

READING STRATEGIES AND
LITERARY ELEMENTS TRANSPARENCY

1a

FOR USE WITH FOCUS LESSON 1: ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Setting is the time and place in which the events of a literary work occur. **Plot** is the sequence of events in a story. **Characters** are the people, animals, or beings in a work. The **theme** is the main idea or message a work conveys. Choose a story you have read and fill in the chart.

Setting:

Characters:

Plot:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Theme:

Conflict is the central struggle between opposing forces in a story or drama. An **external conflict** exists when a character struggles against an outside force, such as nature, another character, society, or a political or social situation. An **internal conflict** exists when a character struggles against something within himself or herself.

Decide which type of conflict exists in these plot summaries.

Summary	Internal	External
1. Natalie works to regain her self respect.		
2. Colin and his mother argue about a curfew.		
3. Two children must find their way home through a severe snowstorm.		
4. Brent learns to conquer his fear of flying.		
5. Peggy tries to control her temper.		
6. Kiarra writes a letter to the governor to protest the building of a new highway.		
7. The platoon valiantly holds off the enemy.		
8. Adina speaks out against what she believes is an injustice.		

Answers: 1. Internal 2. External 3. External
4. Internal 5. Internal 6. External
7. External 8. External

Point of view is the standpoint from which a story is told. In **first-person point of view**, the narrator is a character in the story who uses the words *I* and *me* to relate the tale. In **third-person point of view**, the narrator is a character in the story or someone who stands outside the story who describes the characters and events without participating in them.

Choose two stories you have read. Select a section from each story, and rewrite each one using a different point of view.

Section 1

Section 2

city, and they would have been certain he was just another fool mumbling to himself. The books he bore bent his back in half, but no one here walked with a proud, straight posture. The heavy weight of poverty ground them all down.

Answer: Third-person limited. Possible revision: Rick frowned as he passed the grimy, gray houses. Had they troubled to look out of their yellowed windows, their occupants would have seen Rick murmuring to himself a vow to live in a brightly lit

Third-person point of view can take two different forms. In **third-person limited**, the narrator describes events as they are perceived by only one character. In **third-person omniscient**, the narrator is not a participant in the story and relates the thoughts and actions of several characters.

Read the passage below. Decide whether it is written in a third-person limited or third-person omniscient point of view. Then rewrite the passage from a different third person point of view.

Rick frowned as he passed by the grimy, gray houses, vowing that one day he would live in a brightly lit city, high up off the moldy ground. As he shuffled along, he looked at the broken pieces of concrete along the sidewalk. He hated his torn backpack, but he dragged his heavy books home every night so he could read everything in them, undisturbed. When he lived in the city, he would buy all the books he wanted and never again be burdened by the heavy weight of poverty.

Point of view:

A **flashback** is a memory or account of an event that took place at an earlier time. A flashback usually interrupts the chronological sequence of a story, but the flashback often reveals important information.

Read the brief outline of a story. Identify the part of the story that is the flashback.

a. On a rainy night, two sisters are arguing about who should walk the dog. Neither wants to be interrupted from watching TV.

b. The argument continues, and the dog begins to bark and whine.

c. The girls' mother enters the room and reminds them that both had promised faithfully to walk the dog. The girls remember how he played frisbee and retrieved sticks for hours when they had moved and knew no one else in town.

d. They turn off the television, and both girls go out together to take him for a long walk in the rain.

previous climber. 3. The group pays in some way for its decision to ignore the approaching storm.

Possible Answers: 1. A character strays from the path and falls in quicksand. 2. A character encounters life-threatening danger while climbing and discovers information about the fate of the

The use of clues that tell the reader what will happen in a story is called **foreshadowing**. Foreshadowing helps prepare the reader for what will happen in a story. Foreshadowing can also help create suspense.

Read each example of foreshadowing, taken from different stories. Tell what you think may happen later on.

1. "If you stray from the trail, you could fall into quicksand."

2. Only one person has ever attempted that perilous climb. She has never been heard from again.

3. Storm clouds loomed overhead as the group decided to challenge nature, ignoring the nervous dogs and the old man's warnings.

unexpected by the characters but expected by the readers.

Possible answers: 1. Situational irony: The outcome is unexpected by the characters and the readers. 2. Dramatic irony: The outcome is

Irony is a contrast between appearance and reality. **Situational irony** exists when the actual outcome of a situation is the opposite of what is expected. **Dramatic irony** exists when readers are aware of events or circumstances of which the characters in the story have no knowledge.

