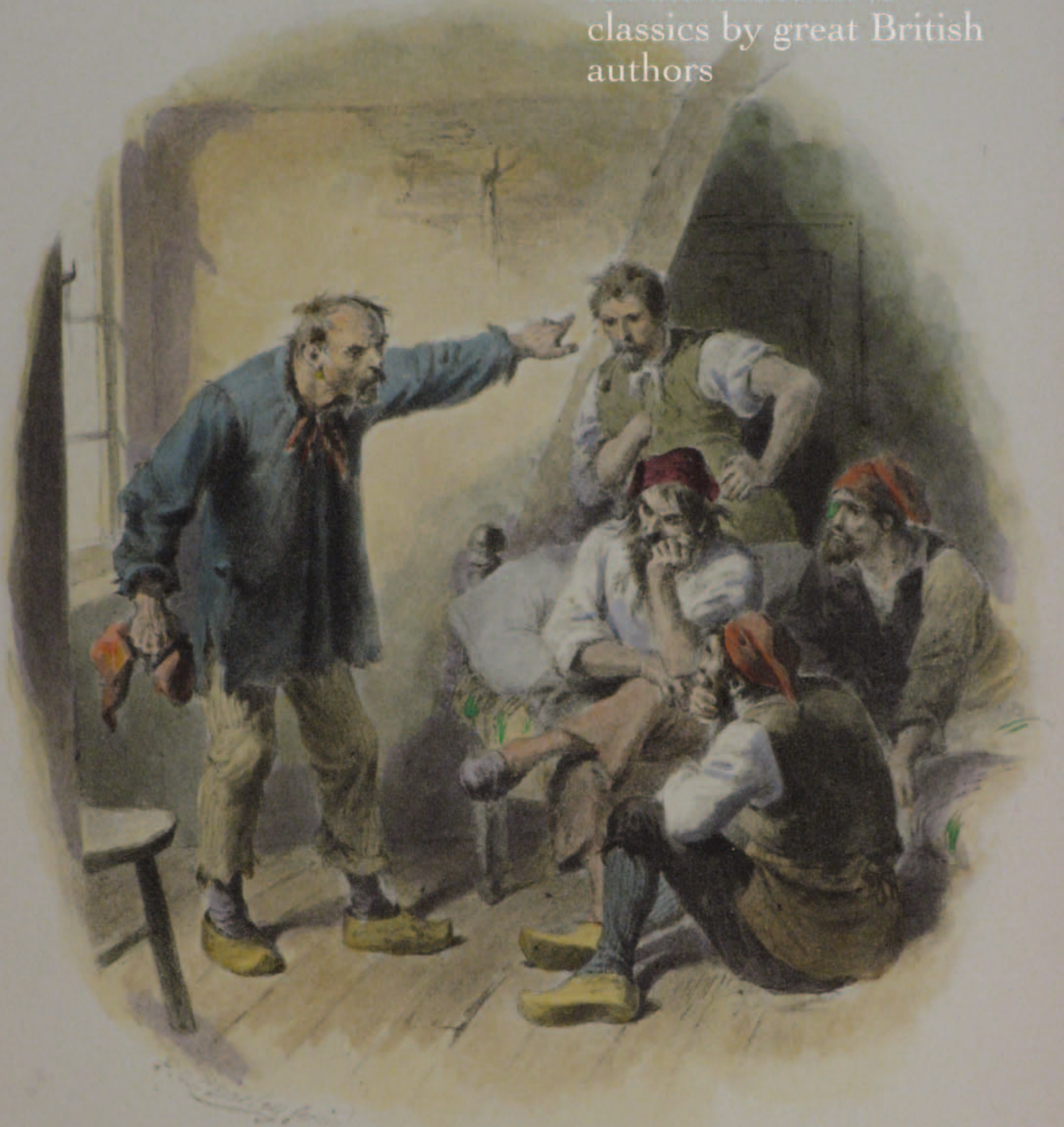
Words Aptly Spoken

BRITISH LITERATURE

An introduction to classics by great British authors



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Words Aptly Spoken
BRITISH LITERATURE

a companion guide to classic literature

SECOND EDITION

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compiled and edited by Jen Greenholt

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Foreword

This collection introduces you to twenty classic works of British literature, beginning with Anglo-Saxon poetry and carrying you into the twentieth century.

To help you navigate the literature, *Words Aptly Spoken: British Literature* will lead you through an overview of literary genres and devices. The collection opens with a discussion of literary techniques and a glossary of some common terms used to talk about literature. These terms appear in **boldface** in the main text, and they are defined and used in a sentence in the introductory glossary.

As with the other collections in the *Words Aptly Spoken* series, *British Literature* contains a series of questions about each work. Review Questions ensure that you understand the basic plot, characters, setting, and message of the book. Thought Questions take the themes and ideas raised by each author and help you apply them to other, more familiar situations.

The complexity of British literature makes it a perfect setting in which to further practice and refine your writing skills. This collection also includes writing practice sections that will encourage you to strengthen your analytical and critical writing skills.

Before the questions devoted to each book, there will be a short section entitled "Understanding Literature." That section will give you background information on the book's genre and some of the devices it uses. Be on the lookout for those characteristics as you read. You may be asked to use the new information in the "Writing Refinement" section after the questions.

These works of British literature are adult-level reading. By this time, you should be able to read closely for details and plot, so the Review and Thought Questions will focus on the major themes and concepts of the books.

All this being said, take a deep breath and get ready to plunge into some great works of British literature.

Best wishes and happy reading!

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A Note for Parents: Tools for the Journey

If you have ever heard Shakespeare performed before a live audience and marveled at the ease with which the words flowed from the actors' lips; if you have ever envied people who can call on Milton, Dickens, Joyce, and Lewis to lend eloquence to their argument; if you have skimmed a list of the hundred greatest novels of all time and winced as you remembered struggling to finish *The Grapes of Wrath* in high school—you may think that the great conversations of literature are forever closed to you. The good news is—they're not!

Whether you are a student, an adult, a parent, a child, or all of the above, you have the capability to train yourself not only to read great literature, but also to share its beauty, truth, and joy with others.

Although most people learn to read as children, the art of deliberately engaging with the content and ideas of a novel or short story requires ongoing practice.

The *Words Aptly Spoken* series is based on the classical model of education,[1] which breaks learning into three natural stages: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. In the grammar stage, you learn the vocabulary of a subject. In the dialectic stage, you learn to develop logical arguments and analyze others' ideas. In the rhetoric stage, you explore the consequences of ideas as you form and express your own. This guide will help you as you begin to apply the classical model to the study of literature.

Why British Literature?

In British literature you will find a subtle, often dry sense of humor, a deep interest in politics and social issues, and an equally strong appreciation for the romantic, the absurd, and the mysterious. Each of the works included in this collection has influenced popular culture and the literature that has come after it. Take Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*: written in the 1670s, it was rewritten in the nineteenth century by Nathaniel Hawthorne as a short story, "The Celestial Railroad," and revisited by C.S. Lewis as *The Pilgrim's Regress* in the 1950s.

Although the messages of these books are obviously powerful, one aim of this collection is to make you aware of them as books—works created using specific tools to achieve both deliberate and unintentional effects. Thinking about literature this way should not hurt your ability to simply enjoy a good book. Rather, it should add another dimension to the mystery, romance, thrill, or delight an author creates using words on a page.

How to Use This Book

Despite popular belief, reading is not wholly instinctive. Because comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking require practice, each work of literature you will study is broken down by chapter into a series of questions designed to give structure and guidance to your reading.

Although the questions are arranged chapter-by-chapter, most readers will not pause to answer questions after finishing a chapter. If the book has captured your imagination the

[1] See Dorothy Sayers' essay, "The Lost Tools of Learning."

