Introduction to English Prose and Poetry

Literary terminology

PROSE

Why, Honey? 1970  
Raymond Carver 4

The Most Dangerous Game 1924  
Richard Connell 7

Hunters in the Snow 1981  
Tobias Wolff 19

Everyday Use 1973  
Alice Walker 29

The Lesson c.1972  
Toni Cade Bambara 35

Harrison Bergeron 1961  
Kurt Vonnegut 40

The Last Spin c.1960  
Evan Hunter 44

POETRY

Introduction to Poetry 49
The Warm and the Cold 51
The Sea 52
My Son, My Executioner 52
When my love swears that she is made of truth 53
I Ask My Mother to Sing 53
This Be the Verse 54
The Span of Life 54
Thistles 54
When in Rome 55
Constantly Risking Absurdity 56
400-Meter Freestyle 57
Six O’Clock News 58

Vocabulary for writing about literature 59
Course requirements and assignment instructions 60
Marking criteria 61
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Literary Terminology</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>theme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>characterisation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>direct characterisation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>indirect characterisation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>flat character</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>round character</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>dynamic character</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>stock character</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>foil character</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>character development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>epiphany</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>plot</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>conflict</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>protagonist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>antagonist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>exposition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>complication</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>climax</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>resolution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>foreshadowing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>narrator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>point of view</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>first person</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>third person limited</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>third person omniscient</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>unreliable narrator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>intrusive narrator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>free indirect discourse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>stream of consciousness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>diction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>denotation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>connotation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tone</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mood</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visual imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auditory imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tactile imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>olfactory imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gustatory imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>synesthesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literal meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>figurative meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>figure of speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>symbol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oxymoron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbal irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situational irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dramatic irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alliteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>euphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cacophony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onomatopoeia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stanza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>couplet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tercet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quatrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rhyme scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iambic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trochaic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tetrameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pentameter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Sir:

I was so surprised to receive your letter asking about my son, how did you know I was here? I moved here years ago right after it started to happen. No one knows who I am here but I’m afraid all the same. Who I am afraid of is him. When I look in the paper I shake my head and wonder. I read what they write about him and I ask myself is that man really my son, is he really doing these things?

He was a good boy except for his outbursts and that he could not tell the truth. I can’t give you any reasons. It started one summer over the Fourth of July, he would have been about fifteen. Our cat Trudy disappeared and was gone all night and the next day.

Mrs. Cooper who lives behind us came the next evening to tell me that Trudy crawled into her backyard that afternoon to die. Trudy was cut up she said but she recognized Trudy.

Cut up? I said. What do you mean cut up?

Mr. Cooper saw two boys in the field putting firecrackers in Trudy’s ears and in her you know what. He tried to stop them but they ran.

Who, who would do such a thing, did he see who it was?

He didn’t know the other boy but one of them ran this way. Mr. Cooper thought it was your son.

I shook my head. No, that’s just not so, he wouldn’t do a thing like that, he loved Trudy, Trudy had been in the family for years, no, it wasn’t my son.

That evening I told him about Trudy and he acted surprised and shocked and said we should offer a reward. He typed something up and promised to post it at school. But just as he was going to his room that night he said don’t take it too hard, mom, she was old, in cat years she was 65 or 70, she lived a long time.

He went to work afternoons and Saturdays as a stockboy at Hartley’s. A friend of mine who worked there, Betty Wilks, told me about the job and said she would put in a word for him. I mentioned it to him that evening and he said good, jobs for young people are hard to find.

The night he was to draw his first check I cooked his favorite supper and had everything on the table when he walked in. Here’s the man of the house, I said, hugging him. I am so proud, how much did you draw, honey? Eighty dollars, he said. I was flabbergasted. That’s wonderful, honey, I just cannot believe it. I’m starved, he said, let’s eat.

I was happy, but I couldn’t understand it, it was more than I was making.

When I did the laundry I found the stub from Hartley’s in his pocket, it was for 28 dollars, he said 80. Why didn’t he just tell the truth? I couldn’t understand.

I would ask him where did you go last night, honey? To the show he would answer. Then I would find out he went to the school dance or spent the evening riding around with somebody in a car. I would think what difference could it make, why doesn’t he just be truthful, there is no reason to lie to his mother.

I remember once he was supposed to have gone on a field trip, so I asked him what did you see on the field trip, honey? And he shrugged and said land formations, volcanic rock, ash, they showed us where there used to be a big lake a million years ago, now it’s just a desert. He looked me in the eyes and went on talking. Then I got a note from the school the next day saying they wanted permission for a field trip, could he have permission to go.

Near the end of his senior year he bought a car and was always gone. I was concerned about his grades but he always laughed. You know he was an excellent student, you know that about him if you know anything. After that he bought a shotgun and a hunting knife.

I hated to see those things come in the house and I told him so. He laughed, he always had a laugh for you. He said he would keep the gun and the knife in the trunk of his
car, he said they would be easier to get to there anyway.

One Saturday night he did not come home. I worried myself into a terrible state. About ten o’clock the next morning he came in and asked me to cook him breakfast, he said he had worked up an appetite out hunting, he said he was sorry for being gone all night, he said they had driven a long way to get to this place. It sounded strange. He was nervous.

Where did you go?
Up to the Wenas. We got a few shots.
Who did you go with, honey?
Fred.
Fred?
He stared and didn’t say anything else.

On the Sunday right after I tiptoed into his room for his car keys. He had promised to pick up some breakfast items on his way home from work the night before and I thought he might have left the things in his car. I saw his new shoes sitting half under his bed and covered with mud and sand. He opened his eyes.

Honey, what happened to your shoes? Look at your shoes.
I ran out of gas, I had to walk for gas. He sat up. What do you care?
I am your mother.

While he was in the shower I took the keys and went out to his car. I opened the trunk. I didn’t find groceries. I saw the shotgun lying on a quilt and the knife too and I saw a shirt of his rolled up in a ball and I shook it out and it was full of blood. It was wet. I dropped it. I closed the trunk and started back for the house and I saw him watching at the window and he opened the door.

I forgot to tell you, he said, I had a bad bloody nose, I don’t know if that shirt can be washed, throw it away. He smiled.

A few days later I asked how he was getting along at work. Fine, he said, he had gotten a raise. But I met Betty Wilks on the street and she said they were all sorry at Hartley’s that he had quit, he was so well liked, she said, Betty Wilks.

Two nights after that I was in bed but I couldn’t sleep, I stared at the ceiling. I heard his car pull up out front and I listened as he put the key in the lock and came through the kitchen door and down the hall to his room and he shut the door after him. I got up. I could see light under his door, I knocked and pushed on the door and said would you like a cup of tea, honey, I can’t sleep. He was bent over by the dresser and slammed a drawer and turned on me, get out he screamed, get out of here, I’m sick of you spying he screamed. I went to my room and cried myself to sleep. He broke my heart that night.

The next morning he was up and out before I could see him, but that was alright with me. From then on I was going to treat him like a lodger unless he wanted to mend his ways, I was at my limit. He would have to apologize if he wanted us to be more than strangers living together under the same roof.

When I came in that evening he had supper ready. How are you? he said, he took my coat. How was your day?
I said I didn’t sleep last night, honey. I promised myself I wouldn’t bring it up and I’m not trying to make you feel guilty but I’m not used to being talked to like that by my son.

I want to show you something, he said, and he showed me this essay he was writing for his civics class. I believe it was on relations between the congress and the supreme court. (It was the paper that won a prize for him at graduation!) I tried to read it and then I decided, this was the time. Honey, I’d like to have a talk with you, it’s hard to raise a child with things the way they are these days, it’s especially hard for us having no father in the house, no man to turn to when we need him. You are nearly grown now but I am still responsible and I feel I am entitled to some respect and consideration and have tried to be fair and honest with you. I want the truth, honey, that’s all I’ve ever asked from you, the
truth. Honey, I took a breath, suppose you had a child who when you asked him something, anything, where he’s been or where he’s going, what he’s doing with his time, anything, never, he never once told you the truth? Who if you asked him is it raining outside, would answer no, it is nice and sunny, and I guess laugh to himself and think you were too old or too stupid to see his clothes are wet. Why should he lie, you ask yourself, what does he gain I don’t understand. I keep asking myself why but I don’t have the answer. Why, honey?

He didn’t say anything, he kept staring, then he moved over alongside me and said I’ll show you. Kneel is what I say, kneel down is what I say, he said, that’s the first reason why.

I ran to my room and locked the door. He left that night, he took his things, what he wanted, and he left. Believe it or not I never saw him again. I saw him at his graduation but that was with a lot of people around. I sat in the audience and watched him get his diploma and a prize for his essay, then I heard him give the speech and then I clapped right along with the rest.

I went home after that. I have never seen him again. Oh sure I have seen him on the TV and I have seen his pictures in the paper.

I found out he joined the marines and then I heard from someone that he was out of the marines and going to college back east and then he married that girl and got himself in politics. I began to see his name in the paper. I found out his address and wrote to him, I wrote a letter every few months, there was never an answer. He ran for governor and was elected, and was famous now. That’s when I began to worry.

I built up all these fears, I became afraid, I stopped writing him of course and then I hoped he would think I was dead. I moved here. I had them give me an unlisted number. And then I had to change my name. If you are a powerful man and want to find somebody, you can find them, it wouldn’t be that hard.

I should be so proud, but I am afraid. Last week I saw a car on the street with a man inside I know was watching me, I came straight back and locked the door. A few days ago the phone rang and rang, I was lying down. I picked up the receiver but there was nothing there.

I am old. I am his mother. I should be the proudest mother in all the land but I am only afraid.

Thank you for writing. I wanted someone to know. I am very ashamed.

I also wanted to ask how you got my name and knew where to write, I have been praying no one knew. But you did. Why did you? Please tell me why.

Yours truly,

QU

QUESTIONS

1. What are we told about the son? How do you react to these claims?
2. What evidence does she give? Is it convincing?
3. What does it refer to in line 3? What effect does this have? What about him on line 4?
4. How is speech reported in the letter (e.g. lines 16-17, 40-44, 96-110)? Comment on the effect.
5. What do we learn about the narrator? What other clues are we given about her state of mind in the first paragraph?
6. Does the content of the letter seem entirely appropriate?
7. What does the final paragraph of the letter suggest about the narrator?
8. Who is the letter written to?
9. Is there anything about the way this letter has been written that surprises you? What is the conflict between the letter’s claimed purpose and its form?
10. What narrative point of view is used? What is the effect?
11. Do you consider the narrator reliable?
12. Why is she writing? What does line 136 suggest about her reasons?
13. How would you describe the two characters?
14. What methods of characterisation does Carver use?
"Off there to the right--somewhere--is a large island," said Whitney. "It's rather a mystery--"

"What island is it?" Rainsford asked.

"The old charts call it 'Ship-Trap Island,'" Whitney replied. "A suggestive name, isn't it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don't know why. Some superstition--"

"Can't see it," remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was palpable as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.

"You've good eyes," said Whitney, with a laugh, "and I've seen you pick off a moose moving in the brown fall bush at four hundred yards, but even you can't see four miles or so through a moonless Caribbean night."

"Nor four yards," admitted Rainsford. "Ugh! It's like moist black velvet."

"It will be light enough in Rio," promised Whitney. "We should make it in a few days. I hope the jaguar guns have come from Purdey's. We should have some good hunting up the Amazon. Great sport, hunting."

"The best sport in the world," agreed Rainsford.

"For the hunter," amended Whitney. "Not for the jaguar."

"Don't talk rot, Whitney," said Rainsford. "You're a big-game hunter, not a philosopher. Who cares how a jaguar feels?"

"Perhaps the jaguar does," observed Whitney.

"Bah! They've no understanding."

"Even so, I rather think they understand one thing--fear. The fear of pain and the fear of death."

"Nonsense," laughed Rainsford. "This hot weather is making you soft, Whitney. Be a realist. The world is made up of two classes--the hunters and the huntees. Luckily, you and I are hunters. Do you think we've passed that island yet?"

"I can't tell in the dark. I hope so."

"Why?" asked Rainsford.

"The place has a reputation--a bad one."

"Cannibals?" suggested Rainsford.

"Hardly. Even cannibals wouldn't live in such a God-forsaken place. But it's gotten into sailor lore, somehow. Didn't you notice that the crew's nerves seemed a bit jumpy today?"

"They were a bit strange, now you mention it. Even Captain Nielsen--"

"Yes, even that tough-minded old Swede, who'd go up to the devil himself and ask him for a light. Those fishy blue eyes held a look I never saw there before. All I could get out of him was 'This place has an evil name among seafaring men, sir.' Then he said to me, very gravely, `Don't you feel anything?'--as if the air about us was actually poisonous. Now, you mustn't laugh when I tell you this--I did feel something like a sudden chill."

"There was no breeze. The sea was as flat as a plate-glass window. We were drawing near the island then. What I felt was a--a mental chill; a sort of sudden dread."

"Pure imagination," said Rainsford.

"One superstitious sailor can taint the whole ship's company with his fear."

"Maybe. But sometimes I think sailors have an extra sense that tells them when they are in danger. Sometimes I think evil is a tangible thing--with wave lengths, just as sound and light have. An evil place can, so to speak, broadcast vibrations of evil. Anyhow, I'm glad we're getting out of this zone. Well, I think I'll turn in now, Rainsford."

"I'm not sleepy," said Rainsford. "I'm going to smoke another pipe up on the afterdeck."

"Good night, then, Rainsford. See you at breakfast."

"Right. Good night, Whitney."
There was no sound in the night as Rainsford sat there but the muffled throb of the engine that drove the yacht swiftly through the darkness, and the swish and ripple of the wash of the propeller.

Rainsford, reclining in a steamer chair, indolently puffed on his favorite brier. The sensuous drowsiness of the night was on him. "It's so dark," he thought, "that I could sleep without closing my eyes; the night would be my eyelids--"

An abrupt sound startled him. Off to the right he heard it, and his ears, expert in such matters, could not be mistaken. Again he heard the sound, and again. Somewhere, off in the blackness, someone had fired a gun three times.

Rainsford sprang up and moved quickly to the rail, mystified. He strained his eyes in the direction from which the reports had come, but it was like trying to see through a blanket. He leaped upon the rail and balanced himself there, to get greater elevation; his pipe, striking a rope, was knocked from his mouth. He lunged for it; a short, hoarse cry came from his lips as he realized he had reached too far and had lost his balance. The cry was pinched off short as the blood-warm waters of the Caribbean Sea dosed over his head.

He struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle. Desperately he struck out with strong strokes after the receding lights of the yacht, but he stopped before he had swum fifty feet. A certain coolheadedness had come to him; it was not the first time he had been in a tight place. There was a chance that his cries could be heard by someone aboard the yacht, but that chance was slender and grew more slender as the yacht raced on. He wrestled himself out of his clothes and shouted with all his power. The lights of the yacht became faint and ever-vanishing fireflies; then they were blotted out entirely by the night.

Rainsford remembered the shots. They had come from the right, and doggedly he swam in that direction, swimming with slow, deliberate strokes, conserving his strength. For a seemingly endless time he fought the sea. He began to count his strokes; he could do possibly a hundred more and then--

Rainsford heard a sound. It came out of the darkness, a high screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish and terror.

He did not recognize the animal that made the sound; he did not try to; with fresh vitality he swam toward the sound. He heard it again; then it was cut short by another noise, crisp, staccato.

"Pistol shot," muttered Rainsford, swimming on.

Ten minutes of determined effort brought another sound to his ears—the most welcome he had ever heard—the muttering and growling of the sea breaking on a rocky shore. He was almost on the rocks before he saw them; on a night less calm he would have been shattered against them. With his remaining strength he dragged himself from the swirling waters. Jagged crags appeared to jut up into the opaqueness; he forced himself upward, hand over hand. Gasping, his hands raw, he reached a flat place at the top. Dense jungle came down to the very edge of the cliffs. What perils that tangle of trees and underbrush might hold for him did not concern Rainsford just then. All he knew was that he was safe from his enemy, the sea, and that utter weariness was on him. He flung himself down at the jungle edge and tumbled headlong into the deepest sleep of his life.

When he opened his eyes he knew from the position of the sun that it was late in the afternoon. Sleep had given him new vigor; a sharp hunger was picking at him. He looked about him, almost cheerfully.

"Where there are pistol shots, there are men. Where there are men, there is food," he thought. But what kind of men, he wondered, in so forbidding a place? An unbroken front of snarled and ragged jungle fringed the shore.

He saw no sign of a trail through the closely knit web of weeds and trees; it was easier to go along the shore, and Rainsford floundered along by the water. Not far from where he landed, he stopped.
Some wounded thing—by the evidence, a large animal—had thrashed about in the underbrush; the jungle weeds were crushed down and the moss was lacerated; one patch of weeds was stained crimson. A small, glittering object not far away caught Rainsford's eye and he picked it up. It was an empty cartridge.

"A twenty-two," he remarked. "That's odd. It must have been a fairly large animal too. The hunter had his nerve with him to tackle it with a light gun. It's clear that the brute put up a fight. I suppose the first three shots I heard was when the hunter flushed his quarry and wounded it. The last shot was when he trailed it here and finished it."

He examined the ground closely and found what he had hoped to find—the print of hunting boots. They pointed along the cliff in the direction he had been going. Eagerly he hurried along, now slipping on a rotten log or a loose stone, but making headway; night was beginning to settle down on the island.

Bleak darkness was blacking out the sea and jungle when Rainsford sighted the lights. He came upon them as he turned a crook in the coast line; and his first thought was that he had come upon a village, for there were many lights. But as he forged along he saw to his great astonishment that all the lights were in one enormous building—a lofty structure with pointed towers plunging upward into the gloom. His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a palatial chateau; it was set on a high bluff, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows. "Mirage," thought Rainsford. But it was no mirage, he found, when he opened the tall spiked iron gate. The stone steps were real enough; the massive door with a leering gargoyle for a knocker was real enough; yet above it all hung an air of unreality.