Identify the kind of irony used in the following passages.

Justine, an outgoing and career-oriented young woman, knew Diego, a shy music lover, in high school. She thought he was out of touch; he thought she was boring and conventional. After having little contact during school, they meet again ten years later. Justine has been unable to keep a steady job. Diego is a highly successful songwriter and musician. They fall in love when they meet again.

Kind of irony:

How you know:

Knowing that he is a much faster runner than the tortoise, the hare challenges the tortoise to a race. Overconfident, the hare boasts, wastes time, and takes a nap while the tortoise plods along. The tortoise wins the race, much to the surprise of the hare, but not to the readers.

Kind of irony:

How you know:

of the river. The area is shady. The shutters and fence are neatly painted.

Possible answers: 1. The author uses long, relaxed sentences with many adjectives. 2. Three domestic structures sit among two species of trees. The structures are approximately 50 feet from the edge

Style is the author’s choice and arrangement of words to create a certain effect. Long sentences and many adjectives create a very different style than do short sentences and few adjectives.

Read the following paragraph and write a sentence describing its style. Then rewrite it in a style that is precise and factual.

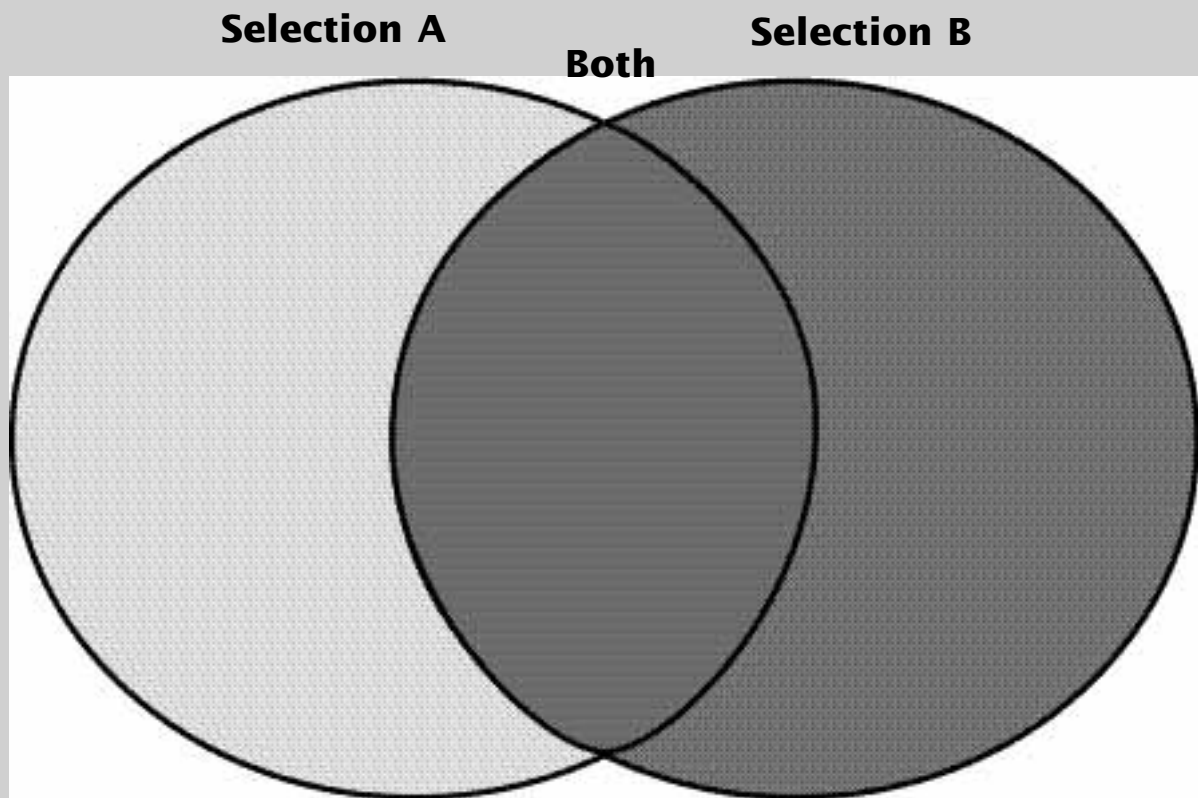
The trio of cottages stood gracefully in a stand of majestic pine and willow trees, a stone’s throw from the river bank. In that shady, welcoming expanse, they seemed to breathe calm and contentment. Their neatly painted shutters and fence framed their image of it: Here is a place of peace and caring.