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way classic literature ought to, you won't want to stop reading! For this reason, treat these questions as tools not only for reading, but also for writing, leading discussion, and sharing your ideas with others.

Review Questions pull out the **grammar** for each chapter: Who is the book about? (Characters) What happens? (Plot) Where does it take place? (Setting) What is the message? (Theme) What is the scope or time frame? (Focus) For readers of all ages, repeatedly asking these questions will generate good reading habits; eventually, as you read, your brain will automatically take note of this information and store it for future use.

Thought Questions are an exercise in **dialectic**, taking the basic elements from the Review Questions and encouraging you to analyze that information in light of other knowledge. As you become more familiar with the building blocks of a story, you should begin to ask questions of your own. What does this mean for me? How should I respond to this argument? You can use the Thought Questions to jump-start your own thinking process, as training tools for leading discussion, or as topics for essays.

If you cannot answer some of the questions by the time you have finished the book, consider going back and re-reading sections you may only have skimmed the first time. A word of caution: don't merely "look up" the answers to the questions and skim the rest of the book. Once established, this habit will make it harder for you to read and understand more difficult books. After all, self-respecting Olympic runners know that they would be at a severe disadvantage in the actual games if they secretly completed only half of their daily training regimen. In the same way, the results you achieve as a reader will reflect the quality and consistency of your training.

This collection emphasizes the grammar, or vocabulary, of literary study. Using specific terms allows you to discuss literature clearly and precisely, so keep your eyes out for **boldface** terms, which indicate a word with a specific meaning in relation to literature. Definitions can be found in the glossary at the end of the section on Devices and Conventions.

Because measuring progress is a part of learning, each section in this book begins or ends with suggested reading and writing exercises that allow you to gauge how well you have mastered the skills you've been practicing. Although exercises are suggested for each book, you can rearrange and revise to suit your needs.

The Journey in Perspective

One of the most important things to remember as you start—or resume—this journey is that it doesn't happen overnight. The art of leading and sharing in conversations about classical literature takes a lifetime to refine. You must begin with the fundamentals: learning to read closely, taking notes, and developing the vocabulary to structure your ideas and explain them to others (**grammar**). You must practice: adding new techniques, revising old ones, and comparing the results (**dialectic**). And then you will be ready to start all over again as you share the joy of the journey with others around you (**rhetoric**). Let's get started!

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Reading Skills

Being a good reader takes practice, and it is vital to a range of other skills. If you miss the big ideas when you read, you cannot analyze or critique those ideas, identify the underlying messages, or respond to them thoughtfully in writing or conversation. These tips will help you read more effectively.

Vocabulary

If you see an unfamiliar word, take a minute to look up the definition and write it down. Not only will this improve your vocabulary, but it will help you avoid missing important details. Pay particular attention to words that have a different connotation now than they had when the book was written.

Characters

Keep a list of the main characters. Write down their names, a few defining characteristics, and their relationships with other characters. If you find a section that shows their character traits especially well, write down the page number.

Plot

Write down a skeletal outline of the book's plot. What happened, to whom, when, where, and how? Focus on turning points and revelations that were important to the plot's development.

Timeline

Keep a timeline of the major events in the book. This is especially useful if multiple subplots take place at the same time. You can also use a timeline to keep track of flashbacks or dream sequences.

Themes

Do you see a pattern in the problems that plague the characters? Is there some flaw that all the main characters share? Write it down. Also, if something in the book reminds you of another book or story you have read, jot down the page number(s) and the element(s) that seem similar.

Quotes

Does a character say something memorable? Underline or highlight it, or write down the page number and a few key words. When you write about or discuss the book, you will need evidence, and it is much easier to mark quotes as you go than to relocate specific passages when you need them.

Don't forget to read with a notebook or pad of sticky notes handy. If you own the book, margins are a great place to write, but make sure you use a bookmark so you can find your notes. Keep practicing these reading skills, and you will find your jobs as thinker, critic, and writer much easier as a result.

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UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE: *Genres*

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If you have ever seen a film adaptation of a book, you know that there is a marked difference between the two genres. Film versions rely heavily on action sequences and may extend battle or chase sequences beyond the scope of the book. Long passages of description must be recreated in visual form to the best of the director's ability. Dialogue is trimmed and patched to give it dramatic weight.

The reason for all these changes is that each genre has a different purpose, a different audience, and different conventions. Film, a visual medium, needs to capture the viewer's attention. Viewers cannot "put down" a movie at a theater. At home, if they turn it off, they are less likely to finish it later.

Books, on the other hand, can be read at one sitting or in chunks. The reader has to have enough description to create a mental picture of the story. If the author chooses, the reader can "see" the characters' inner thoughts and motivations but needs to be told about facial expressions or nervous twitches that an actor can portray on camera. Long action sequences may be hard to visualize in written form.

Just as there are different genres of media, there are also different genres within literature. Each one has certain conventions. Each one shares some characteristics with others, and each one is most effective for certain types of stories. It is important to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of different genres and to be able to evaluate how well an author utilizes his or her genre of choice.

Although it is important to remember that every work is distinct and may not fit neatly into one box, three broad, generally recognized categories of literature are poetry, drama, and prose.

Poetry

Poetry is one of the oldest recognized types of literature. Poetry is difficult to define because there are so many different types and styles, but a few general characteristics apply to most poems: 1) lines of poetry or verse are generally more compressed than lines of prose; 2) poetry has some type of internal structure, whether length of line, rhyme, meter, alliteration, or another device; and 3) poetry uses **symbolism** and imagery like **metaphors** and **similes** to create a a specific impression or image from each element in the poem.

Poems may be long or short, telling a story that takes place over fifty years or describing a single moment. Some poetry has a very strict form, in which the end of every line **rhymes** with the next one. Poetry can also have no rhyme at all. For example, **blank verse** has no rhymes, but it still has **meter**, or a regular number of accented syllables per line. **Free verse**

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does not have regular meter.

Styles of poetry have gone in and out of popularity in British literary history. In this guide, you will study several early types of poems: *Beowulf* is an Old English heroic epic; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a medieval romance poem; *The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of Middle English narrative poems; finally, *Paradise Lost* is a seventeenth-century epic poem.

Drama

Drama is another ancient genre, one that is closely related to poetry, as early dramas were written largely in verse form. In the Western tradition, the principles and characteristics of drama have their roots in classical Greece. Although drama can be in prose or poetry, it has several distinct features.

Drama is written to be performed by actors in front of a collective audience, although it can be read as literature. For this reason, drama has limited description and focuses on dialogue and action. Some dramas are written word for word, while others have limited scripting and allow the actors to improvise. Types of dramas include comedy, tragedy, history, romance, and satire.

Famous British dramatists include Marlowe, Shakespeare, Shaw, and many others. This collection does not include specific works of drama, but the features of drama have influenced modern stage and film adaptations of most of the works you will read.

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Prose

Prose fiction writing, in its commonly recognized forms (the novel, the short story), is one of the newest types of literature. Prose also includes nonfiction genres like biography and autobiography, as well as some dramas, but in this collection, you will read mostly novels and a few short stories. You will also read one biography, *Something Beautiful for God*.

The novel

A novel is recognizable as a lengthy work of prose fiction with a unified theme or storyline rather than a series of episodes, traditionally presenting realistic people and events. Because of its greater length, a novel may have multiple subplots and a variety of characters. Generally the **plot** is complex and may have twists or unexpected revelations. Modern novels are divided into chapters or sections.

Robinson Crusoe is sometimes considered the first true English novel. In addition to this early example of a novel, this guide will introduce you to a wide range of novels and novel derivatives, from social critiques to allegories, romances to children's novels.

