

California Edition



GLENCOE LITERATURE

The Reader's Choice



World
Literature

Point of View

Point of view refers to the standpoint from which a story is told. The person telling the story is called the **narrator**.

- In a story told from the **first-person point of view**, the narrator is a character in the story, and uses the words *I* and *me* to tell the story.
- In **third-person point of view**, the narrator is someone who stands outside the story and describes the characters and action. **Third-person omniscient point of view** means that the narrator knows everything that goes on—including the thoughts and feelings of every character in the story. If the narrator describes events as only one character perceives them, the point of view is called **third-person limited**.

“Cinderella” is told from the third-person omniscient point of view: the narrator explains what the prince is doing as well as what is happening in Cinderella’s household.

Theme

Theme is the central message of a story that readers can apply to life. Themes in fiction commonly provide perceptions about life.

- Sometimes themes are stated directly in a story.
- Usually themes are implied; the reader has to infer them by considering all the elements of a story.

The theme of “Cinderella” is implied. The reader can infer the message that if you are in a bad situation, you should do the best that you can. In the end, things will work out for you.

Plot

Plot is the sequence of events in a story. Most plots deal with a problem and develop around a conflict, a struggle between opposing forces.

- An **external conflict** is a struggle between a character and an outside force, such as another character, society, nature, or fate.
- An **internal conflict** takes place within a character who struggles with opposing feelings or with indecision about how to act.

Following are the events that make up the plot of “Cinderella.”

Problem: Cinderella wants to go to the ball, but her stepsisters prevent her from going.

Conflict: The conflict is external—Cinderella versus the stepsisters and their mother.

Most plots develop in five stages.

- **Exposition** introduces the story’s characters, setting, and conflict.
- **Rising action** develops the conflict with complications and suspense.
- **Climax** is the emotional high point of the story.
- **Falling action** shows what happens to the characters after the climax.
- **Resolution** shows how the conflict is resolved or the problem solved.

Active Reading Strategies

How to Read Fiction

How can you get the most from your reading? Effective readers are active readers. As they read, they have conversations with themselves about the text; they get involved. Don't be a passive reader. Use the following strategies to help you read works of fiction actively and effectively.

- For more about these and other active reading strategies, see *Reading Handbook*, pp. R82–R84.

PREDICT

Predicting helps you anticipate events and stay alert to the less obvious parts of a story. Make educated guesses about what will happen next by combining clues in the story with what you already know.

Say to yourself . . .

- From the title, I'd guess this story is about . . .
- This character will probably . . .
- The next thing that should happen is . . .
- This story is different from my original prediction. Now I think . . .

CONNECT

Draw parallels between the people, places, and events in the story and the people, places, and events in your own life.

Ask yourself . . .

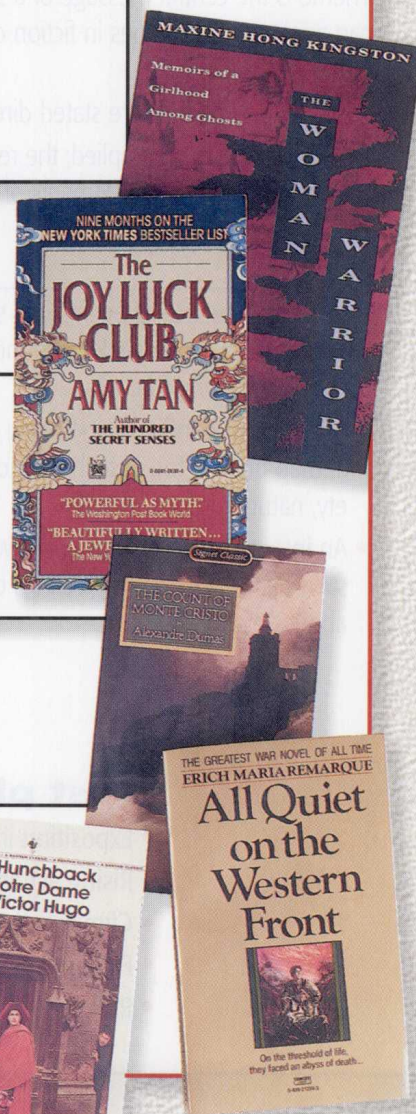
- How would I act in the main character's situation?
- When have I felt the same way as this character?
- What parts of my life does this story remind me of?
- What other stories does this story remind me of?

QUESTION

Ask yourself questions to help you clarify the story as you go along.

Ask yourself . . .

- Have I understood what I've read so far?
- What's going on at this point in the story?
- Who said that?
- What does this mean?



