

Reading Analysis Questions (High School)

Personal Response Questions

- How does the work make you feel? Why?
- Do you identify with a particular character? Why?
- Does a character remind you of a person you know? If so, how?
- What behaviors in the work puzzle you?
- What personal experiences came to your mind as you read the work? How did you feel about those experiences?

Literary Element Questions

Plot

- What is the main conflict?
- Is the story in chronological order, or are there flashbacks? If it is not told chronologically, what is the effect of its order on your response to the action?
- What foreshadowing did you detect when reading the story the first time and when you reread it?
- Is there a specific event that defines the story?

Setting

- What is the setting of the story?
- What does the setting contribute to the story?
- How does the setting define the characters?
- What setting details are important in the development of the plot?
- How does the setting relate to the story's theme?
- Is the setting symbolic of something else?
- Is the setting antagonistic to the characters—is it part of the conflict?
- Could this story be set anywhere else? How would it be changed by a different setting?

Characters/Characterization

- Who are the principal people in the story, and how do they interact?
- Who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist?
- Who are the minor characters, and what do they contribute to the work?
- What do the characters' words, thoughts, and actions reveal about their personalities and motivations?
- How does each character contribute to the development of the plot?
- How do the characters relate to their setting?
- Are the characters symbolic—do they seem to stand for something in addition to themselves?
- Do the characters seem true to life? Or do they seem like stand-ins for ideas?
- With which characters do you sympathize? Does your response to this character change over the course of the story? If so, what causes the change?
- Do the characters speak similarly or differently? How would you characterize their speech—is it formal or informal? Does it reflect their geographical origins, education, or class status?

Point of View

- Who tells the story? Is the narrator a character, or does the narrator stand completely outside the world of the characters in the story?
- What kind of person is the narrator? Is this person reliable, or does s/he appear to be too emotional, mentally unstable, naïve, ignorant, or biased to be trusted?
- Why do you think the writer chose this narrator?
- How does the story's point of view affect the characterizations? How much does the narrator really know?
- Does the author comment on the story?
- How would the story's effect be similar or different if someone else were the narrator?

Theme

- What is the theme, or underlying meaning, of the story? Is it stated explicitly or developed through some other element?
- Does this story remind you of anything else, such as a tale, myth, or story by someone else?
- What passages and details in the work best express the main theme?
- What does the point of view contribute to the theme?
- How does the author communicate the theme?
- What else have you read that has a similar theme?
- Does the theme challenge your values or reinforce them?

Language/Author's Style

- How does the writer's language affect the work's tone? How would you characterize its overall effect—light-hearted, mysterious, sentimental, ironic, or objective?
- How would you describe the word choice—formal or informal? Colorful or plain? Are sentences or lines long and complex, or short and concise?
- What kinds of imagery does the author use, if any? How does the imagery contribute to the work as a whole?
- Can you find figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, and personification? How do they contribute to the unity of the work?
- What is the significance of the work's title?
- Are there motifs—repeated words and images? What special meaning do they take on?
- What symbols, if any, appear in the work? What do they stand for and how do they add to your understanding of the work?

Historical Analysis Questions

- Are events in the author's biography reflected in the work?
- In what ways are the writer's personal, political, or religious values reflected in the work?
- Does this work reflect the historical and cultural context in which it is set? Does it fit in or does it conflict with that context?