The short story

In the nineteenth century, American writer Edgar Allan Poe was one of the first to define the short story form. He said a short story should be readable in one sitting and should produce

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a singular effect on the reader—usually a sense of horror, relief, or fear.

Not all short stories follow this model. However, the word "short," a loose term encompassing works from one paragraph to thirty or more pages in length, does have an effect on the scope of the genre. The plot must be relatively compact. Short stories often deal with a single, formative event in a character's life. Short stories are often limited to one **protagonist**. The focus of the story may be on the character's development, or the character may be a pawn in a sequence of larger events.

The short stories by Chesterton you will study in this collection are part of a specific category known as crime or detective stories.

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UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE: *Devices and Conventions*

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Every writer is different. Each author approaches his or her subject from a different angle. Some writers have a specific purpose in writing: a moral or lesson they want the reader to learn. Others write out of a love of words and wordplay. Sometimes the writer focuses on unusual or complex characters. The writer's main interest may be a historical setting or problem.

At the same time as you enjoy the overall effect of a book, take time to notice the techniques the writer uses to get his or her point across. You may be wondering why this is important. Think of it in terms of traveling.

If you fall asleep while you are riding with someone in the car, you may arrive at a destination without knowing how you got there. That may be fine if you are traveling with people who are going to the same place you are. If, however, you are on a train or bus, you may miss your stop and end up somewhere you don't want to be, with no idea how you got there or where you went wrong.

The same idea applies when you read a book. You probably do not know the author personally, and you will not always read books by people who share your beliefs or worldview. The author may want to convince you to believe a certain way, or the book may contain assumptions you don't share. If you don't notice where the book is taking you, you may reach conclusions you disagree with, but you may not know at what point you headed down that path. For this reason, it is important to "stay awake" while you read.

By learning more about styles and techniques of writing, you will be better equipped to evaluate the book's messages and decide whether or not to accept the worldview and philosophy it contains.

As you read each book, take into account the length of chapters, the genre of the book, and the overall style and sentence structure. Consider the effectiveness of the author's writing style in light of your response to the book. Always keep in mind that the book was composed by a person who wrote with a particular style and probably had a reason for writing that way.

This section introduces some of the devices and conventions used in a work of literature. The unique style of an author is largely determined by these elements, and these are the subtle tools a writer uses (in addition to characters, setting, and plot) to get a point across.

Content

Content is one of the first things you should notice. What type of writing does the author use the most? Most works contain some combination of description, exposition, and

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dialogue. Description refers to passages that give visual information about the setting or the characters. Exposition is when the narrator tells you what happens. It includes action, commentary, or the passage of time. Dialogue refers to the characters' speech and is usually indicated by quotation marks. Dialogue may also be internal, when a character speaks to himself or herself.

Some books use one type of content almost exclusively. Others contain an even balance of all three. Do you notice when an author switches from exposition to description? What is the effect of using dialogue rather than exposition to show events? Why does an author give you so much description of one character and so little for another? Think about what effect each type of writing produces.

Language

The tone and language of a work of literature can be familiar and colloquial, using slang and phonetic spelling to show accents (Mark Twain's writing is a good example). It can be formal, scholarly, or even jumbled and confused. As you read, ask yourself questions about the author's use of language. Does the author use big words to describe scenes? Are there a lot of ambiguous or vague words?

Books are written deliberately, and characters are presented to create a definite impression. In general, every detail that is given about a character has some significance. Do the characters seem well-educated? Do all of them seem equally credible? If not, why not? If the characters philosophize or present a moral principle, do you take them seriously? Be aware of the way a character is described, what his or her physical and emotional traits are, and how he or she speaks.

Just as movies encourage you to cheer for a particular character, books also present some characters as more sympathetic than others. Language and voice have a lot to do with the way you, the reader, perceive the characters, the setting, and the message of each work.

Tense

Although most books are written in the past tense ("It was a dark and stormy night," "Once upon a time there was a princess"), the author chooses which dominant verb tense to use. Even within one tense, the author can use subtle changes to indicate continuous problems, distant versus recent past, and uncertainty. Each tense tells you something a little bit different.

Past tense can give you a sense of expectation or of building tension leading up to some great discovery or revelation. For example, *Jane Eyre* is told in the past tense. In that case, the narrator (Jane) is giving you background information that leads up to her present situation. Present tense might give you a greater sense of immediacy and involvement in the book. It would also give you less certainty about what is going to happen.

A book written in past tense tells you there is a definite ending. You know that the narrator, at least, has seen the end of the story. A book in present tense could stop unfinished or change narrators abruptly if something happens to the original one. When you read, take note of the main verb tense and ways verb tense influences the way you think about the narrator and about the outcome of the plot.

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Perspective/Narrator

Some books have a clearly defined narrator. You know who is telling the story, what his or her role is in the story, and what he or she knows. Sometimes, however, the scenario is not as clear. The voice of the narrator may be distant and impersonal, or it may address the reader directly. Remember, even if the narrator is generic and impersonal, a narrator still exists. Someone is telling the story, and it is frequently someone other than the author.

The most basic concept of narration is "person." **First person** narration uses "I" and "we" to tell the story. For example, "I saw two hundred pirates approaching the beach." First person tells you that the narrator is experiencing or relating these events firsthand. If you see a first person narrator, ask yourself what the narrator reveals about himself or herself, and what his or her role is in the story.

Second person narration uses "you" to tell the story. For example, "You see two hundred pirates rushing toward you." Second person places you, the reader, in the story. Second person narration is very rare (one example is the young adult series *Choose Your Own Adventure*). Occasionally, however, a first or third person narrator will break into second person to address the reader directly. This strategy can be used to draw the reader into the plot, make a side comment, point out something the characters do not notice, or ask the reader to consider something personally.

The most common narration is **third person**, which uses "he," "she," "it," and "they." Third person removes both the reader and the narrator from the story and makes them outside observers rather than participants. Third person narration can be from the perspective of one of the characters, showing only what that character sees and going where he or she goes. It can also be impartial and jump from character to character.

The perspective may be **omniscient** (all-knowing) or **limited**. If the perspective is limited, the narrator knows only what one character knows. If the narration is from the perspective of a particular character, only that character's thoughts are written down. If the perspective is omniscient, the narrator can see everything that is happening, including things the characters cannot see or know. An omniscient narrator may also have access to the thoughts of multiple characters.

A **limited perspective** can lend a greater sense of mystery, while an omniscient perspective can create a sense of impending doom by showing the reader something the characters should see but cannot. An omniscient narrator can also create **irony** by revealing contradictions.

Remember, sometimes a book will combine several different types of perspective and narration. When you see the perspective change, ask yourself why it is changing, and what effect the new style has on the story's content.

Mood/Tone

The author creates mood or tone primarily through description and language. The setting also plays a significant role. Ask yourself how settings are described, including lighting, weather, cleanliness, and age or state of repair. Does everything take place in a darkened, ramshackle mansion? Does it rain a lot? Is nature portrayed as threatening, neutral, or pleasant? You will need to decide if descriptions are an attempt to portray a real setting

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accurately, or if they are symbolic.

Characters contribute to the mood or tone of a piece. Some characters are optimistic; others are pessimistic. If bad things always happen to the cheerful characters, how likely is it that the story will have a happy ending? At the end, are you left with a sense of hope? If so, why? The author can create mood by selecting the order of events, the characters' reactions to events, and the introductory or concluding scenes of the chapter or the book.

Finally, word choice also influences mood. A house may be shadowy and dark, or it may be gloomy and ominous. One description is relatively neutral; the other has negative connotations. In the same way, "happy" and "gleeful" might describe the same emotion, but they create very different tones. One style of writing that uses word choice to produce a certain effect is **satire**. By treating serious issues in a flippant manner or silly issues seriously, satires use humor to make a point.