Author’s Style:

Rewritten in Factual Style:

Tone suggests a writer's or speaker's attitude toward the subject. To identify an author's tone, consider the imagery, syntax, sound devices, and connotations or words in each work.

Think about the tone in two selections with similar subjects. Fill in the diagram below to compare the tone of the two works. Write words or phrases you think describe the tone. In some ways, you may think the tone of the two works is similar. Put words that illustrate the similarities in the area where the two circles overlap.



Diction is the writer's choice of words. It is an important element of tone.

Study each excerpt and describe its tone. Underline words in the excerpt that help establish this tone.

1. . . . The ball loved
Flick. I saw him rack
up thirty-eight or
forty points
in one home game.
His hands were like
wild birds.

2. When I watch you
you wet brown bag
of a woman
who used to be
the best looking
gal in Georgia . . .

Possible answers: 1. Tone: playful, light-hearted.
Words: loved, Flick, rack up, wild birds. 2. Tone:
dismissive, bitter. Words: wet brown bag, used
to be.

universe, two gods equally sure of themselves and ready to do battle.

Possible answers: 1. The pros are giants with the strength to move mountains. 2. A good pitcher is a kind of miracle—half cobra and half clock. 3. The base stealer and pitcher operate in their own

Hyperbole is a figure of speech in which an obvious overstatement or exaggeration is made for effect. The exaggeration heightens a situation or adds humor.

For each statement below, create a hyperbole that emphasizes the situation or makes it humorous.

1. A professional baseball player has to be physically fit.

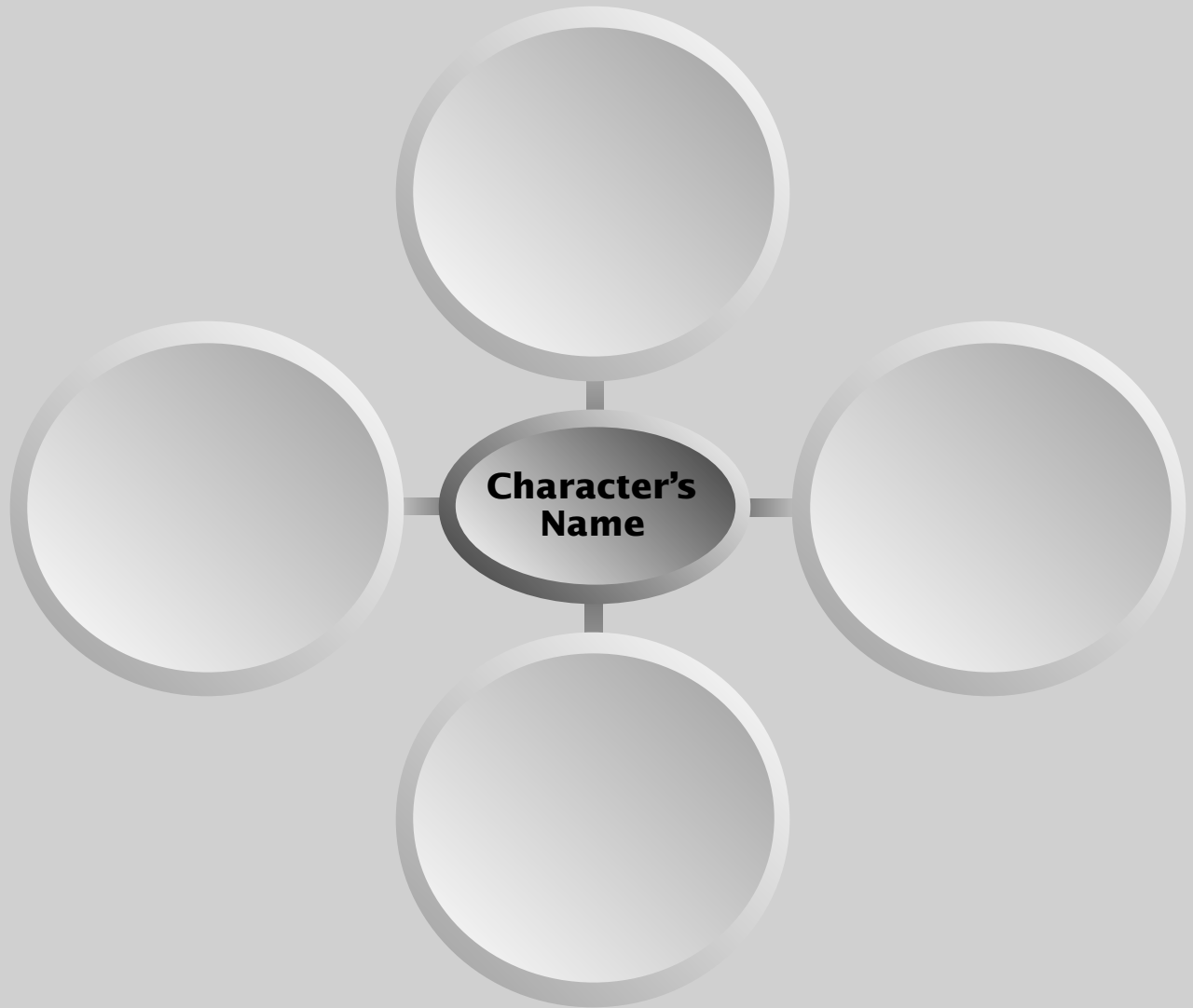
2. A good pitcher must have quick reflexes and precise timing.

