

Збірник наукових праць
UNDERSTANDING LITERARY WORKS

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English literature is a great source of poetry, drama, prose fiction. It presents different genres and trends: from lyrical and romantic to comic and satiric, from realistic to mysterious and imaginary, from epic to incidental and trivial. Writers differ from one another – they create their own world, express their individual experience, expose the conflicts in their own artistic way. The understanding of literary works has to be accumulated thoroughly through careful reading. A writer's language creates a wonderful world in which the reader also takes part.

Careful reading is the real difficulty with any literary work, especially when one reads in a foreign language. The problem is concerned with the inherent comprehension of the reading matter. Students are not accustomed to such complicity, they have to learn how to read literature by concentrating not only on the words, but on the real meaning of the writer's message. Students should be aimed to point out the significance of seemingly unimportant details: the appearance of the personages, their mood and behaviour, the weather and the colours of the things, as they all contribute to the unity of the work. The students' task is to comprehend these numerous aspects and significance of artistic details of the story. It is not easy, since every writer aims to find a unique way of expression in order to excite readers' imagination.

It is important for a non-native reader to be able to hear the individual voice of the writer, to interpret the message of the story, to explore and decode different author's symbols, to recognize all allusions, historic and cultural references in order to grasp the content and the idea of the literary work. Surely, cultural, historical and linguistic commentaries can serve as helpful instruments of grasping the content and the message of a literary work.

In many stories readers come across various symbols which are fully integrated into the plot and structure. In other words, symbols fit into the action at the same time as it represents the idea. Some symbols are used as devices of characterization, others have a function in the plot or a mere abstract significance. We can see it on the example of a popular children's book «The Wizard of the Emerald City» by A. M. Volkov.

It is still difficult to find a house in which the book would not be on the bookshelf. As is known, it is the interpretation of the fairy-tale «The Wonderful Wizard of Oz» written by Frank Baum. Even nowadays, children are happy to be transported from the reality to a magical land, where the yellow-brick road led Ellie straight to the Emerald City. Literary scholars have made a number of attempts to explain the astonishing success of this book. In this case it was necessary to explain the fairy-tale, namely, its hidden unobvious meaning and symbolism. There emerged numerous interpretations: psycho-analytical, economical, political and so on. For example, H. Littlefield in 1964 claimed that through the disguised characters of this literary work the author ridiculed the political figures of their time and in the allegoric form offered the ways of reforming the American economy of the end of the XIX century. The yellow-brick road symbolized the state gold reserve, Scarecrow – the agricultural sector, Tin Woodman was the symbol of the industry, the wizard of Oz – was the symbol of the president McKinley. However, this elegant theory does not explain why even nowadays the story about the little girl Ellie is known not only in the USA, where people forgot McKinley long ago, but even in many other countries, where nobody knew him.

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There are also theories in which the fabulous personages of this fairy-tale and the magic artifacts hide a sacred symbolism which takes its origins in the ancient spiritual traditions. Some believe that this text, written in the form of a children's fairy-tale, may be a spiritual literature monument. Here we should mention that in 1892, that is 8 years before the publication of this work, Frank Baum together with his wife joined the Chicago Branch of the Theosophical Society as he was fond of the issues of spirituality and mysticism, and was convinced of the immortality of the soul. In 1900, F. Baum published in the USA his book «The Wonderful Wizard of Oz». Later on, he recollected that it had been a pure inspiration appeared from nowhere. This book was very popular and became a real bestseller. To the Russian-speaking readers it is known as «The Wizard of the Emerald City» in retelling by Alexander Volkov. Though the style of this book differs from the original, the author kept unchanged the original structure, main characters and the main plot twists and turns.

Taking into consideration the symbolism of this fairy-tale, we may agree that it is a spiritual text, the allegory of the mystical path to the enlightenment of the soul. We pay attention to the juxtaposition of the grey, cheerless, gloomy Kansas city and the bright and vivid Wonderful country of Oz, in other words, the contrast between a grey, boring reality and a colourful world of imagination and fantasy. This wonderful world is multicoloured, as the whole breaks down into different aspects as well as a white colour refracts and transforms into a bright rainbow. However, Kansas city of F. Baum is the world of the highest and absolute form of reality without shades and forms, the allusion to the Old Testament land – formless and empty.

We should note, that the symbolism of colours is conventional in the modern literature, the opposition between symbolic colours is often used to reveal the theme of the literary work. For example, the blue colour is traditionally understood as the eternal colour of romantic aspirations, the green colour is generally used to denote hope. The opposition between white and black presupposes the confrontation of good and evil. Different shades of yellow have associations with prosperity and material wealth. So, the reader should be able to follow the narrative, understand the expression of various images, as well as he should hear the writer's voice and the intonation in which he tells his story.

One more significant stylistic device, employed by the author, is the antonomasia – the use of a proper name to express a general idea of the plot. The name of the main personage is Dorothy (Ellie is a Russian-speaking version), the full name of which is Dorothea, the form of a Greek name Theodora, literally – «a gift from God», that is an eternal spiritual essence.