He lifted the knocker, and it creaked up stiffly, as if it had never before been used. He let it fall, and it startled him with its booming loudness. He thought he heard steps within; the door remained closed. Again Rainsford lifted the heavy knocker, and let it fall. The door opened then—opened as suddenly as if it were on a spring—and Rainsford stood blinking in the river of glaring gold light that poured out. The first thing Rainsford's eyes discerned was the largest man Rainsford had ever seen—a gigantic creature, solidly made and black bearded to the waist. In his hand the man held a long-barreled revolver, and he was pointing it straight at Rainsford's heart.

Out of the snarl of beard two small eyes regarded Rainsford.

"Don't be alarmed," said Rainsford, with a smile which he hoped was disarming. "I'm no robber. I fell off a yacht. My name is Sanger Rainsford of New York City."

The menacing look in the eyes did not change. The revolver pointing as rigidly as if the giant were a statue. He gave no sign that he understood Rainsford's words, or that he had even heard them. He was dressed in uniform—a black uniform trimmed with gray astrakhan.

"I'm Sanger Rainsford of New York," Rainsford began again. "I fell off a yacht. I am hungry."

The man's only answer was to raise with his thumb the hammer of his revolver. Then Rainsford saw the man's free hand go to his forehead in a military salute, and he saw him click his heels together and stand at attention. Another man was coming down the broad marble steps, an erect, slender man in evening clothes. He advanced to Rainsford and held out his hand.

In a cultivated voice marked by a slight accent that gave it added precision and deliberateness, he said, "It is a very great pleasure and honor to welcome Mr. Sanger Rainsford, the celebrated hunter, to my home."

Automatically Rainsford shook the man's hand.

"I've read your book about hunting snow leopards in Tibet, you see," explained the man. "I am General Zaroff."

Rainsford's first impression was that the man was singularly handsome; his second was that there was an original, almost bizarre quality about the general's face. He was a tall man past middle age, for his hair was a vivid white; but his thick eyebrows and pointed
military mustache were as black as the night from which Rainsford had come. His eyes, too, were black and very bright. He had high cheekbones, a sharp-cut nose, a spare, dark face—the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an aristocrat. Turning to the giant in uniform, the general made a sign. The giant put away his pistol, saluted, withdrew.

"Ivan is an incredibly strong fellow," remarked the general, "but he has the misfortune to be deaf and dumb. A simple fellow, but, I'm afraid, like all his race, a bit of a savage."

"Is he Russian?"

"He is a Cossack," said the general, and his smile showed red lips and pointed teeth. "So am I."

"Come," he said, "we shouldn't be chatting here. We can talk later. Now you want clothes, food, rest. You shall have them. This is a most-restful spot."

Ivan had reappeared, and the general spoke to him with lips that moved but gave forth no sound.

"Follow Ivan, if you please, Mr. Rainsford," said the general. "I was about to have my dinner when you came. I'll wait for you. You'll find that my clothes will fit you, I think."

It was to a huge, beam-ceilinged bedroom with a canopied bed big enough for six men that Rainsford followed the silent giant. Ivan laid out an evening suit, and Rainsford, as he put it on, noticed that it came from a London tailor who ordinarily cut and sewed for none below the rank of duke.

The dining room to which Ivan conducted him was in many ways remarkable. There was a medieval magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast refectory tables where twoscore men could sit down to eat. About the hall were mounted heads of many animals—lions, tigers, elephants, moose, bears; larger or more perfect specimens Rainsford had never seen. At the great table the general was sitting, alone.

"You'll have a cocktail, Mr. Rainsford," he suggested. The cocktail was surpassingly good; and, Rainsford noted, the table appointments were of the finest—the linen, the crystal, the silver, the china.

They were eating borsch, the rich, red soup with whipped cream so dear to Russian palates. Half apologetically General Zaroff said, "We do our best to preserve the amenities of civilization here. Please forgive any lapses. We are well off the beaten track, you know. Do you think the champagne has suffered from its long ocean trip?"

"Not in the least," declared Rainsford. He was finding the general a most thoughtful and affable host, a true cosmopolite. But there was one small trait of the general's that made Rainsford uncomfortable. Whenever he looked up from his plate he found the general studying him, appraising him narrowly.

"Perhaps," said General Zaroff, "you were surprised that I recognized your name. You see, I read all books on hunting published in English, French, and Russian. I have but one passion in my life, Mr. Rainsford, and it is the hunt."

"You have some wonderful heads here," said Rainsford as he ate a particularly well-cooked filet mignon. "That Cape buffalo is the largest I ever saw."

"Oh, that fellow. Yes, he was a monster."

"Did he charge you?"

"Hurled me against a tree," said the general. "Fractured my skull. But I got the brute."

"I've always thought," said Rainsford, "that the Cape buffalo is the most dangerous of all big game."

For a moment the general did not reply; he was smiling his curious red-lipped smile. Then he said slowly, "No. You are wrong, sir. The Cape buffalo is not the most dangerous big game." He sipped his wine. "Here in my preserve on this island," he said in the same slow tone, "I hunt more dangerous game."

Rainsford expressed his surprise. "Is there big game on this island?"

The general nodded. "The biggest."
"Really?"
"Oh, it isn't here naturally, of course. I have to stock the island."
"What have you imported, general?" Rainsford asked. "Tigers?"
The general smiled. "No," he said. "Hunting tigers ceased to interest me some years ago. I exhausted their possibilities, you see. No thrill left in tigers, no real danger. I live for danger, Mr. Rainsford."

The general took from his pocket a gold cigarette case and offered his guest a long black cigarette with a silver tip; it was perfumed and gave off a smell like incense.

"We will have some capital hunting, you and I," said the general. "I shall be most glad to have your society."

"But what game--" began Rainsford.

"I'll tell you," said the general. "You will be amused, I know. I think I may say, in all modesty, that I have done a rare thing. I have invented a new sensation. May I pour you another glass of port?"

"Thank you, general."

The general filled both glasses, and said, "God makes some men poets. Some He makes kings, some beggars. Me He made a hunter. My hand was made for the trigger, my father said. He was a very rich man with a quarter of a million acres in the Crimea, and he was an ardent sportsman. When I was only five years old he gave me a little gun, specially made in Moscow for me, to shoot sparrows with. When I shot some of his prize turkeys with it, he did not punish me; he complimented me on my marksmanship. I killed my first bear in the Caucasus when I was ten. My whole life has been one prolonged hunt. I went into the army--it was expected of noblemen's sons--and for a time commanded a division of Cossack cavalry, but my real interest was always the hunt. I have hunted every kind of game in every land. It would be impossible for me to tell you how many animals I have killed."

The general puffed at his cigarette.

"After the debacle in Russia I left the country, for it was imprudent for an officer of the Czar to stay there. Many noble Russians lost everything. I, luckily, had invested heavily in American securities, so I shall never have to open a tearoom in Monte Carlo or drive a taxi in Paris. Naturally, I continued to hunt--grizzlyest in your Rockies, crocodiles in the Ganges, rhinoceroses in East Africa. It was in Africa that the Cape buffalo hit me and laid me up for six months. As soon as I recovered I started for the Amazon to hunt jaguars, for I had heard they were unusually cunning. They weren't." The Cossack sighed. "They were no match at all for a hunter with his wits about him, and a high-powered rifle. I was bitterly disappointed. I was lying in my tent with a splitting headache one night when a terrible thought pushed its way into my mind. Hunting was beginning to bore me! And hunting, remember, had been my life. I have heard that in America businessmen often go to pieces when they give up the business that has been their life."

"Yes, that's so," said Rainsford.

The general smiled. "I had no wish to go to pieces," he said. "I must do something. Now, mine is an analytical mind, Mr. Rainsford. Doubtless that is why I enjoy the problems of the chase."

"No doubt, General Zaroff."

"So," continued the general, "I asked myself why the hunt no longer fascinated me. You are much younger than I am, Mr. Rainsford, and have not hunted as much, but you perhaps can guess the answer."

"What was it?"

"Simply this: hunting had ceased to be what you call 'a sporting proposition.' It had become too easy. I always got my quarry. Always. There is no greater bore than perfection."

The general lit a fresh cigarette.

"No animal had a chance with me any more. That is no boast; it is a mathematical certainty. The animal had nothing but his legs and his instinct. Instinct is no match for
"reason. When I thought of this it was a tragic moment for me, I can tell you."
Rainsford leaned across the table, absorbed in what his host was saying.
"It came to me as an inspiration what I must do," the general went on.
"And that was?"
The general smiled the quiet smile of one who has faced an obstacle and surmounted
it with success. "I had to invent a new animal to hunt," he said.
"A new animal? You're joking." "Not at all," said the general. "I never joke about
hunting. I needed a new animal. I found one. So I bought this island built this house, and
here I do my hunting. The island is perfect for my purposes--there are jungles with a maze
of traits in them, hills, swamps--"
"But the animal, General Zaroff?"
"Oh," said the general, "it supplies me with the most exciting hunting in the world. No
other hunting compares with it for an instant. Every day I hunt, and I never grow bored
now, for I have a quarry with which I can match my wits."
Rainsford's bewilderment showed in his face.
"I wanted the ideal animal to hunt," explained the general. "So I said, `What are the
attributes of an ideal quarry?' And the answer was, of course, `It must have courage,
cunning, and, above all, it must be able to reason.'"
"But no animal can reason," objected Rainsford.
"My dear fellow," said the general, "there is one that can."
"But you can't mean--" gasped Rainsford.
"And why not?"
"I can't believe you are serious, General Zaroff. This is a grisly joke."
"Why should I not be serious? I am speaking of hunting."
"Hunting? Great Guns, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder."

The general laughed with entire good nature. He regarded Rainsford quizzically. "I
refuse to believe that so modern and civilized a young man as you seem to be harbors
romantic ideas about the value of human life. Surely your experiences in the war--"
"Did not make me condone cold-blooded murder," finished Rainsford stiffly.
Laughter shook the general. "How extraordinarily droll you are!" he said. "One does
not expect nowadays to find a young man of the educated class, even in America, with such
a naive, and, if I may say so, mid-Victorian point of view. It's like finding a snuffbox in a
limousine. Ah, well, doubtless you had Puritan ancestors. So many Americans appear to
have had. I'll wager you'll forget your notions when you go hunting with me. You've a
genuine new thrill in store for you, Mr. Rainsford."
"Thank you, I'm a hunter, not a murderer."
"Dear me," said the general, quite unruffled, "again that unpleasant word. But I think
I can show you that your scruples are quite ill founded."
"Yes?"
"Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and, if needs be, taken by the strong.
The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure. I am strong. Why should I
not use my gift? If I wish to hunt, why should I not? I hunt the scum of the earth: sailors
from tramp ships--lassars, blacks, Chinese, whites, mongrels--a thoroughbred horse or
hound is worth more than a score of them."
"But they are men," said Rainsford hotly.
"Precisely," said the general. "That is why I use them. It gives me pleasure. They can
reason, after a fashion. So they are dangerous."
"But where do you get them?"
The general's left eyelid fluttered down in a wink. "This island is called Ship Trap," he
answered. "Sometimes an angry god of the high seas sends them to me. Sometimes, when
Providence is not so kind, I help Providence a bit. Come to the window with me."
Rainsford went to the window and looked out toward the sea.
"Watch! Out there!" exclaimed the general, pointing into the night. Rainsford's eyes saw only blackness, and then, as the general pressed a button, far out to sea Rainsford saw the flash of lights.

The general chuckled. "They indicate a channel," he said, "where there's none; giant rocks with razor edges crouch like a sea monster with wide-open jaws. They can crush a ship as easily as I crush this nut." He dropped a walnut on the hardwood floor and brought his heel grinding down on it. "Oh, yes," he said, casually, as if in answer to a question, "I have electricity. We try to be civilized here."

"Civilized? And you shoot down men?"

A trace of anger was in the general's black eyes, but it was there for but a second; and he said, in his most pleasant manner, "Dear me, what a righteous young man you are! I assure you I do not do the thing you suggest. That would be barbarous. I treat these visitors with every consideration. They get plenty of good food and exercise. They get into splendid physical condition. You shall see for yourself tomorrow."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll visit my training school," smiled the general. "It's in the cellar. I have about a dozen pupils down there now. They're from the Spanish bark San Lucar that had the bad luck to go on the rocks out there. A very inferior lot, I regret to say. Poor specimens and more accustomed to the deck than to the jungle." He raised his hand, and Ivan, who served as waiter, brought thick Turkish coffee. Rainsford, with an effort, held his tongue in check.

"It's a game, you see," pursued the general blandly. "I suggest to one of them that we go hunting. I give him a supply of food and an excellent hunting knife. I give him three hours' start. I am to follow, armed only with a pistol of the smallest caliber and range. If my quarry eludes me for three whole days, he wins the game. If I find him--the general smiled--he loses."

"Suppose he refuses to be hunted?"

"Oh," said the general, "I give him his option, of course. He need not play that game if he doesn't wish to. If he does not wish to hunt, I turn him over to Ivan. Ivan once had the honor of serving as official knouter to the Great White Czar, and he has his own ideas of sport. Invariably, Mr. Rainsford, invariably they choose the hunt."

"And if they win?"

The smile on the general's face widened. "To date I have not lost," he said. Then he added, hastily: "I don't wish you to think me a braggart, Mr. Rainsford. Many of them afford only the most elementary sort of problem. Occasionally I strike a tartar. One almost did win. I eventually had to use the dogs."

"The dogs?"

"This way, please. I'll show you."

The general steered Rainsford to a window. The lights from the windows sent a flickering illumination that made grotesque patterns on the courtyard below, and Rainsford could see moving about there a dozen or so huge black shapes; as they turned toward him, their eyes glittered greenly.

"A rather good lot, I think," observed the general. "They are let out at seven every night. If anyone should try to get into my house--or out of it--something extremely regrettable would occur to him." He hummed a snatch of song from the Folies Bergere.

"And now," said the general, "I want to show you my new collection of heads. Will you come with me to the library?"

"I hope," said Rainsford, "that you will excuse me tonight, General Zaroff. I'm really not feeling well."

"Ah, indeed?" the general inquired solicitously. "Well, I suppose that's only natural, after your long swim. You need a good, restful night's sleep. Tomorrow you'll feel like a new man, I'll wager. Then we'll hunt, eh? I've one rather promising prospect--" Rainsford was hurrying from the room.

"Sorry you can't go with me tonight," called the general. "I expect rather fair sport--a
big, strong, black. He looks resourceful--Well, good night, Mr. Rainsford; I hope you have a
good night's rest."

The bed was good, and the pajamas of the softest silk, and he was tired in every fiber
of his being, but nevertheless Rainsford could not quiet his brain with the opiate of sleep.
He lay, eyes wide open. Once he thought he heard stealthy steps in the corridor outside his
room. He sought to throw open the door; it would not open. He went to the window and
looked out. His room was high up in one of the towers. The lights of the chateau were out
now, and it was dark and silent; but there was a fragment of sallow moon, and by its wan
light he could see, dimly, the courtyard. There, weaving in and out in the pattern of
shadow, were black, noiseless forms; the hounds heard him at the window and looked up,
expectantly, with their green eyes. Rainsford went back to the bed and lay down. By many
methods he tried to put himself to sleep. He had achieved a doze when, just as morning
began to come, he heard, far off in the jungle, the faint report of a pistol.

General Zaroff did not appear until luncheon. He was dressed faultlessly in the
tweeds of a country squire. He was solicitous about the state of Rainsford's health.
"As for me," sighed the general, "I do not feel so well. I am worried, Mr. Rainsford.
Last night I detected traces of my old complaint."

To Rainsford's questioning glance the general said, "Ennui. Boredom."

Then, taking a second helping of crêpes Suzette, the general explained: "The hunting
was not good last night. The fellow lost his head. He made a straight trail that offered no
problems at all. That's the trouble with these sailors; they have dull brains to begin with,
and they do not know how to get about in the woods. They do excessively stupid and
obvious things. It's most annoying. Will you have another glass of Chablis, Mr. Rainsford?"

"General," said Rainsford firmly, "I wish to leave this island at once."

"Ah," said the general, "'I wish to leave this island at once.'"

"General," Rainsford protested. "But, my dear fellow,"

"No, general," he said. "I will not hunt."

"As you wish, my friend," he said. "The choice rests entirely with you. But may I not venture to suggest
that you will find my idea of sport more diverting than Ivan's?"

"You'll find this game worth playing," the general said enthusiastically. "Your brain
against mine. Your woodcraft against mine. Your strength and stamina against mine.
Outdoor chess! And the stake is not without value, eh?"

"And if I win--" began Rainsford huskily.

"I'll cheerfully acknowledge myself defeat if I do not find you by midnight of the third
day," said General Zaroff. "My sloop will place you on the mainland near a town." The
general read what Rainsford was thinking.

"Oh, you can trust me," said the Cossack. "I will give you my word as a gentleman and
a sportsman. Of course you, in turn, must agree to say nothing of your visit here."

"I'll agree to nothing of the kind," said Rainsford.

"Oh," said the general, "in that case--But why discuss that now? Three days hence we
can discuss it over a bottle of Veuve Cliquot, unless--"

The general sipped his wine.
Then a businesslike air animated him. "Ivan," he said to Rainsford, "will supply you with hunting clothes, food, a knife. I suggest you wear moccasins; they leave a poorer trail. I suggest, too, that you avoid the big swamp in the southeast corner of the island. We call it Death Swamp. There's quicksand there. One foolish fellow tried it. The deplorable part of it was that Lazarus followed him. You can imagine my feelings, Mr. Rainsford. I loved Lazarus; he was the finest hound in my pack. Well, I must beg you to excuse me now. I always take a siesta after lunch. You'll hardly have time for a nap, I fear. You'll want to start, no doubt. I shall not follow till dusk. Hunting at night is so much more exciting than by day, don't you think? Au revoir, Mr. Rainsford, au revoir." General Zaroff, with a deep, courtly bow, strolled from the room.

From another door came Ivan. Under one arm he carried khaki hunting clothes, a haversack of food, a leather sheath containing a long-bladed hunting knife; his right hand rested on a cocked revolver thrust in the crimson sash about his waist.

Rainsford had fought his way through the bush for two hours. "I must keep my nerve," he said through tight teeth.

