

Writing Critically 1

Map of the Book

Unit	Writing Skills	Language Study
Unit 1 Life and Value P. 1	Overview: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify various genres of narrative• Understand that narrative is employed in both fiction and non-fiction texts• Understand the elements of narrative writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use time order signals to organize the sequence of events• Present concrete details in narrative writing
Unit 2 Empathy and Justice P. 29	Characterization: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define the meaning of characters• Develop round characters in various ways• Balance showing and telling in developing characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use concrete language to create characters• Use simile, metaphor and personification to produce effective descriptions of scenes or characters
Unit 3 Growth and Maturity P. 55	Setting: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the meaning and importance of setting in narrative writing• Practice various types of settings in a story• Build up the link between settings and characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use sensory details and concrete words to create proper settings for portraying characters and delivering themes• Use concrete words and provide sensory details to describe settings
Unit 4 Truth and Interpretation P. 81	Point of View: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the functions of point of view in narrative writing• Get familiar with various types of point of view• Choose a proper point of view for a specific story	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the importance of precise word choice in expressing point of view• Detect the functions of tenses in narrative writing

Map of the Book

Critical Thinking	Intercultural Competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an understandable report of what you have experienced in life • Interpret the theme or meaning of a story • Reflect on your values and view of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand common values across cultures • Have analytical empathy with people from other cultures • Have curiosity in individuals' life in other cultures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret the theme or meaning of a story • Examine your standards for justice • Formulate your opinion on a character's thoughts and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand similarities in the values of justice across cultures • Understand similarities in the values of love, generosity and friendship across cultures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find evidence to explain the development of characters in texts • Assess the accounts or descriptions of a character's experiences or opinions • Identify issues or problems which are critical to the growth of a character or yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand motherhood across cultures • Understand childhood across cultures • Understand the United States as a country of immigrants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the same story from different perspectives • Justify your reasoning in terms of evidential, conceptual or contextual considerations about the issue • Identify and reflect on your reasons and reasoning processes before coming to the conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret an event from different cultural perspectives • Understand different ways of thinking by people from different cultures • Understand the effects of cultural differences on communication

Writing Critically 1

Unit	Writing Skills	Language Study
Unit 5 Dream and Faith P. 107	Theme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the concept of theme in narrative writing • Identify various types of themes in narrative writing • Practice how to present the chosen theme(s) in your writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the functions of alliteration, hyperbole, onomatopoeia and understatement in narrative writing • Use figurative language to enhance the quality of narrative writing
Unit 6 Conflict and Harmony P. 137	Plot: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the elements of plot in narrative writing • Diagram the plot structure • Understand the role of conflict in narrative writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand different ways of creating cohesion (e.g., reference, substitution, lexis, ellipsis, cohesive nouns and conjunction) • Learn how to keep unity in narrative writing
Unit 7 Ethnicity and Identity P. 165	Style and Tone: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define style and tone in narrative writing • Understand the functions of style and tone in narrative writing • Use rhetorical devices to create styles in narrative writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use words to create a unique style in narrative writing • Use sentences to create a unique style in narrative writing • Use paragraphs to create a unique style in narrative writing
Unit 8 Love and Eternity P. 197	Imagery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define imagery in narrative writing • Understand the association of ideas and emotions with images • Present “showing” with imagery in narrative writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use five senses to create imagery in narrative writing • Use rhetorical devices to create imagery in narrative writing

Map of the Book

Critical Thinking	Intercultural Competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detect and state a person's purpose of behaving in a certain way • Analyze causal relationship in one's thinking and behavior • Determine which of the several possible conclusions is most strongly supported by the information given 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have analytical empathy with people from other cultures • Understand different ways of life in different cultures • Understand differences in non-verbal communication across cultures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detect the truth of a situation based on the information given • Identify relevant evidence to draw a reasonable conclusion • Make an understandable report of what one experienced in a given situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand husband-wife relationship across cultures • Reflect on human-animal relationship across cultures • Understand the customs of different cultures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts • Assess the accounts or descriptions of a character's experiences or opinions • Analyze and evaluate the effects of writing styles on engaging readers with the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the identity conflict of ethnic groups • Understand the effects of cultural differences on communication • Understand the diversity of American culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justify your reasoning in terms of evidential, conceptual or contextual considerations about the issue • Identify relevant evidence to draw reasonable conclusions • Analyze and evaluate the character's thoughts and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have analytical empathy with other creatures such as animals • Understand different ways of thinking of different cultures • Interpret an event from another culture • Interpret literary images from a cross-cultural perspective • Understand the concepts of love and eternity across cultures

5

Unit **Dream and Faith**

Theme in Narrative Writing



“ To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme. No great and enduring volume can ever be written on the flea, though many there be that have tried it. ”

—Herman Melville

Learning Objectives

In this unit, you will learn to

- ▶ identify and analyze themes in narrative writing
- ▶ present and develop themes in narrative writing
- ▶ appreciate and apply some commonly used examples of figurative language in narrative writing
- ▶ understand the power of dream and faith

Pre-class Exploration

1 Look at the following pictures and discuss the questions with your partner.

- 1) What is the story about?
- 2) What is the message that the story wants to tell us?



2 We have read the fable “Hare and Tortoise” in Unit 1. Now read another version of this well-known story by American writer Ambrose Bierce and discuss the questions with your partner.

A Hare, having ridiculed the slow movements of a Tortoise, was challenged by the latter to run a race. A Fox was assigned to the goal and be the judge. They got off well together: Hare at the top of her speed; Tortoise, who had no other intention than making his antagonist exert herself, going very leisurely. After sauntering along for some time he discovered Hare by the wayside, apparently asleep, and seeing a chance to win pushed on as fast as he could, arriving at the goal hours afterward, suffering from extreme fatigue and claiming the victory.

“Not so,” said the Fox. “Hare was here long ago, and went back to cheer you on your way.”

