

## ENGLISH 3714-250: In-class Stylistic Analysis Worksheet and Workshop

You can share the same answers from each group, but you are each required to submit your own individual final copy. In this analysis you must look at the triadic relationship between the author, work and reader to connect your insights with the broader thematic elements of the text. The idea here is to make sense of the characters, characterization and narrative points-of-view in the story. Look at the plot and narrative structuring, as well as the author's use of figurative language. Finally, explore the themes of the text and our reception or moral attitude toward the characters in order to identify the author's meanings, and his or her need to address cultural crisis. For this assignment you will write four paragraphs that take up the questions within each section. Use your answers and responses to develop your final stylistic analysis and to formulate your four (4) paragraphs. Provide textual examples and direct quotations in each paragraph. Use 12pt. Font and double space your answers. The best way to approach this exercise is to choose a specific sequence, passage or scene from the film or text. Examples provided in class discussions.

1. **Look at the point of view and tone.** The point of view has everything to do with the way in which the story is told. For example how does the narration work? Is the story told in first person, third or by an omniscient narration? Is there only one narrator or are there several? How does the dialogue work in the story? Also, how does the genre affect the storytelling? Look at the use of voice throughout the work. Is there a specific voice that stands out? How would you characterize that voice? How much is left absent from the narrator's point of view? How does the narrator limit our understanding of the events? What is the tone throughout the work? In other words, what is the central or governing attitude of the narrator throughout the work? Look at sentence patterns (long, short, ornate, simple, or complex); choices of words (formal, informal) repetitions of symbols, and figurative language (metaphors, similes, personification, alliteration, puns) and link those observations to the larger meanings embedded within the story.
2. **Look at plot.** Discuss the beginnings and the endings. Is the plot chronological? Isolate the central characters. Explore the situations of the major characters. Note the stages and all important changes or shifts in the plot. Have the characters moved from one situation to another, and what were the steps in their process. In particular note the things working against their movement in the story.
3. **Look at character.** It may be useful to think of characters as a function of two impulses: the impulse to individualize and the impulse to typify. Psychological and sociological aspects of a character's environment and the details of that space help us to understand the conditions that cause the character to behave in a particular manner. Describe the setting, mood and atmosphere. Discuss how the characters environments influence our own perceptions of them. For example what role does the villain serve and how does his or her cruelty affect other characters' lives. Ask yourselves how characters' influence our own lives? How do readers reconcile the paradox of having authentic feelings for imaginary

characters? Is there an implied or ideal reader? How do we gain empathy or the imaginative ability to see strangers as fellow sufferers? Remember that the genre of a work can also influence and play an important role in the development of character. Briefly discuss your observations.

4. **Meaning:** A story as Aristotle claims asks us to find universality within specific narratives. Ask yourselves what are the themes of this work? Discovering themes or meanings in a work involves making connections between the work and the world outside of it. You need to look at a particular instance in a story and relate it to some aspect of human relations or move from a given instance to a general notion. Look at patterns, narrative arrangement, genre and the title to explore the deeper meanings within a work. Fiction generates its meanings in innumerable ways, but always in terms of some movement from the particular characters and events of the story to general ideas or human situations suggested by them.

Sample in-class analysis from Guy Maddin's *My Winnipeg*:

Analyze one (1) of the following passages which take into account elements of its structure and larger meaning. Refer to the techniques used for analyzing literature, for example dramatic structure, sentence structure, irony, figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification), foreshadowing, point of view, tone, complication, themes, and imagery to name only a few.

#1

Even the architecture in Winnipeg is sad, has an addled concept of itself. Emblematic of this is the Arlington Street Bridge. A vast span of enfrosted steel girder that arches over the city's sprawling train yards. Where trains couple in the fog, rumble on awhile, then noisily divorce. The bridge, manufactured years ago by the Vulcan Ironworks of London, was originally destined for Egypt, where it was to span the Nile. But a mistake in specs made the fit with that river impossible and the bridge was sold at a bargain price to bargain-crazy Winnipeg. The bridge has not adjusted well to its always-strapped foster home. And it often turns in its sleep while it is possibly dreaming of its lush and joyous originally intended home and pops a girder out of place.

The sounds that groan up from the train yards at night resemble the agonies of some colossal arthritis. Just as the Arlington Street Bridge dreams of the Nile, we have another dreaming, man-made feature of the landscape, Garbage Hill. The only hill in otherwise board-flat Winnipeg. Made from a half-century of the population's trash, then grassed-over and passed off as a park a generation ago. This great mound, home to tobogganing children, dreams its filthy dreams of garbage. It's not uncommon for kids sliding down this hill to be impaled on a rusty piece of rail or old car fender that's been heaved up by the frost.

