

Essentials in Literature
Level 11
Textbook Samples

Setting

The **physical setting** of a narrative is the location in which the story takes place. The setting can be described via a geographic location (or galactic location, in the case of many science fiction stories), a country or city, or even a particular room within a building.



The **temporal setting** of a narrative is the time in which the story takes place. This includes eras in the past, present, or future; seasons; and the time of day.

Setting influences all other elements of fiction, including conflict, characters, and theme. A certain time period or location will include specific conflicts, produce certain qualities in the characters, and be infinitely important in the delivery of the theme. Consider how the temporal and physical settings impact the content of three famous works of literature.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

This 1968 science fiction novel by Philip K. Dick is set in a post-apocalyptic future where the planet has been badly damaged by global nuclear war. Most animal species are either endangered or extinct, and escaped humanoid androids are hunted by corporations. This setting creates conflict not only with the decaying world but also the androids. It also produces depressed, paranoid characters and allows the reader to explore what it means to be human.

The Grapes of Wrath

This 1939 American novel by John Steinbeck is set during the Great Depression in both Oklahoma (where the Dust Bowl has ruined crops) and California (which is overpopulated by folks looking for work). This setting creates conflict with both nature and the economy, produces tough characters driven by survival, and emphasizes the theme that family sticks together through thick and thin.

Wuthering Heights

This 1847 Gothic novel by Emily Brontë is set on the dangerous and gloomy moors of England, where more often than not the weather is violent and drab. This setting reflects not only the temperament of the main characters but also the theme, which highlights the dangerous effects of turbulent infatuation and obsession.

Check Comprehension

1. **Who** are Joe Crowell and Howie Newsome, and **what** are they doing at the beginning of the act?
2. After Mrs. Webb and Emily string beans, the Stage Manager addresses the audience. **Why** does he describe the basic culture of the time? **How** does he describe the culture?
3. **What** song is the choir practicing?

Think Critically

The *presentation vs. representation* debate is one that rages in all forms of art. Some artists choose presentation because they want to make a point about art itself by drawing attention to the form rather than what is being depicted. Others choose presentation for comedic or dramatic purposes; for example, many films and TV shows will “break the fourth wall” and address the audience in ways that draw the viewers in, whether the situation is hilarious or emotional. Still other reasons exist for choosing either presentation or representation.

Why do you think Thornton Wilder chose to make *Our Town* a presentational play? Consider what effect the presentation has on you, the viewer/reader. Write an organized paragraph explaining your answer.

After you read a script, think about the **physical actions** actors must perform to create the **emotional atmosphere** of the play.

In the Audience

Reading *Our Town* and watching it are two very different experiences. Reading a play only exposes a person to the words spoken and a brief description of actions, entrances, and exits.

One element of drama that is particularly difficult to pick up through reading the script is the comedic element. When a person watches a play, they can see how actors move and hear how they deliver their lines in amusing ways. The audience participation—through communal laughter—also affects the atmosphere and how the play is received by the viewer. When only reading a play, however, these elements of the experience are lost.

What moments of Act One do you think would elicit laughter from the audience if the play were performed? Skim Act One again and identify potential comedic moments. List the moments and why you think they would be comedic. Consider not only the words but also how they could be delivered and the actions that could be coupled with the dialogue.

WHAT TO LEARN?

- Meet the Author
- Access the Backdrop

A Whole New World...

American Literature



The 1920s in the United States of America, or “The Roaring Twenties,” as they are often called, were a time of abrupt modernization, economic prosperity, and loosened tradition.

However, beneath the wild parties and fast living that flavored the twenties, many felt disillusioned and restless. Without new frontiers to discover or challenges to overcome, many young people began seeking pleasure as a means to numb the pain of futility.

Keep an Eye Out



In *The Great Gatsby*, the characters who seem to have everything are often the least content. See if you can identify which characters seem discontent and how Fitzgerald signifies their feelings.

Meet the Author

F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Golden Girl

F. Scott Fitzgerald relied on the chaos and romance of his own life to write his colorful stories. His wife Zelda Sayre, a sought-after southern belle whom he dubbed “The Golden Girl,” was unwilling to accept Fitzgerald’s marriage proposal until literary success brought him fame and fortune. Their relationship, grand yet fraught with discord and jealousy, served as the inspiration for *This Side of Paradise*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Tender is the Night*. Many passages in these novels were lifted verbatim from the letters and diary passages of his wife, much to her frustration.

Bound to Get Ahead

Although he was only moderately successful during his lifetime, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald is considered one of the best writers of the 20th century. Fitzgerald dedicated his life to becoming a literary success. His first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, was immediately successful, launching him into the public eye. As a way of promoting his work and creating new material for future projects, Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda lived lavishly and drank often. Unfortunately, Fitzgerald’s later novels never reached the same success as his first during his lifetime. Fueled by alcoholism, Fitzgerald sank into a deep depression, culminating in a deathly heart attack at age forty-four. Fewer than five years after his death, *The Great Gatsby* became an international success.

