

# MURPHY BI-WEEKLY WRITING TIP

## Analyzing Literature: Categories

Dear Murphy Students:

In a previous tip, we defined Analysis as “dividing something into parts and looking at all the parts to better understand it” (Cf., “Analysis vs Synthesis I”).

For English literature essays, you are expected to analyze short stories, poems, and novels – but how do you “divide them into parts”?

Today's tip will look at the common categories to review when analyzing literature.

### Categories to Investigate

When doing a literary analysis, consider these common five categories:

#### Plot

- How does the story begin? How does it progress? How does it end?
- What is the climax of the story?
- How do things change in the story / poem?
- What is important about these changes? What do they reveal?

#### Setting

- Where does the story / poem take place? What country, state, or city?
- When does it place? What time period?
- Are there changes in the setting?
- What is important about these changes?

#### Characters

- Who are the characters? What are their backgrounds?
- How do the characters relate to one another?
- Are there any conflicts between characters? Does a character have an internal conflict? Why?

#### Point of View

- Whose point of view is the story or poem told from?
- What do they know? What do they *not* know? Can we trust what they say?
- Why do you think the author chose this point of view?

#### Language

- Is there anything notable about the word-choice?
- Does it use figurative language (metaphor, personification, etc.)?
- What kind of imagery is used?
- Why (do you think) this imagery is used?

#### Reminder:

you can use these categories to organize your analysis and your notes.

**However:** *do not* try to write a paper analyzing all five at the same time because you may not have the space. Choose 1-2 and go **in depth**.

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Jean Soto, Writing Specialist

[Jean.Soto@slu.cuny.edu](mailto:Jean.Soto@slu.cuny.edu)

(929) 265-2101

If you have questions or want to put this into practice, feel free to contact me! 😊