Questions:

- 1) What is the lesson of this version? How does it differ from the lesson of the original story?
- 2) Is the moral lesson as explicit and clear as that in the original version? Why or why not?
- 3) If you are going to rewrite the story, what would be the moral lesson you want to deliver to your readers?

Part I: Learning the Skills

What is theme?

Theme is the central meaning of a narrative. It has been called the worldview, philosophy, message or moral lesson within a story. The theme of a story is the most important thing the author wants the reader to get from the story.

Themes can be explicit or implicit. Read the following examples and find out the theme of each example.

Example 1

Michael Jordan

In his sophomore year of high school, Michael Jordan tried out for the varsity basketball team at Laney High School in Wilmington, North Carolina. But at five feet and eleven inches tall, Jordan was believed by the coach to be too short to play at that level, so Jordan was cut from the team. Jordan didn't let this obstacle defeat him. In fact, it pushed him to work even harder. He trained vigorously and grew another four inches the following summer.

110 Writing Critically 1

When he finally made the varsity squad, Jordan averaged 25 points a game and went on to become one of the greatest basketball players in history.

Example 2

The Wild Boar and the Fox

A Wild Boar stood under a tree and rubbed his tusks against the trunk. A Fox passing by asked him why he sharpened his teeth when there was no danger threatening from either huntsman or hound. He replied, "I do it advisedly, for it would never do to have to sharpen my weapons just at the time I ought to be using them."

Example 3

The Thieves and the Cock

Some thieves broke into a house and found nothing but a Cock, whom they stole, and got off as fast as they could. Upon arriving at home they prepared to kill the Cock, who thus pleaded for his life: "Pray spare me; I am very serviceable to men. I wake them up in the very early morning to their work." "That is the very reason why we must the more kill you," they replied, "for when you wake your neighbors, you entirely put an end to our business."

The safeguards of virtue are hateful to those with evil intentions.

Example 1 is a piece of non-fiction narrative writing. Examples 2 and 3 are from *Aesop's Fables*. Examples 1 and 2 do not explicitly offer the theme. Yet the moral of each is very clear: The message in Example 1 is "to be persistent and never give up" while Example 2 tells that one should always be prepared. In Example 3, there is an explicit moral message at the end.

As can be seen, themes are not unique to fictional literature. Any form of storytelling, including movies, television series, songs and poetry, can (and should) contain thematic elements.

All the elements, such as characterization, plot and setting, work together to construct the theme. The theme is expressed through what the characters say, do and think, and through everything that takes place within the story. The theme is also revealed in how the plot and setting of the narrative are constructed and presented.



ACTIVITY I

Match the themes with the following stories.

- A. The greatest kindness will not bind the ungrateful.
- B. Idleness brings want.

- C. Contentment with our lot is an element of happiness.
 D. Unity is strength.
 E. Fine feathers don't make fine birds.

Story 1**The Crab and the Fox**

A Crab, forsaking the seashore, chose a neighboring green meadow as its feeding ground. A Fox came across him, and being very hungry ate him up. Just as he was on the point of being eaten, the Crab said, "I well deserve my fate, for what business had I on the land, when by my nature and habits I am only adapted for the sea?"

Story 2**The Ants and the Grasshopper**

The Ants were spending a fine winter's day drying grain collected in the summertime. A Grasshopper, perishing with famine, passed by and earnestly begged for a little food. The Ants inquired of him, "Why did you not treasure up food during the summer?" He replied, "I had not leisure enough. I passed the days in singing." They then said in derision: "If you were foolish enough to sing all the summer, you must dance supperless to bed in the winter."

Story 3**The Farmer and the Snake**

One winter a Farmer found a Snake stiff and frozen with cold. He had compassion on it, and taking it up, placed it in his bosom. The Snake was quickly revived by the warmth, and resuming its natural instincts, bit its benefactor, inflicting on him a mortal wound. "Oh," cried the Farmer with his last breath, "I am rightly served for pitying a scoundrel!"

Story 4**The Peacock and the Crane**

A Peacock spreading its gorgeous tail mocked a Crane that passed by, ridiculing the ashen hue of its plumage and saying, "I am robed, like a king, in gold and purple and all the colors of the rainbow; while you have not a bit of color on your wings." "True," replied the Crane, "but I soar to the heights of heaven and lift up my voice to the stars, while you walk below, like a cock, among the birds of the dunghill."

Story 5**The Lion and the Three Bulls**

Three Bulls for a long time pastured together. A Lion lay in ambush in the hope of making them his prey, but was afraid to attack them while they kept together. Having at last by guileful speeches succeeded in separating them, he attacked them without fear as they fed alone, and feasted on them one by one at his own leisure.

□ What are common themes in narrative writing?

The theme of a story is the most important thing the author wants readers to understand. It is the author's thoughts about a general belief of how things are or how they should be. Examples of themes include coming of age, nostalgia or loneliness, redemption, sacrifice, betrayal, loyalty, greed, justice, oppression, revenge and love. Themes might also involve types of conflict: between the individual and society, the individual and nature, the individual and oneself, and the individual and technology.

By telling the reader what the story is about, the theme expresses the ideas or issues raised within the story. Keep in mind that most stories have multiple themes. For example, in *Harry Potter*, the most significant themes are love and good vs. evil. However, there are also themes of friendship, sacrifice and redemption. One theme might stretch across an entire series, while other themes appear in one book or one chapter of the series. The following are some examples showing different themes. All these excerpts are from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* by J. K. Rowling.

In the story, the protagonist Harry Potter spent the summer holidays at the house of his uncle and aunt's (the Dursleys). His uncle and aunt, who were "Muggles"—people without magic powers, hated the fact that Harry belonged to the wizard world and they tried to hide his letters from his wizard friends and imprisoned him in his own bedroom. In the following excerpt, his friend Ron came to rescue him with two of his brothers.