He had not been entirely clearheaded when the chateau gates snapped shut behind him. His whole idea at first was to put distance between himself and General Zaroff; and, to this end, he had plunged along, spurred on by the sharp rowers of something very like panic. Now he had got a grip on himself, had stopped, and was taking stock of himself and the situation. He saw that straight flight was futile; inevitably it would bring him face to face with the sea. He was in a picture with a frame of water, and his operations, clearly, must take place within that frame.

"I'll give him a trail to follow," muttered Rainsford, and he struck off from the rude path he had been following into the trackless wilderness. He executed a series of intricate loops; he doubled on his trail again and again, recalling all the lore of the fox hunt, and all the dodges of the fox. Night found him leg-weary, with hands and face lashed by the branches, on a thickly wooded ridge. He knew it would be insane to blunder on through the dark, even if he had the strength. His need for rest was imperative and he thought, "I have played the fox, now I must play the cat of the fable." A big tree with a thick trunk and outspread branches was near by, and, taking care to leave not the slightest mark, he climbed up into the crotch, and, stretching out on one of the broad limbs, after a fashion, rested. Rest brought him new confidence and almost a feeling of security. Even so zealous a hunter as General Zaroff could not trace him there, he told himself; only the devil himself could follow that complicated trail through the jungle after dark. But perhaps the general was a devil--

An apprehensive night crawled slowly by like a wounded snake and sleep did not visit Rainsford, although the silence of a dead world was on the jungle. Toward morning when a dingy gray was varnishing the sky, the cry of some startled bird focused Rainsford's attention in that direction. Something was coming through the bush, coming slowly, carefully, coming by the same winding way Rainsford had come. He flattened himself down on the limb and, through a screen of leaves almost as thick as tapestry, he watched. . . . That which was approaching was a man.

It was General Zaroff. He made his way along with his eyes fixed in utmost concentration on the ground before him. He paused, almost beneath the tree, dropped to his knees and studied the ground. Rainsford's impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther, but he saw that the general's right hand held something metallic--a small automatic pistol.

The hunter shook his head several times, as if he were puzzled. Then he straightened up and took from his case one of his black cigarettes; its pungent incenselike smoke floated up to Rainsford's nostrils.

Rainsford held his breath. The general's eyes had left the ground and were traveling inch by inch up the tree. Rainsford froze there, every muscle tensed for a spring. But the
sharp eyes of the hunter stopped before they reached the limb where Rainsford lay; a smile spread over his brown face. Very deliberately he blew a smoke ring into the air; then he turned his back on the tree and walked carelessly away, back along the trail he had come. The swish of the underbrush against his hunting boots grew fainter and fainter.

The pent-up air burst hotly from Rainsford's lungs. His first thought made him feel sick and numb. The general could follow a trail through the woods at night; he could follow an extremely difficult trail; he must have uncanny powers; only by the merest chance had the Cossack failed to see his quarry.

Rainsford's second thought was even more terrible. It sent a shudder of cold horror through his whole being. Why had the general smiled? Why had he turned back?

Rainsford did not want to believe what his reason told him was true, but the truth was as evident as the sun that had by now pushed through the morning mists. The general was playing with him! The general was saving him for another day's sport! The Cossack was the cat; he was the mouse. Then it was that Rainsford knew the full meaning of terror.

"I will not lose my nerve. I will not."

He slid down from the tree, and struck off again into the woods. His face was set and he forced the machinery of his mind to function. Three hundred yards from his hiding place he stopped where a huge dead tree leaned precariously on a smaller, living one. Throwing off his sack of food, Rainsford took his knife from its sheath and began to work with all his energy.

The job was finished at last, and he threw himself down behind a fallen log a hundred feet away. He did not have to wait long. The cat was coming again to play with the mouse.

Following the trail with the sureness of a bloodhound came General Zaroff. Nothing escaped those searching black eyes, no crushed blade of grass, no bent twig, no mark, no matter how faint, in the moss. So intent was the Cossack on his stalking that he was upon the thing Rainsford had made before he saw it. His foot touched the protruding bough that was the trigger. Even as he touched it, the general sensed his danger and leaped back with the agility of an ape. But he was not quite quick enough; the dead tree, delicately adjusted to rest on the cut living one, crashed down and struck the general a glancing blow on the shoulder as it fell; but for his alertness, he must have been smashed beneath it. He staggered, but he did not fall; nor did he drop his revolver. He stood there, rubbing his injured shoulder, and Rainsford, with fear again gripping his heart, heard the general's mocking laugh ring through the jungle.

"Rainsford," called the general, "if you are within sound of my voice, as I suppose you are, let me congratulate you. Not many men know how to make a Malay mancatcher. Luckily for me I, too, have hunted in Malacca. You are proving interesting, Mr. Rainsford. I am going now to have my wound dressed; it's only a slight one. But I shall be back. I shall be back."

When the general, nursing his bruised shoulder, had gone, Rainsford took up his flight again. It was flight now, a desperate, hopeless flight, that carried him on for some hours. Dusk came, then darkness, and still he pressed on. The ground grew softer under his moccasins; the vegetation grew ranker, denser; insects bit him savagely.

Then, as he stepped forward, his foot sank into the ooze. He tried to wrench it back, but the muck sucked viciously at his foot as if it were a giant leech. With a violent effort, he tore his feet loose. He knew where he was now. Death Swamp and its quicksand.

His hands were tight closed as if his nerve were something tangible that someone in the darkness was trying to tear from his grip. The softness of the earth had given him an idea. He stepped back from the quicksand a dozen feet or so and, like some huge prehistoric beaver, he began to dig.

Rainsford had dug himself in in France when a second's delay meant death. That had been a placid pastime compared to his digging now. The pit grew deeper; when it was above his shoulders, he climbed out and from some hard saplings cut stakes and sharpened them to a fine point. These stakes he planted in the bottom of the pit with the points
sticking up. With flying fingers he wove a rough carpet of weeds and branches and with it he covered the mouth of the pit. Then, wet with sweat and aching with tiredness, he crouched behind the stump of a lightning-charred tree.

He knew his pursuer was coming; he heard the padding sound of feet on the soft earth, and the night breeze brought him the perfume of the general's cigarette. It seemed to Rainsford that the general was coming with unusual swiftness; he was not feeling his way along, foot by foot. Rainsford, crouching there, could not see the general, nor could he see the pit. He lived a year in a minute. Then he felt an impulse to cry aloud with joy, for he heard the sharp crackle of the breaking branches as the cover of the pit gave way; he heard the sharp scream of pain as the pointed stakes found their mark. He leaped up from his place of concealment. Then he cowered back. Three feet from the pit a man was standing, with an electric torch in his hand.

"You've done well, Rainsford," the voice of the general called. "Your Burmese tiger pit has claimed one of my best dogs. Again you score. I think, Mr. Rainsford, I'll see what you can do against my whole pack. I'm going home for a rest now. Thank you for a most amusing evening."

At daybreak Rainsford, lying near the swamp, was awakened by a sound that made him know that he had new things to learn about fear. It was a distant sound, faint and wavering, but he knew it. It was the baying of a pack of hounds.

Rainsford knew he could do one of two things. He could stay where he was and wait. That was suicide. He could flee. That was postponing the inevitable. For a moment he stood there, thinking. An idea that held a wild chance came to him, and, tightening his belt, he headed away from the swamp. The baying of the hounds drew nearer, then still nearer, nearer, ever nearer. On a ridge Rainsford climbed a tree. Down a watercourse, not a quarter of a mile away, he could see the bush moving. Straining his eyes, he saw the lean figure of General Zaroff; just ahead of him Rainsford made out another figure whose wide shoulders surged through the tall jungle weeds; it was the giant Ivan, and he seemed pulled forward by some unseen force; Rainsford knew that Ivan must be holding the pack in leash.

They would be on him any minute now. His mind worked frantically. He thought of a native trick he had learned in Uganda. He slid down the tree. He caught hold of a springy young sapling and to it he fastened his hunting knife, with the blade pointing down the trail; with a bit of wild grapevine he tied back the sapling. Then he ran for his life. The hounds raised their voices as they hit the fresh scent. Rainsford knew now how an animal at bay feels.

He had to stop to get his breath. The baying of the hounds stopped abruptly, and Rainsford's heart stopped too. They must have reached the knife.

He shinned excitedly up a tree and looked back. His pursuers had stopped. But the hope that was in Rainsford’s brain when he climbed died, for he saw in the shallow valley that General Zaroff was still on his feet. But Ivan was not. The knife, driven by the recoil of the springing tree, had not wholly failed.

Rainsford had hardly tumbled to the ground when the pack took up the cry again. "Nerve, nerve, nerve!" he panted, as he dashed along. A blue gap showed between the trees dead ahead. Ever nearer drew the hounds. Rainsford forced himself on toward that gap. He reached it. It was the shore of the sea. Across a cove he could see the gloomy gray stone of the chateau. Twenty feet below him the sea rumbled and hissed. Rainsford hesitated. He heard the hounds. Then he leaped far out into the sea.

When the general and his pack reached the place by the sea, the Cossack stopped. For some minutes he stood regarding the blue-green expanse of water. He shrugged his shoulders. Then he sat down, took a drink of brandy from a silver flask, lit a cigarette, and hummed a bit from Madame Butterfly.

General Zaroff had an exceedingly good dinner in his great paneled dining hall that evening. With it he had a bottle of Pol Roger and half a bottle of Chambertin. Two slight
annoyances kept him from perfect enjoyment. One was the thought that it would be
difficult to replace Ivan; the other was that his quarry had escaped him; of course, the
American hadn't played the game--so thought the general as he tasted his after-dinner
liqueur. In his library he read, to soothe himself, from the works of Marcus Aurelius. At ten
he went up to his bedroom. He was deliciously tired, he said to himself, as he locked
himself in. There was a little moonlight, so, before turning on his light, he went to the
window and looked down at the courtyard. He could see the great hounds, and he called,
"Better luck another time," to them. Then he switched on the light.
A man, who had been hiding in the curtains of the bed, was standing there.
"Rainsford!" screamed the general. "How in God's name did you get here?"
"Swam," said Rainsford. "I found it quicker than walking through the jungle."
The general sucked in his breath and smiled. "I congratulate you," he said. "You have
won the game."
Rainsford did not smile. "I am still a beast at bay," he said, in a low, hoarse voice.
"Get ready, General Zaroff."
The general made one of his deepest bows. "I see," he said. "Splendid! One of us is to
furnish a repast for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. En guard,
Rainsford." . . .

He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided.

QUESTIONS
1. What are the two meanings of the title? How are they relevant to the story?
2. What is the narrative point of view? Does it change during the story? What effect does this have?
3. What mood is created at the beginning of the story (up to …as the blood-warm waters of the
   Caribbean Sea dosed over his head.
4. How is suspense used in the story? At which point was the suspense at its most intense? Why?
5. What happens at the end of the story? Can we be sure?
6. What is the most important in this story: plot, character or theme?
7. What does the discussion between Whitney and Rainsford at the beginning of the story reveal
   about Rainsford's character? Does his character develop during the story?
8. Discuss the characterizations of Rainsford and Zaroff. Which one is more fully characterized? Are
   both characters plausible (believable)?
9. How would you evaluate this story? What seems to be its purpose?
Hunters in the Snow  
Tobias Wolff (b.1945)

Tub had been waiting for an hour in the falling snow. He paced the sidewalk to keep warm and stuck his head out over the curb whenever he saw lights approaching. One driver stopped for him but before Tub could wave the man on he saw the rifle on Tub's back and hit the gas. The tires spun on the ice.

The fall of snow thickened. Tub stood below the overhang of a building. Across the road the clouds whitened just above the rooftops, and the street lights went out. He shifted the rifle strap to his other shoulder. The whiteness seeped up the sky.

A truck slid around the corner, horn blaring, rear end sashaying. Tub moved to the sidewalk and held up his hand. The truck jumped the curb and kept coming, half on the street and half on the sidewalk. It wasn't slowing down at all. Tub stood for a moment, still holding up his hand, then jumped back. His rifle slipped off his shoulder and clattered on the ice, a sandwich fell out of his pocket. He ran for the steps of the building. Another sandwich and a package of cookies tumbled onto the new snow. He made the steps and looked back.

The truck had stopped several feet beyond where Tub had been standing. He picked up his sandwiches and his cookies and slung the rifle and went up to the driver's window. The driver was bent against the steering wheel, slapping his knees and drumming his feet on the floorboards. He looked like a cartoon of a person laughing, except that his eyes watched the man on the seat beside him. "You ought to see yourself," the driver said. "He looks just like a beach ball with a hat on, doesn't he? Doesn't he, Frank?"

The man beside him smiled and looked off.

"You almost ran me down," Tub said. "You could've killed me."

"Come on, Tub, said the man beside the driver. "Be mellow. Kenny was just messing around." He opened the door and slid over to the middle of the seat.

Tub took the bolt out of his rifle and climbed in beside him. "I waited an hour," he said. "If you meant ten o'clock why didn't you say ten o'clock?"

"Tub, you haven't done anything but complain since we got here," said the man in the middle. "If you want to piss and moan all day you might as well go home and bitch at your kids. Take your pick." When Tub didn't say anything he turned to the driver. "Okay, Kenny, let's hit the road."

Some juvenile delinquents had heaved a brick through the windshield on the driver's side, so the cold and snow tunneled right into the cab. The heater didn't work. They covered themselves with a couple of blankets Kenny had brought along and pulled down the muffs on their caps. Tub tried to keep his hands warm by rubbing them under the blanket but Frank made him stop.

They left Spokane and drove deep into the country, running along black lines of fences. The snow let up, but still there was no edge to the land where it met the sky. Nothing moved in the chalky fields. The cold bleached their faces and made the stubble stand out on their cheeks and along their upper lips. They stopped twice for coffee before they got to the woods where Kenny wanted to hunt.

Tub was for trying someplace different; two years in a row they'd been up and down this land and hadn't seen a thing. Frank didn't care one way or the other, he just wanted to get out of the goddamned truck. "Feel that," Frank said, slamming the door. He spread his feet and closed his eyes and leaned his head way back and breathed deeply. "Tune in on that energy."

"Another thing," Kenny said. "This is open land. Most of the land around here is posted."

"I'm cold," Tub said.
Frank breathed out. "Stop bitching, Tub. Get centered."

"I wasn't bitching."

"Centered," Kenny said. "Next thing you'll be wearing a nightgown, Frank. Selling flowers out at the airport."

"Kenny," Frank said, "you talk too much."

"Okay," Kenny said. "I won't say a word. Like I won't say anything about a certain babysitter."

"What babysitter?" Tub asked.


Kenny laughed.

"You're asking for it," Frank said.

"Asking for what?"

"Hey," Tub said, "are we hunting or what?"

They started off across the field. Tub had trouble getting through the fences. Frank and Kenny could have helped him; they could have lifted up on the top wire and stepped on the bottom wire, but they didn't. They stood and watched him. There were a lot of fences and Tub was puffing when they reached the woods.

They hunted for over two hours and saw no deer, no tracks, no sign. Finally they stopped by the creek to eat. Kenny had several slices of pizza and a couple of candy bars; Frank had a sandwich, an apple, two carrots, and a square of chocolate; Tub ate one hard-boiled egg and a stick of celery.

"You ask me how I want to die today," Kenny said. "I'll tell you burn me at the stake."

He turned to Tub. "You still on that diet?" He winked at Frank.

"What do you think? You think I like hard-boiled eggs?"

"All I can say is, it's the first diet I ever heard of where you gained weight from it."

"Who said I gained weight?"

"Oh, pardon me. I take it back. You're just wasting away before my very eyes. Isn't he, Frank?"

Frank had his fingers fanned out, tips against the bark of the stump where he'd laid his food. His knuckles were hairy. He wore a heavy wedding band and on his right pinky another gold ring with a flat face and an "F" in what looked like diamonds. He turned the ring this way and that. "Tub," he said, "you haven't seen your own balls in ten years."

Kenny doubled over laughing. He took off his hat and slapped his leg with it.

"What am I supposed to do?" Tub said. "It's my glands."

They left the woods and hunted along the creek. Frank and Kenny worked one bank and Tub worked the other, moving upstream. The snow was light but the drifts were deep and hard to move through. Wherever Tub looked the surface was smooth, undisturbed, and after a time he lost interest. He stopped looking for tracks and just tried to keep up with Frank and Kenny on the other side. A moment came when he realized he hadn't seen them in a long time. The breeze was moving from him to them; when it stilled he never once stopped.

Tub caught up with Frank and Kenny at a bend of the creek. They were standing on a log that stretched from their bank to his. Ice had backed up behind the log. Frozen reeds stuck out, barely nodding when the air moved.

"See anything?" Frank asked.

Tub shook his head.
There wasn't much daylight left and they decided to head back toward the road. Frank and Kenny crossed the log and they started downstream, using the trail Tub had broken. Before they had gone very far Kenny stopped. "Look at that," he said, and pointed to some tracks going form the creek back into the woods. Tub's footprints crossed right over them. There on the bank, plain as day, were several mounds of deer sign. "What do you think that is, Tub?" Kenny kicked at it. "Walnuts on vanilla icing?"

"I guess I didn't notice."
Kenny looked at Frank.
"I was lost."
"You were lost. Big deal."
They followed the tracks into the woods. The deer had gone over a fence half buried in drifting snow. A no hunting sign was nailed to the top of one of the posts. Frank laughed and said the son of a bitch could read. Kenny wanted to go after him but Frank said no way, the people out here didn't mess around. He thought maybe the farmer who owned the land would let them use it if they asked. Kenny wasn't so sure. Anyway, he figured that by the time they walked to the truck and drove up the road and doubled back it would be almost dark.

"Relax," Frank said. "You can't hurry nature. If we're meant to get that deer, we'll get it. If we're not, we won't."
They started back toward the truck. This part of the woods was mainly pine. The snow was shaded and had a glaze on it. It held up Kenny and Frank but Tub kept falling through. As he kicked forward, the edge of the crust bruised his shins. Kenny and Frank pulled ahead of him, to where he couldn't even hear their voices any more. He sat down on a stump and wiped his face. He ate both the sandwiches and half the cookies, taking his own sweet time. It was dead quiet.