3. The pitcher and the base runner wage their own private battle apart from the game.

Identify an example of hyperbole from a story you have read or from a movie or television program you have seen. What effect did the hyperbole have?

An **archetype** is a specific kind of symbol or motif that recurs in literature and art in the form of an image, character type, or plot. An archetype might appear in slightly different forms in different stories, but the underlying meaning of that archetype is always similar.

Think of an archetypal character in a story or play you have read. In the web below, write down some of the traits that make this character an archetype.



Allusion is a literary technique in which a brief reference is made to a specific person, place, thing, other literary work, or event unconnected with the immediate framework of the subject being discussed. Allusions may be literary, mythological, historical, or religious.

Identify the allusions and their meanings in the following passages.

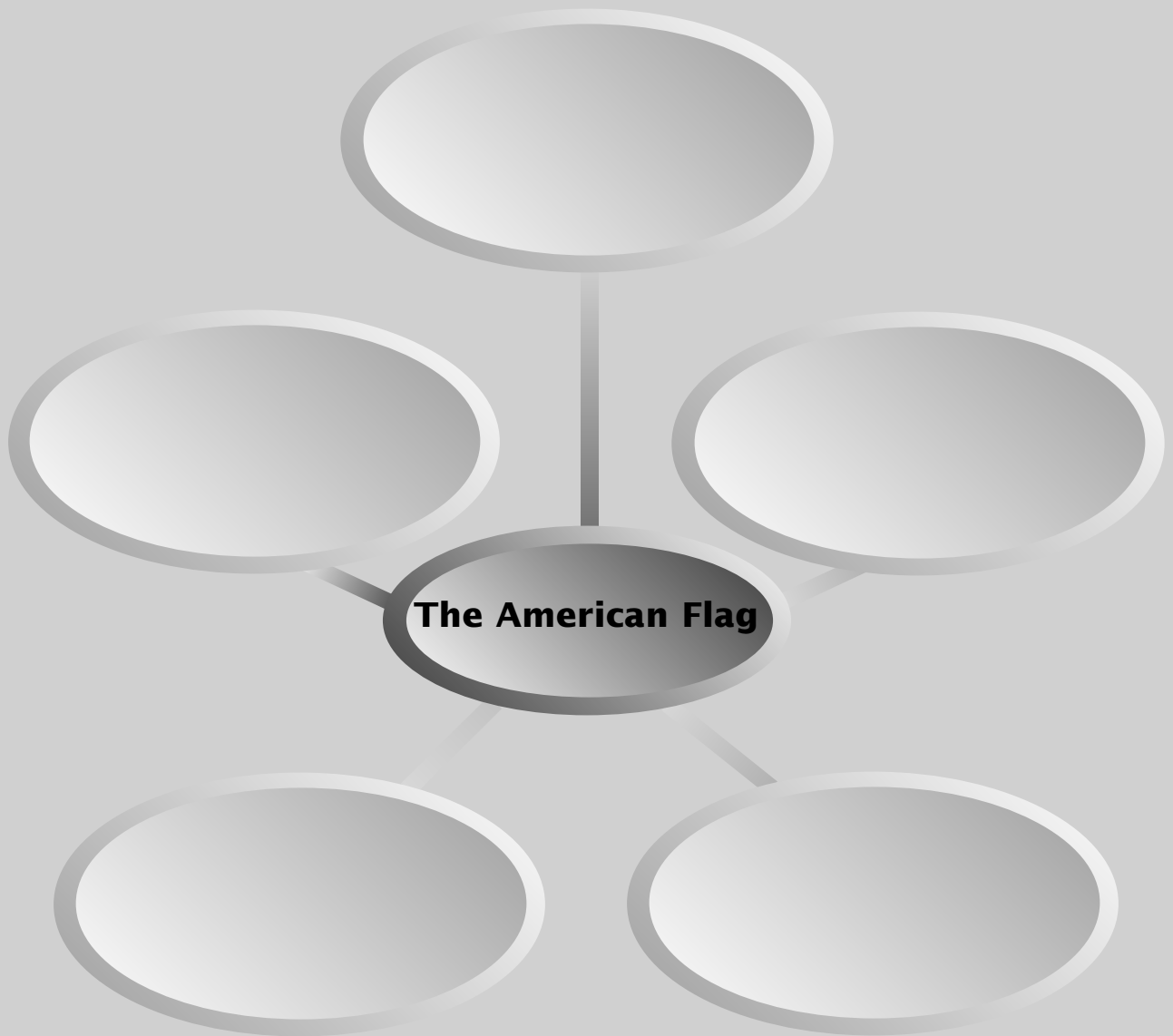
Passage	Allusion	Meaning
Rodrigo felt burdened with endless guilt and sorrow for his family's situation. He felt like a modern day Atlas, holding up the world.		
Her mother beamed and called her daughter Little Girl Wolfgang, as the child sat down at the piano.		
Sometimes he wanted to get away from everything and live, like his namesake—an earlier Henry, in his own little Walden.		
The garden was lush with trees and flowers and an absence of human forms, an Eden only ten miles from the city.		