"Ron!" breathed Harry, creeping to the window and pushing it up so they could talk through the bars. "Ron, how did you—? What the—?"

Harry's mouth fell open as the full impact of what he was seeing hit him. Ron was leaning out of the back window of an old turquoise car, which was parked in midair. Grinning at Harry from the front seats were Fred and George, Ron's elder twin brothers.

"All right, Harry?" asked George.

"What's been going on?" said Ron. "Why haven't you been answering my letters? I've asked you to stay about twelve times, and then Dad came home and said you'd got an official warning for using magic in front of Muggles—"

"It wasn't me—and how did he know?"

"He works for the Ministry," said Ron. "You know we're not supposed to do spells outside school—"

"You should talk," said Harry, staring at the floating car.

"Oh, this doesn't count," said Ron. "We're only borrowing this. It's Dad's, we didn't enchant it. But doing magic in front of those Muggles you live with—"

"I told you, I didn't—but it'll take too long to explain now—look, can you tell them at Hogwarts that the Dursleys have locked me up and won't let me come back, and obviously I can't magic myself out, because the Ministry'll think that's the second spell I've done in three days, so—"

"Stop gibbering," said Ron. "We've come to take you home with us."

"But you can't magic me out either—"

"We don't need to," said Ron, jerking his head toward the front seat and grinning. "You forget who I've got with me."

"Tie that around the bars," said Fred, throwing the end of a rope to Harry.

Harry was very surprised when he found that Ron came to rescue him with his brothers. The letters Ron sent to Harry were all intercepted; therefore, Harry failed to reply these letters. Though he felt confused, Ron still came to Harry when he heard news about Harry. Furthermore, Ron was risking being criticized by his parents, particularly his mom, for using his dad's enchanted car without permission. It is clear that Ron cared Harry as a friend. Therefore, the conversations here show the theme of friendship between Harry and Ron.

In the following excerpt, Harry Potter was facing the antagonist Voldemort (born Tom Marvolo Riddle) again. Harry Potter became famous because Voldemort failed to kill him when he was still a baby. Later Harry Potter started his training at Hogwarts, a wizard training school. One day Voldemort met Harry and tried to find the answers to his puzzles about Harry. This excerpt is part of the confrontation between Harry and Voldemort.

"... I have been waiting for you to appear since we arrived here. I knew you'd come. I have many questions for you, Harry Potter."

"Like what?" Harry spat, fists still clenched.

"Well," said Riddle, smiling pleasantly, "how is it that you—a skinny boy with no extraordinary magical talent—managed to defeat the greatest wizard of all time? How did you escape with nothing but a scar, while Lord Voldemort's powers were destroyed?"

There was an odd red gleam in his hungry eyes now.

"Why do you care how I escaped?" said Harry slowly. "Voldemort was after your time..."

"Voldemort," said Riddle softly, "is my past, present, and future, Harry Potter..."

He pulled Harry's wand from his pocket and began to trace it through the air, writing three shimmering words:

TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE

Then he waved the wand once, and the letters of his name rearranged themselves:

I AM LORD VOLDEMORT

"You see?" he whispered. "It was a name I was already using at Hogwarts, to my most intimate friends only, of course. You think I was going to use my filthy Muggle father's name forever? I, in whose veins runs the blood of Salazar Slytherin himself, through my mother's side? I, keep the name of a foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch? No, Harry—I fashioned myself a new name, a name I knew wizards everywhere would one day fear to speak, when I had become the greatest sorcerer in the world!"

Harry's brain seemed to have jammed. He stared numbly at Riddle, at the orphaned

boy who had grown up to murder Harry's own parents, and so many others... At last he forced himself to speak.

"You're not," he said, his quiet voice full of hatred.

"Not what?" snapped Riddle.

"Not the greatest sorcerer in the world," said Harry, breathing fast. "Sorry to disappoint you and all that, but the greatest wizard in the world is Albus Dumbledore. Everyone says so. Even when you were strong, you didn't dare try and take over at Hogwarts. Dumbledore saw through you when you were at school and he still frightens you now, wherever you're hiding these days—"

The smile had gone from Riddle's face, to be replaced by a very ugly look.

Here Tom Riddle revealed his previous life and his ambition to become the greatest wizard in the magic world. The theme of greed is presented through the words of Riddle, who tried every means to become the greatest sorcerer in the world. In this excerpt, Harry Potter found himself in a very disadvantageous position. However, he still denied Riddle being the greatest sorcerer, showing great courage. Therefore, the theme in this excerpt includes greed, courage and the confrontation between good and evil.

In the following excerpt, Riddle (or Voldemort) successfully trapped Harry Potter in a confined space. He was sure that Harry Potter was unable to escape this time. But before killing Harry Potter, he still wanted to find out the answers to his questions. The following is part of his conversation with Harry Potter.

"To business, Harry," said Riddle, still smiling broadly. "Twice—in your past, in my future—we have met. And twice I failed to kill you. How did you survive? Tell me everything. The longer you talk," he added softly, "the longer you stay alive."

Harry was thinking fast, weighing his chances. Riddle had the wand. He, Harry, had Fawkes and the Sorting Hat, neither of which would be much good in a duel. It looked bad, all right... but the longer Riddle stood there, the more life was dwindling out of Ginny... and in the meantime, Harry noticed suddenly, Riddle's outline was becoming clearer, more solid... If it had to be a fight between him and Riddle, better sooner than later.

"No one knows why you lost your powers when you attacked me," said Harry abruptly. "I don't know myself. But I know why you couldn't kill me. Because my mother died to save me. My common Muggle-born mother," he added, shaking with suppressed rage. "She stopped you killing me. And I've seen the real you. I saw you last year. You're a wreck. You're barely alive. That's where all your power got you. You're in hiding. You're ugly, you're foul—"

In this excerpt, we can see that Harry's mother's love made all the magic power of Voldemort useless. Several themes of the book are presented here. One of the most important themes in the book is love. Together with it is the sacrifice which his

mother made for him. Besides, there are also other themes in the story, for example, good would win over evil.