Cardinal points of Baum's Wonderful country are meaningful too. The magical land is divided between the four rulers: the wizards of the North and South are kind, while the ones of the East and West are evil. The images of the wizards are highly symbolic: since the ancient times people have identified the West – the place where the Sun sets every day – with the Land of the Dead, while the East has been traditionally associated with the birth, the new life. So, the evil wizards of the West and East symbolize Death and Birth.

On her way to the Emerald city, Ellie meets Scarecrow, Tin Woodman and Cowardly Lion. These personages symbolize three kinds of mind, three parts of soul. The first of them - Scarecrow, a straw garden scarecrow who needs brain, symbolizes a mental centre, or the head. The second Ellie's friend - Tin Woodman – yearns for his lost heart. The Cowardly Lion joins the friends on their way to the Wizard in order to ask for courage. The Lion is the ancient symbol of will and royal power, he is the body centre. However, the friends ask the Wizard for something they already have: Scarecrow is clever, he makes witty decisions to save his friends in the difficult situations, Tin Woodman shows kindness and compassion to them, the Cowardly Lion makes scary monsters run

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away and turns out to be the strongest and the most courageous. The moral of this tale is clear: all we need, we already have, the essence of the spiritual work consists of revealing resources within ourselves.

As for the yellow-brick road, along which Ellie and her friends go to the Emerald city, it is the symbol of the path of spiritual development. At the end of their adventures, the friends discover that Goodwin is not a wizard but a common man who was brought to the Wonderful country on the air balloon. Goodwin is a collective image of the teacher and mentor who appears an ordinary person. Possibly, he is a few steps ahead his student, just because he was the first to appear in this world, and the teacher is able to point the way, however he cannot do spiritual work instead of his students.

We try to grasp the meaning of the literary work, to read «between the lines», that is, to interpret and then to evaluate it. Slow and careful reading can become a fantastic process full of discoveries and wonders, and a desirable and beneficent pastime.

Various means of interpretation help the reader to come to his own understanding of the literary work.

The example of the assignment for students' interpretation and stylistic analysis:

I. Get ready to interpret the story according to the plan:

1. What kind of story is it? (e.g.: gripping, amusing, elegant, keeping in suspense, boring, trivial, depressing, moralistic, poetic, provocative, controversial, etc.)

2. What is the story about? What is the theme of the story? (e.g. love, family love, friendship, divorce, war, murder, loneliness, etc.) Is the theme explicit or implicit; is it of psychological, social, moral or philosophical nature?

3. Who is the narrator? Is the author's presence in the story direct in his attitude towards his characters and their actions, or indirect and the narration is told through the characters' speech or thoughts? How do the personages' speech and thoughts characterize them?

4. What is the general tone of the story (formal, neutral, ironical, satirical, sad, etc.)?

5. What is the setting of the story (the time and the place of the action)?

6. Who are the main characters? Are their names speaking? What is the main conflict and when does it reveal itself? Who is the protagonist? The antagonist? What are the main contrasts between them? Does the author present a direct description of their appearance, main traits, actions, relationships, etc.? (or are they presented indirectly through different stylistic devices?) Give a one-sentence sketch of the main personages. Give a full character sketch of the main personages (what the author says about their age, background, family, social position, appearance, occupation, habits, etc.)

7. Are the secondary personages of vital importance too? What role do they play?

8. What is the plot of the story? In what way is the atmosphere created?

9. Analyze the composition of the story. Single out the exposition, complications, climax and denouement. Are any parts of the composition omitted? Are there any flashbacks or foreshadowing? Comment on the use of tenses. How can you characterize the ending: open, twisted, tricky, (un)predictable, etc.?

10. What are the symbols of the story? Are they correlated with the characters' personalities?

11. Speak on the title of the story (may be it is metaphorical, or some allusion is hidden in it).

12. What is the main idea of the story? (or, in other words, the underlying thought and emotional attitude transmitted to the reader by the whole structure of the literary text).

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II. Get ready for a stylistic analysis of the story.

1. Name the stylistic devices (lexical and syntactical) which predominate in the author's style.
 2. What stylistic devices does the author use to depict his characters brightly and vividly? Comment on the emblematic names of the characters, what is their contextual explanation?
 3. What devices help the author express his emotionally coloured attitude to the characters? Which stylistic devices help the author reveal the main idea of the story?
 4. How are the cases of humour, irony, satire (if any) contribute to the general mood of the story?
 5. What effect does the repetition of some words or clauses produce?
 6. Can you hear the voices of the characters through the unuttered represented speech?
 7. Sum up all your literary and linguistic observations and say what makes the author's style individual.
 8. What are your impressions of the story? What struck you most about it?
 9. Give your own opinion of the author's aims and techniques.
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PECULIARITIES OF ENGLISH ABBREVIATIONS AND SHORTENINGS IN DIACHRONIC ASPECT

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The use of abbreviations and shortened words in various types of written textual array is as old as the written language variant itself. Being born in Ancient times, abbreviated or shortened words were transformed in the course of their forthcoming development, and reflected the needs of the changing humanity. Judging by sources and history of shortening, we may note that these words were observed in written manuscripts of peoples who had writing. The possibility to shorten or clip lexical units speaks for the mental development and activation of literacy. Abbreviation processes reflect the important features of the English language development, which presuppose the simplicity of expression and preservation for communication purposes in various spheres of man's life.