

Literature Analysis with Graded Readers

➤ In this handout you'll find:

Introduction for Instructors

Four sets of questions for literature analysis (for 4 reader levels)

One formal comparison/contrast writing task for 2 graded readers

[Introduction for Instructors]

“You’ll read 4 novels this term”

- That sure gets the ELLs’ attention on the first day of class!
- The ELLs enjoy this component of the course because they choose the novels, learn about other novels from their peers, and have a deep sense of achievement. Many report they had never read a WHOLE book in English, and many ask for access to my personal library after the course is complete.
- Essentially the ELLs in the reading/writing and listening/speaking classes read a level 3, 4, 5 and 6 graded reader within a 14 week term.
- For each level, they are required to choose a different genre (romance, action, mystery, classic, crime, etc.) and answer a different set of generic questions for each.
- The ELLs still do the literature skill work (critical thinking), but the variety of texts relieves “same book analysis fatigue.”
- The reading/writing class learners write paragraph responses to the questions and give brief oral reports in small groups. The listening/speaking class learners prepare note cards and present to small groups. Thus, giving them practice in presenting with notes.
- To reduce plagiarism temptation, I no longer ask for complete book reviews since full reviews can easily be found online for many of the graded reader titles. I have also started to purchase graded readers which are NOT classics such as those by Dickens. It’s just too tempting for them.
- Some of the following writing tasks can be adjusted for different levels of learners. For example, for characters Analysis question 1, a lower level group would be required to provide lists of details whereas a higher level group would be required to combine the 2 details in sentence with a relative clause.

Questions for Graded Reader level 3: Character Analysis

1. Make a list of all the characters in the book.

Provide 2 details about each person (occupation, personality, relationship to another, etc).

2. In a paragraph, explain how one of the characters changes throughout the story.

Use these questions to guide you:

How does the character change or grow?

What causes this change?

Is it a positive or a negative change?

3. Choose another character. In a paragraph, explain if the character is believable or not believable.

Use these questions to guide you:

What are the main characteristics of the character?

Have you ever met people like him/her in your own life?

Discuss similarities between this character and the people you know.

If they are not believable, explain why not.

Questions for Graded Reader Level 4: Setting and Plot

1. List the main and minor characters. Give ONE detail about each of them.

2. Describe the opening scene. Explain why it did or did not interest you in reading the rest of the story.

3. In a paragraph, explain the turning point (climax) of the plot. Discuss how the characters and situations changed after this turning point.

4. Was the plot predictable or unpredictable? Give reasons and examples to explain your view.

Questions for Graded Reader Level 5: Plot

1. Create a sociogram of the main characters.

2. Describe the main conflict in the story.

Person vs. Person?

Person vs. Society?

Person vs. Himself/ Herself?

Person vs. Nature?

3. Write an epilogue to the novel. That is, explain what happens 5 or 20 years after the events that occurred in the published conclusion. It can be written in the style of the novel (whoever's point of view it was in), from a character's point of view, or written as a newscast. Be creative!

Questions for Graded Reader Level 6: Creating a Sales Pitch

1. In class, you will present a 5 minute oral and print advertisement (11 X 14 inch) of your novel.

2. The print ad should include the title and author. As well, you can include words, symbols or pictures which help to summarize the plot of the story.

3. After your 5 minute presentation, you will lead a 5 minute Q & A time about your book.

4. Your classmates will rate your sales pitch. You will be rated on your poster content, oral presentation, enthusiasm, Q & A and overall persuasiveness.

[For Instructor] **A More Formal Option: In Class Comparison OR Contrast writing**

- Sometimes, I include the graded readers in the final exam.
- It is “open book,” so they can refer to their previous assignments and have access to the novels.
- This is the complete assignment guideline page.

[Material for ELLs]

In Class Writing

- For this assignment, you will write about two of the graded readers that you read this term.
- You can refer to the novels and your assignments.

CHOOSE ONE of the topics below and write ONE paragraph accordingly

A. Characters

Think about the main characters in two different novels. These questions can guide you.

- Are there two main or minor characters that are very similar or very different? Think about their personality, relationships with others, occupations, etc.
- Did they react to the same kind of situation differently or the same?
- Did they change in similar or different ways from the beginning to the end of the story?

On the back of this paper, make an outline for a comparison **OR** contrast paragraph about two characters you have read about in two DIFFERENT novels. From your main points in the outline, it must be very clear if you are using the AAA BBB or ABABAB organizational pattern.

OR

B. Events or general plot

Think about the events and/or plots of two different novels.

These questions can guide you.

- Were there two murders? How were they different or the same?
- Were the problems/ conflicts in the stories the same or different?
- Were the problems/ conflicts in the stories solved in similar or different ways?

On the back of this paper, make an outline for a comparison **OR** contrast paragraph about the two events or the general plots. From your main points in the outline, it must be very clear if you are using the AAA BBB or ABABAB organizational pattern.