□ How is theme revealed through narration?

Themes are one of the most fundamental aspects in narrative writing. These themes often have their roots in human motivations, feelings and relationships. Themes themselves could be rather dull, preachy or abstract, such as good *vs.* evil, betrayal and loss, altruism, self-sacrifice and the corrupting nature of power. But themes provide the foundation on which a story rests and themes are the soil from which all stories grow.

The theme of a narrative is revealed to the reader through different techniques. In general, it could be implicit or explicit. By “implicit,” it means that the author is not directly telling the reader what the themes would be. Instead, they are woven into the plot development and characterization. For instance, after we read the above three excerpts, we know that there are several themes revealed to us. In the first excerpt, we can see the theme of friendship. It is demonstrated to us through the use of plot design. That is, when Harry was locked up by his uncle, Ron came to rescue him. It is also revealed through the use of dialogue between Harry and Ron. In the second and third excerpts, themes such as love, greed and courage are also revealed through the development of the plot, particularly the dialogue between the protagonist and the antagonist. Besides this implicit way of delivering themes, it might also be possible to be more explicit about the theme or the point that the author wants to share with his or her readers. For example, in Excerpt 3 on Pages 102 and 103, the author indicates the theme in the first paragraph. The author shows us a very ordinary interaction a father had with his daughter, who instructed her father about how to properly meet a kid in “the twenty-first century.” The theme is mentioned at the very beginning: The choices of the children not only depend on their own efforts and attitudes but also depend on men—and American society—respecting and accommodating the choices they make. The father respected his daughter’s idea about meeting a kid according to his or her ideas.

Other writing techniques might also affect how themes are presented. For instance, if a story is presented through only one point of view, the reader can conclude that this character’s interpretation of events represents the only important interpretation of the narrative. On the other hand, if a story is presented from multiple points of view, the reader might have to interpret it on multiple levels and from multiple perspectives. The theme may also be revealed by the narrator. A third-person omniscient narrator who presents various characters’ thoughts and feelings may reveal a more abstract and broader theme than a third-person limited narrator who presents only one character’s thoughts and feelings.

□ How to develop and interpret themes in narrative writing?

There is a good chance that themes will manifest themselves even if you put no special effort into their development. In fact, themes are always so closely tied to human nature that it is almost impossible to tell a story without a theme of some kind. But if you approach a theme with intent (even vague intent), your work will have greater depth and meaning.

In most narrative writing, themes shouldn't be overly obvious. If you're working on a theme involving sacrifice, you don't want to have your characters making sacrifices all the time. Themes work best when they are subtle in most cases.

Since themes can contain messages and morals, you should make a conscious effort not to force your personal beliefs and values onto your readers. There is a difference between making a statement and being preachy. Most readers don't like novels that preach at them. In fact, some themes work best when they are presented as questions and the reader gets to experience contrary viewpoints. For example, we all accept that stealing is wrong, but we feel differently about it when a small starving child is stealing a piece of bread. After identifying a story's theme, the reader can make conclusions about the story. These conclusions are the reader's interpretation of the text.



ACTIVITY 2

Review the texts you have read in the previous units and figure out the theme(s) revealed in each text. Discuss with your partner how these themes are developed and revealed in the texts, and comment on the techniques that the authors use to develop the themes.

Text	Theme(s)	How the theme(s) is (are) revealed	Comments
<i>The Story of My Life</i> (Chapter 4)			
"The Necklace"			
"After Twenty Years"			
"The Selfish Giant"			
"Too Soon a Woman"			
"My Father Sits in the Dark"			
"The Three Little Pigs" (V1)			
"The Three Little Pigs" (V2)			
"A Day's Wait"			



ACTIVITY 3

Read the poem “Sea-Fever” by John Masefield carefully. Write your answer to each question and then discuss your answers with your partner.

- 1) What is the theme, or message that the author expresses in this poem?
- 2) What words are repeated to point out the theme? Without these words, do you think that the theme will be weakened or strengthened in the poem? Why?
- 3) What do you gain from this poem in terms of living a life?

Sea-Fever

I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
 And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
 And the wheel’s kick and the wind’s song and the white sail’s shaking,
 And a grey mist on the sea’s face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
 Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
 And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
 And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
 To the gull’s way and the whale’s way, where the wind’s like a whetted knife;
 And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
 And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick’s over.



ACTIVITY 4

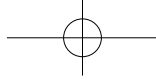
Read the following passage, and then complete the statements that follow.

Epaminondas: A Folk Tale Retold

Epaminondas lived with his mama in a little house on a hill. He was a sweet boy, but as his mama always said, not the brightest bulb in the lamp! Most days, Epaminondas went to visit his auntie. She lived on the other side of the hill. He loved to walk through the forest and cross the stream to her house. Most days she gave him something to take home.

One day Auntie gave Epaminondas half a cake. He grabbed it in his fists and carried it home. When he got there, it was smeared all over his hands. “What have you got there?” asked Mama.

“Cake, Mama,” said Epaminondas.



118 Writing Critically 1

“Epaminondas, that’s no way to carry cake!” said Mama. “You wrap it in clean leaves and put it in your hat. Now will you remember that?”

“Yes, Mama,” said Epaminondas.

The next week, Auntie gave Epaminondas some fresh, sweet butter. He wrapped it in leaves and put it in his hat. It was a hot day. The butter began to melt and when he got home, it was all over him. His mama cried, “That’s no way to carry butter! You wrap it in leaves, cool it in the brook, and carry it home! Will you remember that?”

By and by, Auntie gave Epaminondas a puppy. He wrapped it in leaves, cooled it in the brook, and carried it home. His mama rubbed the poor shivering pup with a soft towel and fed it warm soup. “That’s no way to treat a puppy!” she said. “You tie a string around its neck, put it on the ground, and walk it home! Will you remember?” “Yes, Mama,” said Epaminondas.

