” or “what is” answer format. These groups take turns just as the traditional players in Jeopardy do, however the group is free to discuss possible answers and strategies amongst themselves. If a group answers incorrectly, the other groups have a chance to answer. There will also be a speed round in which questions will be asked in quick succession, and which ever group can answer correctly the fastest wins the points for that round. This game should be a welcome change of pace for the students as they just finished their essays and are about to take their final exam. It is an effective way to inject more joy into the class, and keep students engaged through a little friendly activity.

**H. Unit Exam Example and Answers**

**Part A:**

(1) A literary symbol...

A: has a specific meaning

**B**: has multiple meanings

C: is any symbol used in literature

D: has no meaning

(2) In *To Build a Fire,* fire building would be an example of:

A: Setting

B: Theme

**C**: Topic

D: Plot

(3) Which of the following are instances of imagery? Circle all that apply.

**A**: The stinging of cold air

**B**: The dancing of the light upon ocean waves

**C**: The sweet fragrance of spring flowers

**D**: The shrill howl of the neighbor’s dog

(4) If the denouement of a story is especially long, you might expect:

A: that there is no real sense of closure to the story

B: that it would take much longer for the climax of the story to occur

C: that there might be a lot of suspense

**D**: that the reader would lose interest

(5) Which of the following is *not* part of the beginning steps of successful critical analysis?

A: Annotation

B: Close-Reading

**C**: Searching for a story’s theme

D: Identifying the literary elements and devices

(6) Which of the following is not a type of narrator?

A: Unreliable

**B**: Unbearable

C: Detached Observer

D: Naive

(7) A third person omniscient narrator:

A: Is generally the protagonist of the story

B: Is all knowing, but can’t get inside more than one character’s head

**C**: Can access all character's thoughts

D: Is usually biased

(8) The bird hunter in *A White Heron* is an example of a \_\_\_\_\_ character.

A: Stock

B: Dynamic

C: Foil

**D**: Flat

(9) The point of view in *On Seeing The 100% Perfect Girl* is:

**A**: First-person and-third person

B: Third-person limited

C: Third-person omniscient

D: First-person

(10) Meaningful connections are \_\_\_\_\_. Circle all that apply.

**A**: Supported by textual evidence

B: Assume what the intent of the author is

**C**: Logical

D: Opinion-based

**Part B:** You must answer three of the five possible short answer questions. You may answer all five for extra credit worth 5% of your total score.

(1) What effect might an author want to achieve by leaving out the denouement from a story? How would this impact the overall theme of the story?

Answer: This would give the story an ending that feels abrupt and unresolved, as the denouement is the resolution of a story which ties off the falling action. This is commonly seen in postmodern works of fiction that convey themes of incompleteness, unfulfillment, and open-endedness, because it makes the story itself feel incomplete, unfulfilled, and open-ended.

(2) What advantages and disadvantages might there be to telling a story from first-person point of view?

Answer: Some of the advantages of first-person narration include that the reader become more emotionally attached to the narrator. The narrator having a limited perspective on the events of the story leaves room for surprise in that there may be a later discovery of an event from a different perspective. It also tends to leave more of the story’s events to the imagination of the reader. Some of these strengths could also be disadvantages if the limitation of the narrator’s perception seriously inhibits the understanding of the events in the story.

(3) Quickly sketch the plot structure of *The Secret Sharer*, and explain in a sentence where each of the plot elements occur in the story.

Answer: The exposition takes place at the start of the story as the narrator relays a bit about his life to the audience while he takes over as captain for a new ship. The rising action begins when the captain pulls a drowning man on board the ship who looks exactly like him. The climax happens as the doppelganger jumps overboard in an attempt to swim to a nearby island. The falling action includes the doppelganger making it safely to the island. The resolution includes the captain steering the ship a new direction and wishing the doppelganger farewell.

(4) What steps can you take if a story isn’t making any sense to you?