VISUALIZE

In your mind, form pictures of what is happening in the story. Pay attention to the details the writer gives you, and make them a part of your reading experience.

Ask yourself . . .

- How does this scene/character/object look?
- Who is in this scene?
- Where are the characters in relation to one another and to their surroundings?

EVALUATE

Form opinions and make judgments about the story while you are reading.

Ask yourself . . .

- Does this turn of events make sense?
- Are the actions of this character consistent?
- What is particularly effective about this writer's style?
- Do I agree with this idea?

REVIEW

Pause from time to time to think about your reading. Summarize events in a story or rephrase difficult language to help you understand and remember what you've read.

Say to yourself . . .

- So far, . . .
- In other words, . . .

RESPOND

Respond *while* you are reading. Think about your spontaneous feelings.

Say to yourself . . .

- If I were this character, . . .
- I'd like to ask the writer why . . .
- I think this character is . . .
- Who else would enjoy this story?

Applying the Strategies

1. Read the following story, "You Are Now Entering the Human Heart," using the Active Reading Model notes in the margins.
2. Choose a work of fiction you have not yet read and practice using all of these strategies. Write comments on stick-on notes and put them in the margins of the story as you read.



Before You Read

You Are Now Entering the Human Heart



Meet Janet Frame

“I was in touch with the unalterable human composition that is the true basis of fiction, the great events of everyone’s life and death. . . .”

As a poor, shy child growing up in New Zealand, Janet Frame dreamt of becoming a poet. As an adult, she credits writing with saving her life.

Misdiagnosed as schizophrenic, Frame spent her early adulthood in and out of mental hospitals, where she received hundreds of electroshock treatments. Even though the treatments affected her memory, she still managed to write, and she published her first book of short stories, *The Lagoon*, in 1951. Frame was scheduled to undergo a lobotomy, a brain operation used to treat mental illness, but a hospital official cancelled her operation when he discovered her book had won a literary award. Frame wrote about the experience in *An Angel at My Table*, the second of three volumes of her autobiography. Today, Frame is regarded as one of the leading writers of New Zealand.

Janet Frame was born in 1924.

Reading Focus

“I felt that I could see the feelings of people beneath their faces, in their eyes, their imposed or swift unguarded expressions, and in the words they spoke.” Think about this quote by Janet Frame from *An Angel at My Table*.

Observing Now think about an encounter you had recently with either a stranger or someone you know, in which you could “see” the unspoken feelings of the person. What feelings did you observe from the person’s expressions, gestures, or manner of speaking? Jot down a few notes about the encounter and your observations.

Setting a Purpose Read to share a character’s insights into the feelings of other people.

Building Background

Science Museums in Philadelphia

The short story you are about to read is set in two science museums in Philadelphia—the Franklin Institute Science Museum and the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. Founded in 1824 and named after Benjamin Franklin, the Franklin Institute features a variety of hands-on exhibits, including a mini-earthquake and an artificial heart 220 times larger than life-size. The nearby Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, founded in 1812, is a natural history museum that displays dioramas of animals in their natural habitats as well as live animals that visitors can touch.

Vocabulary Preview

askew (ə skū’) *adj.* crooked; at an angle; p. 6

persist (pər sist’) *v.* to insist, as in repeating a statement; p. 7


recoil (ri kōil’) *v.* to draw back, as in fear, horror, or surprise; p. 7

petrified (pe’ trə fid) *adj.* paralyzed with fear or horror; p. 7



Warnampi Tingari, 1980. Dick Pantimas (Australia).

You Are Now Entering the Human Heart

Janet Frame 

I LOOKED AT THE NOTICE. I WONDERED IF I HAD TIME BEFORE my train left Philadelphia for Baltimore in one hour. That heart, ceiling-high, occupied one corner of the large exhibition hall, and from wherever you stood in the hall you could hear its beating, *thum-thump-thum-thump*. It was a popular exhibit, and sometimes, when there were too many children about, the entrance had to be roped off, as the children loved to race up and down the blood vessels and match their cries to the heart's beating.

Active Reading Model

You Are Now Entering the Human Heart

Active Reading Model

VISUALIZE

Picture an artificial heart so large that people can walk through it.

I could see that the heart had already been punished for the day—the floor of the blood vessel was worn and dusty, the chamber walls were covered with marks, and the notice “You Are Now Taking the Path of a Blood Cell Through the Human Heart,” hung askew. I wanted to see more of the Franklin Institute and the Natural Science Museum across the street, but a journey through the human heart would be fascinating. Did I have time?