Today, Auntie gave Epaminondas a freshly-baked loaf of bread. He tied a string around it, put it on the ground, and walked home! The birds loved it because there were enough crumbs on the ground to feed a flock for a week! And when he got home, all he had left was a small, sticky lump of bread stuck to the string!

His mama shook her head and said, “No sense telling you any more, Epaminondas! Now I’m going to get more bread from Auntie. You see those pies cooling on the porch? They’re for the bake sale. While I’m gone, you mind how you step in those pies!”

Now we know she meant “be careful and don’t step in the pies,” but Epaminondas minded his mama. He stepped right in the middle of each pie! When his mama got home and saw the mess, she just laughed. “Oh, Epaminondas, you ain’t got the brains you were born with... but I love you anyway!” Then she gave him a big hug... and a slice of fresh bread.

1) The phrase “not the brightest bulb in the lamp” in Para. 1 means _____

_____.

2) After reading about Epaminondas’ dealing with the cake, the butter and the puppy, your impression about him is _____

_____.

3) The theme of this folk tale is _____

_____.



ASSIGNMENT 1

Write a short story with a clear theme such as friendship, love, honesty or

courage. *Aesop's Fables* could be good examples to follow.

Step A: Choose one of your favorite books, movies or television series and identify 5-10 themes in it.

Step B: Determine one key theme that is woven through the entire story.

Step C: Find out how this key theme is presented. Is it through settings, characters or plots? Identify and study them.

Step D: Use the same key theme to create your own story. Design some actions or descriptions for your character(s) that would match your theme.

Step E: Draft your story and get feedback from your partner.

Part II: Case Analysis

All classic fiction or non-fiction stories have some important themes. That is simply one of the criteria to distinguish great works from others. Writers might choose different ways to present their themes. Read the following two stories and compare how themes are presented in each story.

Text A

The Cop and the Anthem

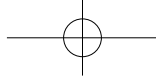
O. Henry

On his bench in Madison Square Soapy moved uneasily. When wild geese honk high of nights, and when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy's mind became cognizant of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming rigor. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernatorial ambitions of Soapy were not of the highest. In them there were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of soporific Southern skies drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul craved.



120 Writing Critically 1

Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas and bluecoats, seemed to Soapy the essence of things desirable.

For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night three Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench near the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the Island loomed big and timely in Soapy's mind. He scorned the provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents. In Soapy's opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy's proud spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As Caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which, though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman's private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to dine luxuriously at some expensive restaurant; and then, after declaring insolvency, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering café, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm, and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was decent and his neat black, ready-tied four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady missionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing—with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demi-tasse and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the café management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter refuge.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter's eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the

ignoble fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted Island was not to be an epicurean one. Some other way of entering limbo must be thought of.

At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobblestone and dashed it through the glass. People came running around the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

"Where's the man that done that?" inquired the officer excitedly.

"Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?" said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one greets good fortune.

The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to parley with the law's minions. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man halfway down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin. Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and telltale trousers without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts and pie. And then to the waiter he betrayed the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

"Now, get busy and call a cop," said Soapy. "And don't keep a gentleman waiting."

"No cop for youse," said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. "Hey, Con!"

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy dream. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Five blocks Soapy travelled before his courage permitted him to woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented what he fatuously termed to himself a "cinch." A young woman of a modest and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with sprightly interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and two yards from the window a large policeman of severe demeanor leaned against a water-plug.

It was Soapy's design to assume the role of the despicable and execrated "masher." The refined and elegant appearance of his victim and the contiguity of the conscientious cop encouraged him to believe that he would soon feel the pleasant official clutch upon his arm that would insure his winter quarters on the right little, tight little isle.

Soapy straightened the lady missionary's ready-made tie, dragged his shrinking cuffs into the open, set his hat at a killing cant and sidled toward the young woman. He made eyes at her, was taken with sudden coughs and "hems," smiled, smirked and went brazenly through the impudent and contemptible litany of the "masher." With half an eye Soapy saw that the policeman was watching him fixedly. The young woman moved away a few steps, and again bestowed her absorbed attention upon the shaving mugs. Soapy followed, boldly stepping to her side, raised his hat and said:

"Ah there, Bedelia! Don't you want to come and play in my yard?"

The policeman was still looking. The persecuted young woman had but to beckon a finger and Soapy would be practically *en route* for his insular haven. Already he imagined he could feel the cozy warmth of the station-house. The young woman faced him and, stretching out a hand, caught Soapy's coat sleeve.

"Sure, Mike," she said joyfully, "if you'll blow me to a pail of suds. I'd have spoke to you sooner, but the cop was watching."

With the young woman playing the clinging ivy to his oak Soapy walked past the policeman, overcome with gloom. He seemed doomed to liberty.

At the next corner he shook off his companion and ran. He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets, hearts, vows and librettos. Women in furs and men in greatcoats moved gaily in the wintry air. A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchantment had rendered him immune to arrest. The thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a transplendent theatre he caught at the immediate straw of "disorderly conduct."

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved, and otherwise disturbed the welkin.

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen.

"'Tis one of them Yale lads celebratin' the goose egg they give to the Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions to lave them be."

Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on entering. Soapy stepped inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

"My umbrella," he said, sternly.

"Oh, is it?" sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit larceny. "Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one on the corner."

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would again run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.

"Of course," said the umbrella man—"that is—well, you know how these mistakes occur—I—if it's your umbrella I hope you'll excuse me—I picked it up this morning in a restaurant—If you recognize it as yours, why—I hope you'll—"

"Of course it's mine," said Soapy, viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall blonde in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improvements. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and turmoil was but faint. He set his face down this toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, quaint and rambling and gabled. Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.