When Tub crossed the last fence into the toad the truck started moving. Tub had to run for it and just managed to grab hold of the tailgate and hoist himself into the bed. He lay there, panting. Kenny looked out the rear window and grinned. Tub crawled into the lee of the cab to get out of the freezing wind. He pulled his earflaps low and pushed his chin into the collar of his coat. Someone rapped on the window but Tub would not turn around. He and Frank waited outside while Kenny went into the farmhouse to ask permission. The house was old and paint was curling off the sides. The smoke streamed westward off the top of the chimney, fanning away into a thin gray plume. Above the ridge of the hills another ridge of blue clouds was rising.

"You've got a short memory," Tub said.
"What?" Frank said. He had been staring off.
"I used to stick up for you."
"Okay, so you used to stick up for me. What's eating you?"
"You shouldn't have just left me back there like that."
"You're a grown-up, Tub. You can take care of yourself. Anyway, if you think you're the only person with problems I can tell you that you're not."
"Is there something bothering you, Frank?"
Frank kicked at a branch poking out of the snow. "Never mind," he said.
"What did Kenny mean about the babysitter?"
"Kenny talks too much," Frank said. "You just mind your own business."
Kenny came out of the farmhouse and gave the thumbs-up and they began walking back toward the woods. As they passed the barn a large black hound with a grizzled snout ran out and barked at them. Every time he barked he slid backwards a bit, like a cannon recoiling. Kenny got down on all fours and snarled and barked back at him, and the dog slunk away into the barn, looking over his shoulder and peeing a little as he went.
"That's an old-timer," Frank said. "A real graybeard. Fifteen years if he's a day."
"Too old," Kenny said.

Past the barn they cut off through the fields. The land was unfenced and the crust was freezing up thick and they made good time. They kept to the edge of the field until they picked up the tracks again and followed them into the woods, farther and farther back toward the hills. The trees started to blur with the shadows and the wind rose and needled their faces with the crystals it swept off the glaze. Finally they lost the tracks.

Kenny swore and threw down his hat. "This is the worst day of hunting I ever had, bar none." He picked up his hat and brushed off the snow. "This will be the first season since I was fifteen I haven't got my deer."

"It isn't the deer," Frank said. "It's the hunting. There are all these forces out here and you just have to go with them."

"You go with them," Kenny said. "I came out here to get me a deer, not listen to a bunch of hippie bullshit. And if it hadn't been for dimples here I would have, too."

"That's enough," Frank said.

"And you--you're so busy thinking about that little jailbait of yours you wouldn't know a deer if you saw one."

"Drop dead," Frank said, and turned away.

Kenny and Tub followed him back across the fields. When they were coming up to the barn Kenny stopped and pointed. "I hate that post," he said. He raised his rifle and fired. It sounded like a dry branch cracking. The post splintered along its right side, up toward the top. "There," Kenny said. "It's dead."

"Knock it off," Frank said, walking ahead.

Kenny looked at Tub. He smiled. "I hate that tree," he said, and fired again. Tub hurried to catch up with Frank. He started to speak but just then the dog ran out of the barn and barked at them. "Easy, boy," Frank said.

"I hate that dog," Kenny was behind them.

"That's enough," Frank said. "You put that gun down."

Kenny fired. The bullet went in between the dog's eyes. He sank right down into the snow, his legs splayed out on each side, his yellow eyes open and staring. Except for the blood he looked like a small bearskin rug. The blood ran down the dog's muzzle into the snow.

They all looked at the dog lying there.

"What did he ever do to you?" Tub asked. "He was just barking."

Kenny turned to Tub. "I hate you."

Tub shot from the waist. Kenny jerked backward against the fence and buckled to his knees. He folded his hands across his stomach. "Look," he said. His hands were covered with blood. In the dusk his blood was more blue than red. It seemed to belong to the shadows. It didn't seem out of place. Kenny eased himself onto his back. He sighed several times, deeply. "You shot me," he said.

"I had to," Tub said. He knelt beside Kenny. "Oh God," he said. "Frank. Frank."

Frank hadn't moved since Kenny killed the dog.

"Frank!" Tub shouted.

"I was just kidding around," Kenny said. "It was a joke. Oh!" he said, and arched his back suddenly. "Oh!" he said again, and dug his heels into the snow and pushed himself along on his head for several feet. Then he stopped and lay there, rocking back and forth on his heels and head like a wrestler doing warm-up exercises.


"He made me," Tub said.

"No no no," Kenny said.
Tub was weeping from the eyes and nostrils. His whole face was wet. Frank closed his eyes, then looked down at Kenny again. "Where does it hurt?"
"Everywhere," Kenny said, "just everywhere."
"Oh God," Tub said.
"I mean where did it go in?" Frank said.
"Here." Kenny pointed at the wound in his stomach. It was welling slowly with blood. "You're lucky," Frank said. "It's on the left side. It missed your appendix. If it had hit your appendix you'd really be in the soup." He turned and threw up onto the snow, holding his sides as if to keep warm.
"Are you all right?" Tub said.
"There's some aspirin in the truck," Kenny said.
"I'm all right," Frank said.
"We'd better call an ambulance," Tub said.
"Jesus," Frank said. "What are we going to say?"
"Exactly what happened," Tub said. "He was going to shoot me but I shot him first."
"No sir!" Kenny said. "I wasn't either!"
Frank patted Kenny on the arm. "Easy does it, partner." He stood. "Let's go."
Tub picked up Kenny's rifle as they walked down toward the farmhouse. "No sense leaving this around," He said. "Kenny might get ideas."
"I can tell you one thing," Frank said. "You've really done it this time. This definitely takes the cake."
They had to knock on the door twice before it was opened by a thin man with lank hair. The room behind him was filled with smoke. He squinted at them. "You get anything?" he asked.
"No," Frank said.
"I knew you wouldn't. That's what I told the other fellow."
"We've had an accident."
The man looked past Frank and Tub into the gloom. "Shoot your friend, did you?"
Frank nodded.
"I did," Tub said.
"I suppose you want to use the phone."
"If it's okay."
The man in the door looked behind him, then stepped back. Frank and Tub followed him into the house. There was a woman sitting by the stove in the middle of the room. The stove was smoking badly. She looked up and then down again at the child asleep in her lap. Her face was white and damp; strands of hair were pasted across her forehead. Tub warmed his hands over the stove while Frank went into the kitchen to call. The man who had let them in stood at the window, his hands in his pockets.
"My friend shot your dog," Tub said.
The man nodded without turning around. "I should have done it myself. I just couldn't." "He loved that dog so much," the woman said. The child squirmed and she rocked it.
"You asked him to?" Tub said. "You asked him to shoot your dog?"
"He was old and sick. Couldn't chew his food any more. I would have done it myself but I don't have a gun."
"You couldn't have anyway," the woman said. "Never in a million years."
The man shrugged.
Frank came out of the kitchen. "We'll have to take him ourselves. The nearest hospital is fifty miles from here and all their ambulances are out anyway."
The woman knew a shortcut but the directions were complicated and Tub had to write them down. The man told them where they could find some boards to carry Kenny
He didn't have a flashlight but he said he would leave the porch light on.

It was dark outside. The clouds were low and heavy-looking and the wind blew in shrill gusts. There was a screen loose on the house and it banged slowly and then quickly as the wind rose again. They could hear it all the way to the barn. Frank went for the boards while Tub looked for Kenny, who was not where they had left him. Tub found him farther up the drive, lying on stomach. "You okay?" Tub said.

"It hurts."
"Frank says it missed your appendix."
"I already had my appendix out."

"All right," Frank said, coming up to them. "We'll have you in a nice warm bed before you can say Jack Robinson." He put the two boards on Kenny's right side.

"Just as long as I don't have one of those male nurses," Kenny said.
"Ha ha," Frank said. "That's the spirit. Get ready, set, over you go," and he rolled Kenny onto the boards. Kenny screamed and kicked his legs in the air. When he quieted down Frank and Tub lifted the boards and carried him down the drive. Tub had the back end, and with the snow blowing in his face he had trouble with his footing. Also he was tired and the man inside had forgotten to turn the porch light on. Just past the house Tub slipped and threw out his hands to catch himself. The boards fell and Kenny tumbled out and rolled to the bottom of the drive, yelling all the way. He came to rest against the right front wheel of the truck.

"You fat moron," Frank said. "You aren't good for diddly."
Tub grabbed Frank by the collar and back him hard up against the fence. Frank tried to pull his hands away but Tub shook him and snapped his head back and forth and finally Frank gave up.

"What do you know about fat," Tub said. "What do you know about glands?" As he spoke he kept shaking Frank. "What do you know about me?"
"All right," Frank said.
"No more," Tub said.
"All right."

"No more talking to me like that. No more watching. No more laughing."
"Okay, Tub. I promise."
Tub let go of Frank and leaned his forehead against the fence. His arms hung straight at his sides.

"I'm sorry, Tub." Frank touched him on the shoulder. "I'll be down at the truck."
Tub stood by the fence for a while and then got the rifles off the porch. Frank had rolled Kenny back onto the boards and they lifted him into the bed of the truck. Frank spread the seat blankets over him. "Warm enough?" he asked.

Kenny nodded.
"Okay. Now how does reverse work on this thing?"
"All the way to the left and up." Kenny sat up as Frank started forward to the cab.

"Frank!"
"What?"
"If it sticks don't force it.
The truck started right away. "One thing," Frank said, "you've got to hand it to the Japanese. A very ancient, very spiritual culture and they can still make a hell of a truck," He glanced over at Tub. "Look, I'm sorry. I didn't know you felt that way, honest to God I didn't. You should have said something."
"I did."
"When? Name one time."
"A couple of hours ago."
"I guess I wasn't paying attention."
"That's true, Frank," Tub said. "You don't pay attention very much."
"Tub," Frank said. "what happened back there, I should have been more sympathetic. I realize that. You were going through a lot. I just want you to know it wasn't your fault. He was asking for it."
"You think so?"
"Absolutely. It was him or you. I would have done the same thing in your shoes, no question."

The wind was blowing into their faces. The snow was a moving white wall in front of their lights; it swirled into the cab through the hole in the windshield and settled on them. Tub clapped his hands and shifted around to stay warm, but it didn't work.
"I'm going to have to stop," Frank said. "I can't feel my fingers."

Up ahead they saw some lights off the road. It was a tavern. Outside in the parking lot there were several jeeps and trucks. A couple of them had deer strapped across their hoods. Frank parked and they went back to Kenny. "How you doing, partner," Frank said.
"I'm cold."
"Well, don't feel like the Lone Ranger. It's worse inside, take my word for it. You should get that windshield fixed."
"Look," Tub said, "he threw the blankets off. They were lying in a heap against the tailgate."
"Now look, Kenny," Frank said, "it's no use whining about being cold if you're not going to try and keep warm. You've got to do your share." He spread the blankets over Kenny and tucked them in at the corners.
"They blew off."
"Hold on to them then."
"Why are we stopping, Frank?"
"Because if me and Tub don't get warmed up we're going to freeze solid and then where will you be?" He punched Kenny lightly in the arm. "So just hold your horses."

The bar was full of men in colored jackets, mostly orange. The waitress brought coffee. "Just what the doctor ordered," Frank said, cradling the steaming cup in his hand. His skin was bone white. "Tub, I've been thinking. What you said about me not paying attention, that's true."
"It's okay."
"No. I really had that coming. I guess I've just been a little too interested in old number one. I've had a lot on my mind. Not that that's any excuse."
"Forget it, Frank. I sort of lost my temper back there. I guess we're all a little on edge."

Frank shook his head. "It isn't just that."
"You want to talk about it?"
"Just between us, Tub?"
"Sure, Frank. Just between us."
"Tub, I think I'm going to be leaving Nancy."
"Oh, Frank. Oh, Frank." Tub sat back and shook his head. Frank reached out and laid his hand on Tub's arm. "Tub, have you ever been really in love?"
"Well--"
"I mean really in love." He squeezed Tub's wrist. "With your whole being."
"I don't know. When you put it like that, I don't know."
"You haven't then. Nothing against you, but you'd know it if you had." Frank let go of Tub's arm. "This isn't just some bit of fluff I'm talking about."
"Who is she, Frank?"
Frank paused. He looked into his empty cup. "Roxanne Brewer."
"Cliff Brewer's kid? The babysitter?"
"You can't just put people into categories like that, Tub. That's why the whole system is wrong. And that's why this country is going to hell in a rowboat."
"But she can't be more than--" Tub shook his head.
"Fifteen. She'll be sixteen in May." Frank smiled. "May fourth, three twenty-seven p.m. Hell, Tub, a hundred years ago she'd have been an old maid by that age. Juliet was only thirteen."
"Juliet? Juliet Miller? Jesus, Frank, she doesn't even have breasts. She doesn't even wear a top to her bathing suit. She's still collecting frogs."
"Not Juliet Miller. The real Juliet. Tub, don't you see how you're dividing people up into categories? He's an executive, she's a secretary, he's a truck driver, she's fifteen years old. Tub, this so-called babysitter, this so-called fifteen-year-old has more in her little finger than most of us have in our entire bodies. I can tell you this little lady is something special."
Tub nodded. "I know the kids like her."
"She's opened up whole worlds to me that I never knew were there."
"What does Nancy think about all of this?"
"She doesn't know."
"You haven't told her?"
"Not yet. It's not so easy. She's been damned good to me all these years. Then there's the kids to consider." The brightness in Frank's eyes trembled and he wiped quickly at them with the back of his hand. "I guess you think I'm a complete bastard."
"No, Frank. I don't think that."
"Well, you ought to."
"Frank, when you've got a friend it means you've always got someone on your side, no matter what. That's the way I feel about it anyway."
"You mean that, Tub?"
"Sure I do."
Frank smiled. "You don't know how good it feels to hear you say that."

Kenny had tried to get out of the truck but he hadn't made it. He was jackknifed over the tailgate, his head hanging above the bumper. They lifted him back into the bed, and covered him again. He was sweating and his teeth chattered. "It hurts, Frank."
"It wouldn't hurt so much if you just stayed put. Now we're going to the hospital. Go that? Say it--I'm going to the hospital."
"I'm going to the hospital."
"Again."
"I'm going to the hospital."
"Now just keep saying that to yourself and before you know it we'll be there."
After they had gone a few miles Tub turned to Frank. "I just pulled a real boner," he said.
"What's that?"
"I left the directions on the table back there."
"That's okay. I remember them pretty well."
The snowfall lightened and the clouds began to roll back off the fields, but it was no warmer and after a time both Frank and Tub were bitten through and shaking. Frank almost didn't make it around a curve, and they decided to stop at the next roadhouse.
There was an automatic hand-dryer in the bathroom and they took turns standing in front of it, opening their jackets and shirts and letting the jet of hot air breath across their faces and chests.
"You know," Tub said, "what you told me back there, I appreciate it. Trusting me."
Frank opened and closed his fingers in front of the nozzle. "The way I look at it, Tub, no man is an island. You've got to trust someone."

"Frank--"

"Frank waited.

"When I said that about my glands, that wasn't true. The truth is I just shovel it in."

"Well, Tub--"

"Day and night, Frank. In the shower. On the freeway." He turned and let the air play over his back. "I've even got stuff in the paper towel machine at work."

"There's nothing wrong with your glands at all?" Frank had taken his boots and socks off. He held first his right, then his left foot up to the nozzle.

"No. There never was."

"Does Alice know?" The machine went off and Frank started lacking up his boots.

"Nobody knows. That's the worst of it, Frank. Not the being fat, I never got any big kick out of being thin, but the lying. Having to lead a double life like a spy or a hit man. This sounds strange but I feel sorry for those guys, I really do. I know what they go through. Always having to think about what you say and do. Always feeling like people are watching you, trying to catch you at something. Never able to just be yourself. Like when I make a big deal about only having an orange for breakfast and then scarf all the way to work. Oreos, Mars Bars, Twinkies. Sugar Babies. Snickers." Tub glanced at Frank and looked quickly away. "Pretty disgusting, isn't it?"

"Tub. Tub." Frank shook his head. "Come on." He took Tub's arm and led him into the restaurant half of the bar. "My friend is hungry," he told the waitress. "Bring four orders of pancakes, plenty of butter and syrup."

"Frank--"

"Sit down."

When the dishes came Frank carved out slabs of butter and just laid them on the pancakes. Then he emptied the bottle of syrup, moving it back and forth over the plates. He leaned forward on his elbows and rested his chin in one hand. "Go on, Tub."

Tub ate several mouthfuls, then started to wipe his lips. Frank took the napkin away from him. "No wiping," he said. Tub kept at it. The syrup covered his chin; it dripped to a point like a goatee. "Weigh in, Tub," Frank said, pushing another fork across the table. "Get down to business." Tub took the fork in his left hand and lowered his head and started really chowing down. "Clean your plate," Frank said when the pancakes were gone, and Tub lifted each of the four plates and licked it clean. He sat back, trying to catch his breath.

"Beautiful," Frank said. "Are you full?"

"I'm full," Tub said. "I've never been so full."

Kenny's blankets were bunched up against the tailgate again.

"They must have blown off," Tub said.

"They're not doing him any good," Frank said. We might as well get some use out of them."


"I'm going to the hospital," Kenny said.

"Attaboy," Frank said.

The blankets helped. The wind still got their faces and Frank's hands but it was much better. The fresh snow on the road and the trees sparkled under the beam of the headlight. Squares of light from farmhouse windows fell onto the blue snow in the fields.

"Frank," Tub said after a time, "you know that farmer? He told Kenny to kill the dog."

"You're kidding!" Frank leaped forward considering. "That Kenny. What a card." He laughed and so did Tub. Tub smiled out the back window. Kenny lay with his arms folded over his stomach, moving his lips at the stars. Right overhead was the Big Dipper, and
behind, hanging between Kenny's toes in the direction of the hospital, was the North Star, Pole Star, Help to Sailors. As the truck twisted through the gentle hills the star went back and forth between Kenny's boots, staying always in his sight. "I'm going to the hospital," Kenny said. But he was wrong. They had taken a different turn a long way back.