Later. First, I would go across the street to the Hall of North America, among the bear and the bison, and catch up on American flora and fauna.

I made my way to the Hall. More children, sitting in rows on canvas chairs. An elementary class from a city school, under the control of an elderly teacher. A museum attendant holding a basket, and all eyes gazing at the basket.

“Oh,” I said. “Is this a private lesson? Is it all right for me to be here?”

The attendant was brisk. “Surely. We’re having a lesson in snake handling,” he said. “It’s something new. Get the children young and teach them that every snake they meet is not to be killed. People seem to think that every snake has to be knocked on the head. So we’re getting them young and teaching them.”

“May I watch?” I said.

“Surely. This is a common grass snake. No harm, no harm at all. Teach the children to learn the feel of them, to lose their fear.”

He turned to the teacher. “Now, Miss—Mrs.—” he said.

“Miss Aitcheson.”

He lowered his voice. “The best way to get through to the children is to start with teacher,” he said to Miss Aitcheson. “If they see you’re not afraid, then they won’t be.”

She must be near retiring age, I thought. A city woman. Never handled a snake in her life. Her face was pale. She just managed to drag the fear from her eyes to some place in their depths, where it lurked like a dark stain. Surely the attendant and the children noticed?

“It’s harmless,” the attendant said. He’d been working with snakes for years.

Miss Aitcheson, I thought again. A city woman born and bred. All snakes were creatures to kill, to be protected from, alike the rattler, the copperhead, king snake, grass snake—venom and victims. Were there not places in the South where you couldn’t go into the streets for fear of the rattlesnakes?

Her eyes faced the lighted exit. I saw her fear. The exit light blinked, hooded. The children, none of whom had ever touched a live snake, were sitting hushed, waiting for the drama to begin; one or two looked afraid as the attendant withdrew a green snake about three feet long from the basket and with a swift movement, before the teacher could protest, draped it around her neck and stepped back, admiring and satisfied.

CONNECT

How do you feel about handling snakes? How would you feel if you were the teacher?

PREDICT

What do you think the teacher will do?

Vocabulary

askew (ə skū') *adj.* crooked; at an angle

“There,” he said to the class. “Your teacher has a snake around her neck and she’s not afraid.”

Miss Aitcheson stood rigid; she seemed to be holding her breath.

“Teacher’s not afraid, are you?” the attendant persisted. He leaned forward, pronouncing judgement on her, while she suddenly jerked her head and lifted her hands in panic to get rid of the snake. Then, seeing the children watching her, she whispered, “No, I’m not afraid. Of course not.” She looked around her.

“Of course not,” she repeated sharply.

I could see her defeat and helplessness. The attendant seemed unaware, as if his perception had grown a reptilian covering. What did she care for the campaign for the preservation and welfare of copperheads and rattlers and common grass snakes? What did she care about someday walking through the woods or the desert and deciding between killing a snake and setting it free, as if there would be time to decide, when her journey to and from school in downtown Philadelphia held enough danger to occupy her? In two years or so, she’d retire and be in that apartment by herself and no doorman, and everyone knew what happened then, and how she’d be afraid to answer the door and to walk after dark and carry her pocketbook in the street. There was enough to think about without learning to handle and love the snakes, harmless and otherwise, by having them draped around her neck for everyone, including the children—most of all the children—to witness the outbreak of her fear.

“See, Miss Aitcheson’s touching the snake. She’s not afraid of it at all.”

As everyone watched, she touched the snake. Her fingers recoiled. She touched it again.

“See, she’s not afraid. Miss Aitcheson can stand there with a beautiful snake around her neck and touch it and stroke it and not be afraid.”

The faces of the children were full of admiration for the teacher’s bravery, and yet there was a cruelly persistent tension; they were waiting, waiting.

“We have to learn to love snakes,” the attendant said. “Would someone like to come out and stroke teacher’s snake?”

Silence.

One shamefaced boy came forward. He stood petrified in front of the teacher.

“Touch it,” the attendant urged. “It’s a friendly snake. Teacher’s wearing it around her neck and she’s not afraid.”

The boy darted his hand forward, rested it lightly on the snake, and immediately withdrew his hand. Then he ran back to his seat. The children shrieked with glee.

“He’s afraid,” someone said. “He’s afraid of the snake.”

Active Reading Model

EVALUATE

What do you think of the way the attendant is acting?

REVIEW

Summarize what the narrator supposes about the teacher’s situation in life and her inner feelings.

