

## WRITING EXERCISE #2

### Writing About Literature

#### **PART A:** Writing About **Literature**

Due Week 2, first section: notes and one page interpretation of a short story

You have analyzed an advertisement and the details it uses to convey a message to the public. Another important type of imaginative text—literature—also carries messages informed by the ideologies in our society that you can examine critically (Maasik and Solomon 11). How might that be?

Read either Margaret **Atwood's** or Ursula **Le Guin's** stories from Weeks 1-2 and be prepared to discuss aspects of the story that raise questions, explore problems, or seem significant. Stories, like other fictional texts, carry meanings, and Ann Raimés suggests some basic questions to ask in order to analyze the meanings of stories (81). Begin by looking at the texts details and by asking who, what, when, where, why do events occur. Raimés outlines some additional key points to consider in “Ten Ways to Analyze a Work of Literature.” For this assignment, read your story carefully, and:

ANSWER questions 1-9 (in Raimés, pages 80-81), DESCRIBING the details and elements of the story (Level 1 analysis on the handout “Writing About Imaginative Texts”)

HOW are the details and elements related? GROUP related or contrasting details and elements of the story (Level 2). The charts in “Writing About Imaginative Texts’ and “Analyzing Cultural Texts” can help you make these implicit connections. How do certain details and elements of the story work with or against each other? How are the events or conflicts in the plot organized, for instance, in relation to elements of character? What types of characters “win” or “lose”? How do the setting, tone, point of view, narrator, and/or title, etc. work together in the text to create an overall meaning?

WRITE a page explaining what you have discovered about the story by analyzing its details and elements. SUGGEST an overall meaning and its significance implied by the thematic grouping of details or elements in the story (Level 3).

Bring your annotated copy of the story, typed notes, and one-page interpretation to the next section for discussion.

## **PART B: Writing About a Poem or Song**

Due Week 2 in section: notes and one-page interpretation of your selected poem

Read either Langston Hughes's poem "A Dream Deferred" (posted on the DOC website) or Ishmael Reed's poem "badman of the guest professor" and be prepared to discuss aspects of it in class that raised questions in your mind, seem significant, or seemed particularly interesting. To analyze the poem begin with the basic who, what, when, where, why questions recommended by Raimes to identify the poem's Level 1 details. Also note the guidelines and suggestions in "Writing About Imaginative Texts" and "Analyzing Cultural Texts" as you move from Level 1 details to Level 2 patterns and a Level 3 interpretation of its meaning and significance:

ASK who is speaking and who is the audience? (Refer to the speaker as the poet or speaker, not by the author's name.) What conflict or issue is being explored? What happens? When? Where? Why is the speaker talking?

DESCRIBE the key details and elements of the poem. How do they illustrate the conflicts, tensions, or issues? Describe key images, the speaker's tone, word choice, line breaks, structure of poem, etc. (Level 1)

ANALYZE how GROUPS of related and contrasting details and elements identify key issues. Note how repetitions of words or phrases, patterns of rhyme, image patterns work together to dramatize central conflicts. (Level 2)

Write a page explaining what you have discovered about the poem. Is there an overall theme suggested by groups of related or contrasting details? (Level 3) Formulate a tentative thesis stating your interpretation.

Bring your annotated version of the poem, notes, and one-page interpretation based on your Level 1, 2, 3 analysis of the poem.

If there is a claim from another text from Weeks 2 or 3 that supports your interpretation, be prepared to identify the claim and explain how it enhances your interpretation.

Resources: The Writing Center. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.  
[www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/poetry-explication.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/poetry-explication.html) (3/25/2008)