human interference

Possible answers: 1. Atlas; bears a great burden
2. Wolfgang Mozart; is a child musical prodigy
3. Henry David Thoreau; wants to escape to solitary place in nature 4. Eden; predated

Symbolism is a literary technique in which a person, place, or thing is used to represent something in addition to itself. A symbol always has a literal meaning. Some symbols are universal: spring symbolizes rebirth; night represents death. Often, however, writers invent their own symbols.

What does the American flag symbolize to you? Write your ideas in the web below.



Possible answers: freedom, patriotism, history, power, equality

One of the main types of figurative language is a **simile**. By using the words *than*, *like*, or *as*, a simile compares two things. These things are essentially unlike each other, but they are similar in at least one way.

For each description, select the comparison you think is valid and most interesting. In the space at the right, explain how the things are similar.

Simile	Similarity
<p>1. Pale people attracted by spring sunshine like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> bees longing for honey. <input type="checkbox"/> plants kept too long in a closet. <input type="checkbox"/> moths drawn to a flame. 	
<p>2. A storm tosses the willow branches as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a girl tosses her hair. <input type="checkbox"/> a master cracks a whip. <input type="checkbox"/> a ballplayer whips the ball to home plate. 	
<p>3. The shards of a broken vase glare up like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> accusing eyes. <input type="checkbox"/> mournful faces. <input type="checkbox"/> angry hearts. 	

the look of supple willow branches. 3. Like accusing eyes suits the antagonistic tone established by the words *shards* and *glare*.

Possible answers: 1. Like plants kept too long in a closet points out how both are sickly and starved for light. 2. As a master cracks a whip captures the sharpness and violence of the storm as well as

to April, June, and December, respectively. The metaphors imply that she is outwardly warm but without empathy or feeling.

Possible answers: 1. A speech and rough edges are compared. 2. The metaphor implies that the speech is essentially complete and simply needs to be refined. 3. Tears, smile, and heart are compared

A **metaphor** is a type of figurative language in which a writer compares two unlike things. Unlike a simile, a metaphor does not use *than*, *like*, or *as*. A metaphor implies the comparison rather than states that one thing is like another.

For each metaphor, identify the things being compared and how they are alike.

Metaphor: He was working to smooth out the rough edges in his speech.