QUESTIONS

1. Which of the three characters do you find the most/least sympathetic? How has the author achieved this effect?
2. Are the characters fully characterised? Are they round or flat characters?
3. How do the characters' actions and dialogue help to characterise them? Find examples.
4. Do any of these characters develop during the story?
5. What is the narrative point of view during the majority of the story? What effect does this have?
6. How does the narrative point of view shift at the end of the story? What is the effect of this?
7. How do lines 1-30 work as an exposition? What do we learn about the characters?
8. On lines 85-93, Tub finds himself alone. Comment on the dramatic effect of Tub's solitude. Are there any other examples of solitude in the story?
9. Comment on the significance of lines 297-302 and 334-5.
10. What is the weather like during the story? Why might the author have made this choice?
11. Comment on the effect of the scene where Frank and Tub stop for coffee. What is particularly ironic about lines 377-81?
12. What do the final two sentences suggest about the characters?
13. State the theme of this story in one sentence.
14. What is the most important in this story: plot, character or theme?
15. How would you evaluate this story? What seems to be its purpose?
Everyday Use
Alice Walker (b.1944)

I will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon. A yard like this is more comfortable than most people know. It is not just a yard. It is like an extended living room. When the hard clay is swept clean as a floor and the fine sand around the edges lined with tiny, irregular grooves, anyone can come and sit and look up into the elm tree and wait for the breezes that never come inside the house.

Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: she will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eying her sister with a mixture of envy and awe. She thinks her sister has held life always in the palm of one hand, that "no" is a word the world never learned to say to her.

You've no doubt seen those TV shows where the child who has "made it" is confronted, as a surprise, by her own mother and father, tottering in weakly from backstage. (A pleasant surprise, of course: What would they do if parent and child came on the show only to curse out and insult each other?) On TV mother and child embrace and smile into each other's faces. Sometimes the mother and father weep, the child wraps them in her arms and leans across the table to tell how she would not have made it without their help. I have seen these programs.

Sometimes I dream a dream in which Dee and I are suddenly brought together on a TV program of this sort. Out of a dark and soft-seated limousine I am ushered into a bright room filled with many people. There I meet a smiling, gray, sporty man like Johnny Carson who shakes my hand and tells me what a fine girl I have. Then we are on the stage and Dee is embracing me with tears in her eyes. She pins on my dress a large orchid, even though she has told me once that she thinks orchids are tacky flowers.

In real life I am a large, big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands. In the winter I wear flannel nightgowns to bed and overalls during the day. I can kill and clean a hog as mercilessly as a man. My fat keeps me hot in zero weather. I can work outside all day, breaking ice to get water for washing; I can eat pork liver cooked over the open fire minutes after it comes steaming from the hog. One winter I knocked a bull calf straight in the brain between the eyes with a sledge hammer and had the meat hung up to chill before nightfall. But of course all this does not show on television. I am the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake. My hair glistens in the hot bright lights. Johnny Carson has much to do to keep up with my quick and witty tongue.

But that is a mistake. I know even before I wake up. Who ever knew a Johnson with a quick tongue? Who can even imagine me looking a strange white man in the eye? It seems to me I have talked to them always with one foot raised in flight, with my head fumed in whichever way is farthest from them. Dee, though. She would always look anyone in the eye. Hesitation was no part of her nature.

"How do I look, Mama?" Maggie says, showing just enough of her thin body enveloped in pink skirt and red blouse for me to know she's there, almost hidden by the door.

"Come out into the yard," I say.

Have you ever seen a lame animal, perhaps a dog run over by some careless person rich enough to own a car, sidle up to someone who is ignorant enough to be kind to him? That is the way my Maggie walks. She has been like this, chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in shuffle, ever since the Maggie walks. She has been like this, chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in shuffle, ever since the fire that burned the other house to the ground.

Dee is lighter than Maggie, with nicer hair and a fuller figure. She's a woman now,
though sometimes I forget. How long ago was it that the other house burned? Ten, twelve years? Sometimes I can still hear the flames and feel Maggie's arms sticking to me, her hair smoking and her dress falling off her in little black papery flakes. Her eyes seemed stretched open, blazed open by the flames reflected in them. And Dee. I see her standing off under the sweet gum tree she used to dig gum out of; a look of concentration on her face as she watched the last dingy gray board of the house fall in toward the red-hot brick chimney. Why don't you do a dance around the ashes? I'd wanted to ask her. She had hated the house that much.

I used to think she hated Maggie, too. But that was before we raised money, the church and me, to send her to Augusta to school. She used to read to us without pity; forcing words, lies, other folks' habits, whole lives upon us two, sitting trapped and ignorant underneath her voice. She washed us in a river of make-believe, burned us with a lot of knowledge we didn't necessarily need to know. Pressed us to her with the serious way she read, to shove us away at just the moment, like dimwits, we seemed about to understand.

Dee wanted nice things. A yellow organdy dress to wear to her graduation from high school; black pumps to match a green suit she'd made from an old suit somebody gave me. She was determined to stare down any disaster in her efforts. Her eyelids would not flicker for minutes at a time. Often I fought off the temptation to shake her. At sixteen she had a style of her own: and knew what style was.

I never had an education myself. After second grade the school was closed down. Don't ask my why: in 1927 colored asked fewer questions than they do now. Sometimes Maggie reads to me. She stumbles along good-naturedly but can't see well. She knows she is not bright. Like good looks and money, quickness passes her by. She will marry John Thomas (who has mossy teeth in an earnest face) and then I'll be free to sit here and I guess just sing church songs to myself. Although I never was a good singer. Never could carry a tune. I used to love to milk till I was hooked in '49. Cows are soothing and slow and don't bother you, unless you try to milk them the wrong way.

I have deliberately turned my back on the house. It is three rooms, just like the one that burned, except the roof is tin; they don't make shingle roofs any more. There are no real windows, just some holes cut in the sides, like the portholes in a ship, but not round and not square, with rawhide holding the shutters up on the outside. This house is in a pasture, too, like the other one. No doubt when Dee sees it she will want to tear it down. She wrote me once that no matter where we "choose" to live, she will manage to come see us. But she will never bring her friends. Maggie and I thought about this and Maggie asked me, "Mama, when did Dee ever have any friends?"

She had a few. Furtive boys in pink shirts hanging about on washday after school. Nervous girls who never laughed. Impressed with her they worshiped the well-turned phrase, the cute shape, the scalding humor that erupted like bubbles in lye. She read to them.

When she was courting Jimmy T she didn't have much time to pay to us, but turned all her faultfinding power on him. He flew to marry a cheap city girl from a family of ignorant flashy people. She hardly had time to recompose herself.

When she comes I will meet — but there they are!

Maggie attempts to make a dash for the house, in her shuffling way, but I stay her with my hand. "Come back here, " I say. And she stops and tries to dig a well in the sand with her toe.

It is hard to see them clearly through the strong sun. But even the first glimpse of leg
out of the car tells me it is Dee. Her feet were always neat-looking, as if God himself had shaped them with a certain style. From the other side of the car comes a short, stocky man. Hair is all over his head a foot long and hanging from his chin like a kinky mule tail. I hear Maggie suck in her breath. "Uhnnnh," is what it sounds like. Like when you see the wriggling end of a snake just in front of your foot on the road. "Uhnnnh."

Dee next. A dress down to the ground, in this hot weather. A dress so loud it hurts my eyes. There are yellows and oranges enough to throw back the light of the sun. I feel my whole face warming from the heat waves it throws out. Earrings gold, too, and hanging down to her shoulders. Bracelets dangling and making noises when she moves her arm up to shake the folds of the dress out of her armpits. The dress is loose and flows, and as she walks closer, I like it. I hear Maggie go "Uhnnnh" again. It is her sister's hair. It stands straight up like the wool on a sheep. It is black as night and around the edges are two long pig tails that rope about like small lizards disappearing behind her ears.

"Wa-su-zo-Tean-o!" she says, coming on in that gliding way the dress makes her move. The short stocky fellow with the hair to his navel is all grinning and he follows up with "Asalamalakim, my mother and sister!" He moves to hug Maggie but she falls back, right up against the back of my chair. I feel her trembling there and when I look up I see the perspiration falling off her chin.

"Don't get up," says Dee. Since I am stout it takes something of a push. You can see me trying to move a second or two before I make it. She turns, showing white heels through her sandals, and goes back to the car. Out she peeks next with a Polaroid. She stoops down quickly and lines up picture after picture of me sitting there in front of the house with Maggie cowering behind me. She never takes a shot without making sure the house is included. When a cow comes nibbling around the edge of the yard she snaps it and me and Maggie and the house. Then she puts the Polaroid in the back seat of the car, and comes up and kisses me on the forehead.

Meanwhile Asalamalakim is going through motions with Maggie's hand. Maggie's hand is as limp as a fish, and probably as cold, despite the sweat, and she keeps trying to pull it back. It looks like Asalamalakim wants to shake hands but wants to do it fancy. Or maybe he don't know how people shake hands. Anyhow, he soon gives up on Maggie.

"Well," I say. "Dee."

"No, Mama," she says. "Not 'Dee', Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo!"

"What happened to 'Dee'?" I wanted to know.

"She's dead," Wangero said. "I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me."

"You know as well as me you was named after your aunt Dicie," I said. Dicie is my sister. She named Dee. We called her "Big Dee" after Dee was born. "But who was she named after?" asked Wangero.

"I guess after Grandma Dee," I said.

"And who was she named after?" asked Wangero.

"Her mother," I said, and saw Wangero was getting tired. "That's about as far back as I can trace it," I said. Though, in fact, I probably could have carried it back beyond the Civil War through the branches.

"Well," said Asalamalakim, "there you are."

"Uhnnhh," I heard Maggie say.

"'There I was not," I said, "before 'Dicie' cropped up in our family, so why should I try to trace it that far back?"

He just stood there grinning, looking down on me like somebody inspecting a Model A car. Every once in a while he and Wangero sent eye signals over my head.

"How do you pronounce this name?" I asked.

"You don't have to call me by it if you don't want to," said Wangero.
"Why shouldn't I?" I asked. "If that's what you want us to call you, we'll call you."
"I know it might sound awkward at first," said Wangero.
"I'll get used to it," I said. "Ream it out again."

Well, soon we got the name out of the way. Asalamalakim had a name twice as long and three times as hard. After I tripped over it two or three times he told me to just call him Hakim-a-barber. I wanted to ask him was he a barber, but I didn't really think he was, so I didn't ask.

"You must belong to those beef-cattle peoples down the road," I said. They said "Asalamalakim" when they met you, too, but they didn't shake hands. Always too busy: feeding the cattle, fixing the fences, putting up salt-lick shelters, throwing down hay. When the white folks poisoned some of the herd the men stayed up all night with rifles in their hands. I walked a mile and a half just to see the sight.

Hakim-a-barber said, "I accept some of their doctrines, but farming and raising cattle is not my style." (They didn't tell me, and I didn't ask, whether Wangero (Dee) had really gone and married him.)

We sat down to eat and right away he said he didn't eat collards and pork was unclean. Wangero, though, went on through the chitlins and corn bread, the greens and everything else. She talked a blue streak over the sweet potatoes. Everything delighted her. Even the fact that we still used the benches her daddy made for the table when we couldn't afford to buy chairs.

"Oh, Mama!" she cried. Then turned to Hakim-a-barber. "I never knew how lovely these benches are. You can feel the rump prints," she said, running her hands underneath her and along the bench. Then she gave a sigh and her hand closed over Grandma Dee's butter dish. "That's it!" she said. "I knew there was something I wanted to ask you if I could have." She jumped up from the table and went over in the corner where the churn stood, the milk in it crabber by now. She looked at the churn and looked at it.

"This churn top is what I need," she said. "Didn't Uncle Buddy whittle it out of a tree you all used to have?"

"Yes," I said.

"Uh huh," she said happily. "And I want the dasher, too."

"Uncle Buddy whittle that, too?" asked the barber.

Dee (Wangero) looked up at me.

"Aunt Dee's first husband whittled the dash," said Maggie so low you almost couldn't hear her. "His name was Henry, but they called him Stash."

"Maggie's brain is like an elephant's," Wangero said, laughing. "I can use the chute top as a centerpiece for the alcove table," she said, sliding a plate over the chute, "and I'll think of something artistic to do with the dasher."

When she finished wrapping the dasher the handle stuck out. I took it for a moment in my hands. You didn't even have to look close to see where hands pushing the dasher up and down to make butter had left a kind of sink in the wood. In fact, there were a lot of small sinks; you could see where thumbs and fingers had sunk into the wood. It was beautiful light yellow wood, from a tree that grew in the yard where Big Dee and Stash had lived.

After dinner Dee (Wangero) went to the trunk at the foot of my bed and started rifling through it. Maggie hung back in the kitchen over the dishpan. Out came Wangero with two quilts. They had been pieced by Grandma Dee and then Big Dee and me had hung them on the quilt frames on the front porch and quilted them. One was in the Lone Stat pattern. The other was Walk Around the Mountain. In both of them were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn fifty and more years ago. Bits and pieces of Grandpa Jattell's Paisley shirts. And one teeny faded blue piece, about the size of a penny matchbox, that was from Great Grandpa Ezra's uniform that he wore in the Civil War.
"Mama," Wangero said sweet as a bird. "Can I have these old quilts?"

I heard something fall in the kitchen, and a minute later the kitchen door slammed. "Why don't you take one or two of the others?" I asked. "These old things was just done by me and Big Dee from some tops your grandma pieced before she died."

"No," said Wangero. "I don't want those. They are stitched around the borders by machine."

"That'll make them last better," I said.

"That's not the point," said Wangero. "These are all pieces of dresses Grandma used to wear. She did all this stitching by hand. Imagine!" She held the quilts securely in her arms, stroking them.

"Some of the pieces, like those lavender ones, come from old clothes her mother handed down to her," I said, moving up to touch the quilts. Dee (Wangero) moved back just enough so that I couldn't reach the quilts. They already belonged to her.

"Imagine!" she breathed again, clutching them closely to her bosom.

"The truth is," I said, "I promised to give them quilts to Maggie, for when she marries John Thomas."

She gasped like a bee had stung her.

"Maggie can't appreciate these quilts!" she said. "She'd probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use."

"I reckon she would," I said. "God knows I been saving 'em for long enough with nobody using 'em. I hope she will!" I didn't want to bring up how I had offered Dee (Wangero) a quilt when she went away to college. Then she had told they were old-fashioned, out of style.

"But they're priceless!" she was saying now, furiously; for she has a temper. "Maggie would put them on the bed and in five years they'd be in rags. Less than that!"

"She can always make some more," I said. "Maggie knows how to quilt."

Dee (Wangero) looked at me with hatred. "You just will not understand. The point is these quilts, these quilts!"

"Well," I said, stumped. "What would you do with them?"

"Hang them," she said. As if that was the only thing you could do with quilts. Maggie by now was standing in the door. I could almost hear the sound her feet made as they scraped over each other.

"She can have them, Mama," she said, like somebody used to never winning anything, or having anything reserved for her. "I can 'member Grandma Dee without the quilts."

I looked at her hard. She had filled her bottom lip with checkerberry snuff and gave her face a kind of dopey, hangdog look. It was Grandma Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself. She stood there with her scarred hands hidden in the folds of her skirt. She looked at her sister with something like fear but she wasn't mad at her. This was Maggie's portion. This was the way she knew God to work.

When I looked at her like that something hit me in the top of my head and ran down to the soles of my feet. Just like when I'm in church and the spirit of God touches me and I get happy and shout. I did something I never done before: hugged Maggie to me, then dragged her on into the room, snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap. Maggie just sat there on my bed with her mouth open.

"Take one or two of the others," I said to Dee.

But she turned without a word and went out to Hakim~a~barber.

"You just don't understand," she said, as Maggie and I came out to the car.

"What don't I understand?" I wanted to know.

"Your heritage," she said, And then she turned to Maggie, kissed her, and said, "You ought to try to make something of yourself, too, Maggie. It's really a new day for us. But
from the way you and Mama still live you’d never know it.”

She put on some sunglasses that hid everything above the tip of her nose and chin. Maggie smiled; maybe at the sunglasses. But a real smile, not scared. After we watched the car dust settle I asked Maggie to bring me a dip of snuff. And then the two of us sat there just enjoying, until it was time to go in the house and go to bed.

QUESTIONS

1. What do you know about the history of the US civil rights struggle? How does a knowledge of that history contribute to interpretations of the story?
2. Why has Dee changed her name? What has she gained/lost by doing so?
3. What issues does the opening section of the story bring up? How are these issues dealt with later in the story?
Back in the days when everyone was old and stupid or young and foolish and me and Sugar were the only ones just right, this lady moved on our block with nappy hair and proper speech and no makeup. And quite naturally we laughed at her, laughed the way we did at the junk man who went about his business like he was some big-time president and his sorry-ass horse his secretary. And we kinda hated her too, hated the way we did the winos who cluttered up our parks and pissed on our handball walls and stank up our hallways and stairs so you couldn’t halfway play hide-and-seek without a goddamn gas mask. Miss Moore was her name. The only woman on the block with no first name. And she was black as hell, cept for her feet, which were fish-white and spooky. And she was always planning these boring-ass things for us to do, us being my cousin, mostly, who lived on the block cause we all moved North the same time and to the same apartment then spread out gradual to breathe. And our parents would yank our heads into some kinda shape and crisp up our clothes so we’d be presentable for travel with Miss Moore, who always looked like she was going to church though she never did. Which is just one of the things the grownups talked about when they talked behind her back like a dog. But when she came calling with some sachet she’d sewed up or some gingerbread she’d made or some book, why then they’d all be too embarrassed to turn her down and we’d get handed over all spruced up. She’d been to college and said it was only right that she should take responsibility for the young ones’ education, and she not even related by marriage or blood. So they’d go for it. Specially Aunt Gretchen. She was the main gofer in the family. You got some ole dumb shit foolishness you want somebody to go for, you send for Aunt Gretchen. She been screwed into the go-along for so long, it’s a blood-deep natural thing with her. Which is how she got saddled with me and Sugar and Junior in the first place while our mothers were in a la-de-da apartment up the block having a good ole time.