Sep 24, 1896—Dec 21, 1940





Analyzing Figurative Language Symbolism and Imagery

Symbolism is the use of a person, place, object, or action to express a deeper or double meaning, sometimes describing an intangible idea or concept. **Imagery** is words or phrases that appeal to the reader's physical senses: sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.

When used in conjunction, symbolism and imagery create poems that are both vivid and meaningful. Imagery produces rich pictures, sounds, and other sensory experiences in the reader's mind, but when these images take on symbolic significance, the poem opens up to many applications.

Not every poem combines imagery with symbolism. Even in poems that do, not every image is symbolic. In order to discern whether or not an image demonstrates symbolism, consider three things:

- Is the image a focal point of the poem, or is it subsidiary?
- Does the image appear multiple times?
- Does the poem itself seem to indicate that the image has special significance?



Analyzing Figurative Language activity provided in the Resource Book on page 89.

Element of Poetry: Diction

The vocabulary and syntax of a poem are jointly known as **diction**. Vocabulary refers to word choice, and syntax refers to word order and punctuation. Part of what sets poetry apart from prose is the unique diction that creates a precise and rhythmic piece of writing.

Poetic diction can be either formal or casual, simple or complex, equivocal or concrete. Poems written according to **fixed forms** tend to have a more formal and lofty diction. In contrast, **free verse** welcomes more casual vocabulary and syntax.

Whitman's free verse poem achieves poetic rhythm through word choice, repetition, and inverted syntax. The English language generally structures sentences with the *subject* first followed by the *predicate*, *adjective phrases*, and/or *prepositional phrases*. However, poets like Whitman sometimes rearrange this traditional syntax for poetic reasons.

Traditional syntax:

*The stars watch over
forgotten meadows.*

Inverted syntax:

*Over meadows forgotten
watch the stars.*

Element of Poetry activity provided in the Resource Book on page 91.

Read "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" by Walt Whitman.

“My Papa’s Waltz” &
“Woman and Child”
section from the
Poetry Unit

Accompanying activity
sheets from the
Resource Book

(Note: The Fiction Unit includes an Independent Practice for each section. Due to the nature of Drama, Novel, and Poetry sections, however, these Units do not include Independent Practices for each section.)



WHAT TO LEARN?

- Extended Metaphor and Simile
- Mood and Tone

What you find may **SURPRISE** you

Have you ever judged something based on appearance alone, such as a store, a book, or even a person? If you have, you are not alone. First impressions are powerful, so we often rely on what we see and never bother to dig deeper. You have probably found that first impressions are not always accurate.

In the same way, first impressions of poetry are often inaccurate. You may not immediately relate to a poem but eventually come to appreciate it. Similarly, two poems may seem unrelated at first, but they may share more similarities than a first impression reveals.

Discuss how first impressions can be inaccurate or even harmful with your teacher or fellow classmates.

Preview “My Papa’s Waltz” by Theodore Roethke and “Woman and Child” by Judith Beveridge.



American Literature

Meet the Authors

World Literature



Triumph Amidst Turmoil Theodore Roethke May 25, 1908—Aug 1, 1963

Although considered one of the most influential poets of his generation, Roethke led an unhappy life rooted in issues of abandonment, loss, and low self-esteem that greatly influenced his work. Even so, he won a Pulitzer Prize and was a successful teacher; two of his students also won Pulitzers, and two others were nominated. Fellow poet James Dickey once commented, “Whitman was a great poet, but he’s no competition for Roethke.”

Judith Beveridge A Woman for All Seasons 1956—

Editor and professor as well as poet, Beveridge is the author of multiple poetry collections and the recipient of several awards, including the Philip Hodgins Memorial Medal, the New South Wales Premier’s Award, and the Josephine Ulrick Poetry Prize. Although she was born in London, she is eagerly claimed by Australia, where she moved with her family in 1960.



Analyzing Figurative Language Extended Metaphor and Simile

A **simile** is an imaginative comparison that uses the words “like” or “as,” claiming one thing is like another.

A **metaphor** is also an imaginative comparison between two things or concepts, but it does not use the words “like” or “as.” This type of figurative language claims one thing is another. An **extended metaphor** is a metaphor that is present throughout an entire poem.

By using similes, metaphors, and extended metaphors, poets describe and suggest similarities between objects, actions, and ideas.

Simile	What two things are being compared?
[Lines 14-15]	The breeze and a cat's tongue lapping milk
<p>Is this comparison effective? Why or why not?</p> <p><i>This comparison is effective because it communicates the gentleness of the breeze by...</i></p>	

Analyzing Figurative Language activity can be found on page 81.