1. What is compared?

2. What does the metaphor imply?

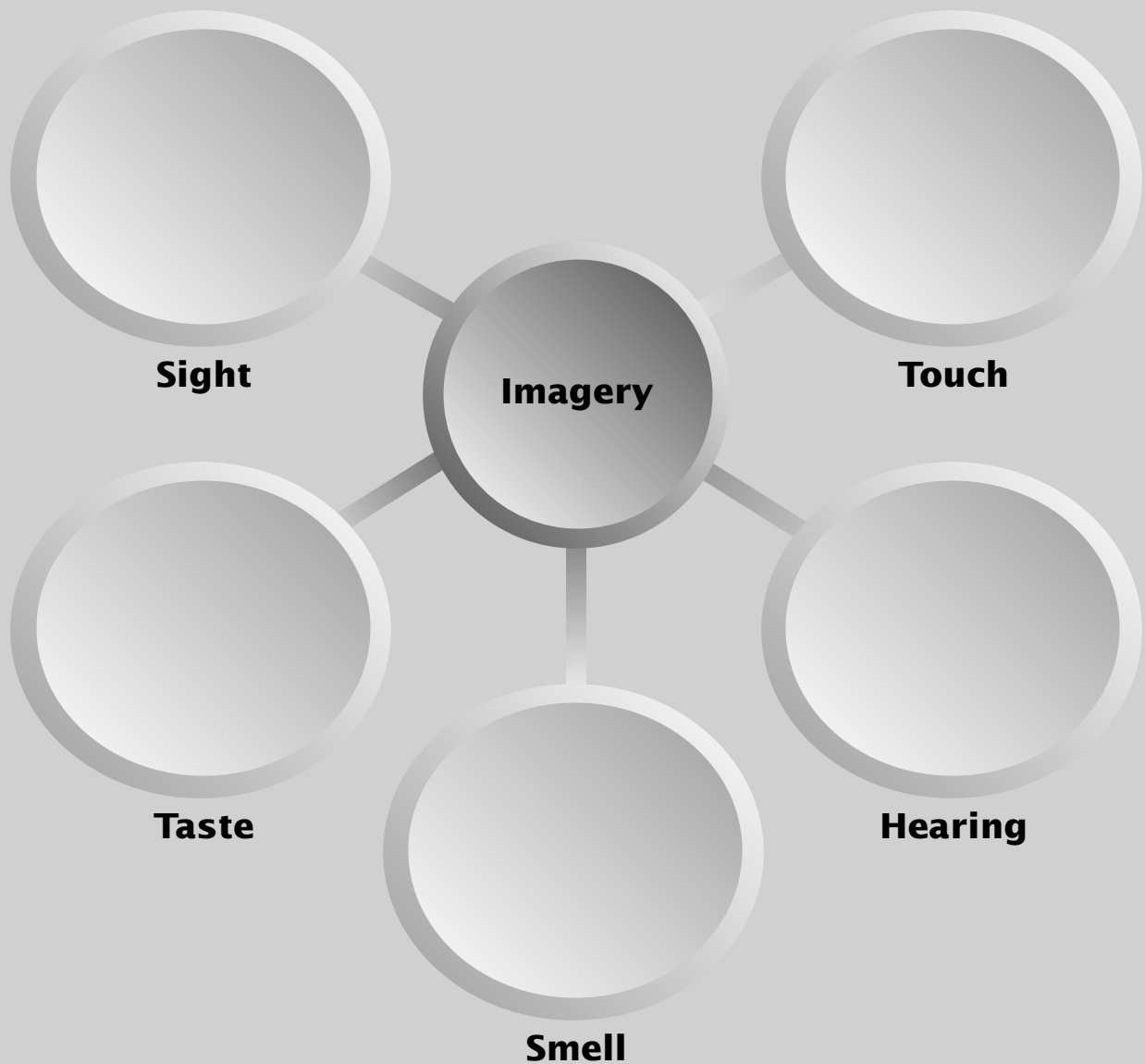
Metaphor: Her tears are April rain; her smile is sunlit June; but her heart is December ice.

3. What is compared?

4. What do the metaphors imply?

Imagery is the use of details that appeal to readers' senses of sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing. Writers use precise nouns and vivid modifiers to create appealing imagery and make their writing lively.

Find images in poems you have read that appeal to your senses. Then complete the diagram below.



A **motif** is a recurring idea, image, or group of images that unifies a work of literature.

Read the following passage. Underline the words and images that represent a motif.

