

**Presentation Assignments for**  
***How to Read Literature Like a Professor***  
**by Thomas C. Foster**  
**(Adapted from Donna Anglin)**

**Introduction: How'd He Do That?**

How do memory, symbol, and pattern affect the reading of literature? How does the recognition of patterns make it easier to read complicated literature? Discuss a time when your appreciation of a literary work was enhanced by understanding symbol or pattern.

**Chapter 1 -- Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not)**

List the five aspects of the QUEST and then apply them to something you have read (or viewed) in the form used on pages 8-9.

**Chapter 2 -- Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion**

Choose a meal from a literary work and apply the ideas of Chapter 2 to this literary depiction.

**Chapter 3: --Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires**

What are the essentials of the Vampire story? Apply this to a literary work you have read or viewed.

**Chapter 4 -- If It's Square, It's a Sonnet**

Select three sonnets and show which form they are. Discuss how their content reflects the form. (Submit copies of the sonnets, marked to show your analysis).

**Chapter 5 --Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?**

Define intertextuality. Discuss three examples that have helped you in reading specific works.

**Chapter 6 -- When in Doubt, It's from Shakespeare...**

Discuss a work that you are familiar with that alludes to or reflects Shakespeare. Show how the author uses this connection thematically. Read pages 35-36 carefully. In these pages, Foster shows how Fugard reflects Shakespeare through both plot and theme. In your discussion, focus on theme.

**Chapter 7 -- ...Or the Bible**

Read "Araby" (available online). Discuss Biblical allusions that Foster does not mention. Look at the example of the "two great jars." Be creative and imaginative in these connections.

**Chapter 8 -- Hansel and Gretel**

Think of a work of literature that reflects a fairy tale. Discuss the parallels. Does it create irony or deepen appreciation?

**Chapter 9 -- It's Greek to Me**

Write a free verse poem derived or inspired by characters or situations from Greek mythology. Be prepared to share your poem with the class. Note that there are extensive links to classical mythology on my Classics page.

**Chapter 10 -- It's More Than Just Rain or Snow**

Discuss the importance of weather in a specific literary work, not in terms of plot.

**Chapter 11 -- Is That a Symbol?**

Discuss how writers often include symbols to allow the reader to use their imagination and connect to the story in a personal way. Consider a text your group members have in common. Describe the personal connections each of you made to a symbol in the story. You must show the contrasts in the interpretations.

**Chapter 12 -- It's All Political**

Assume that Foster is right and "it is all political." Use his criteria to show that one of the major works assigned to you as a freshman is political.

**Chapter 13 -- Geography Matters...**

Discuss at least four different aspects of a specific literary work that Foster would classify under "geography."

**Interlude -- One Story**

Create your own archetype. Then identify an archetypal story and apply it to a literary work with which you are familiar.

**Chapter 14 -- Marked for Greatness**

Figure out Harry Potter's scar. If you aren't familiar with Harry Potter, select another character with a physical imperfection and analyze its implications for characterization.

**Chapter 15 -- He's Blind for a Reason, You Know**

Think about the symbolic items an author deliberately writes into a story to give a character wisdom, such as blindness. Recall two stories in which a character is changed in a way that "opens their eyes." Explain what the author's purpose was for including this "blindness" and how it affected the plot development.

**Chapter 16 -- It's Never Just Heart Disease ...And Rarely Just Illness**

Recall two characters who died of a disease in a literary work. Consider how these deaths reflect the "principles governing the use of disease in literature" (93). Discuss the effectiveness of the death as related to plot, theme, or symbolism.

**Chapter 17 -- Don't Read with Your Eyes**

After reading Chapter 17, choose a scene or episode from a novel, play or epic written before the twentieth century. Contrast how it could be viewed by a reader from the twenty-first century with

how it might be viewed by a contemporary reader. Focus on specific assumptions that the author makes, assumptions that would not make it in this century.

### **Chapter 18 -- Is He Serious? And Other Ironies**

Select an ironic literary work and explain the multivocal nature of the irony in the work.

### **Chapter 19 -- A Test Case**

Read "The Garden Party" by Katherine Mansfield, the short story starting on page 107 . Complete the exercise on pages 131-132, following the directions exactly. Then compare your writing with the three examples. How did you do? What does the essay that follows comparing Laura with Persephone add to your appreciation of Mansfield's story?

### **Envoi**

Choose a motif not discussed in this book (as the horse reference on page 144) and note its appearance in three or four different works. What does this idea seem to signify?