So this one day Miss Moore rounds us all up at the mailbox and it’s puredee hot and she’s knockin herself out about arithmetic. And school suppose to let up in summer I heard, but she don’t never let up. And the starch in my pinafore scratching the shit outta me and I’m really hating this nappy-head bitch and her goddamn college degree. I’d much rather go to the pool or to the show where it’s cool. So me and Sugar leaning on the mailbox being surly, which is a Miss Moore word. And Flyboy checking out what everybody brought for lunch. And Fat Butt already wasting his peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich like the pig he is. And Junebug punchin on Q.T.’s arm for potato chips. And Rosie Giraffe shifting from one hip to the other waiting for somebody to step on her foot or ask her if she from Georgia so she can kick ass, preferably Mercedes’. And Miss Moore asking us do we know what money is like we a bunch of retards. I mean real money, she say, like it’s only poker chips or monopoly papers we lay on the grocer. So right away I’m tired of this and say so. And would much rather snatch Sugar and go to the Sunset and terrorize the West Indian kids and take their hair ribbons and their money too. And Miss Moore files that remark away for next week’s lesson on brotherhood, I can tell. And finally I say we oughta get to the subway cause it’s cooler an’ besides we might meet some cute boys. Sugar done snipped her mama’s lipstick, so we ready.

So we heading down the street and she’s boring us silly about what things cost and what our parents make and how much goes for rent and how money ain’t divided up right in this country. And then she gets to the part about we all poor and live in the slums which I don’t feature. And I’m ready to speak on that, but she steps out in the street and hails two cabs just like that. Then she hustles half the crew in with her and hands me a five-dollar bill and tells me to calculate 10 percent tip for the driver. And we’re off. Me and Sugar and Junebug and Flyboy hangin out the window and hollering to everybody, putting lipstick on
each other cause Flyboy a faggot anyway, and making farts with our sweaty armpits. But I'm mostly trying to figure how to spend this money. But they are fascinated with the meter ticking and Junebug starts laying bets as to how much it'll read when Flyboy can't hold his breath no more. Then Sugar lays bets as to how much it'll be when we get there. So I'm stuck. Don't nobody want to go for my plan, which is to jump out at the next light and run off to the first bar-b-que we can find. Then the driver tells us to get the hell out cause we there already. And the meter reads eighty-five cents. And I'm stalling to figure out the tip and Sugar say give him a dime. And I decide he don't need it bad as I do, so later for him. But then he tries to take off with Junebug foot still in the door so we talk about his mama something ferocious. Then we check out that we on Fifth Avenue and everybody dressed up in stockings. One lady in a fur coat, hot as it is. White folks crazy.

"This is the place," Miss Moore say, presenting it to us in the voice she uses at the museum. "Let's look in the windows before we go in."

"Can we steal?" Sugar asks very serious like she's getting the ground rules squared away before she plays. "I beg your pardon," say Miss Moore, and we fall out. So she leads us around the windows of the toy store and me and Sugar screamin, "This is mine, that's mine, I gotta have that, that was made for me, I was born for that," till Big Butt drowns us out.

"Hey, I'm goin to buy that there."

"That there? You don't even know what it is, stupid."

"I do so," he say punchin on Rosie Giraffe. "It's a microscope."

"Whatcha gonna do with a microscope, fool?"

"Look at things."

"Like what, Ronald?" ask Miss Moore. And Big Butt ain't got the first notion. So here go Miss Moore gabbing about the thousands of bacteria in a drop of water and the somethinother in a speck of blood and the million and one living things in the air around us is invisible to the naked eye. And what she say that for? Junebug go to town on that "naked" and we rolling. Then Miss Moore ask what it cost. So we all jam into the window smudgin it up and the price tag say $300. So then she ask how long'd take for Big Butt and Junebug to save up their allowances. "Too long," I say. "Yeh," adds Sugar, "outgrown it by that time." And Miss Moore say no, you never outgrow learning instruments. "Why, even medical students and interns and," blah, blah, blah. And we ready to choke Big Butt for bringing it up in the first damn place.

"This here costs four hundred eighty dollars," say Rosie Giraffe. So we pile up all over her to see what she pointin out. My eyes tell me it's a chunk of glass cracked with something heavy, and different-color inks dripped into the splits, then the whole thing put into a oven or something. But for $480 it don't make sense.

"That's a paperweight made of semi-precious stones fused together under tremendous pressure," she explains slowly, with her hands doing the mining and all the factory work.

"So what's a paperweight?" asks Rosie Giraffe.

"To weigh paper with, dumbbell," say Flyboy, the wise man from the East.

"Not exactly," say Miss Moore, which is what she say when you warm or way off too. "It's to weigh paper down so it won't scatter and make your desk untidy." So right away me and Sugar curtsy to each other and then to Mercedes who is more the tidy type.

"We don't keep paper on top of the desk in my class," say Junebug, figuring Miss Moore crazy or lyin one.

"At home, then," she say. "Don't you have a calendar and a pencil case and a blotter and a letter-opener on your desk at home where you do your homework?" And she know damn well what our homes look like cause she nosys around in them every chance she gets.
"I don't even have a desk," say Junebug. "Do we?"

"No. And I don't get no homework neither," says Big Butt.

"And I don't even have a home," say Flyboy like he do at school to keep the white folks off his back and sorry for him. Send this poor kid to camp posters, is his specialty.

"I do," says Mercedes. "I have a box of stationery on my desk and a picture of my cat. My godmother bought the stationery and the desk. There's a big rose on each sheet and the envelopes smell like roses."

"Who wants to know about your smelly-ass stationery," say Rosie Giraffe fore I can get my two cents in.

"It's important to have a work area all your own so that..."

"Will you look at this sailboat, please," say Flyboy, cuttin her off and pointin to the thing like it was his. So once again we tumble all over each other to gaze at this magnificent thing in the toy store which is just big enough to maybe sail two kittens across the pond if you strap them to the posts tight. We all start reciting the price tag like we in assembly.

"Hand-crafted sailboat of fiberglass at one thousand one hundred ninety-five dollars."

"Unbelievable," I hear myself say and am really stunned. I read it again for myself just in case the group recitation put me in a trance. Same thing. For some reason this pisses me off. We look at Miss Moore and she lookin at us, waiting for I dunno what.

"Who'd pay all that when you can buy a sailboat set for a quarter at Pop's, a tube of glue for a dime, and a ball of string for eight cents? It must have a motor and a whole lot else besides," I say. "My sailboat cost me about fifty cents."

"But will it take water?" say Mercedes with her smart ass.


"Sailed mine in Gentral Park and it keeled over and sank. Had to ask my father for another dollar."

"And you got the strap," laugh Big Butt. "The jerk didn't even have a string on it. My old man wailed on his behind."

Little Q.T. was staring hard at the sailboat and you could see he wanted it bad. But he too little and somebody'd just take it from him. So what the hell. "This boat for kids, Miss Moore?"

"Parents silly to buy something like that just to get all broke up," say Rosie Giraffe.

"That much money it should last forever," I figure.

"My father'd buy it for me if I wanted it."

"Your father, my ass," say Rosie Giraffe getting a chance to finally push Mercedes.

"Must be rich people shop here," say Q.T.

"You are a very bright boy," say Flyboy. "What was your first clue?" And he rap him on the head with the back of his knuckles, since Q.T. the only one he could get away with. Though Q.T. liable to come up behind you years later and get his licks in when you half expect it.

"What I want to know is," I says to Miss Moore though I never talk to her, I wouldn't give the bitch that satisfaction, "is how much a real boat costs? I figure a thousand'd get you a yacht any day."

"Why don't you check that out," she says, "and report back to the group?" Which really pains my ass. If you gonna mess up a perfectly good swim day least you could do is have some answers. "Let's go in," she say like she got something up her sleeve. Only she don't lead the way. So me and Sugar turn the corner to where the entrance is, but when we get there I kinda hang back. Not that I'm scared, what's there to be afraid of, just a toy store. But I feel funny, shame. But what I got to be shamed about? Got as much right to go in as anybody. But somehow I can't seem to get hold of the door, so I step away from Sugar to lead. But she hangs back too. And I look at her and she looks at me and this is ridiculous. I mean, damn, I have never ever been shy about doing nothing or going
nowhere. But then Mercedes steps up and then Rosie Giraffe and Big Butt crowd in behind and shove, and next thing we all stuffed into the doorway with only Mercedes squeezing past us, smoothing out her jumper and walking right down the aisle. Then the rest of us tumble in like a glued-together jigsaw done all wrong. And people lookin at us. And it’s like the time me and Sugar crashed into the Catholic church on a dare. But once we got in there and everything so hushed and holy and the candles and the bowin and the handkerchiefs on all the drooping heads, I just couldn’t go through with the plan. Which was for me to run up to the altar and do a tap dance while Sugar played the nose flute and messed around in the holy water. And Sugar kept givin me the elbow. Then later teased me so bad I tied her up in the shower and turned it on and locked her in. And she’d be there till this day if Aunt Gretchen hadn’t finally figured I was lyin about the boarder takin a shower.

Same thing in the store. We all walkin on tiptoe and hardly touchin the games and puzzles and things. And I watched Miss Moore who is steady watchin us like she waitin for a sign. Like Mama Drewery watches the sky and sniffs the air and takes note of just how much slant is in the bird formation. Then me and Sugar bump smack into each other, so busy gazing at the toys, specially the sailboat. But we don’t laugh and go into our fat-lady bump-stomach routine. We just stare at that price tag. Then Sugar run a finger over the whole boat. And I’m jealous and want to hit her. Maybe not her, but I sure want to punch somebody in the mouth.

"Watcha bring us here for, Miss Moore?"

"You sound angry, Sylvia. Are you mad about something?" Givin me one of them grins like she tellin a grown-up joke that never turns out to be funny. And she’s lookin very closely at me like maybe she plannin to do my portrait from memory. I’m mad, but I won’t give her that satisfaction. So I slouch around the store bein very bored and say, "Let’s go."

Me and Sugar at the back of the train watchin the tracks whizzin by large then small then gettin gobbled up in the dark. I’m thinkin about this tricky toy I saw in the store. A clown that somersaults on a bar then does chin-ups just cause you yank lightly at his leg. Cost $35. I could see me askin my mother for a $35 birthday clown. "You wanna who that costs what?" she’d say, cocking her head to the side to get a better view of the hole in my head. Thirty-five dollars could buy new bunk beds for Junior and Gretchen’s boy.

Thirty-five dollars and the whole household could go visit Grand-daddy Nelson in the country. Thirty-five dollars would pay for the rent and the piano bill too. Who are these people that spend that much for performing clowns and $1000 for toy sailboats? What kinda work they do and how they live and how come we ain’t in on it? Where we are is who we are, Miss Moore always pointin out. But it don’t necessarily have to be that way, she always adds then waits for somebody to say that poor people have to wake up and demand their share of the pie and don’t none of us know what kind of pie she talking about in the first damn place. But she ain’t so smart cause I still got her four dollars from the taxi and she sure ain’t gettin it Messin up my day with this shit. Sugar nudges me in my pocket and winks.

Miss Moore lines us up in front of the mailbox where we started from, seem like years ago, and I got a headache for thinkin so hard. And we lean all over each other so we can hold up under the draggy ass lecture she always finishes us off with at the end before we thank her for borin us to tears. But she just looks at us like she readin tea leaves. Finally she say, "Well, what did you think of F.A.O. Schwarz?"

Rosie Giraffe mumbles, "White folks crazy."

"I’d like to go there again when I get my birthday money," says Mercedes, and we shove her out the pack so she has to lean on the mailbox by herself.

"I’d like a shower. Tiring day," say Flyboy.

Then Sugar surprises me by sayin, "You know, Miss Moore, I don’t think all of us here put together eat in a year what that sailboat costs." And Miss Moore lights up like
somebody goosed her. "And?" she say, urging Sugar on. Only I'm standin on her foot so she don't continue.

"Imagine for a minute what kind of society it is in which some people can spend on a toy what it would cost to feed a family of six or seven. What do you think?"

"I think," say Sugar pushing me off her feet like she never done before cause I whip her ass in a minute, "that this is not much of a democracy if you ask me. Equal chance to pursue happiness means an equal crack at the dough, don't it?" Miss Moore is besides herself and I am disgusted with Sugar's treachery. So I stand on her foot one more time to see if she'll shove me. She shuts up, and Miss Moore looks at me, sorrowfully I'm thinkin.

And somethin weird is goin on, I can feel it in my chest. "Anybody else learn anything today?" lookin dead at me. I walk away and Sugar has to run to catch up and don't even seem to notice when I shrug her arm off my shoulder.

"Well, we got four dollars anyway," she says. "Uh huh."

"We could go to Hascombs and get half a chocolate layer and then go to the Sunset and still have plenty money for potato chips and ice cream sodas."

"Uh huh."

"Race you to Hascombs," she say.

We start down the block and she gets ahead which is O.K. by me cause I'm going to the West End and then over to the Drive to think this day through. She can run if she want to and even run faster. But ain't nobody gonna beat me at nuthin.

QUESTIONS

1. Identify features of the narrator's vernacular. How would you describe the style of her language? Is it accurate to call it "spoken language?"

2. What is the central conflict in this story? Who is the protagonist? Who/what is/are the antagonist(s)? How is the conflict resolved?
The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren’t only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General.

Some things about living still weren’t quite right, though. April, for instance, still drove people crazy by not being springtime. And it was in that clammy month that the H-G men took George and Hazel Bergeron’s fourteen-year-old son, Harrison, away.

It was tragic, all right, but George and Hazel couldn’t think about it very hard. Hazel had a perfectly average intelligence, which meant she couldn’t think about anything except in short bursts. And George, while his intelligence was way above normal, had a little mental handicap radio in his ear. He was required by law to wear it at all times. It was tuned to a government transmitter. Every twenty seconds or so, the transmitter would send out some sharp noise to keep people like George from taking unfair advantage of their brains.

George and Hazel were watching television. There were tears on Hazel’s cheeks, but she’d forgotten for the moment what they were about.

On the television screen were ballerinas.

A buzzer sounded in George’s head. His thoughts fled in panic, like bandits from a burglar alarm.

“That was a real pretty dance, that dance they just did,” said Hazel.

“Huh?” said George.

“That dance – it was nice,” said Hazel.

“Youp,” said George. He tried to think a little about the ballerinas. They weren’t really very good – no better than anybody else would have been, anyway. They were burdened with sashweights and bags of birdshot, and their faces were masked, so that no one, seeing a free and graceful gesture or a pretty face, would feel like something the cat drug in.

George was toying with the vague notion that maybe dancers shouldn’t be handicapped. But he didn’t get very far with it before another noise in his ear radio scattered his thoughts.

George winced. So did two out of the eight ballerinas.

Hazel saw him wince. Having no mental handicap herself she had to ask George what the latest sound had been.

“Sounded like somebody hitting a milk bottle with a ball peen hammer,” said George.

“I’d think it would be real interesting, hearing all the different sounds,” said Hazel, a little envious. “All the things they think up.”

“Um,” said George.

“Only, if I was Handicapper General, you know what I would do?” said Hazel. Hazel, as a matter of fact, bore a strong resemblance to the Handicapper General, a woman named Diana Moon Glampers. “If I was Diana Moon Glampers,” said Hazel, “I’d have chimes on Sunday – just chimes. Kind of in honor of religion.”

“I could think, if it was just chimes,” said George.


“Good as anybody else,” said George.

“Who knows better’n I do what normal is?” said Hazel.
“Right,” said George. He began to think glimmeringly about his abnormal son who was now in jail, about Harrison, but a twenty-one-gun salute in his head stopped that.

“Boy!” said Hazel, “that was a doozy, wasn’t it?”

It was such a doozy that George was white and trembling and tears stood on the rims of his red eyes. Two of the eight ballerinas had collapsed to the studio floor, were holding their temples.

“All of a sudden you look so tired,” said Hazel. “Why don’t you stretch out on the sofa, so’s you can rest your handicap bag on the pillows, honeybunch.” She was referring to the forty-seven pounds of birdshot in canvas bag, which was padlocked around George’s neck. “Go on and rest the bag for a little while,” she said. “I don’t care if you’re not equal to me for a while.”

George weighed the bag with his hands. “I don’t mind it,” he said. “I don’t notice it any more. It’s just a part of me.

“You been so tired lately – kind of wore out,” said Hazel. “If there was just some way we could make a little hole in the bottom of the bag, and just take out a few of them lead balls. Just a few.”

“Two years in prison and two thousand dollars fine for every ball I took out,” said George. “I don’t call that a bargain.”

“If you could just take a few out when you came home from work,” said Hazel. “I mean – you don’t compete with anybody around here. You just set around.”

“If I tried to get away with it,” said George, “then other people’d get away with it and pretty soon we’d be right back to the dark ages again, with everybody competing against everybody else. You wouldn’t like that, would you?”

“I’d hate it,” said Hazel.

“There you are,” said George. “The minute people start cheating on laws, what do you think happens to society?”

If Hazel hadn’t been able to come up with an answer to this question, George couldn’t have supplied one. A siren was going off in his head.

“Reckon it’d fall all apart,” said Hazel.

“What would?” said George blankly.

“Society,” said Hazel uncertainly. “Wasn’t that what you just said?”

“Who knows?” said George.

The television program was suddenly interrupted for a news bulletin. It wasn’t clear at first as to what the bulletin was about, since the announcer, like all announcers, had a serious speech impediment. For about half a minute, and in a state of high excitement, the announcer tried to say, “Ladies and gentlemen – ”

He finally gave up, handed the bulletin to a ballerina to read.

“That’s all right –” Hazel said of the announcer, “he tried. That’s the big thing. He tried to do the best he could with what God gave him. He should get a nice raise for trying so hard.”

“Ladies and gentlemen” said the ballerina, reading the bulletin. She must have been extraordinarily beautiful, because the mask she wore was hideous. And it was easy to see that she was the strongest and most graceful of all the dancers, for her handicap bags were as big as those worn by two-hundred-pound men.

And she had to apologize at once for her voice, which was a very unfair voice for a woman to use. Her voice was a warm, luminous, timeless melody. “Excuse me – ” she said, and she began again, making her voice absolutely uncompetitive.

“Harrison Bergeron, age fourteen,” she said in a grackle squawk, “has just escaped from jail, where he was held on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the government. He is a genius and an athlete, is under–handicapped, and should be regarded as extremely dangerous.”
A police photograph of Harrison Bergeron was flashed on the screen – upside down, then sideways, upside down again, then right side up. The picture showed the full length of Harrison against a background calibrated in feet and inches. He was exactly seven feet tall.

