

Name:

Study Guide:

How to Read Literature Like a Professor

by Thomas C. Foster

As you read *HTRLLAP*, use this study guide to make sure you're getting the gist of each chapter. Understanding these concepts NOW will make AP English Literature so much easier and our class discussions and your essays much more effective!

You can handwrite your responses to each question on notebook paper, or you can type them—whatever you prefer. Just make sure you do them. Again, it'll make your life a lot easier all year, and it will get us off to a great start in August!

Check my website, <http://MrsKissire.weebly.com>, for additional info. Who knows, I may even get something set up there so we can have an online conversation about the book this summer...

Chapter 1—pgs 1-6 **“Every Trip is a Quest (Except When It’s Not)”**

- 1) What are the five characteristics of the quest?
- 2) BLOG! (see my website, choose *AP Lit*, then *Blog*. Find the relevant one for this question.) Choose a book you have read or a movie you have seen that contains a quest, and identify the characteristics and explain. Use Foster's explanations of the setup in *The Crying of Lot 49* on pages 4-5 as your guide, meaning yours should be as detailed and clear as his.

Chapter 2—pgs 7-14 **“Nice to Eat With You: Acts of Communion”**

- 3) Complete this sentence about communion: “...breaking bread together is an act of _____”
- 4) Why does Foster assert that a meal scene in literature is almost always symbolic?
- 5) List the things, according to Foster, that eating in literature can represent.
- 6) Think of an example of a *positive* “communion” scene in a book you read or a movie you have seen. Briefly describe the scene and explain its symbolic meaning.
- 7) Think of an example of a *negative* “communion” scene in a book you read or a movie you have seen. Briefly describe the scene and explain its symbolic meaning.

Chapter 3—pgs 15-21 **“Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires”**

- 8) What are the essentials of the vampire story?

- 9) What are some things besides vampirism that vampires and ghosts represent in literature?

Chapter 4—pgs 22-27

“If It’s Square, It’s a Sonnet”

- 10) Explain the title of this chapter—what does Foster mean “if it’s square, it’s a sonnet”?
- 11) What are some of the ways in which a poet works his magic on you?
- 12) Define/describe a Petrarchan sonnet.
- 13) Research Petrarchan sonnets. Write down the title and author of one here and attach a copy of the poem to this packet (or if you’re typing your answers, copy and paste the Petrarchan sonnet into this answer).
- 14) Define/describe a Shakespearean sonnet.
- 15) Research Shakespearean sonnets. Write down the title of one here and attach a copy of the poem to this packet (or if you’re typing your answers, copy and paste it into this answer). You may not use any that are mentioned in Foster’s book. Bonus points will be given for a Shakespearean sonnet by a poet other than William Shakespeare!
- 16) Why, according to Foster, is it more difficult to write a short poem than a long one?

Chapter 5—pgs 28-36

“Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?”

- 17) What is the “big secret” Foster reveals in this chapter?
- 18) How does recognition of these allusions in literature change the reading experience for a reader?
- 19) What is “intertextuality”?
- 20) How does Foster say a literature professor can help a beginning reader?

Chapter 6—pgs 37-46

“When in Doubt, It’s from Shakespeare...”

- 21) Why do so many writers use and quote Shakespeare?
- 22) “_____ features prominently in the use not only of Shakespeare but of any prior writer.” (p. 44)

Chapter 7—pgs 47-56

“...Or the Bible”

- 23) What do Biblical allusions do for a piece of literature?

Chapter 8—pgs 57-63**“Hansel and Gretel”**

- 24) What is the literary canon?
- 25) What does Foster suggest on pg. 59 as the reason so many writers choose to allude to fairy tales in their work?
- 26) For what purpose do writers often use “readerly knowledge of source texts”? (pgs 60, 62-63)
- 27) BLOG! Think of a book you have read or a movie you have seen that draws parallels to a familiar fairy tale. Briefly describe the plot and how the fairy tale allusion plays out. To what effect? (Irony? To mess around with the story? To make what point?) Explain.

Chapter 9—pgs 64-73**“It’s Greek to Me”**

- 28) How does Foster define “myth” on page 65?
- 29) What are the four great struggles of the human being?

Chapter 10—pgs 74-81**“It’s More Than Just Rain or Snow”**

- 30) Foster says “weather is never just weather”. What are some things rain can represent in literature, according to Foster?
- 31) What does a rainbow represent in literature?
- 32) What does fog represent in literature?
- 33) What does snow represent in literature?

Interlude—pgs 82-86**“Does He Mean That?”**

- 34) Summarize Foster’s argument from this chapter.

Chapter 11—pgs 87-96**“...More Than It’s Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence”**

- 35) What are the implications of violence in literature?
- 36) What are the two categories of violence in literature? Define and describe each.
- 37) What are the four reasons that authors kill off characters in literature?
- 38) What questions should readers ask themselves when they encounter an act of violence or a death in a piece of literature?
- 39) BLOG! Choose an act of violence or a death from a piece of literature you have read. Using the information in this chapter, identify its literary purpose. Be sure to include specific details to make your answer clear and complete.