The moon was above, lustrous and serene; vehicles and pedestrians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves—for a little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And the anthem that the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy's receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church wrought a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties and base motives that made up his existence.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this novel mood. An instantaneous and strong impulse moved him to battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the mire; he would make a man of himself again; he would conquer the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time; he was comparatively young yet; he would resurrect his old eager ambitions and pursue them without faltering. Those solemn but sweet organ notes had set up a revolution in him. To-morrow he would go into the roaring down-town district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find him to-morrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody in the world. He would—

124 Writing Critically 1

Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a policeman.

“What are you doin’ here?” asked the officer.

“Nothin,” said Soapy.

“Then come along,” said the policeman.

“Three months on the Island,” said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.



ACTIVITY 5

Read Text A and consider how the author develops the main theme of the story.

Task 1 Understanding the text

Work in groups or pairs and fill in the blanks with the missing information about how the author develops the main theme through a series of events and a twist with the last event.

	Soapy’s action	Result(s)	Comments
the 1st event	Dined luxuriously at some expensive restaurant.	The head waiter kept him from getting in.	The snobbish waiter judged him by his appearance.
the 2nd event	Broke a shop window and waited for the police to arrest him.	The policeman did not believe he did it.	
the 3rd event			
the 4th event			
the 5th event			
the 6th event			
the 7th event			

Task 2 Responding to the text

Write your answer to each question in full sentences. Then discuss your answers with your partner.

- 1) Why did Soapy want to be arrested and what does that tell us about the theme of the story?

- 2) What are the regular responsibilities of a policeman? How did the cop respond to Soapy's several attempts to get arrested and how does that help to develop the theme of the story?

- 3) When Soapy was moved by the anthem music near the church and planned to start over, he was arrested. What is the significance of this event in further developing the theme?

- 4) Does the author convey his theme clearly in the text? How do you figure out the theme in the story?

- 5) What impact do you think the unexpected arrest would have on Soapy's regained faith to "battle with his desperate fate" and "make a man of himself again"?

Text B

Thank You, M'am

Langston Hughes

She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but a hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o'clock at night, dark, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the sudden single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance. Instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocketbook, boy, and give it here."

She still held him tightly. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "Yes'm."

The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?"

The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

By that time two or three people passed, stopped, turned to look, and some stood watching.

"If I turn you loose, will you run?" asked the woman.

"Yes'm," said the boy.

"Then I won't turn you loose," said the woman. She did not release him.

"I'm very sorry, lady, I'm sorry," whispered the boy.

"Um-hum! Your face is dirty. I got a great mind to wash your face for you. Ain't you got nobody home to tell you to wash your face?"

"No'm," said the boy.

"Then it will get washed this evening," said the large woman, starting up the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her.

He looked as if he were fourteen or fifteen, frail and willow-wild in tennis shoes and blue jeans.

The woman said, "You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?"

"No'm," said the being-dragged boy. "I just want you to turn me loose."

"Was I bothering you when I turned that corner?" asked the woman.

"No'm."

"But you put yourself in contact with me," said the woman. "If you think that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones."

Sweat popped out on the boy's face and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half-nelson about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room.

She said, "What is your name?"

"Roger," answered the boy.

"Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face," said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose—at last. Roger looked at the door—looked at the woman—looked at the door—and went to the sink.

"Let the water run until it gets warm," she said. "Here's a clean towel."

"You gonna take me to jail?" asked the boy, bending over the sink.

"Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere," said the woman. "Here I am trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat, and you snatch my pocketbook! Maybe, you ain't been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?"

"There's nobody home at my house," said the boy.

"Then we'll eat," said the woman. "I believe you're hungry—or been hungry—to try to snatch my pocketbook."

"I wanted a pair of blue suede shoes," said the boy.

"Well, you didn't have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes," said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. "You could have asked me."

"M'am?"

The water dripping from his face, the boy looked at her. There was a long pause. A very long pause. After he had dried his face and not knowing what else to do, dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open. He would make a dash for it down the hall. He would run, run, run!

The woman was sitting on the day bed. After a while, she said, "I were young once and I wanted things I could not get."

There was another long pause. The boy's mouth opened. Then he frowned, not knowing he frowned.

The woman said, "Um-hum! You thought I was going to say *but*, didn't you? You thought I was going to say, *but I didn't snatch people's pocketbooks*. Well, I wasn't going to say that." Pause. Silence. "I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if He didn't already know. So you set down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable."

In another corner of the room behind a screen was a gas plate and an icebox. Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse, which she left behind her on the day bed. But the boy took care to sit on the far side of the room, away from the purse, where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eyes if she wanted to. He did not trust the woman to trust him. And he did not trust the woman not to trust him. And he did not want to be mistrusted now.

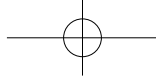
"Do you need somebody to go to the store," asked the boy, "maybe to get some milk or something?"

"Don't believe I do," said the woman, "unless you just want sweet milk yourself. I was going to make cocoa out of this canned milk I got here."

She heated some lima beans and ham she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table. The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty shop that stayed open late, what the work was like, and how all kinds of women came in and out, blondes, redheads and Spanish. Then she cut him half of her ten-cent cake.

"Eat some more, son," she said.

When they finished eating, she got up and said, "Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else's—because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But from here on in, son, I wish you would behave yourself."



128 Writing Critically 1

She led the way down the hall to the front door and opened it. "Good night! Behave yourself, boy!" she said, looking out into the street as he went down the steps.

The boy wanted to say something other than "Thank you, m'am" to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but although his lips moved, he couldn't even say that, as he turned at the foot of the barren stoop and looked up at the large woman in the door. He barely managed to say "Thank you" before she shut the door. And he never saw her again.



ACTIVITY 6

Read Text B and consider how the author develops the main theme of the story.

Task 1 Understanding the text

Write your answer to each question in full sentences. Then discuss your answers with your partner.