The rest of Harrison’s appearance was Halloween and hardware. Nobody had ever worn heavier handicaps. He had outgrown hindrances faster than the H–G men could think them up. Instead of a little ear radio for a mental handicap, he wore a tremendous pair of earphones, and spectacles with thick wavy lenses. The spectacles were intended to make him not only half blind, but to give him whanging headaches besides.

Scrap metal was hung all over him. Ordinarily, there was a certain symmetry, a military neatness to the handicaps issued to strong people, but Harrison looked like a walking junkyard. In the race of life, Harrison carried three hundred pounds.

And to offset his good looks, the H–G men required that he wear at all times a red rubber ball for a nose, keep his eyebrows shaved off, and cover his even white teeth with black caps at snaggle–tooth random.

“If you see this boy,” said the ballerina, “do not – I repeat, do not – try to reason with him.”

There was the shriek of a door being torn from its hinges.

Screams and barking cries of consternation came from the television set. The photograph of Harrison Bergeron on the screen jumped again and again, as though dancing to the tune of an earthquake.

George Bergeron correctly identified the earthquake, and well he might have – for many was the time his own home had danced to the same crashing tune. “My God –” said George, “that must be Harrison!”

The realization was blasted from his mind instantly by the sound of an automobile collision in his head.

When George could open his eyes again, the photograph of Harrison was gone. A living, breathing Harrison filled the screen.

Clanking, clownish, and huge, Harrison stood in the center of the studio. The knob of the uprooted studio door was still in his hand. Ballerinas, technicians, musicians, and announcers cowered on their knees before him, expecting to die.

“I am the Emperor!” cried Harrison. “Do you hear? I am the Emperor! Everybody must do what I say at once!” He stamped his foot and the studio shook.

“Even as I stand here –” he bellowed, “crippled, hobble, sickened – I am a greater ruler than any man who ever lived! Now watch me become what I can become!”

Harrison tore the straps of his handicap harness like wet tissue paper, tore straps guaranteed to support five thousand pounds.

Harrison’s scrap–iron handicaps crashed to the floor.

Harrison thrust his thumbs under the bar of the padlock that secured his head harness. The bar snapped like celery. Harrison smashed his headphones and spectacles against the wall.

He flung away his rubber–ball nose, revealed a man that would have awed Thor, the god of thunder.

“I shall now select my Empress!” he said, looking down on the cowering people. “Let the first woman who dares rise to her feet claim her mate and her throne!”

A moment passed, and then a ballerina arose, swaying like a willow.

Harrison plucked the mental handicap from her ear, snapped off her physical handicaps with marvelous delicacy. Last of all, he removed her mask.

She was blindingly beautiful.

“Now” said Harrison, taking her hand, “shall we show the people the meaning of the word dance? Music!” he commanded.

The musicians scrambled back into their chairs, and Harrison stripped them of their
handicaps, too. “Play your best,” he told them, “and I’ll make you barons and dukes and earls.”

The music began. It was normal at first – cheap, silly, false. But Harrison snatched two musicians from their chairs, waved them like batons as he sang the music as he wanted it played. He slammed them back into their chairs.

The music began again and was much improved.

Harrison and his Empress merely listened to the music for a while – listened gravely, as though synchronizing their heartbeats with it.

They shifted their weights to their toes.

Harrison placed his big hands on the girl’s tiny waist, letting her sense the weightlessness that would soon be hers.

And then, in an explosion of joy and grace, into the air they sprang!

Not only were the laws of the land abandoned, but the law of gravity and the laws of motion as well.

They reeled, whirled, swiveled, flounced, capered, gamboled, and spun.

They leaped like deer on the moon.

The studio ceiling was thirty feet high, but each leap brought the dancers nearer to it. It became their obvious intention to kiss the ceiling.

They kissed it.

And then, neutralizing gravity with love and pure will, they remained suspended in air inches below the ceiling, and they kissed each other for a long, long time.

It was then that Diana Moon Glampers, the Handicapper General, came into the studio with a double-barreled ten-gauge shotgun. She fired twice, and the Emperor and the Empress were dead before they hit the floor.

Diana Moon Glampers loaded the gun again. She aimed it at the musicians and told them they had ten seconds to get their handicaps back on.

It was then that the Bergerons’ television tube burned out.

Hazel turned to comment about the blackout to George.

But George had gone out into the kitchen for a can of beer.

George came back in with the beer, paused while a handicap signal shook him up. And then he sat down again. “You been crying?” he said to Hazel.

“Yup,” she said,

“What about?” he said.

“I forget,” she said. “Something real sad on television.”

“What was it?” he said.

“It’s all kind of mixed up in my mind,” said Hazel.

“Forget sad things,” said George.

“I always do,” said Hazel.

“That’s my girl,” said George. He winced. There was the sound of a riveting gun in his head.

“Gee – I could tell that one was a doozy,” said Hazel.

“You can say that again,” said George.

“Gee –” said Hazel, “I could tell that one was a doozy.”
The boy sitting opposite him was his enemy. The boy sitting opposite him was called Tigo, and he wore a green silk jacket with an orange stripe on each sleeve. The jacket told Danny that Tigo was his enemy. The jacket shrieked, "Enemy, enemy!"

"This is a good piece," Tigo said, indicating the gun on the table." This runs you close to forty-five bucks, you try to buy it in a store. That's a lot of money."

The gun on the table was a Smith & Wesson .38 Police Special.

It rested exactly in the center of the table, its sawed-off, two-inch barrel abruptly terminating the otherwise lethal grace of the weapon. There was a checked walnut stock on the gun, and the gun was finished in a flat blue. Alongside the gun were three .38 Special cartridges.

Danny looked at the gun disinterestedly. He was nervous and apprehensive, but he kept tight control of his face. He could not show Tigo what he was feeling. Tigo was the enemy, and so he presented a mask to the enemy, cocking one eyebrow and saying, "I seen pieces before. There's nothing special about this one." "Except what we got to do with it," Tigo said. Tigo was studying him with large brown eyes. The eyes were moist-looking. He was not a bad-looking kid, Tigo, with thick black hair and maybe nose that was too long, but his mouth and chin were good. You could usually tell a cat by his mouth and his chin. Tigo would not turkey out of this particular rumble. Of that, Danny was sure. "Why don't we start?" Danny asked. He wet his lips and looked across at Tigo.

"You understand," Tigo said, "I got no bad blood for you."

"I understand."

"This is what the club said. This is how the club said we should settle it. Without a big street diddlebop, you dig? But I want you to know I don't know you from a hole in the wall-except you wear a blue and gold jacket."

"And you wear a green and orange one," Danny said," and that's enough for me."

"Sure, but what I was trying to say..."

"We going to sit and talk all night, or we going to get this thing rolling?" Danny asked.

"What I'm tryin to say," Tigo went on, "is that I just happened to be picked for this, you know? Like to settle this thing that's between the two clubs I mean, you got to admit your boys shouldn't have come in our territory last night."

"I got to admit nothing," Danny said flatly.

"Well, anyway, they shot at the candy store. That wasn't right. There's supposed to be a truce on."

"Okay, okay," Danny said.

"So like... like this is the way we agreed to settle it. I mean, one of us and... and one of you. Fair and square. Without any street boppin', and without any law trouble."

"Let's get on with it," Danny said.

"I'm trying to say, I never even seen you on the street before this. So this ain't nothin' personal with me. Whichever way it turns out, like...

"I never seen you neither," Danny said.

Tigo stared at him for a long time. "That's cause you're new around here. Where you from originally?"

"My people come down from the Bronx."

"You got a big family?"

"A sister and two brothers, that's all."


"Let's make it, huh?"
"I'm waitin'," Danny said.
Tigo picked up the gun, and then he took one of the cartridges from the table top. He broke open the gun, slid the cartridge into the cylinder, and then snapped the gun shut and twirled the cylinder. "Round and round she goes," he said, "and where she stops, nobody knows. There's six chambers in the cylinder and only one cartridge. That makes the odds five-to-one that the cartridge'll be in firing position when the cylinder stops whirling. You dig?"

"I dig."
"I'll go first," Tigo said.
Danny looked at him suspiciously. "Why?"
"You want to go first?"
"I don't know."
"I'm giving you a break." Tigo grinned. "I may blow my head off first time out."
"Why you giving me a break?" Danny asked.
Tigo shrugged. "What the hell's the difference?" He gave the cylinder a fast twirl.
"The Russians invented this, huh?" Danny asked.
"Yeah."
"I always said they was crazy bastards."
"Yeah, I always..." Tigo stopped talking. The cylinder was stopped now. He took a deep breath, put the barrel of the .38 to his temple, and then squeezed the trigger. The firing pin clicked on an empty chamber.
"Well, that was easy, wasn't it?" he asked. He shoved the gun across the table. "Your turn, Danny."
Danny reached for the gun. It was cold in the basement room, but he was sweating now. He pulled the gun toward him, then left it on the table while he dried his palms on his trousers. He picked up the gun then and stared at it.
"It's a nifty piece," Tigo said. "I like a good piece."
"Yeah, I do too," Danny said. "You can tell a good piece just by the way it feels in your hand."
Tigo looked surprised. "I mentioned that to one of the guys yesterday, and he thought I was nuts.
"Lots of guys don't know about pieces," Danny said, shrugging. "I was thinking," Tigo, said, "when I get old enough, I'll join the Army, you know? I'd like to work around pieces."
"I thought of that, too. I'd join now only my old lady won't give me permission. She's got to sign if I join now."
"Yeah, they're all the same," Tigo said smiling. "Your old lady born here or the old country?"
"The old country," Danny said.
"Yeah, well you know they got these old-fashioned ideas."
"I better spin," Danny said.
"Yeah," Tigo agreed.
Danny slapped the cylinder with his left hand. The cylinder whirled, whirled, and then stopped. Slowly, Danny put the gun to his head. He wanted to close his eyes, but he didn't dare. Tigo, the enemy, was watching him. He returned Tigo's stare, and then he squeezed the trigger. His heart skipped a beat, and then over the roar of his blood he heard the empty click.
Hastily, he put the gun down on the table.
"Makes you sweat, don't it?" Tigo said.
Danny nodded, saying nothing. He watched Tigo. Tigo was looking at the gun.
"Me now, huh?" Tigo said. He took a deep breath, then picked up the .38. He twirled the cylinder, waited for it to stop, and then put the gun to his head.
"Bang!" Tigo said, and then he squeezed the trigger. Again the firing pin clicked on an empty chamber. Tigo let out his breath and put the gun down.

"I thought I was dead that time," he said.
"I could hear the harps," Danny said.
"This is a good way to lose weight, you know that?" Tigo laughed nervously, and then his laugh became honest when he saw Danny was laughing with him. "Ain't it the truth?" You could lose ten pounds this way.
"My old lady's like a house," Danny said laughing. "She ought to try this kind of a diet." He laughed at his own humor, pleased when Tigo joined him.
"That's the trouble," Tigo said. "You see a nice deb in the street, you think it's crazy, you know? Then they get to be our people's age, and they turn to fat." He shook his head.
"You got a chick?" Danny asked.
"Yeah, I got one.
"What's her name?"
"Aw, you don't know her."
"Maybe I do," Danny said.
"Her name is Juana." Tigo watched him. "She's about five-two, got these brown eyes..."
"I think I know her," Danny said. He nodded. "Yeah, I think I know her."
"She's nice, ain't she?" Tigo asked. He leaned forward, as if Danny's answer was of great importance to him.
"Yeah she's nice," Danny said.
"Yeah. Hey maybe sometime we could..." Tigo cut himself short. He looked down at the gun, and his sudden enthusiasm seemed to ebb completely. "It's your turn," he said.
"Here goes nothing," Danny said. He twirled the cylinder, sucked in his breath, and then fired.
The emptily click was loud in the stillness of the room.
"Man!" Danny said.
"We're pretty lucky, you know?" Tigo said.
"So far."
"We better lower the odds. The boys won't like it if we..." He stopped himself again, and then reached for one of the cartridges on the table. He broke open the gun again, slipped in the second cartridge into the cylinder. "Now we got two cartridges in here," he said. "Two cartridges, six chambers. That's four-to-two. Divide it, and you get two-to-two." He paused. "You game?"
"That's... that's what we're here for, ain't it?"
"Sure."
"Okay then."
"Gone," Tigo said, nodding his head. "You got courage, Danny."
"You're the one needs the courage," Danny said gently. "It's your spin."
"Tigo lifted the gun. Idly, he began spinning the cylinder.
"You live on the next block, don't you?" Danny asked.
"Yeah." Tigo kept slapping the cylinder. It spun with a gently whirring sound.
"That's how come we never crossed paths, I guess. Also, I'm new on the scene."
"Yeah, well you know, you get hooked up with one club, that's the way it is."
"You like the guys on you club?" Danny asked, wondering why he was asking such a stupid question, listening to the whirring of the cylinder at the same time.
"They're okay." Tigo shrugged. "None of them really send me, but that's the club on my block, so what're you gonna do, huh?" His hand left the cylinder. It stopped spinning. He put the gun to his head.
"Wait!" Danny said.
47

Tigo looked puzzled. "What's the matter?"
"Nothing. I just wanted to say... I mean..." Danny frowned. "I don't dig too many of the guys on my club, either."
Tigo nodded. For a moment, their eyes locked. Then Tigo shrugged, and fired.

Phew," Tigo said.
"Man, you can say that again."
Tigo slid the gun across the table.
Danny hesitated an instant. He did not want to pick up the gun. He felt sure that this time the firing pin would strike the percussion cap of one of the cartridges. He was sure that this time he would shoot himself.
"Sometimes I think I'm turkey," he said to Tigo, surprised that his thoughts had found voice.
"I feel that way sometimes, too," Tigo said.
"I never told that to nobody," Danny said. "The guys on my club would laugh at me, I ever told them that."
"Some things you got to keep to yourself. There ain't nobody you can trust in this world."
"There should be somebody you can trust," Danny said. "Hell, you can't tell nothing to your people. They don't understand." Tigo laughed. "That's an old story. But that's the way things are. What're you gonna do?"
"Yeah. Still, sometimes I think I'm turkey."
"Sure, sure," Tigo said. "It ain't only that, though. Like sometimes... well, don't you wonder what you're doing stomping some guy in the street? Like... you know what I mean?"
Like... who's the guy to you? What you got to beat him up for? 'Cause he messed with somebody else's girl?" Tigo shook his head. "It gets complicated sometimes."
"Yeah, but..." Danny frowned again. "You got to stick with the club. Don't you?"
"Sure, sure... hell yes." Again, their eyes locked.
"Well, here goes," Danny said. He lifted the gun. "It's just..." He shook his head, and then twirled the cylinder. The cylinder spun, and then stopped. He studied the gun, wondering if one of the cartridges would roar from the barrel when he squeezed the trigger.
Then he fired.
Click.
"I didn't think you was going through with it," Tigo said.
"I didn't neither."
"You got heart, Danny," Tigo said. He looked at the gun. He picked it up and broke it open.
"What you doing?" Danny asked.
"Another cartridge," Tigo said. "Six chambers, three cartridges. That makes it even money. You game?"
"You?"
"The boys said..." Tigo stopped talking. "Yeah, I'm game," he added, his voice curiously low.
"It's your turn, you know."
"I know," Danny watched as Tigo picked up the gun. "You ever been rowboating on the lake?"
Tigo looked across the table at Danny, his eyes wide. "Once," he said. "I went with Juana."
"Is it... is it any kicks?"
"Yeah. Yeah, its grand kicks. You mean you never been?"
"No," Danny said.
"Hey, you got to tryin', man," Tigo said excitedly. "You'll like it. Hey, you try it."
"Yeah, I was thinking maybe this Sunday I'd ..." He did not complete the sentence. "My spin," Tigo said wearily. He twirled the cylinder. "Here goes a good man," he said, and he put the revolver to his head and squeezed the trigger.

Click.
Danny smiled nervously. "No rest for the weary," he said. "But Jesus you've got the heart. I don't know if I can go through with it."
Sure, you can," Tigo assured him. "Listen, what's there to be afraid of?" He slid the gun across the table.
"We keep this up all night?" Danny asked.
"They said ... you know ..."
"Well, it ain't so bad. I mean, hell, we didn't have this operation, we wouldn'ta got a chance to talk, huh?" He grinned feebly.
"Yeah," Tigo said, his face splitting in a wide grin. "It ain't been so bad, huh?"
"No, it's been ... well, you know, these guys on the club, who can talk to them?"
He picked up the gun. "We could ..." Tigo started.
"What?"
"We could say ... well ... like we kept shootin' an' nothing happened, so ..." Tigo shrugged. "What the hell! We can't do this all night, can we?"
"I don't know."
"Let's make this the last spin. Listen, they don't like it, they can take a flying leap, you know?"
"I don't think they'll like it. We're supposed to settle this for the clubs."
"Screw the clubs!" Tigo said. "Can't we pick our own ..." The word was hard coming. When it came, his eyes did not leave Danny's face. "... friends?"
"Sure we can," Danny said vehemently. "Sure we can! Why not?"
"The last spin," Tigo said. "Come on, the last spin."
"Gone," Danny said. "Hey you know, I'm glad they got this idea. You know that? I'm actually glad!" He twirled the cylinder. "Look, you want to go on the lake this Sunday? I mean with your girl and mine? We could get two boats. Or even one if you want." "Yeah, one boat," Tigo Said. "Hey, your girl'll like Juana, I mean it. She's a swell chick."
The cylinder stopped. Danny put the gun to his head quickly.
"Here's to Sunday," he said. He grinned at Tigo, and Tigo grinned back, and then Danny fired.

The explosion rocked the small basement room, ripping away half of Danny's head, shattering his face. A small cry escaped Tigo's throat, and a look of incredulous shock knifed his eyes. Then he put his head on the table and began weeping.
What is Poetry?

Stephen Fry has said that poetry does not “deliver meaning and communication in the way that an assemblage of words usually does”. So what does it deliver? What is poetry and what makes it a unique form of expression?

To help you think about it, read Billy Collins’ poem.

Introduction to Poetry

Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem and hold it up to the light like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem’s room and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski across the surface of a poem waving at the author’s name on the shore.

