

This is the outcome one for this module

After passing this course, there are several things that your lecturers expect you to be able to do. These skills are what lecturers are referring to when they write about course outcomes. The expected outcomes for ENG2602 are listed on the page of your study guide marked 'v'. This week, to help you understand what you need to do to pass this course, I will be going through your course outcomes and trying to explain them a bit more fully. There are four course outcomes, and I will discuss them one by one. This is a bit of a long post, but do not worry. It is easy to read, and it is just meant to help you to understand what is expected.

Your study guide says the following about Outcome One:

Outcome 1: students (in other words, ourselves and yourselves) identify the *typical English language attributes of prose, poetry and drama*. We should ask ourselves, 'what are the common features of these kinds of writing?' Also, 'in what ways do they differ?'

What does this mean?

This means is that you should be able to tell the difference between poetry, prose and drama, or between poems, plays and novels or non-fiction books.

The good news is that you can probably do this already. You should be able to see that poems are usually fairly short and written in lines of a particular length. Dramas, or plays, are usually written in lines of dialogue, or of people speaking to one another. Novels are usually much longer than poems and plays.

What you will have to learn more about as you go through this course is the common and different features of these kinds of writing. In other words, you have to know what you should look for when trying to analyse a poem, or an extract from a novel or play.

To get you started:

A poem will usually focus on one idea or a limited set of ideas. A poem will also usually make use of poetic devices such as alliteration, metaphors, similes, personification and run-on lines (we'll discuss these more later). You should therefore know that, when you analyse a poem, you

should look for the idea or ideas that it focuses on, and explain how this idea is conveyed. You should also try to understand which poetic devices the poet uses and why he or she uses them.

For example:

Look at the following poem by Hans Christian Anderson:

To move, to breathe, to fly, to float,
To gain all while you give,
To roam the roads of lands remote,
To travel is to live.

Here, the central idea of the poem is travel, and how it makes people feel alive. We know this because the speaker praises aspects of travel in the first three lines, and the poem culminates in the last line 'to travel is to live'. The speaker of the poem shows that travel makes him feel alive by exposing him to a range of different experiences in line one. These experiences are 'to move, to breathe, to fly' and 'to float'. If you look at line one, you will notice that the 'f' sound is repeated at the start of the words 'fly' and 'float'. We call this repetition alliteration, and it is a poetic device. Because the repeated f sound is so soft and light here, it gives the impression that the speaker feels light and free. When you see the effect of the alliteration and explain it, like this, you are analysing.

A drama, like a play, will also usually be focused on a set of ideas. You might call these ideas themes. You should try to discover what the themes or central ideas of a drama are as you read it. You should also try to explain how these ideas are conveyed.

One thing which is also important about dramas is that they are usually written in lines of dialogue, or speech between characters. There will also be stage directions, which describe the actions of the characters. Their appearances might also be described. When reading a drama, we discover what we know about the characters through what they say and do and sometimes what they look like. This means that when you analyse a drama, you should look at what the words and actions and descriptions of characters are telling you about who they are, what they care about and how they feel.

For example:

Look at the extract below from Eugene O'Neill's play *Long Day's Journey into Night*:

MARY: James, it's Edmund you ought to scold for not eating enough. He hardly touched anything except coffee. He needs to eat to keep up his strength. I keep telling him that but he says he simply has no appetite. Of course, there's nothing takes away your appetite like a bad summer cold.

TYRONE: Yes, it's only natural. So don't let yourself get worried—

MARY: [*quickly*] Oh, I'm not. I know he'll be all right in a few days if he takes care of himself, [*as if she wanted to dismiss the subject but can't*] But it does seem a shame he should have to be sick right now.

TYRONE: Yes, it is bad luck. [*He gives her a quick, worried look.*] But you mustn't let it upset you, Mary. Remember, you've got to take care of yourself, too.

MARY: [*quickly*] I'm not upset. There's nothing to be upset about. What makes you think I'm upset?

TYRONE: Why, nothing, except you've seemed a bit high-strung the past few days. MARY: [*forcing a smile*] I have? Nonsense, dear. It's your imagination; [*with sudden tenseness*] You really must not watch me all the time, James. I mean, it makes me selfconscious.

From looking at the dialogue between Tyrone and Mary, and the stage directions that tell you about their actions, consider what you can learn about them.

Both characters seem to be worried about someone called Edmund, because he 'has no appetite' and seems to have 'a bad summer cold'. But Tyrone also seems to be worried about Mary, and how Edmund's illness will affect her. We see this when he gives her 'a quick, worried look' and says 'you've got to take care of yourself'. Judging by these words, we might be able to guess that one of the main themes of this play is illness and how it affects families. Noticing this and explaining it is analysing.

A novel is usually much longer than a poem or a play. Because novels are longer than poems and plays, they allow writers to explore more themes or ideas than poems or plays might allow for. Novels also often have more characters than plays. Whereas in plays we find out about characters through their dialogue and stage descriptions, novels can tell us about characters through exploring their thoughts. So, when reading a novel, we might find out a lot about characters through what narrators say about them rather than just through the words which they speak or the actions that they take. When you try to analyse an extract from a novel, you should look for its central ideas or themes, just as you would when you analyse a poem or play.

For example:

Look at the extract below from *Daddy Long Legs* by Jean Webster:

Blue Wednesday

The first Wednesday in every month was a Perfectly Awful Day--a day to be awaited with dread, endured with courage and forgotten with haste.

Every floor must be spotless, every chair dustless, and every bed without a wrinkle. Ninety-seven squirming little orphans must be

scrubbed and combed and buttoned into freshly starched gingham; and all ninety-seven reminded of their manners, and told to say, 'Yes, sir,' 'No, sir,' whenever a Trustee spoke.

It was a distressing time; and poor Jerusha Abbott, being the oldest orphan, had to bear the brunt of it. But this particular first Wednesday, like its predecessors, finally dragged itself to a close.

Think about what you can tell about Jerusha Abbott and her life just from this extract. You can probably tell that she is the oldest orphan in an orphanage, and that life is not easy there. She is clearly made to work hard, as we can tell from the description of the 'dread' that she feels for each 'Blue Wednesday' when important people called trustees who finance the orphanage visit.

We should also start looking for things to analyse. From this extract, we can tell that one of main themes or ideas of this novel is likely to be the struggle of poverty. You might notice that the words 'Perfectly Awful Day' have initial capital letters. Think about what this means. Could it emphasise how awful the day is? Perhaps the writer is trying to personify the day into a very unpleasant person by giving it a name. The effect of this is that the first Wednesday of every month becomes like a horrible visitor instead of just a day, and the reader understands a bit more why this Wednesday is so bad for Jerusha.

Please feel free to ask questions about this post. If you want to try analysing to get used to it, why not try looking for some alliteration in the poem by Hans Christian Anderson and explaining its effect? You can also see what you can tell about Mary and Tyrone and their lives from the extract from *Long Day's Journey into Night*. You could also see what more you can tell about the life of Jerusha Abbott.