The dancing leaves whirled across the path like waltzing ballerinas. Alone now, her life seeming like an empty stage, Cecilia thought of the summer and the long hours of practice at the barre, the temperamental instructors and performers, the gold and red costumes. The images of leaves and dancers blurred into a frenetic whirlwind. Her life seemed changed, and yet she couldn't say how. Maybe at some point in the coming year she would know as she faced new challenges. Would she still feel as though she were doing an endless pirouette and getting nowhere, or would she feel more directed, more in control, leaping across obstacles and reaching greater heights?

What is the motif?

Answers: dancing, waltzing, ballerinas, stage, barre, temperamental, instructors, performers, dances, pirouette, leaping; The motif is ballet dancing.

The **mood** is the feeling or emotional quality of a story or poem. Often, the setting—the time and place in which the literary work takes place—helps create the mood, as does the writer’s choice of words.

Read the excerpt below. Identify the mood. Then identify the details of the setting that help create the mood.

The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same materials and hue. But in this chamber only, the color of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood color. . . . But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

Mood:

Details:

ghastly in the extreme.

Answers: eerie, terrifying, bizarre, ghastly; closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls; panes here were scarlet—a deep blood color;

Writers often use the sound of words for effect. Several techniques, or **sound devices**, can achieve **sound play** in a literary work. One of these is **alliteration**: the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words. Alliteration is a musical effect that adds to the appeal and underscores the meaning of a poem.

Read these lines from well-known poems. Identify the words in which alliteration is found.

1. Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight
In sunshine and in shadow,
2. A single flow'r he sent me, since we met.
All tenderly his messenger he chose;
3. And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed;
4. And in her voice, the calling of the dove;
Like music of a sweet, melodious part.

Look for examples of alliteration in other poems you have read. What sounds form the alliteration?

Answers: 1. *gaily and gallant; sunshine and shadow*
2. *single, sent, and since* 3. *fair and fair; chance and changing* 4. *music and melodious*

Assonance repeats vowel sounds within words. **Consonance** repeats consonant sounds within words or at the ends of words. Assonance and consonance are both used by poets to create the musical effects in their poems.

Underline the repeated vowel or consonant sounds in the following sentences. Then indicate if the repetition is an example of assonance or consonance.

1. The sound of howling drowned
the sleepy town.

2. The gaze of wise grandfathers
and older brothers who know
better days.

3. Only the lonely know the woe
and sorrow.

4. James takes some grapes; Teena
eats cheese, meat, and sweets.

5. Blood flowed red along the
highland road.

4. James, takes, and grapes—consonance; Teena,
eats, cheese, meat, and sweets—assonance
5. blood, flowed, and road—assonance

Answers: 1. sound, howling, drowned, and town—
assonance 2. gaze and days—assonance;
grandfathers, brothers, and better—consonance
3. only, lonely, know, woe, and sorrow—assonance

Onomatopoeia is the use of a word or phrase that imitates or describes the sound it names. Words like *tick-tock*, *whirr*, and *sizzle* are onomatopoeic; they not only add sound effects but also add liveliness and enhance mood in a poem.

For each situation or action, pick one or more onomatopoeic words from the list that match. List at least two more of your own. Pick one of the situations or actions and write a couplet using onomatopoeic words.

beat, blow, bray, bubble, buzz, clomp, clang, cluck, crack, crackle, ding-dong, fizzle, groan, hiss, jingle, jangle, moo, meow, neigh, pound, pow, purr, roar, shrill, sigh, slam, thump, tinkle, whoosh, whisper, zoom

1. bells ringing in the night _____

2. sirens heard in the distance _____

3. a motor running _____

Couplet: _____

Search for onomatopoeic words in a poem you have read.
Analyze their effects.

Possible answers: 1. jangle, clang, tinkle; bong, peal, plink 2. bray, shrill, groan; walls, scream, howl, wheee 3. purr, whisper, or zoom; pocketa-pocketa, chug-chug, vroom

Personification is a figure of speech that describes an animal, an inanimate object, an idea, or a force of nature as if it were alive or had human traits or feelings.

Tell what is being personified and what human trait is given in each of the following examples.

“Nor shall Death brag thou wand’rest in his shade,”

Thing Personified:

Human Trait:

“Of morning blushing in the early skies”

Thing Personified:

Human Trait:

I know the language of music. Sometimes it speaks lovingly to me. Other times it scolds and torments me.

Thing Personified:

Human Trait:

Answers: 1. death, boastfulness 2. morning, shyness 3. music, speaking kindly and cruelly