Chapter 12—pgs 97-107**“Is That a Symbol?”**

- 40) What is the difference between symbolism and allegory?
- 41) What are the tools we must use to figure out what a symbol might mean?
- 42) Why is symbolic meaning different for each individual reader? What are some of the factors that influence what we understand in our reading?
- 43) Symbols in literature can be both objects and _____. (pg 105)
- 44) What are the questions reads should ask of the text when trying to determine symbolic meaning?

Chapter 13—pgs 108-116**“It’s All Political”**

- 45) Foster asserts that “Nearly all writing is _____.” (pg. 111)
- 46) On page 115, Foster explains why most literature can be called “political”. Summarize his argument.

Chapter 14—pgs 117-124**“Yes, She’s a Christ Figure, Too”**

- 47) Foster writes on page 118, “...to get the most out of your reading of European and American literature, knowing _____ is essential. Similarly, if you undertake to read literature from an Islamic or a Buddhist or a Hindu culture, _____.” Why? Explain.
- 48) Foster asserts that a character need not have all of the distinguishing characteristics of Jesus Christ in order to be considered a Christ figure in literature. Why? Explain.
- 49) How is reading a piece of literature a conversation with the author, even if the author has been dead for a thousand years?

**** Be sure you know the list on pages 119-120! Make a copy of it somewhere so you can find it again and again! ****

Chapter 15—pgs 125-134**“Flights of Fancy”**

- 50) If you come across a character flying in a piece of literature, he/she is one or more of the following:
- 51) What does it mean when literary characters fly?
- 52) Does a character always have to actually fly in order for there to be “flying” in a piece of literature? Explain.

***** NOTE: the next two chapters are about sex in literature. If you (or your parents) aren't comfortable with your reading/learning about this, SKIP these two chapters. You will NOT be punished in any form or fashion for going straight to Chapter 18. *****

Chapter 16—pgs 135-142 “It’s All About Sex...”

- 53) Who does Foster accuse of teaching writers to encode sexual message in their writing and of teacher readers to decode sexual messages in literature?
- 54) What are some things that can represent male sexuality in literature?
- 55) What are some things that can represent female sexuality in literature?

Chapter 17—pgs 143-151 “...Except Sex”

- 56) Foster writes, “When they’re writing about other things, they really mean sex, and when they write about sex, they really mean something else” (page 144). What are some of the other things that a sex scene can mean?

Chapter 18—pgs 152-162 “If She Comes Up, It’s Baptism”

- 57) What are some of the things that baptism (or immersion in water) can mean in literature?
- 58) What are some of the things that drowning can mean in literature?

Chapter 19—pgs 163-174 “Geography Matters”

- 59) What are some of the roles geography plays in literature, and what are some of the effects of geography on literature?
- 60) What does it mean when an author sends a character south?
- 61) How can a writer’s personal geography inform his/her work?

Chapter 20—pgs 175-184 “...So Does Season”

- 62) What are the symbolic meanings of the seasons?
- 63) BLOG! Choose a piece of literature you have read in which the season is important or symbolic. Write here the title and author, and briefly describe and explain the symbolic season.

Interlude—pages 185-192**“One Story”**

- 64) Summarize Foster’s point in this section of the book.
- 65) What are the two words Foster uses to define this concept?
- 66) Define *intertextuality*.
- 67) Define *archetype*.

Chapter 21—pgs 193-200**“Marked for Greatness”**

- 68) For what reason(s) do authors give characters deformities, scars, or other physical markings in literature?
- 69) BLOG! Choose a book you have read, and identify a main character who has some physical marking. Describe and explain why you think the author chose to give him/her that physical trait; what does it mean?

Chapter 22—pgs 201-206**“He’s Blind for a Reason, You Know”**

- 70) For what reason(s) do authors choose to make characters blind in literature?

Chapter 23—pgs 207-212**“It’s Never Just Heart Disease...”**

- 71) What things can “heart trouble” signify in literature, according to Foster?

Chapter 24—pgs 213-225**“...And Rarely Just Illness”**

- 72) What are the “principles governing the use of disease in works of literature”?

Chapter 25—pgs 226-234**“Don’t Read With Your Eyes”**

- 73) Explain what Foster means by “don’t read with your eyes”.
- 74) About what in this chapter does Foster warn readers?

Chapter 26—pgs 235-244**“Is He Serious? And Other Ironies”**

- 75) Explain what Foster means by “irony trumps everything”.
- 76) Foster defines *irony* on page 240 like this: “What *irony* chiefly involves, then, is _____.” Explain what he means by this.

- 77) There are three types of irony in literature (see below). Identify one example of each type of irony that Foster has presented in this chapter or earlier in the book, and write it as the answer to this question.
- a. Verbal Irony (character SAYS opposite of what is expected)
 - b. Situational Irony/Structural Irony (the situation or event lays out in an opposite or abnormal way—not like expected)
 - c. Dramatic Irony (audience/reader knows more than characters know)

Chapter 27—pgs 245-277 “A Test Case”

- 78) Complete the task that Foster sets out for you on pages 265-266. Write your response to the task; be prepared to discuss this in class!!!

Envoi—pgs 278-281

- 79) How does Foster suggest that readers learn to identify trends? Why are trends important?
- 80) What is Foster’s parting advice for his reader?