Purpose

From all of these conventions and devices, you can begin to estimate the underlying purpose and worldview of the book. The possibilities are endless. The purpose of the book could be profit, moral training, social change, historical documentation, aesthetics (the pursuit of beauty), or personal fulfillment. The author could be proposing a different worldview, promoting social reform, working through an event in his or her past, or correcting a historical inaccuracy.

Keep in mind that this process is largely guesswork. Unless you have spoken to the author personally, you cannot know what he or she intended, and sometimes an author may be unaware of the attitudes and ideas the book reveals. However, you can evaluate the content and effects of the book and speculate about the author's intent. This exercise is also a good reminder that worldview has a tendency to show up in what you produce, with or without a conscious decision to put it in.

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Writing Refinement

Sometimes it is easy to confuse good writing with vague writing or with using a lot of big words, but it is possible to write with refinement without sounding like a dictionary. There are a variety of ways to enhance your skills as a writer. (One of the best ways is to spend a lot of time reading because you will be able to see what is effective and what is not.) This collection introduces you to a few technical and analytic skills that will help you get started.

Three keys to good writing are clarity, precision, and sophistication. Clarity means you avoid using more words than you need to make your point. You say what you mean instead of rambling. Precision means you say exactly what you mean, nothing more and nothing less. You choose the best possible word to represent your intended meaning. Sophistication means you have a wide vocabulary, and you use varied sentence structure and transitions. You explain and use examples, you use appropriate terminology correctly, and you integrate quotations smoothly.

Practicing Clarity, Precision, and Sophistication

Sometimes native English speakers learn to write by instinct ("it sounds right!") rather than by a solid knowledge of English grammar. As you work to become a clearer, more sophisticated writer, it is a great time to go back and review the basics. One trait that distinguishes good writers from competent ones is the ability to use different types of sentences. Before you can do that, you will need to understand how sentences work. This section is not a thorough guide to English grammar, but it will help you identify some of the core concepts related to sentence structure. If one of the concepts or terms in this section is not clear to you, consider stopping to consult a grammar book before you continue.

There are four types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.

A **simple sentence** has one independent clause. An independent clause can stand by itself; it has a subject and a verb and does not rely on another clause to make a complete thought.

Example: *The book was short.*

A **compound sentence** has two or more independent clauses linked together by a semicolon or a coordinating conjunction like "and," "so," or "but."

Example: *The book was short, so I read it quickly.*

A **complex sentence** has one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. A dependent clause, as the name suggests, is not complete on its own. It has a subject and verb, but it is linked to another clause by a subordinating conjunction like "when," "because," or "if."

Example: *The book was short because it was a children's book.*

A **compound-complex** sentence has at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

Example: *The book was short because it was a children's book, so I read it quickly.*

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Every clause within a sentence follows one of seven possible sentence patterns:

S-V*i* (subject + intransitive verb)
Example: *The boy ran.*

S-V*t*-DO (subject + transitive verb + direct object)
Example: *The hero killed the dragon.*

S-V*l*-PN (subject + linking verb + predicate nominative)
Example: *The writer was Charles Dickens.*

S-V*l*-PA (subject + linking verb + predicate adjective)
Example: *The character is honest.*

S-V*t*-IO-DO (subject + transitive verb + indirect object + direct object)
Example: *The stranger gave her an apple.*

S-V*t*-DO-OCN (subject + transitive verb + direct object + object complement noun)
Example: *The good fairy made the servant a princess.*

S-V*t*-DO-OCA (subject + transitive verb + direct object + object complement adjective)
Example: *The attention made him proud.*

When you read, stop periodically and test your ability to identify different types of sentences. As you write, make it your goal to use different sentence structures. Remember, it is great to be able to write "naturally," without thinking about grammar rules; however, if you ever want to teach someone else how to write, explain why a sentence is or is not grammatically correct, or accurately edit your own writing, it is important to understand the mechanics of writing as well.

Citing Sources

When you cite (quote or paraphrase) a work of literature in an essay, it is important, as with any other source, to give proper attribution. Writers and researchers put a lot of time into their work, and they deserve recognition for that effort. In academics, failure to give proper credit is called plagiarism. Plagiarism includes copying and pasting information from the Internet, paraphrasing or directly quoting someone else's words without giving them credit, and claiming someone else's ideas as your own.

There are several ways to use research correctly. You can use an author's words exactly, but you must use quotation marks. You can also paraphrase the author's words. Paraphrasing does not mean simply changing a word or two; it means completely rewriting the information in your own words **and** sentence structure. Whether you paraphrase or quote, you must include citations.

For writing about literature, the most common style for citations is from the Modern Language Association (MLA). MLA style uses a Works Cited page at the end of the paper, which contains full bibliographical information for each book, and parenthetical citations within the body of the paper, which give the author's last name—or title, if the author is unknown—and the page number of the quoted or paraphrased material.[2]

[2]*MLA Handbook* (see www.mla.org) is the best source for detailed information about this citation style.

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The Works Cited entries are alphabetized by the author's last name, and each entry gives the author's name, the title of the work, the location of the publishing company, the publisher's name, and the date of publication (found on the copyright page of most books). When you cite a complete, stand-alone work, like a novel or play, the title should be in italics. If you cite part of a larger collection, like a story or poem, the title of the story should be in quotation marks, and it should be followed by the title of the collection in italics.

If you choose not to paraphrase, and instead you use the same words and sentence structure as the original, you need to put the information in quotation marks. If you take out part of a quote to save space or because it's not relevant to your argument, you should use an ellipsis [...] to notify readers that you have modified the original and to indicate where material is missing.

In addition to these general guidelines for citations, quoting literature brings up a few unique concerns. Sometimes a quote from literature will include dialogue. Use single quotation marks ' ' for the dialogue within the quote and normal quotation marks " " for the outside of the quotation.

See the following example for a demonstration of correct citations:

> In the text: "'They are indeed,' said Professor Godbole. 'Such affability is seldom seen.'" (Forster 67).
>
> Works Cited entry: Forster, E.M. *A Passage to India*. Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest, 1989.

If you quote a poem, formatting the poem as it appears on the page takes up a lot of room. Instead, unless you are quoting more than four lines, use a backslash (/) to indicate line breaks. Because the whole poem may be on the same page, whenever possible your parenthetical citation should give the line numbers for your quote. If you cite the same poem multiple times, uses "lines" in the parenthetical the first time, and then shorten it to "ll." See the following example:

> "So The Spear-Danes in days gone by / and the kings who ruled them had courage and greatness" (*Beowulf* lines 1-2).

Remember, although these particular rules are arbitrary and apply mainly to academic writing, tailoring your writing to a specified format is the same skill needed to write memos and reports, letters of application, resumes, grant proposals, newspaper articles, and many other writing tasks.

Analyzing Influences

There is more to writing than having good grammar and style (the mechanics of writing), although those are certainly important. Content—what you write—is even more important. As you become comfortable reading classic literature, you should begin to focus on ideas. Try not to treat all essays as book reports; instead, think of writing as starting a conversation with the author and the text. To do that, you have to read with depth and breadth.

Reading with depth means asking, what assumptions does this book make? How does it convey ideas? How is it structured? What devices does the author use, and to what effect?

Reading with breadth means asking, how does this book relate to other books? What

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outside influences and ideas does it reflect? Literature is not written in a vacuum. What that means is that literature is never completely free of the conditions in which it was created. Authors and their texts can interact with society in several ways: a work of literature can support social conventions either implicitly or explicitly; it can critique social conventions; it can also reject those conventions and attempt to establish its own. (This last category often appears in works of science fiction or fantasy.)