Answer: There are several steps you can take if you are feeling lost while reading a story. First, it may be essential that you know something about the era in which the text was written in order to understand it, so researching the context of the story may prove helpful. Also, knowing something about the author and his or her style may give you clues of what to look for in your reading. Taking note in your readings of recurring symbols, situations, and ideas will also help you see a pattern within the text. Also, the regular asking of essential questions may be especially revealing.

(5) Why might the author of a story choose to not reveal the name or any distinct features of the protagonist?

Answer. This was the case in Joseph Conrad’s story *The Secret Sharer*. The protagonist and narrator remained unnamed to make the story more universal. This means that the experience of the protagonist, and themes of the story, can be more easily related to the lives of the readers. Making characters very distinct in appearance and demeanor usually makes them contrast with the reader.

**Part C:** You must answer two of the six possible essay questions. Use of annotated texts for this portion of the exam is encouraged.

(1) How does Poe build a powerful feeling of suspense in *The Cask of Amontillado*?

Answer: There are several techniques Poe uses to build the suspense of this story. Most of them are related to the literary device of foreshadowing. From the beginning of the tale, the narrator tells us that he will extract revenge on Fortunato. He also tells us his plan to lure Fortunato with an irresistible wine. This is kept in mind of the reader as Montresor takes Fortunato into his catacombs. There is also plenty of double-entendre use that further foreshadows the murder. The trowel Montresor draws in response to Fortunato’s comment about the masons is actually to wall him up with. Fortunato mentions that he will not die of a cough, to which Montresor replies, “True,” as he knows it is he that will kill him. Irony is also used to foreshadow the murder, such as when Montresor claims to drink to the “long life” of Fortunato. Symbolism also signals the events of the story. The luring of Fortunato into an underground, increasingly isolated catacomb is somewhat like luring him into his own grave, or a spider luring an insect into its web. The murder taking place at night, underground, and in darkness is symbolic of the evil and death about to take place. Montresor's family crest is also revealing of his intent, as it features a snake biting a heel in retaliation for being trampled on. Suspense is also created by how long Poe drags out the rising action before the climactic murder. The suspense is maintained during the murder as it is a slow and terrifying processes, leaving the reader hoping for some kind or resolution.

(2) What do you feel is the most predominant theme in *On Seeing the 100% Perfect Girl*?

Answer: The most prominent theme in this story would have to be that reality is layered and complex, rather than fixed and clear. This is demonstrated by numerous conflicting accounts of reality found all throughout the story. First, there is the conflict between the narrator’s life in the present moment, and the anticipation for the future moment when he will pass the girl. For most of the beginning of the story, the narrator is jumping back and forth between his perception of the girl getting closer to him, and what he imagines he might say to her when the moment arrives. There is also a conflict between fate and freewill. The story mentions that it is fate that brought the narrator into this situation where he’d pass by the 100% perfect girl. However, the narrator (and presumably the reader as well) operate as if the narrator has the free-will ability to choose to say something to this girl. There is also a conflict about the nature of love and the idea of a soul-mate. The story presents both sides of the soul-mate issue; that on one hand they may exist and be a “cosmic miracle,” and be known through intuition in a moment’s glance. However, the reliability of the narrator, who has just claimed to have spotted his soul-mate from blocks away, without having any rationale for why he feels this is his soul-mate, is highly questionable. So, on the other hand, soul-mates may just be an idea existing in the mind of this immature and out-of-touch narrator. There is also the conflict between the reality of the physical world that includes engaging with other people, and the inner world of imagination the narrator is caught up in. The narrator reflects that his “ideas are never very practical,” which further demonstrates the disconnect between these inner and outer worlds. This conflict is more obvious when the story switches from first-person to third-person and the narrator tells a story within the story. By the end of this story, the reader is left uncertain as to whether this story actually happened (in the context of the first-person story), or if it was just a creation of the narrator’s imagination. If it did happen, then it completely bridges the two stories, and changes the meaning of the first-person story.

(3) Analyze the use of symbolism in *Araby* and explain how it supports its themes.

(4) What symbolic connection does the protagonist in *A White Heron* have with the heron? How does this support the theme(s) of the story?

(6) In *The Secret Sharer, w*as the mysterious passenger real or imaginary? If you think you can’t know, explain why.