Element of Poetry: Mood and Tone

Mood refers to how the reader feels when reading a poem. **Tone**, however, refers to how the author feels about their topic of writing as evidenced in the work itself.

Mood and tone work together because the author's tone can influence the reader's mood. A reflective poem pondering the meaning of life can evoke contemplation from the reader; a lighthearted poem detailing the journey of a lost homework assignment can draw out an amused or joyful mood in the reader.

In Christina Rossetti's “When I am dead, my dearest,” for example, the narrator considers her own death but approaches it with an attitude of pragmatism rather than sorrow: “And if thou wilt, remember, / And if thou wilt, forget.” The tone of this poem is rational, which in turn evokes a thoughtful mood from the reader.

Element of Poetry activity can be found on page 83.

Read “My Papa’s Waltz” by Theodore Roethke and “Woman and Child” by Judith Beveridge.



Think About It

1. Roethke mentions several concrete objects in his poem, such as whiskey, pans, a buckle, and dirt. What do you think is the significance of these objects?
2. Why do you think Beveridge chose the setting of a garden for her poem? How does it relate to the mother and her son?
3. Consider the repetition of certain phrases in lines 11, 12-13, 19, and 32 of “Woman and Child.” What do you think is the importance of these repeated phrases?

Connection Reflection

4. Despite the haphazard and violent motions of his father, the narrator of “My Papa’s Waltz” refuses to let go of him. Have you experienced an unhealthy situation or relationship that you refused to leave? If so, why did you insist on staying? If not, why do you think someone would choose to do so?
5. The woman in “Woman and Child” remains melancholy despite the lightheartedness of her son. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt emotionally disconnected from the people around you? How did you react?

After you **read** a poem and **understand** its language, ask yourself, **what does it mean?**

Main Idea

Both “My Papa’s Waltz” and “Woman and Child” focus on the relationships between parents and children, albeit very different kinds of relationships. These poems also examine the expected roles of parents and children.

A

What is the waltz that Roethke is describing in “My Papa’s Waltz”? What is the contrast between what the narrator is experiencing and a real waltz?

B

Consider the woman’s feelings in “Woman and Child” in the midst of a lovely day and setting. Why do you think she feels this way? Does the poem indicate that her sadness is caused by her position as a mother or by something else?

Writing Connection

“My Papa’s Waltz” and “Woman and Child” examine different aspects of relationships between parents and children, the first poem from the perspective of the child and the second poem from the perspective of the parent. Think about your own relationship with one or both of your parents or a guardian.

Choose an extended metaphor that describes the relationship. Write a poem of any style that uses the extended metaphor.

Breaking Boundaries

1, 2, 3 and 1, 2, 3 – Locate instructions or a tutorial video for how to waltz. Practice the steps by yourself or with a partner. As you practice, consider why Roethke chose the metaphor of a waltz rather than other dances for his poem.

How Does That Make You Feel? – Using credible sources, research depression and its varying effects on people of all ages. Compile your findings in a report.

The Inside Scoop – Interview a mother or a father (not necessarily your own) about what it feels like to be a parent—the joys, the struggles, the unexpected events, the triumphs.



Analyzing Figurative Language: Extended Metaphor and Simile

A **simile** is an imaginative comparison, and it uses the words “like” or “as,” claiming one thing is like another.

A **metaphor** is also an imaginative comparison between two things or concepts, but this type of figurative language does not use the words “like” or “as.”

Record one simile and one metaphor from “Woman and Child.” Explain the two things that are being compared in both the simile and metaphor. Evaluate whether or not the comparisons are effective and explain your evaluation.

Simile	What two things are being compared?
Is this comparison effective? Why or why not?	

Metaphor	What two things are being compared?
Is this comparison effective? Why or why not?	

“My Papa’s Waltz” & “Woman and Child”

A **metaphor** is an imaginative comparison between two things or concepts. This type of figurative language claims one thing is another without using the words “like” or “as.” An **extended metaphor** is a metaphor that is present throughout an entire poem.

Identify the extended metaphor in “My Papa’s Waltz.” In the appropriate boxes, record elements of the extended metaphor from each stanza. Write a paragraph that explains the significance of the extended metaphor, using what you included from each stanza as support.

What is the extended metaphor?	
Stanza One	Stanza Two
Stanza Three	Stanza Four

What is the significance of the extended metaphor?

Element of Poetry: Mood and Tone

Mood refers to how the reader feels when reading a poem. **Tone**, however, refers to how the author feels about their topic of writing as evidenced in the work itself. Mood and tone work together because the author’s tone will influence the reader’s mood.

Explain the tone of “Mother and Child” using excerpts from the poem as support. Explain how the poem’s tone influences its mood.

What is the tone of “Woman and Child”?

How does the tone of “Woman and Child” influence its mood?