Looking at the social and cultural influences on a literary work sometimes requires background research. It is highly unlikely that you know the precise social conditions, for example, when *The Canterbury Tales* was written. However, if you go to the library or the Internet, you can find plenty of information about class identity and the reworking of social divisions in fourteenth-century England.

You might be surprised by the portrayal of slavery as natural in *Robinson Crusoe*, but after researching the history of slavery, you might find that it did not become illegal in England until 1772, years after Defoe's novel was published. While social customs may not excuse the treatment of slaves portrayed in literature, it can help to explain it.

After all, literature cannot help mirroring some of what is normal in society. As a conscientious reader, it is always wise to be aware of the conditions in which a piece of literature was written. Great literature can apply to modern situations, but each work was written in a specific context. As a sophisticated writer, you should take into account themes and ideas that were influential to the author.

Comparing Ideas

Not only do books relate to historical and social movements, but they also respond to other works of literature. Think about your own culture. What movies have produced sequels, spin-offs, and parodies? What characters and settings have name recognition even among people who haven't read the book or seen the movie?

Now apply those questions to classic literature. Some novels are written as a modern retelling or a critical rewrite of another book. Others quote or reference an earlier work. Sometimes two books approach the same issue from opposite directions, and sometimes they approach different issues from the same perspective.

For example, two books set during World War II might have very different perspectives if they were written by a German author and a British author. Sometimes a different genre shapes two books that would otherwise be very similar. You can learn a lot by finding the links—and distinctions—between two works of literature.

In addition, comparison is a prime opportunity to dissect an author's style. If two authors take on the same core idea, they will not produce the same work because each one has a unique writing style.

Finally, by comparing and contrasting two different works on the same subject, you can gain valuable insight into the way information can be interpreted differently based on your philosophy and worldview. Whether you like it or not, assumptions influence conclusions. Even in literature, authors' perspectives tend to give a particular slant to each topic they put on paper.

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Applying Critical Lenses

Looking at the world "through rose-colored glasses" is a common way of saying someone always sees things as better than they really are. The phrase has a figurative meaning, but it is based on a real phenomenon: wearing a pair of tinted sunglasses can make you see the world differently as the distinction between certain colors fades or vanishes entirely. In the same way, when you read a novel, the "lens" through which you read has a real impact on what you see in the book.

Part of your "lens" as a reader is involuntary—based on your worldview, your experiences, and your preconceptions—and part of it is a choice of what interests you. Think about being in a book club or discussing a book with a friend. Some people are passionate about defending the actions of their favorite character. Others are interested in the way a book fits into its historical context, or in the details the author leaves out or brushes over.

People who study or teach literature do the same thing: they choose to focus on specific features of literature when they read based on what they find interesting or compelling. If you take a literature course in college or join a literature discussion group, you may be asked to think about the "lens" through which you read. First and foremost, identifying your own "lens" will make you a stronger, more conscientious reader. In addition, studying the lenses other literary critics have used will give you insight into the perspectives you may encounter in a conversation about literature.

As with any new vocabulary, you may find that you have been using the concepts already without knowing it. Remember, there is no master list of critical approaches, and new methods are developed all the time. The following three—Marxist, feminist/multicultural, and historicist—will give you a sample to get you started.

Marxist criticism pays attention to the underlying class struggle in a work of literature. Marx thought that art and literature reflect the society in which they were created, especially economic attitudes. Marxist criticism focuses on the portrayal of different economic classes. Does the book support the dominance of the middle and upper classes, or are you encouraged to sympathize with the lower, working classes? Does the book imply that social hierarchies are logical and natural, or does it point out their problems and contradictions?

Feminist and multicultural criticisms pay attention to the experiences of people groups in a work of literature (whether divided by race, gender, nation, or ethnicity). They focus on the way these groups are portrayed and how much or little power they have. Feminist criticism looks at the way the roles of women are reinforced or challenged by works of literature. Multicultural criticism emphasizes the way other cultural groups are empowered or minimized.

Historicist criticism pays attention to the history surrounding the creation of literature. It treats the literary work as a historical artifact and focuses on events that may have influenced the author's concerns or perspectives. Historicism looks at the circumstances at the time the book was written and draws parallels between the history and the resulting literature.

One, all, or none of these methods may match your interests, but even if you disagree with all of these approaches, being aware of the vocabulary of literary criticism will give you new ways to talk about literature with all different kinds of people, from scholars to coworkers, family, and friends.

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Although these are secular categories of analysis, the underlying ideas of each of them can be compatible with a Christian worldview. The breakdown of relationships between rich and poor, advantaged and disadvantaged, and men and women is a clear sign of this world's imperfections. Analyzing different cultures in literature can reveal the diversity and beauty of creation and the people in it. Finally, history and literature are different types of expression, but each of them shows an important piece of the greater story of failure and redemption.

Using the Vocabulary

Every field has its own vocabulary. Much of the vocabulary of literary analysis is derived from everyday terms. Some words, however, have a different meaning when they are used in the context of literature. If you practice using the following words when you discuss literature, you will not only improve your vocabulary, but you will become a more precise, sophisticated writer in the process.

A word of caution: using big words does not make you a good writer, especially if you use them incorrectly. Special terminology is valuable when it is used sparsely, correctly, and only as needed.

These terms appear in **bold** in the rest of this book. Here, each word is defined and used in a sentence. If it is a literary technique, 1) the word is defined, 2) an example is given, and 3) the term is used in a sentence, as it might be in an essay about literature.

Literary Analysis Glossary

Allegory — A story with two levels of meaning, one that is literal, and one in which the characters, places, and events stand for something outside the story.

The Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory for the struggles a Christian undergoes on his or her journey through life.

Alliteration – When several words in a line use the same initial consonant sound or repeat the same vowel sound. This technique was used instead of or alongside rhyming in Old and Middle English poetry.

"The walls breached and burnt down to brands and ashes." From *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Part 1. Here the sound "b" is emphasized repeatedly.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight uses alliteration to emphasize key words in the poem.

Allusion – An indirect reference to another literary work or historical figure or event. Sometimes the reference is to a character; other times it refers to a famous line or quotation.

"Strong wind, earthquake-shock, and fire may pass by: but I shall follow the guiding of that still small voice which interprets the dictates of conscience." From Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, chapter 19.

In this passage, Jane alludes to the "still small voice" mentioned in 1 Kings 19:11-12.

Antagonist – A character who opposes the hero of the story. Often, the antagonist shows the hero's character by contrast.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, traditional literary roles are switched because Screwtape takes

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the role of the protagonist, and the Enemy (God) is the literary antagonist.

Blank verse – Poetry that has meter (a set number of accented syllables per line) but not rhyme.

"The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n." From Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 1.

Milton defended his use of blank verse, calling rhyme "the invention of a barbarous age."

Bob and wheel – One line of two (occasionally three) syllables followed by four short rhyming lines. This device appears at the conclusion of stanzas in later Middle English poetry.

"most fair. / Where war and wrack and wonder / By shifts have sojourned there, / And bliss by turns with blunder / In that land's lot had share." From *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Part 1.

The bob and wheel with which each stanza of *Sir Gawain* concludes often summarizes or reflects on the contents of the rest of the stanza.

Caesura – A grammatical pause or physical break in a line of poetry, which was used to divide the line in Old English and some Middle English poetry. A caesura (plural, caesurae or caesuras) is often symbolized by this mark: ||

"Sigemund's glory || grew and grew." From *Beowulf*, in a free-spoken poem told by a thane in King Hrothgar's court.

The poems told by members of the court in *Beowulf* are divided by caesurae, a common device in alliterative poems.

Climax – The height of tension or turning point in a story, when the book moves from building to resolving conflict.

In *The Hobbit*, the tensions between Bilbo, the dwarves, and the elves build until they reach a climax just before the Battle of Five Armies.

