

## TWO MAJOR WAYS TO READ WORDS IN LITERATURE

**Literally:** Words mean on the page exactly what they mean in real life. What happens in a story means exactly and only what happened literally on the page. Descriptions of events in a story are called *Exposition*.

**Metaphorically:** (also called figuratively). Words can mean something different on the page than their literal meanings. They can also do “double duty,” with both literal meanings AND symbolic meanings. (e.g. In Vietnam, we were called “grunts”)

## TWO MAJOR TYPES OF LITERARY ANALYSIS

We will use both types of analysis in breakout and in discussion groups, but I will focus on teaching you formalism, since that is more academic and takes more instruction and practice.

In **reader response**, the reader talks about how the text relates to one’s personal life. He may discuss an incident in his life which is similar to one in the story and discuss how the text and the incident inform each other – adding meaning to the text. In a milder version of reader response, the reader might talk about how the text is influenced by a cultural/historical/political/etc event.

In **formalism**, the goal is to draw meaning from the text itself, rather than drawing meaning from the world outside and forcing that meaning onto the text. It should read objectively, not personally. An **argument** is made that X is true, and is backed up by detailed analysis of **cited quotes or passages** from the text in conjunction with other quotes and passages from the same text. This is called a **close reading**, where one takes a short passage and breaks down its meaning paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, line by line, sometimes even word by word. The essayist does NOT rephrase the passage or summarize events, but analyzes what specific word choices do: how they affect each other, how this small excerpt reflects the values or message of the larger piece.

## LITERARY TERMS, ALSO CALLED “DEVICES”

These are from the course syllabus: “Please keep track of this list. We will be explaining and using these terms throughout the course and assessing your understanding of them in unit quizzes and at the end of the quarter.” I will also cover some additional terms as they are introduced in each unit, such as theme, motif, and point-of-view. Some definitions are below:

allegory	epic	metaphor	personification	Simile
allusion	image	meter/rhythm	point of view	Structure
archetype	irony	narrator/persona	Rhyme	Symbol
comedy	lyric	paradox	Satire	Tragedy

## **LANGUAGE STYLES – how the words sound**

**Lyric:** subjective thoughts and feelings, often in a songlike style or form; having a pleasing succession of sounds

**Meter/rhythm and rhyme:** how the sounds of words fall on a beat, or if they sound the same

**Alliteration:** When two or more words start with the same letter (e.g. “Ruffles have Ridges”)

## **STORY TYPES – the basis structure of a piece of literature**

**Allegory:** a story in which the characters and events are symbols for ideas about human life or a political /historical situation

**Fable:** a story which has a moral lesson, and often has make-believe elements, or exists in a “secondary world”

**Comedy/Tragedy/Satire/Epic/Ode:** Is the story funny, sad or sarcastic? Is it a long heroic poem, or in honor of something?

## **STORY ELEMENTS – common things most good stories have**

**Persona/narrator:** What kind of personality is telling the story? Does she seem professional, casual, wise, angry, confused?

**Point of view:** How does the narrator address the reader? Using first-person (“I”), second-person (“you”) or third person (“he/she/they etc.”) Third-person narrators can either be *omniscient* (all-knowing) or *limited omniscient* (what’s seen/heard).

**Theme:** What are the main ideas in the story? What subjects does it discuss and what point is it trying to make about them?

**Motifs:** Images and words that repeat in a story, that give extra meaning to one of its themes. Motifs also function as *symbols*.

**Archetypes:** Character types and the roles they play that are common to all societies: heroes, villains, growing up, etc.

## **FIGURATIVE MEANING – things used to represent other things**

**Symbol:** an object representing something, to give it a different, deeper, more significant meaning than its literal meaning.

**Metaphor:** a comparison of one thing to something different, usually what something is, has, or does. (e.g. had a button nose)

**Simile:** a comparison of one thing to something different using the word “like” (e.g. smooth like butter)

**Personification:** a non-person is given qualities or actions that a person would have or do

## **OTHER WAYS TO CONVEY MEANING – opposites and extremes**

**Irony:** intended meaning of words is different from the actual meaning; a situation that ends differently than anticipated.

**Paradox:** a statement that contains two opposites within it (e.g. He was very good at being bad.)

**Hyperbole:** exaggerating the meaning of something to all or none, the most or the least, or more/less than something extreme

## "Some Nights" by Fun.

Verse 1

Some nights I stay up cashing in my bad luck  
Some nights I call it a draw  
Some nights I wish that my lips could build a castle  
Some nights I wish they'd just fall off  
But I still wake up, I still see your ghost  
Oh, Lord, I'm still not sure what I stand for oh

Whoa oh oh (What do I stand for?)  
Whoa oh oh (What do I stand for?)  
Most nights I don't know anymore...  
Oh, whoa, oh, whoa, oh, whoa, oh, oh,  
Oh, whoa, oh, whoa, oh, whoa, oh, oh

Chorus

Verse 2

This is it, boys, this is war - what are we waiting for?  
Why don't we break the rules already?  
I was never one to believe the hype  
Save that for the black and white  
I try twice as hard and I'm half as liked,  
But here they come again to jack my style

That's alright (that's alright)  
I found a martyr in my bed tonight  
She stops my bones from wondering  
just who I am, who I am, who I am  
Oh, who am I? Mmm... Mmm...

Breakdown 1

Verse 3

Well, some nights I wish that this all would end  
'Cause I could use some friends for a change.  
And some nights I'm scared you'll forget me again  
Some nights I always win, I always win...  
But I still wake up, I still see your ghost  
Oh, Lord, I'm still not sure what I stand for, oh

Whoa oh oh (What do I stand for?)  
Whoa oh oh (What do I stand for?)  
Most nights I don't know... (oh, come on)

Chorus

So this is it. I sold my soul for this?  
Washed my hands of God for this?  
I miss my mom and dad for this?

No. When I see stars, when I see, when I see stars, that's all they are  
When I hear songs, they sound like a swan, so come on.  
Oh, come on. Oh, come on. Oh, come on!

Breakdown 2

Verse 4

Well, that is it guys, that is all - five minutes in and I'm bored again  
Ten years of this, I'm not sure if anybody understands  
This one is not for the folks at home;  
Sorry to leave, mom, I had to go  
Who the f--- wants to die alone  
all dried up in the desert sun?

My heart is breaking for my sister and the con that she called "love"  
But when I look into my nephew's eyes...  
Man, you wouldn't believe the most amazing things that can come from...  
Some terrible nights... ah...

Breakdown 3

Chorus out . .