- 1) Who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist in this story?

- 2) What is the conflict mentioned at the beginning of the story?

- 3) What leads to the encounter between the protagonist and the antagonist?

- 4) What did the woman decide to do after the first encounter with the boy?

- 5) Did the boy try to run away when he got a chance later? Why or why not?

Task 2 Responding to the text

The dialogue plays an important role in the development of the theme of this story. Read the following dialogue excerpts and discuss with a partner how they demonstrate the theme in the story.

- 1) Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "Yes'm."

The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?"

The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

- 2) “If I turn you loose, will you run?” asked the woman.
 “Yes’m,” said the boy.
 “Then I won’t turn you loose,” said the woman.
- 3) “I’m very sorry, lady, I’m sorry,” whispered the boy.
 “Um-hum! Your face is dirty. I got a great mind to wash your face for you. Ain’t you got nobody home to tell you to wash your face?”
 “No’m,” said the boy.
 “Then it will get washed this evening,” said the large woman...
- 4) “You gonna take me to jail?” asked the boy, bending over the sink.
 “Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere,” said the woman. “Here I am trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat, and you snatch my pocketbook! Maybe, you ain’t been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?”
 “There’s nobody home at my house,” said the boy.
- 5) “Then we’ll eat,” said the woman. “I believe you’re hungry—or been hungry—to try to snatch my pocketbook.”
 “I wanted a pair of blue suede shoes,” said the boy.
 “Well, you didn’t have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes,” said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. “You could have asked me.”
- 6) “Um-hum! You thought I was going to say *but*, didn’t you? You thought I was going to say, *but I didn’t snatch people’s pocketbooks*. Well, I wasn’t going to say that.” Pause. Silence. “I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if He didn’t already know. So you set down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable.”
- 7) “Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else’s—because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But from here on in, son, I wish you would behave yourself.”

Task 3 Making a comparison between “The Cop and the Anthem” and “Thank You, M’am”

Write your answer to each question in full sentences. Then discuss your answers with your partner.

- 1) Are there any similarities between Soapy and Roger?
-
-
- 2) Are there any similarities between the policemen and Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones?
-
-
- 3) What might happen if Soapy had met someone like Mrs. Luella Bates Washington

Jones earlier in his life?

- 4) What might happen if Roger had met a policeman as that in “The Cop and the Anthem”?
-
-
- 5) What distinguishes Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones from the cops and what are the consequences of these differences?
-
-
- 6) What are the respective viewpoints of the authors toward the disadvantaged (Soapy and Roger) and the powerful (the cops and Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones) in your opinion? How does that serve the theme of each story?
-
-
- 7) Do you think Mrs. Jones acted out of faith in the story? Why or why not? In what ways do you think a person of faith differs from a person without faith?
-
-

Task 4 Writing practice

Rewrite “The Cop and the Anthem” or “Thank You, M’am” from the perspective of Soapy or Roger, using the first person point of view and keeping the same theme.

Part III: Language Study

□ Figurative language (II)

Figurative language refers to words or expressions with a meaning that is different from their daily or literal interpretation. Writers ornament their writing with figurative language to make it more entertaining or to clarify the meaning they intend to convey. Figurative language is very common in poetry, but is also used in prose and non-fiction writing. In Unit 2, we briefly learned about three types of figurative language, and in this unit, we are going to learn more.

1. Alliteration

Alliteration refers to the repetition of the same sounds or the same kinds of sounds at the beginning of the words. For example, in Story 2 on Page 135, there are several examples of alliteration such as “wide whispering woods” and “fearful frenzied.” Alliteration creates an atmosphere in rhythm, thus making the narrative or

description more vivid.

2. Hyperbole

Exaggerating, often in a humorous way, is known as hyperbole. For example:

- ◇ On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved, and otherwise **disturbed the welkin**.

In this example, Soapy thought of the idea of making noises so that he might be arrested because of “disorderly conduct.” Therefore, he was making such a fuss of himself that he disturbed the sky or universe. “Welkin” is a word often used in poetry with the meaning of “the sky, the vault of heaven.” Of course, it is impossible for him to make that kind of noise. It is just exaggeration. He wanted to draw the attention of a cop who was nearby but failed. Here are more examples:

- ◇ Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and **shook him until his teeth rattled**.
- ◇ My eyes widened at the sight of the **mile-high ice cream cones** we were having for dessert.

3. Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia names an action or a thing according to what it sounds like. For example, “The bees **buzz** angrily when their hive is disturbed.” The sounds made by the bees could almost be heard when the word “buzz” is pronounced. The following are more examples.

- ◇ The cow **moed** when it saw a passing train.
- ◇ Birds **twittered** and **tweeted**...
- ◇ The horse’s hooves **clip-cloped** on the cobblestones.

4. Understatement

In contrast with hyperbole, which greatly exaggerates the truth, understatement deliberately makes a situation less important or serious than it is. For example:

- ◇ I have to have this operation. It isn’t very serious. I have this **tiny little tumor** on the brain.

In this example, this “I” first mentioned an operation that was necessary for him or her because he or she had to have that. But then he or she described it as not serious. The last sentence reveals the seriousness of the problem: This “I” actually got a tumor on the brain. Yet, he or she tried to downplay the possible consequences. This is further strengthened by two adjectives: “tiny” and “little.” This description would be a sharp contrast with what we usually describe a tumor on the brain, thus greatly enhances the characterization of the speaker.

We have learned simile, metaphor and personification in Unit 2. In the following we are going to discuss these figures of speech using some examples in this unit to further illustrate the use of figurative language.

5. Simile

- ◇ “No cop for you,” said the waiter, with a voice **like** butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail.