Conflict – Tensions or difficulties faced by the characters in a story. Conflict can be internal, like personal doubts, or external, like physical obstacles or enemies.

Charles Darnay's and Sydney Carton's mutual love for Lucie in *A Tale of Two Cities* is a consistent source of conflict between the two characters.

Epic poem — A long narrative poem about the life of a heroic figure, usually dealing with the struggle between good and evil and including other distinct features like a twelve-part structure, extensive battles, and lists of weapons and armor.

Milton composed *Paradise Lost* to tell the Christian story in the form of an epic poem.

First person – A grammatical structure in which the narrator uses the pronouns "I" or "we" to personally tell the story.

"Music and silence—how I detest them both!" From C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.

Because C.S. Lewis's Screwtape speaks to the reader in first person, the reader becomes privy to Screwtape's most personal thoughts about God and man.

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Foreshadowing – An event that hints at something that will happen later.

The dwarves' unwillingness to tell the Elvenking about the treasure, even if it means imprisonment, foreshadows the battle that will arise over ownership of the treasure.

Framework story – A story containing another story. Sometimes the inner story is told by a character in the frame story; sometimes the inner story is a play or story read or viewed by characters in the frame story.

The framework story in *The Canterbury Tales* is a group of pilgrims telling each other stories as they ride along the road to Canterbury.

Free verse – Poetry that lacks regular meter and, often, rhyme as well.

"Roses are planted where thorns grow, / And on the barren heath / Sing the honey bees." From William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

Modern poetry is often written in free verse, so the poet is not tied down to specific forms.

Irony – An event, situation, action, or statement that reveals inconsistency, in which reality and appearance are different.

An atheist cries "Oh God!" when a tornado strikes.

It is ironic that Robinson Crusoe joins an expedition to buy slaves when he himself has recently escaped from slavery.

Kenning – A poetic name for a person, place, or thing, which consists of several descriptive words often joined by a hyphen. This technique was specifically used in Old English epic poetry.

"So the guardian of the mound, / the hoard-watcher, waited for the gloaming." From Beowulf.

In *Beowulf*, "Guardian of the mound" and "hoard-watcher" are kennings for the dragon.

Limited Perspective – When the narrator follows one character's perspective. Sometimes limited perspective also means the narrator cannot go inside the character's head or know his or her thoughts.

Pride and Prejudice is told in limited perspective from Elizabeth Bennet's point of view.

Metaphor – An implicit comparison between two things, or between a character or event and a broader theme, concept, or idea.

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the women knitting under the guillotine are a metaphor for the French Revolutionary society, which existed under the perpetual shadow of death.

Meter – The rhythm of a poem, as conveyed by the number of (emphasized) syllables in a line. Meter consists of the type of "foot" or pattern of stresses, and the number of feet in a line.

"I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell." From Shakespeare, *King Lear*, act 2, scene 4.

Most of Shakespeare's plays are written in the same meter: iambic pentameter.

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Narrator – The "voice" telling the story. Sometimes, but not always, the narrator is a character. The narrator can speak in first, second, or third person, and in past, present, or future tense.

The narrator of Forster's *A Passage to India* occasionally speaks to the reader in first person, indicating moments when the author wants to point out a broader social principle.

Omniscient Perspective – When the narrator is not limited to one character's point of view, but sees the larger picture. This term can also refer to a narrator who can see and know things that the characters do not, or who can see inside the characters' thoughts and emotions.

Because the narrator is omniscient in *A Tale of Two Cities*, readers see a bigger picture than the characters do.

Plot – The events or course of action that moves a story along.

Although the characters are complex, the basic plot of *Animal Farm* is relatively simple: a group of animals take over a farm, and their original communal spirit eventually disappears.

Point of view – The angle from which a story is told. Sometimes a narrator tells the story about characters, and sometimes a character tells his or her own story. Sometimes the story only follows what one character sees, and sometimes it jumps from character to character.

Because *Jane Eyre* is told from Jane's point of view, the reader does not know anything about the source of the mysterious laughter until Jane finds out.

Protagonist – The main character of a book, who is usually viewed in a positive light.

Since there are multiple main characters in Forster's novel, it is difficult to pinpoint the protagonist of *A Passage to India*.

Pun – A play on words that makes a subtle joke using words that sound the same but have different meanings.

"'Mine is a long and a sad tale!' said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing. 'It is a long tail, certainly,' said Alice." From Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*.

The characters in *Alice in Wonderland* repeatedly create puns on words like "tail" and "tale."

Rhyme – Two words that sound the same. In poetry, rhyme is often used to mark the end of a line.

"Whan that April with his showres soote / The droughte of March hath perced to the roote." From Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, The General Prologue (Middle English version).

One of the difficulties of translating poetry is staying true to the original rhyme patterns.

Satire - A way of criticizing an idea or person by exaggerating their troubling characteristics to create humor, but with the ultimate goal of producing reform.

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In "A Modest Proposal," Swift satirizes callous discussions of poverty by suggesting that poor children be killed to feed the rich.

Second Person – A grammatical structure using the pronoun "you," which places the reader within the story's action.

"You will find that a good many Christian-political writers think that Christianity began going wrong and departing from the doctrine of its Founder, at a very early stage." From C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter 23.

Because C.S. Lewis's Screwtape addresses the reader in second person, the reader becomes another recipient of Screwtape's twisted advice to Wormwood.

Simile – An explicit comparison between two things, signified by the words "like," "as," or "than."

"All the same it was like trying to ride, without bridle or stirrups, a round-bellied pony that was always thinking of rolling on the grass." From J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*.

Bilbo uses similes to describe his experience helping the dwarves escape the elves' palace.

Stanza – A segment of a poem, like a chapter in a book, composed of two or more lines. Stanzas generally have a consistent rhyme scheme or meter.

Each stanza of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ends with a bob and wheel pattern.

Symbolism – The use of objects or characters to represent ideas.

It is symbolic that in the film version of *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs. Bennet is often shown in between images of fluttering and squawking chickens.

Third Person – A grammatical structure, using the pronouns "he/she," "it," and "they" as subjects.

"The animals hated Moses because he told tales and did not work, but some of them believed in Sugarcandy Mountain." From George Orwell, *Animal Farm*.

Third person is the least involved "voice" and the most common in novels.

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Beowulf

Author Unknown

Beowulf is one of very few surviving works from Anglo-Saxon, or Old English, literature. The author is unknown. The poem, which recounts the deeds of the hero Beowulf, is set in fifth or sixth century Scandinavia, but it was probably written in the eighth or ninth century in what is now England. The text was found in the *Cotton Vitellius A. xv* manuscript, also called the Nowell Codex after the earliest known owner. Although the original manuscript is housed in the British Library, several translations are available; one of the best was prepared by twentieth-century Irish poet Seamus Heaney.

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UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE: *Genre*

The heroic poem *Beowulf* is one of the first major works of literature in English. Nonetheless, you will read it in translation. Like any language, English has developed and changed over time. As a result, Old English is very different from the English spoken today, and modern readers would recognize few of the words.

Poems like *Beowulf* have much in common with oral narratives, stories that a bard or poet would recite to the nobility or to travelers along the road. The structure of *Beowulf*, like many Old English poems, is based on **alliteration** and **caesura** instead of **rhyme** and **meter**. In another technique common to Old English poetry, *Beowulf* uses multiple **kennings** to describe significant characters. Modern English translations may not re-create these characteristics precisely, but most keep the alliteration intact.

Beowulf is a heroic **epic poem**. Epic poetry, which has its roots in Greece, has many distinct characteristics. The following list gives some of the most recognizable. Keep in mind that not every epic poem includes all of these characteristics because the list was created after the poems in order to group and categorize them. In general, though, an epic poem:

Begins with the invocation of a muse or guiding spirit.