But all they want to do is tie the poem to a chair with rope and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose to find out what it really means.

QUESTIONS
1. Who is referred to in the poem? Who is I, and they?
2. What does the poem suggest we should and shouldn’t do? Is this good advice?
3. This poem was included in the English A2 M09 paper 1 exam, for comparative commentary. Was this a somewhat ironic choice?
4. At which point does the mood of the poem change? How is this related to the poem’s meaning?
5. What different images are used in the poem? Are they all visual? Are they effective? Which image is the most effective, in your opinion?
For the following sentences, choose the word that has the most positive connotation, and then describe the connotations of each of the four words in more detail.

1. Most teachers think that Blanche is a very ______ young woman.
   a) determined  b) stubborn  c) tenacious  d) obstinate

2. As the girls played their video games, their parents ______ them.
   a) scrutinised  b) observed  c) studied  d) glared at

3. Our philosophy teacher gives very ______ assignments.
   a) taxing  b) demanding  c) perplexing  d) challenging

4. My friend has very ______ plans for what to do after graduating.
   a) grandiose  b) ambitious  c) pretentious  d) ruthless

5. Tod's looking quite ______ this year, he used to be so ______.
   a) stout  b) fat  c) plump  d) portly
   a) thin  b) slender  c) skinny  d) gaunt

For each of the questions below, put the three words under the headings FAVOURABLE, NEUTRAL, UNFAVOURABLE.

7. lazy  relaxed  slow
8. prudent  timid  cowardly
9. mousy  shy  modest
10. out-of-date  tried-and-tested  old
11. dignified  pompous  reserved
12. stubborn  persistent  persevering
13. new  cutting-edge  newfangled
14. thrifty  miserly  parsimonious
15. self-confident  proud  conceited
16. curious  concerned  nosy

FAVOURABLE  NEUTRAL  UNFAVOURABLE
The Warm and the Cold
Ted Hughes

This poem is a description of the onset of a cold winter’s night. It is made up of a series of similes, which, in the guise of a fun and stimulating classroom exercise, have all been removed and placed in the box below. Complete the poem with the similes that you feel best fit. Be prepared to justify and defend your choices.

Freezing dusk is closing
Like ________________________
On trees and roads and hills and all
That can no longer feel.
But the carp is in its depth
Like ________________________
And the badger in its bedding
Like ________________________
And the butterfly in its mummy
Like ________________________
And the owl in its feathers
Like ________________________

Freezing dusk has tightened
Like ________________________
On the starry aeroplane
Of the soaring night.
But the trout is in its hole
Like ________________________
The hare strays down the highway
Like ________________________
The snail is dry in the outhouse
Like ________________________
The owl is pale on the gatepost
Like ________________________

Moonlight freezes the shaggy world
Like ________________________
The past and the future
Are the jaws of a steel vice.
But the cod is in the tide-rip
Like ________________________
The deer are on the bare-blown hill
Like ________________________
The flies are behind the plaster
Like ________________________
Sparrows are in the ivy-clump
Like ________________________

Such a frost
The flimsy moon
Has lost her wits.
A star falls.
The sweating farmers
Turn in their sleep

| a slow trap of steel | oxen on spits |
|____________________|_______________|
| a root going deeper  | a doll in its lace |
| money in a pig       | a planet in its heaven |
| a key in a purse     | a loaf in the oven |
| a clock on its tower| smiles on a nurse |
| the lost score of a jig | a viol in its case |
| a nut screwed tight  | a seed in a sunflower |
| a mammoth of ice     | a chuckle in a sleeper |
The Sea
James Reeves

The sea is a hungry dog,
Giant and grey.
He rolls on the beach all day.
With his clashing teeth and shaggy jaws
Hour upon hour he gnaws
The rumbling, tumbling stones,
And 'Bones, bones, bones, bones!'
The giant sea-dog moans,
Licking his greasy paws.

And when the night wind roars
And the moon rocks in the stormy cloud,
He bounds to his feet and sniffs and sniffs,
Shaking his wet sides over the cliffs,
And howls and hollos long and loud.

But on quiet days in May or June,
When even the grasses on the dune
Play no more their reedy tune,
With his head between his paws
He lies on the sandy shores,
So quiet, so quiet, he scarcely snores.

QUESTIONS
1. What is this poem describing?
2. What central metaphor is used? How is this metaphor developed throughout the poem?
3. Is the metaphor effectively chosen and developed?
4. This poem uses metaphor, whereas “The Warm and the Cold” uses simile. What is the difference?
5. Why is metaphor such an effective figure of speech?

My Son, My Executioner
Donald Hall

My son, my executioner,
I take you in my arms,
Quiet and small and just astir,
And whom my body warms.

Sweet death, small son, our instrument
Of immortality,
Your cries and hungers document
Our bodily decay.

We twenty-five and twenty-two,
Who seemed to live forever,
Observe enduring life in you
And start to die together.
When my love swears that she is made of truth

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 138

When my love swears that she is made of truth
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false speaking tongue:
On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told:
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

QUESTIONS
1. Paraphrase the meaning of each line of the poem in your own words.
2. What are the two denotations of *lie* in line 2? Do we find any clues later in the poem? How is this play on words important for an understanding of the poem?
3. What is the tone of the poem? Consider the connotations of all the important words in the poem to help you decide (you might want to write them down on a separate piece of paper).
4. What does this poem suggest about human nature?
5. The sonnet is a highly regular and fixed form of English verse. In what ways has the language of the poem been organised into a regular structure?

I Ask My Mother To Sing

Li-Young Lee

She begins, and my grandmother joins her.
Mother and daughter sing like young girls.
If my father were alive, he would play
his accordion and sway like a boat.

I've never been in Peking, or the Summer Palace,
nor stood on the great Stone Boat to watch
the rain begin on Kuen Ming Lake, the picnickers
running away in the grass.

But I love to hear it sung;
how the waterlilies fill with rain until
they overturn, spilling water into water,
then rock back, and fill with more,

Both women have begun to cry.
But neither stops her song.
This Be The Verse

Philip Larkin

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.  
They may not mean to, but they do.  
They fill you with the faults they had  
And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn  
By fools in old-style hats and coats,  
Who half the time were soppy-stern  
And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.  
It deepens like a coastal shelf.  
Get out as early as you can,  
And don't have any kids yourself.

The Span of Life

Robert Frost

The old dog barks backwards without getting up.  
I can remember when he was a pup.

Thistles

Ted Hughes

Against the rubber tongues of cows and the hoeing hands of men  
Thistles spike the summer air  
And crackle open under a blue-black pressure.  
Every one a revengeful burst  
Of resurrection, a grasped fistful  
Of splintered weapons and Icelandic frost thrust up  
From the underground stain of a decayed Viking.  
They are like pale hair and the gutturals of dialects.  
Every one manages a plume of blood.  
Then they grow grey like men.  
Mown down, it is a feud. Their sons appear  
Stiff with weapons, fighting back over the same ground.
When in Rome

Mari Evans

Mattie dear
the box is full . . .
take
whatever you like
to eat . . .

(an egg
or soup
. . . there ain't no meat.)

there's endive there
and
cottage cheese . . .

(whew! if I had some
black-eyed peas . . )

there's sardines
on the shelves
and such . . .
but
don't
get my anchovies. . .
they cost
too much!

(me get the
anchovies indeed!
what she think, she got --
a bird to feed?)

there's plenty in there
to fill you up . . .

(yes'm. just the
sight's
enough!

Hope I lives till I get
home
I'm tired of eatin'
what they eats in Rome . . .)

QUESTIONS
1. What is the allusion in the title? How is it to be understood?
2. The poem seems to be a dialogue between two characters. What can we infer about these characters from their diction? How would you describe the tone of each of the characters?
3. Why are one of the character's lines in brackets?
Constantly Risking Absurdity
Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Constantly risking absurdity and death
whenever he performs above the heads
of his audience
the poet like an acrobat
climbs on rime to a high wire of his own making
and balancing on eyebeams above a sea of faces
paces his way to the other side of the day
performing entrachats and sleight-of-foot tricks
and other high theatrics and all without mistaking
any thing for what it may not be
For he's the super realist who must perforce perceive
taut truth before the taking of each stance or step
in his supposed advance toward that still higher perch
where Beauty stands and waits with gravity
to start her death-defying leap
And he
a little charleychaplin man who may or may not catch
her fair eternal form spreadeagled in the empty air
of existence

QUESTIONS
1. Who is the “he” character? Is it clear who “he” is referring to each of the times it appears in the poem? Does “he” refer to more than one character? How is this important in terms of the poem’s meaning?
2. What is the central comparison being made in the poem? How is this comparison developed? Is this poem similar to *The Sea* in that respect?
3. Does the poem’s unusual layout contribute to its meaning in any way?
4. How does the poet play with language in the poem? In what way might this be connected to the poem’s meaning?
400-Meter Freestyle
Maxime Kumin

The gun full swing the swimmer catapults and cracks six feet away onto that perfect glass he catches at and throws behind him scoop after scoop cunningly moving the water back to move him forward. Thrift is his wonderful secret; he has schooled out all extravagance. No muscleriples without compensation wrist cock to heel snap to his mobile mouth that siphons in the air that nurtures him at half an inch above sea level so to speak. The astonishing whites of the soles of his feet rise and salute us on the turns. He flips, converts, and is gone in one. We watch him for signs. His arms are steady at the catch, his cadent feet tick in the stretch, they know the lesson well. Lungs know, too; he does not list for air he drives along on little sips carefully expended but that plum red heart pumps hard cries hurt how soon its near one more and makes its final surge. Time: 4:25:9

QUESTIONS
1. Does reading this poem in any way capture the feeling of competitive swimming? How has the poet used language to achieve this?
2. Does this poem suggest that 4:25.9 is a good time?
Six O'Clock News  
Tom Leonard

this is thi widny thingk  
six a clock it wuz troo.  
news thi jist wanna yoo  
man said n scruff tokn.  
thi reason thirza right  
a talk wia way ti spell  
BBC accent ana right way  
iz coz yi to tok it. this  
widny wahnt is me tokn yir  
mi ti talk right way a  
aboot thi spellin. this  
trooth wia is ma trooth.  
voice lik yooz doant no  
wanna yoo thi trooth  
scruff. if yirsellz cawz  
a toktaboot yi canny talk  
liw wanna yoo right. this is  
scruff yi the six a clock  

QUESTIONS
1. Describe your initial reaction to this poem. Did your opinion change after reading the poem? After reading it several times?
2. What is this poem's purpose? Does it contain a message?
3. Comment on the poem's diction. What effect does it have?

Poetic and Linguistic Techniques Used in Advertising

The following list contains some of the English language's more memorable advertising slogans. What poetic/linguistic techniques can you identify in each, and what effect do these techniques have?

Beanz Meanz Heinz (Heinz baked beans)
Gillette, the best a man can get (Gillette)
Go to work on an egg (Egg Marketing Board)
Just do it (Nike)
The quicker picker-upper (Bounty chocolate bars)
Guinness is good for you (Guinness)
Re-tuned, re-conditioned. Heck it's been re-everythinged (VW)
Probably the best beer in the world (Carlsberg)
Milk has gotta lotta bottle (Milk Marketing Board)
You'll never put a better bit of butter on your knife (Country Life butter)
You can be sure of Shell (Shell)
Daz washes whiter than white (Daz washing powder)
Vocabulary for writing about literature

Describing tone
Tone is the emotional attitude expressed by the writer/narrator towards the subject. You can think of it as being like tone of voice – the emotional attitude we reveal in the way we speak. Tone is correctly described with adjectives that could equally be applied to descriptions of a speaker’s tone of voice. Here are some of the more common words that can be used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>admire</th>
<th>condescending</th>
<th>gloomy</th>
<th>persuasive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aggressive</td>
<td>confident</td>
<td>hateful</td>
<td>pessimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aloof</td>
<td>critical</td>
<td>hopeful</td>
<td>pleading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amused</td>
<td>cynical</td>
<td>humorous</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angry</td>
<td>derogatory</td>
<td>impatient</td>
<td>proud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apologetic</td>
<td>despairing</td>
<td>indifferent</td>
<td>provocative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approving</td>
<td>determined</td>
<td>indignant</td>
<td>reassuring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrogant</td>
<td>disapproving</td>
<td>irate</td>
<td>resentful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authoritative</td>
<td>disdainful</td>
<td>ironic</td>
<td>resentful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bitter</td>
<td>disgusted</td>
<td>judgemental</td>
<td>respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bold</td>
<td>disillusioned</td>
<td>light-hearted</td>
<td>romantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>callous</td>
<td>disparaging</td>
<td>loving</td>
<td>sarcastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calm</td>
<td>disrespectful</td>
<td>matter-of-fact</td>
<td>serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carefree</td>
<td>dissatisfied</td>
<td>melancholic</td>
<td>sincere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>careful</td>
<td>dreamy</td>
<td>morbid</td>
<td>sceptical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caring</td>
<td>embarrassed</td>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>solemn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cautionary</td>
<td>enthusiastic</td>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>sympathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheerful</td>
<td>excited</td>
<td>nostalgic</td>
<td>unapologetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combative</td>
<td>factual</td>
<td>optimistic</td>
<td>urgent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comical</td>
<td>fearful</td>
<td>outraged</td>
<td>worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compassionate</td>
<td>fearless</td>
<td>passionate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerned</td>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>patient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condemning</td>
<td>frustrated</td>
<td>patronizing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words for describing what the writer/narrator does

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>address</th>
<th>describes</th>
<th>portrays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alleges</td>
<td>discusses</td>
<td>predicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alludes to</td>
<td>emphasises</td>
<td>presents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appeals to</td>
<td>employs</td>
<td>proposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asserts</td>
<td>exploites</td>
<td>qualifies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assesses</td>
<td>explores</td>
<td>questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attributes sth to</td>
<td>expresses</td>
<td>recalls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belittles</td>
<td>highlights</td>
<td>reflects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classifies</td>
<td>illuminates</td>
<td>rejects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compares</td>
<td>illustrates</td>
<td>remembers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concedes</td>
<td>implies</td>
<td>reveals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condemns</td>
<td>insists</td>
<td>satirizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confronts</td>
<td>introduces</td>
<td>speculates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connects sth to</td>
<td>juxtaposes</td>
<td>states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contrasts</td>
<td>laments</td>
<td>stresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conveys</td>
<td>maintains</td>
<td>suggests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critiques</td>
<td>mocks</td>
<td>underlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depicts</td>
<td>notes</td>
<td>urges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deplores</td>
<td>observes</td>
<td>warns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Requirements

During the course you will have to write two assignments, as instructed below. You will also give an oral commentary in the final week of the course, and your grade will be based on these three assignments, (but also influenced by your performance in certain activities in class). You will, of course, also need to attend lessons in order to pass the course.

Written assignments (both A & B)

A. Choose one of the following. These tasks are analytical questions and should be written as essays, with examples from the text(s) used to illustrate your arguments. To get good marks, your essay will need to analyse, not describe. This means that rather than just say what happens, you need to consider the implications of what it means.

Questions 4 and 5 ask you to consider the role of a specific literary technique. That means you need consider what effect that technique has, and how that technique and the effect it creates contribute to the meaning of the work (i.e. the theme).

1. What techniques does Carver use to characterise the narrator in Why, Honey?
2. Is Hunters in the Snow more than just a story of three men hunting?
3. Does The Lesson contain a lesson?
4. Discuss the role of science fiction and fantasy in Harrison Bergeron.
5. Discuss the role of suspense in The Last Spin.

B. Choose either 1 or 2. These tasks are creative, and give you considerably more freedom. However, your text should show your understanding of the story (both the events of the story and the characters involved), and you need to pay attention to the style and structure of your text. As well as the actual text, you should also write a brief rationale, in which you explain how your text demonstrates your understanding of the story, and how the language you have used is consistent with either a tabloid newspaper (task 1) or Sylvia’s vernacular (text 2).

1. Write a news report on the death of Harrison Bergeron. Your report should be in the style of a British tabloid newspaper (e.g. www.thesun.co.uk, www.mirror.co.uk). You will need to adopt an authentic tabloid style as well as structuring your text like an authentic news report – reading some tabloid news reports before you write yours will help you achieve this.

2. Write a letter from Sylvia to Sugar (The Lesson) in which Sylvia reproaches Sugar for her “treachery”. To get good marks, the style of your letter should be faithful to Sylvia’s vernacular, and you should demonstrate an understanding of Sylvia’s character.

3. Write two speeches for a community book club meeting in a poor black neighbourhood in New York in the 1970s. The speeches should take a stance on what The Lesson suggests black Americans should do about the racial inequality of American society. The speeches should be written by two characters from Everyday Use: the first speech by the mother and the second speech by Dee (Wangero). Your challenge here is twofold: to capture the ideological differences between the two characters as well as their differing styles of language.
Oral commentary

During the double lesson in the alternative schedule week, you will be giving an oral commentary on one of the poems we study during the course. You will work with a partner, and will be given about 15 minutes to prepare for the commentary with the text that I will select for you. Your commentary should be an analysis of how the poem uses language to achieve its purpose. Guiding questions will be given to help you.

Marking criteria

Each assignment will be given a mark out of 20, which will be combined with a mark out of 10 awarded for performance during lessons. The final mark, out of 70, will be the basis for your course grade.

The marking criteria are similar to those that will be used in the Language A: Language and Literature programme during IB1 and IB2. Details can be found for each of the three assignments in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written task A: Essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criterion A: Understanding of literary work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion B: Understanding of the use and effects of stylistic features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion C: Organisation and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion D: Language and style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written task B: Creative written response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criterion A: Rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Does the rationale explain how the task demonstrates an understanding of the literary work and the way language is used? /2p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion B: Task and content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Does the task show an understanding of the literary work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Does the task show an understanding of the conventions of a tabloid newspaper article or the stylistic features of Sylvia’s vernacular? /8p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion C: Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How coherent and/or authentic is the structure of the task? /5p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion D: Language and style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How appropriate is the choice of register and style?     /5p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criterion A: Understanding of literary work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are the comments supported by well-chosen examples?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion B: Language and style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How appropriate is the choice of register and style?   /10p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>