

SIFT Analysis for Poetry

Ms. Mariko Antonacci

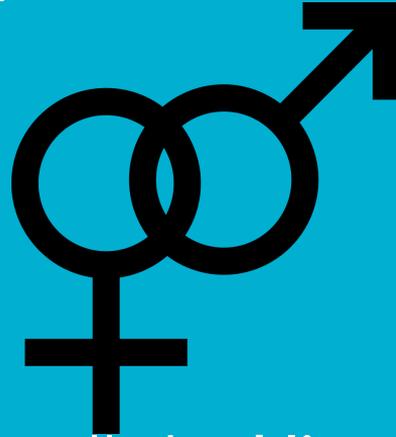
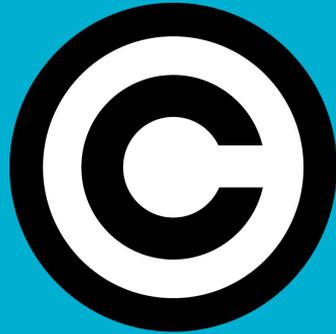
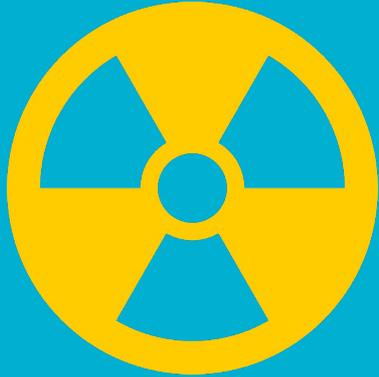
The SIFT Method

- **Symbol:** examine the text and title for symbolism
- **Images:** identify images and sensory details
- **Figurative Language:** analyze figurative language and other devices
- **Tone and Theme:** discuss how all devices reveal tone and theme

S: Symbol

Symbols: Signs of Something More

We encounter symbols in our everyday lives:



These commonly accepted symbols are called public symbols.

Symbols in Literature

- Writers create new, personal symbols in their work.
- In literature, a **symbol** is an **object**, a **setting**, an **event**, an **animal**, or even a **person** that functions in the story the way you'd expect it to, but also *stands for something more than itself, usually for something abstract*.
 - Authors often use symbols (or “symbolism”) to give their work more meaning and to make a story be about more than the events it describes.

Symbols: Two Examples

In Greek mythology, the Gods are all symbols for forces of nature – for example, Poseidon is a symbol for the sea. He is extremely powerful, but also wrathful and unpredictable. By telling stories of Poseidon's vengeful fury, the Greeks (who were not great shipbuilders) symbolically delivered a message about how dangerous the sea can be.

In our culture, Albert Einstein is the ultimate symbol of intelligence and scientific genius. When we simply see Einstein's iconic face on a T-shirt, book cover, or advertisement, we immediately know that whoever put that image there was trying to say something related to extreme intelligence.

**Harlem (1951) is a place where
African-American art flourished in
the United States.**

-Jazz

-Poetry and drama

**-Painting/photography/sculptures,
etc.**

Is it a symbol?

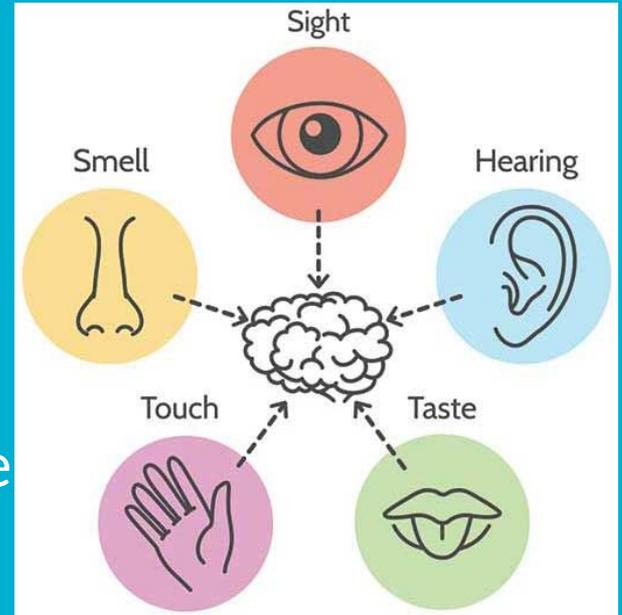
Guidelines to follow...

- Symbols are often visual.
- When some event or object or setting is used as a symbol in the story, you will usually find that the writer has given it a great deal of emphasis. Often it reappears throughout the story.
- A symbol in literature is a form of figurative language. Like a metaphor, a symbol is something that is identified with something else that is very different from it, but that shares some quality.
- A symbol usually has something to do with a story's theme.

I: Imagery

Imagery:

- Identify images and sensory details.
- Imagery helps to promote mood and tone.
- What do I see, hear, taste, smell, or feel?
- Consider: What effect is the author trying to convey with these images?
 - *This is MOST important!*



F: Figurative Language

Figurative Language

- Analyze **figurative language** and other devices.
- Writers form images by using figures of speech such as simile, metaphors, hyperbole, and personification.
 - Other devices can include: irony, allusion

T: Theme and Tone

Theme

- Theme: the central, underlying idea of a literary work.
 - Themes are a generalization about human conduct.
 - Themes are typically one or two sentences that explain the ultimate message behind a literary work.

Theme: What it is NOT

- Cannot be expressed in a single word.
- Not the purpose of the work (entertainment or instruction)
- Man versus nature is not a theme, it is a conflict.
- Unlike a moral or fable, the theme is seldom, if ever, stated.
- It is never a cliché.

How do I figure out the theme?

- You must first understand the plot, the characterization and conflict, the imagery, and the author's tone.
- Identify the **subject** in one word...
 - Then, explain in one or two sentences what the author says about the subject.
 - NOTE: Many literary works have more than one theme and there is seldom just one "right" answer!

Tone

- Tone is the author's attitude toward the subject (the beginnings of theme)
- Tone is revealed through the words he or she chooses (diction).
- You must understand the author's word choice, details, imagery and language in order to understand the tone.
- *Think: what ATTITUDE does the author have as s/he is writing this piece?*

**Now let's use the SIFT analysis to
analyze “Harlem” by Langston
Hughes.**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46548/harlem>