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Begins in the middle of the action (*in medias res*).

Includes the statement of a theme.

Has a hero with superhuman qualities and almost godlike characteristics.

Lists and describes the hero's armor and weapons.

Contains extensive battle sequences.

Has a wide scope and usually covers the entire length of a hero's life.

Deals with the struggle between good and evil.

Has a 12-part structure.

As you read, think about which of these characteristics *Beowulf* fulfills. Which does it not fulfill? *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton, is also an epic, and *The Lord of the Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien, has been called a popular epic. If you have read these books, do you think they should be classified as epics? Why or why not?

Review Questions

1. Who were some of the good kings of the Spear-Danes?
2. What was done to Shield Sheafson's [Scyld-Scefing] body when he died?
3. What was the name of King Hrothgar's mead hall?
4. Who or what attacked the king's hall?
5. Who came to Hrothgar's aid?
6. With what weapons did Beowulf plan to fight Grendel?
7. How did Unferth challenge Beowulf at the feast? How did Beowulf respond?
8. Why could Beowulf's fellow warriors not injure Grendel?
9. How did Grendel die? What did he leave behind?
10. What did Hrothgar give Beowulf as tokens of his appreciation?
11. Who came to avenge Grendel?
12. Where did Grendel and his mother live?
13. Who gave Beowulf a sword to use against the monsters?
14. How did Beowulf kill Grendel's mother?
15. What advice did Hrothgar give Beowulf?
16. How did Beowulf gain the throne of the Geats? What disrupted the peace of his rule?
17. What had provoked the monster to anger?
18. Why did Beowulf choose to face the monster alone?
19. What was the result of Beowulf's battle with the monster?
20. What did Beowulf's comrades do during the battle?
21. Who stood by Beowulf?
22. What did Beowulf want to see before he died?
23. What did the Geats do with Beowulf's body?

Thought Questions

24. "Behavior that's admired is the path to power among people everywhere." Do you agree?
25. Grendel was described as a descendant of Cain. Why is this **allusion** significant?
26. When Beowulf arrived, his company was met by a warrior. If the warrior talked so courteously to armed strangers on his land, what does this tell you about the culture he represented?

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27. Why do you think Beowulf felt obliged to help King Hrothgar defeat Grendel?
28. The men are called "a right people" because they were always ready to defend their lord. Is this same standard applicable today?
29. "It is always better to avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning." Do you agree?
30. What kind of person is Unferth? What is his relationship to Beowulf?
31. Beowulf is said to have fought for "the glory of winning." Is this a noble reason? Discuss.
32. What made Beowulf a hero? Was he perfect? If not, why not?
33. What is the role of God in *Beowulf*?
34. If you have seen the 2007 movie version of *Beowulf*, what are some of the differences? Why do you think the writers, directors, and producers took those liberties?

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WRITING REFINEMENT: *Practicing Clarity, Precision, and Sophistication*

Keep in mind that there are many different ways to say the same thing. Rewriting sentences to use different structures and patterns will make you a stronger and more interesting writer. Take a look at the following example:

Example: Beowulf destroys the monster that is killing King Hrothgar's people.

Variation: When a monster attacks King Hrothgar's people, Beowulf answers the king's call for help.

Start by identifying the main kernel of the sentence (the subjects and verbs).

Example: Beowulf destroys ~~the~~ monster ~~that is killing King Hrothgar's people~~.

Variation: When ~~a~~ monster attacks ~~King Hrothgar's~~ people, Beowulf answers ~~the king's~~ call ~~for help~~.

Once you have eliminated the modifiers, you will see that the original sentence is a **simple sentence** (it has one independent clause), and it is an example of an **S-V*t*-DO** sentence pattern. The variation turns the sentence into a **complex sentence** (it has a dependent clause followed by an independent clause). The dependent and independent clauses are still in the **S-V*t*-DO** pattern.

Now it's your turn. For each of the following sentences, identify the sentence structure and the sentence pattern(s) of the original, and then rewrite each sentence using a different structure and/or pattern. Feel free to break the idea into two or more sentences to experiment with different lengths.

1. *Beowulf* is an Old English poem by an anonymous author about a Scandinavian hero.
2. *Beowulf* is an epic poem because, for example, it has a hero with superhuman qualities.
3. Beowulf defeats Grendel and his mother, but he is ultimately killed by the dragon.

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Selections from

The Canterbury Tales

Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343-1400) was born into the rising middle class in fourteenth-century England. During his lifetime, Chaucer held a variety of civil service roles. He worked as a diplomat for King Edward, and he was a customs official for a London port. Later in life, he was a justice of the peace and a Member of Parliament. Chaucer's occupations brought him into contact with people from all social classes. These experiences are reflected in his poetry. One of his most famous works is *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of poetic tales written in the late 1300s.

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UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE: *Devices and Conventions*

Language contributes to the mood of literature, but it also develops characters and gives them credibility—or takes it away. One character whom you may not always notice, but whose voice is also influenced by language, is the narrator.

Look at the following passages (in translation) describing the knight and the squire. Write down your impression of each character. Then look at the words used to describe that person. Underline the words that contributed to your impression. What do you learn about the narrator from these descriptions? Circle words that contribute to your impression of the narrator.

KNIGHT

> Of mortal battles he had fought fifteen,
> And he'd fought for our faith at Tramissene
> Three times in duels, always killed his foe.
> This self-same worthy knight had been also
> At one time with the lord of Palatye
> Against another heathen in Turkey:
> And always won he widespread fame for prize.

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SQUIRE

Some twenty years of age he was, I guess.
In stature he was of average length,
Wondrously active, agile, and great of strength.
He'd ridden sometime with the cavalry
In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardy,
And conducted well within that little space
In hope to win thereby his lady's grace.

Prologue

	Here bygynneth the Book of the Tales of Caunterbury	Here begins the Book of the Tales of Canterbury
1	Whan that aprill with his shoures soote	When April with his showers sweet with fruit
2	The droghte of march hath perced to the roote,	The drought of March has pierced unto the root,
3	And bathed every veyne in swich licour	And bathed each vein with liquor that has power
4	Of which vertu engendred is the flour;	To generate therein and sire the flower;
5	Whan zephirus eek with his sweete breeth	When Zephyr also has, with his sweet breath,
6	Inspired hath in every holt and heeth	Quickened again, in every holt and heath,
7	Tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne	The tender shoots and buds, and the young sun
8	Hath in the ram his halve cours yronne,	Into the Ram one half his course has run,
9	And smale foweles maken melodye,	And many little birds make melody
10	That slepen al the nyght with open ye	That sleep through all the night with open eye
11	(so priketh hem nature in hir corages);	(So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage)—
12	Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,	Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage,
13	And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,	And palmers to go seeking out strange strands,
14	To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;	To distant shrines well known in sundry lands.
15	And specially from every shires ende	And specially from every shire's end
16	Of engelond to caunterbury they wende,	Of England they to Canterbury wend,
17	The hooly blisful martir for to seke,	The holy blessed martyr there to seek
18	That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.	Who helped them when they lay so ill and sick.
19	Bifil that in that seson on a day,	Befell that, in that season, on a day
20	In southwerk at the tabard as I lay	In Southwark, at the Tabard, as I lay
21	Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage	Ready to start upon my pilgrimage
22	To caunterbury with ful devout corage,	To Canterbury, full of devout homage,
23	At nyght was come into that hostelrye	There came at nightfall to that hostelry
24	Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye,	Some nine and twenty in a company
25	Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle	Of sundry persons who had chanced to fall

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26	In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,	In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all
27	That toward caunterbury wolden ryde.	That toward Canterbury town would ride.
28	The chambres and the stables weren wyde,	The rooms and stables spacious were and wide,
29	And wel we weren esed atte beste.	And well we there were eased, and of the best.
30	And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,	And briefly, when the sun had gone to rest,
31	So hadde I spoken with hem everichon	So had I spoken with them, every one,
32	That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,	That I was of their fellowship anon,
33	And made forward erly for to ryse,	And made agreement that we'd early rise
34	To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.	To take the road, as you I will apprise.
35	But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,	But none the less, whilst I have time and space,
36	Er that I ferther in this tale pace,	Before yet farther in this tale I pace,
37	Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun	It seems to me accordant with reason
38	To telle yow al the condicioun	To inform you of the state of every one
39	Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,	Of all of these, as it appeared to me,
40	And whiche they weren, and of what degree,	And who they were, and what was their degree,
41	And eek in what array that they were inne;	And even how arrayed there at the inn;
42	And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.	And with a knight thus will I first begin.

