

Literature

12

Grade Twelve

>>>THE LITERATURE *ASSIGNMENTS* BEGIN AFTER THE ANSWER KEY SECTION<<<

- INITIATION – by Robert H. Benson
- BEOWULF – Translated by Seamus Heaney
- IVANHOE – by Sir Walter Scott
- THE VIRGINIAN – by Owen Wister

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12TH GRADE LITERATURE

AIDS TO UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE

LITERARY ELEMENTS

Literature can generally be described in terms of the four traditional literary elements: **character, plot, setting, and theme**. You will come to see that novels (historical fiction) are generally richer in these elements than biographies are, the latter relying predominantly on actual events from the life of the individual, and being limited to factual accounts. The historical fiction, on the other hand, can be manipulated and embellished to create a more suspenseful story line, with dialogue contrived to construct and lead characters. This is not to say that biographies are less exciting, simply that they are written differently from novels.

Every author uses these four elements in developing the entire story, with the **plot** defined in literary circles as “the causal sequence of action,” or the series of inter-related causes and effects (results). More simply, the plot is the main story-line, with all the little ups and downs along the way toward a main climax and ultimate ending of the story. If graphed, it would look like a jagged, upward sloping line (defining the “conflict” or “suspense” of the novel), which drops off dramatically with the climax. As the line drops off, we have what is referred to as the “resolution” of the conflict, which is generally the ending.

One of the ways an author varies the suspense of a novel is by introducing various kinds of **characters**. Authors can choose from type (stereotypical) characters, or individual characters, with the latter being superior, generally speaking, for a more suspenseful novel. Additionally, characters can be either static (un-changing) or developing, as well as parallel or contrasting. (In the parable of the Prodigal Son, for instance, the Father is static, while the returning son is a developing character. For an example of contrasting characters, we can see the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.) There are both main and secondary characters, with recognizable traits.

Many people think that a story’s **setting** is nothing more than its geographic location and perhaps the era in which it takes place. In actuality, setting is that essential aspect of a story which includes place, time, and circumstances. But it is still more than that. A good author such as Charles Dickens can re-create with his words, not just the appearance of people and things of the time period, but their speech and mindset, as well. Such an author can transport the reader across time and space.

The **theme** of a story is its main point. What is the author trying to say? Is there a lesson in the story? What is the common thread which runs through the story?

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Assignments: Weeks 1 and 2

Student's Name _____

Important Note: A book report will be required in week 10, so keep this in mind as you are reading the book. Make notes of main characters and how they are involved in the story. Also, make special note of main events, settings, plot changes and theme and how the author uses these elements to keep the interest of the reader. These notes will be of great help when writing your book report. Look ahead to week 10 to see what is required for this book report.

**You will be required to send in a copy of your notes
in week 5.**

Week 1 – Read PART I: Chapters I and II, pp. 3-51, of *Initiation* by Robert Hugh Benson.

Make notes of main characters and how they are involved in the story. Also, make special note of main events, settings, plot changes and theme and how the author uses these elements to keep the interest of the reader. These notes will be of great help when writing your book report.

Time _____

Completed this week's assignment

(Check this box once the assignment has been

completed)

Week 2 – Read PART I: Chapters III and IV, pp. 52-97, of *Initiation* by Robert Hugh Benson.

Make special note of main events, settings, plot changes and theme and how the author uses these elements to keep the interest of the reader.

Time _____

Completed this week's assignment

For use by OLVS tutor only: Literature - Week 1 _____ Week 2 _____