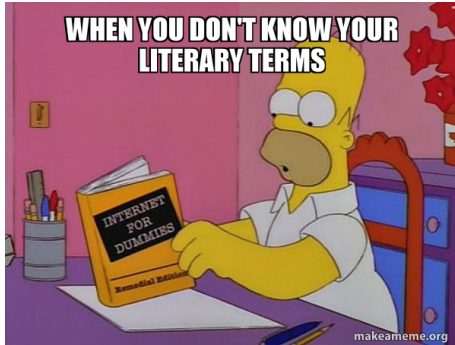


Close reading and literary devices

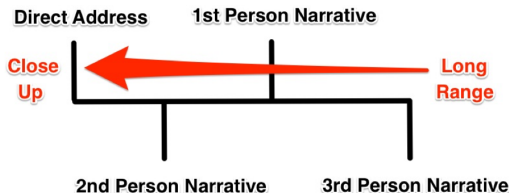


I. Overview

- A close reading is an in-depth, careful analysis of a short text.
- Read the passage and try to understand on a literal level what might be going on. What is the obvious theme?
- The next step is to analyze to discern a deeper, less obvious meaning.

II. Narrative perspective

- Take note of who is speaking and the perspective conveyed in the passage. Consider the narrator's tone or attitude.
 - First person:** The narrator is a character in the story telling it from their perspective (I/we).
 - Second person:** The reader/listener is part of the story (you).
 - Third person:** The narrator is not part of the story (he/she/they/it).



II. Narrative perspective

- *“Keep in mind what you have heard today. You might find that you are not so brave.”*

My Land by Sonata Arctica

- Second person (direct address)

- *“He is the man who travels in the land of dragons and magic spells.”*

Hero in a Dream by Ensiferum

- Third person

- *“We walk through the ages. The world on our shoulders.”*

Carry the Cross by Arch Enemy

- First person

III. Figurative language

- **Metaphor:** Figure of speech that compares a shared trait between two unlike things. A metaphor says that one thing “is” another thing.
 - *“Love is a razor and I walked the line on that silver blade.”*
The Evil That Men Do by Iron Maiden
- **Simile:** Figure of speech that directly compares two things using “like” or “as.”
 - *“Time is like a fuse, short and burning fast.”*
Fight Fire with Fire by Metallica

III. Figurative language

- **Allegory:** A wider narrative that acts as a metaphor. The lyrics of the song may be *symbolic*.
 - *“Master of Puppets I’m pulling your strings. Twisting your mind and smashing your dreams.”*
Master of Puppets by Metallica
- **Allusion:** Brief and indirect reference to a person, place, event, text, or idea containing cultural, historical, literary, or political significance.
 - *“Save yourself a penny for the ferryman. Save yourself and let them suffer. In hope. In love. This world ain’t ready for The Ark.”*
Planet Hell by Nightwish

IV. Other rhetorical devices

- **Repetition:** What phrases and sounds are repeated and why?
- **Rhyme:** Repetition of a similar sound between words or the ending of words.
 - *“I’ve been down this road once or twice before, through the open door. I come falling through it. There’s a sign post up ahead, like a watershed.”*
Safe Home by Anthrax
- **Alliteration:** The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of a word.
 - *“Silent screams and shattered dreams of what we left at seventeen.”*
Body Breakdown by Dragonforce

IV. Other rhetorical devices

- **Anaphora:** Repetition of the same words at the beginning of successive lines.
 - *“Come wind. Come snow. Come winterland. I have resigned myself to death. Come will to show the hidden hand.”*
The Black Halo by Kamelot
- **Antimetabole:** Repetition of words in successive clauses, but in transposed order.
 - *“One for all, all for one.”* Nemesis by Arch Enemy
 - *“We do what we like and we like what we do.”* Party Hard by Andrew W.K.
- Keep in mind that the significance of word order can be difficult to interpret because metal music lyricists are often non-native English speakers.

V. Imagery

- Imagery refers to writing that invokes the reader's senses with descriptive word choice to create a more vivid and realistic recreation of the scene in their mind.
 - *"Deep silent complete. Black velvet sea."*
Deep Silent Complete by Nightwish
- Imagery can be cohesive or it can be contrasting (antithesis).
 - *"Walls made of stone are turned into water now."*
Ocean Planet by Gojira

VI. Putting it together

- A good thesis statement is clear, focused, descriptive and argues for a specific interpretation of the song's meaning.
- You do not need to incorporate every single literary device or every single line of the song into your analysis. If you are familiar with other literary techniques, feel free to include them.
- A helpful question to ask is why did the songwriter choose to use literary devices the way they did?
- You may also comment on musical elements to the extent that they support your thesis (i.e. vocal style, melody, rhythm).