SAMPLE

The Knight's Tale

	The Knight's Portrait	The Knight
43	A knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,	A knight there was, and he a worthy man,
44	That fro the tyme that he first bigan	Who, from the moment that he first began
45	To riden out, he loved chivalrie,	To ride about the world, loved chivalry,
46	Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.	Truth, honour, freedom and all courtesy.
47	Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,	Full worthy was he in his leige-lord's war,
48	And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,	And therein had he ridden (none more far)
49	As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,	As well in Christendom as heathenesse,
50	And evere honoured for his worthynesse.	And honoured everywhere for worthiness.
51	At alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.	At Alexandria, he, when it was won;
52	Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne	Full oft the table's roster he'd begun

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53	Aboven alle nacions in pruce;	Above all nations' knights in Prussia.
54	In lettow hadde he reysed and in ruce,	In Latvia raided he, and Russia,
55	No cristen man so ofte of his degree.	No christened man so oft of his degree.
56	In gernade at the seege eek hadde he be	In far Granada at the siege was he
57	Of algezir, and riden in belmarye.	Of Algeciras, and in Belmarie.
58	At lyeys was he and at satalye,	At Ayas was he and at Satalye
59	Whan they were wonne; and in the grete see	When they were won; and on the Middle Sea
60	At many a noble armee hadde he be.	At many a noble meeting chanced to be.
61	At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,	Of mortal battles he had fought fifteen,
62	And foughten for oure feith at tramyssene	And he'd fought for our faith at Tramissene
63	In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.	Three times in lists, and each time slain his foe.
64	This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also	This self-same worthy knight had been also
65	Somtyme with the lord of palatye	At one time with the lord of Palatye
66	Agayn another hethen in turkye.	Against another heathen in Turkey:
67	And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys;	And always won he sovereign fame for prize.
68	And though that he were worthy, he was wys,	Though so illustrious, he was very wise
69	And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.	And bore himself as meekly as a maid.
70	He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde	He never yet had any vileness said,
71	In al his lyf unto no maner wight.	In all his life, to whatsoever wight.
72	He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.	He was a truly perfect, gentle knight.
73	But, for to tellen yow of his array,	But now, to tell you all of his array,
74	His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.	His steeds were good, but yet he was not gay.
75	Of fustian he wered a gypon	Of simple fustian wore he a jupon
76	Al bismotered with his habergeon,	Sadly discoloured by his habergeon;
77	For he was late ycome from his viage,	For he had lately come from his voyage
78	And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.	And now was going on this pilgrimage.

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The General Prologue

Review Questions

1. When did people often set off on pilgrimages?
2. What was their destination?
3. How many were in the narrator's company?
4. Briefly describe the travelers (name, appearance, personality, or distinguishing characteristics).
   - Knight
   - Squire
   - Yeoman
   - Monk
   - Prioress
   - Friar
   - Merchant
   - Clerk
   - Lawyer
   - Franklin
   - Haberdasher
   - Carpenter
   - Weaver
   - Dyer
   - Arras-maker
   - Cook
   - Sailor
   - Physician
   - Wife of Bath
   - Parson
   - Plowman
   - Miller
   - Manciple
   - Reeve
   - Summoner
   - Pardoner
   - Host
5. What did the narrator ask of his listeners after he listed the pilgrims?
6. What did the Host encourage the company to do along the way?
7. Who drew the shortest straw, indicating that he/she should tell the first tale?

Thought Questions

8. Why do you think Chaucer included the character details that he did?
9. The group was of many social classes. What would be a comparable group of people today?
10. What is the effect of telling stories within a story? Do you pay attention to all stories equally?
11. What is the relationship between the **framework story** and the stories within it?

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The Knight's Tale

Review Questions

12. Who stopped Thesëus and his bridal party on the road?
13. Whom did Thesëus find among the dead of Thebes? What did he do with them?
14. Whom did Palamon see in the garden?
15. What caused Palamon and Arcita to quarrel?
16. How did Arcita get out of prison? On what condition was he released?
17. Under what guise did Arcita return to Athens? To what position was he promoted?
18. How did Palamon escape prison?
19. How/where did Palamon and Arcita meet? What did they agree to do?
20. Who revealed the fighters' identities to Thesëus?
21. Why did Thesëus pardon them? What did he decree?
22. What did Palamon ask from Venus on the day of the battle?
23. What did Emily (Emelye) ask from Diana? What was her answer?
24. What did Arcita ask from Mars?
25. What was the outcome of the tournament?
26. What happened to Arcita when he went to salute Emily?
27. What was Arcita's last request?
28. What did Thesëus tell Emily and Palamon to do?

Thought Questions

29. Is there a difference between "affection of holiness" and love?
30. Arcita makes the argument that love is the greatest law. Do you agree? Why or why not?
31. Would it be better to be in prison and be able to see your love or to be free and separated?
32. How do people today demonstrate their love? Are these ways as extreme, in your opinion?
33. Is it odd that the two men would help each other dress for battle against each other?
34. What does this tell you about the code of a knight?
35. Is it still considered noble to fight for a lady? Why or why not?
36. How would you describe Arcita's character? Palamon's? Emily's?
37. Why do you think Thesëus mourned for Arcita?
38. Is there a moral to this tale? If so, what is it?

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WRITING REFINEMENT: *Using the Vocabulary*

Chaucer's poetry is complex and intricately crafted. He used both rhyme and some alliteration to structure his poems. Look at the following passage from the General Prologue. The version on the left is in Middle English. Underline the words that rhyme (it may be tricky since Middle English pronunciation is different from modern English, but give it your best attempt). If there is any alliteration, underline that as well. The first two lines are done for you. Compare this version to a modern English version, included parallel to it.

Middle English	Modern English
Now have I told you smoothly in a clause	Now have I told you briefly, in a clause,
Th'estaat, th'array, the nombr e, and eek the cause	The state, the array, the number, and the cause
Why that assembled was this compaignye	Of the assembling of this company
In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrye	In Southwark, at this noble hostelry
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle,	Known as the Tabard Inn, closely to the Bell.
But now the time has come wherein to tell	But now is time to you for to tell
How that we baren us that ilke night	How we conducted ourselves that very night
Whan we were in that hostelrye alight.	When at the hostelry we did alight.
And after wol I tell of oure viage,	And afterward the story I begin
Al al the remenant of oure pilgrimage.	To tell you of our pilgrimage we're in.

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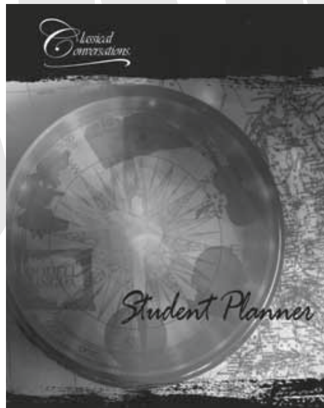

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