By comparing two elements, the descriptive effect is enhanced, thus making it more impressive. For instance, by describing the waiter as having a voice like “butter cakes” and an eye like “the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail,” the author tells us what the waiter is like—very unpleasant and unfriendly. Comparing the voice with butter cakes and his eyes with a cherry in a cocktail is fresh and creative. The following are more examples of simile:

- ◇ He arose, joint by joint, **as** a carpenter’s rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes.
- ◇ My love is **like** a red, red rose.
- ◇ He wasn’t frightened exactly, but he was **as** anxious **as** a fish out of water to find his family before evening.

6. Metaphor

- ◇ With the young woman playing the clinging **ivy** to his **oak** Soapy walked past the policeman, overcome with gloom.

In this sentence, the “ivy” refers to the woman and the “oak” refers to Soapy. The woman clung to Soapy so tightly that she looked like ivy clinging to an oak. The use of metaphor makes the image very clear. Here are more examples:

- ◇ Alice was thrilled when her **idea** began to bear **fruit**.
- ◇ The boss **thundered** into the room.

7. Personification

- ◇ For years the **hospitable** Blackwell’s had been his winter quarters.

The word “hospitable” is usually used to describe a person who treats his or her guest with warmth. But here it refers to a prison, which is usually not modified by such a word. Thus, a combination of personification and irony creates a strong impact on the reader. Here are more examples:

- ◇ In Soapy's opinion the Law was more **benign** than Philanthropy.
- ◇ The leaves **danced** in the wind on the cold October afternoon.



ACTIVITY 7

The following sentences are all from O. Henry's works. Find out the figurative device(s) in each sentence and discuss the effect with your partner. There may be more than one answer.

- 1) Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.
- 2) Arrest seemed but a rosy dream.
- 3) I went out and caught that boy and shook him until his freckles rattled.
- 4) A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's card.
- 5) Days, weeks, and months went by, and still that little cloud of unforgotten cowardice hung above the camp.
- 6) ... one of the deputies and two of the valorous volunteers—waited, concealed by beer barrels...
- 7) The city marshal was resolved. He had decided that Calliope Catesby should no more wake the echoes of Quicksand.
- 8) She began to talk in Spanish, a mournful stream of melancholy music.
- 9) It was considered an improper act to shoot the bride and groom at a wedding.
- 10) For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.
- 11) There was a confused hum of wheels below, and the sedative buzz of an electric fan.
- 12) Light as a cork, he was kept bobbing along by the human tide.
- 13) ... luck would again run against him.
- 14) A man gets in a groove in New York. It takes the West to put a razor-edge on him.
- 15) ... birds twittered sleepily under the roof.



ACTIVITY 8

Read the following lines of poetry and find out the figurative device(s) in each excerpt.

Excerpt 1

Like burnt-out torches by a sick man's bed

134 Writing Critically 1

Excerpt 2

There's a faucet in the basement
that had dripped one drop all year
since he fixed it, we can't find it
without wearing scuba gear.

Excerpt 3

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,

Excerpt 4

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,

Excerpt 5

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might:

Excerpt 6

The leaves are little yellow fish
swimming in the river.

Excerpt 7

The old clock down in the parlor
Like a sleepless mourner grieves,

Excerpt 8

By the lakes that thus outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead,—
Their sad waters, sad and chilly

Excerpt 9

Fame is a bee.
It has a song—
It has a sting—



ACTIVITY 9

Read the following two stories and underline the different parts. What makes the difference? Discuss your understanding with your partner.

Story 1

Toby was lost. He must have wandered off from his family during their morning hike because around noon he realized that he was all alone in the middle of the woods. He

wasn't frightened exactly, but he was definitely anxious to find his family before evening. The thought of spending a night in the woods alone was a scary one. Heaving a sigh, Toby walked on.

Story 2

Toby was totally lost. He must have wandered off from his family during their morning hike because around noon he realized that he was all alone in the middle of the wide whispering woods. Thunk! Thunk! ... went his feet on the soft pine needles that covered the ground like a soft brown blanket. Birds twittered and tweeted from the sky-scraping branches of trees, but there was no sound of his family. He wasn't frightened exactly, but he was as anxious as a fish out of water to find his family before evening. The thought of spending a night in the woods alone was one that made his heart dance a fearful frenzied jig in his chest. Heaving a sigh, Toby tiredly trudged on.



ACTIVITY 10

Read the following paragraph and then rewrite it using figurative language.

Tanysha sat up late in her bedroom trying to study. She was an all-A student, and tomorrow's math test was an important one. Lying back on her bed for a minute, Tanysha started daydreaming about going to college and becoming a doctor one day.

1) **Using Alliteration:** Tanysha sat up late in her bedroom trying to study.

2) **Using Hyperbole:** She was an all-A student...

3) **Using Simile:** ... and tomorrow's math test was an important one.

4) **Using Onomatopoeia:** Lying back on her bed for a minute...

5) **Using Metaphor:** ... Tanysha started daydreaming about going to college and becoming a doctor one day.

**ASSIGNMENT 2**

Review your first draft for Assignment 1. Consider your partner's questions or comments regarding this draft and the language devices discussed, and revise it if necessary.

Checklist

Put a check (✓) as appropriate.

- 1. Do you have a theme in your story?
- 2. Have you described the settings in a way that is fit for your theme?
- 3. Do the events in your writing manifest the main theme?
- 4. Do your characters' actions and words support the main theme in one way or another?
- 5. Does the narrator's point of view align with the main theme?
- 6. Is there a variety of figurative language used in your story?

Term project

Review your term project story again and consider whether your themes have been well illustrated or could be further illustrated with more events or situations.

Self-evaluation

In this unit, I have learned that:

Achievement	Yes	No
The theme expresses the ideas or issues that are raised within a story.		
The theme can be developed implicitly as well as explicitly.		
Figurative language refers to words or expressions with a meaning that is different from their everyday or the literal interpretation.		
Proper use of figurative language can strengthen the theme(s) of narrative writing.		
Alliteration, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, onomatopoeia and understatement are frequently used figurative language.		