QUESTION

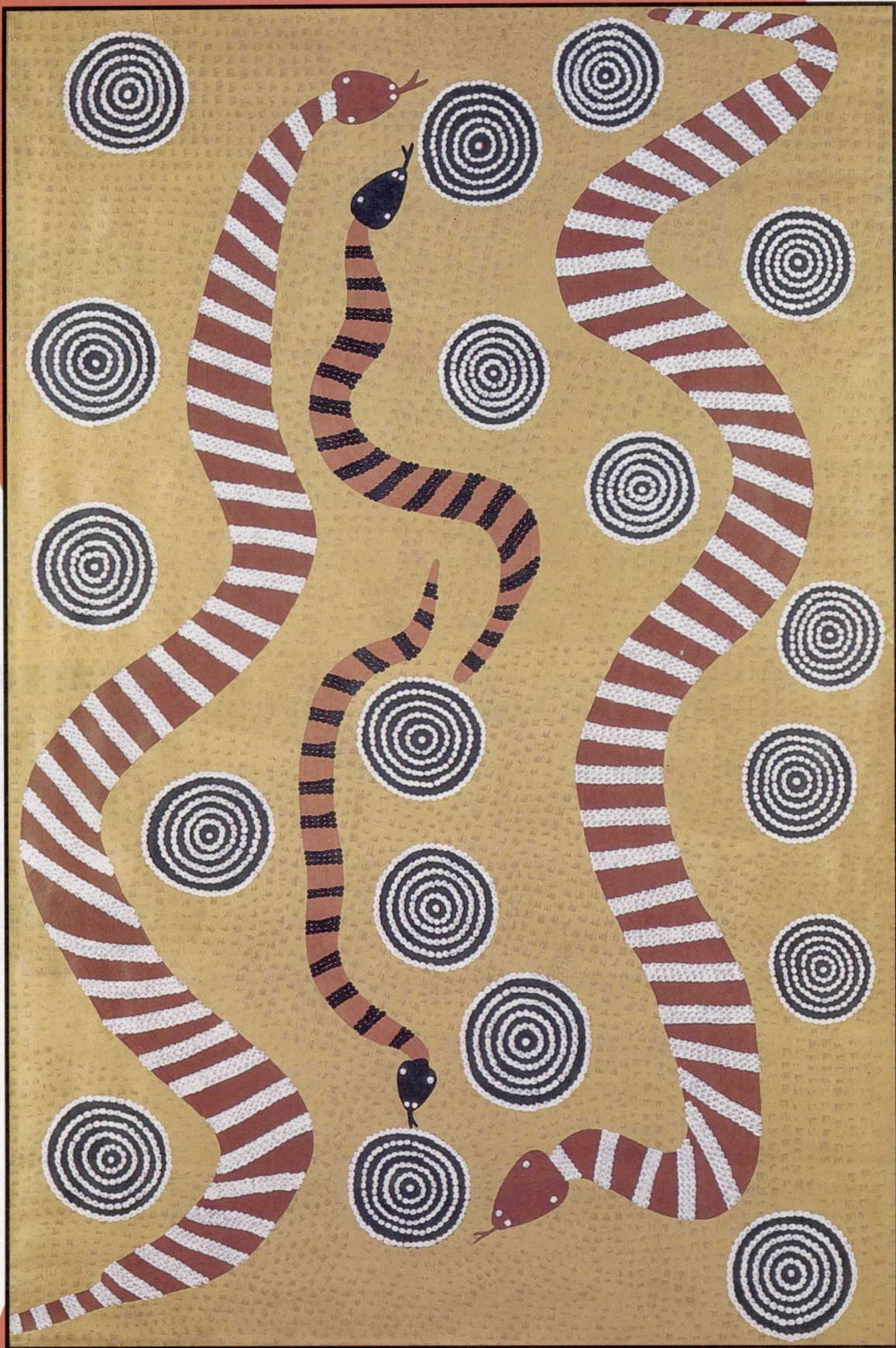
What are the children waiting for?

Vocabulary

persist (pər sist’) *v.* to insist, as in repeating a statement

recoil (ri kōil’) *v.* to draw back, as in fear, horror, or surprise

petrified (pe’ trə fīd) *adj.* paralyzed with fear or horror



Snake Dreaming, 1989. Billy Stockman Tjapaltjarri (Australia). Acrylic on canvas, 191 x 127 cm. Corbally Stourton Contemporary Art, London.

Viewing the painting: How do the patterns and shapes in this painting contribute to its mood? How does this mood relate to the mood of the story? Explain.

The attendant soothed. "We have to get used to them, you know. Grown-ups are not afraid of them, but we can understand that when you're small you might be afraid, and that's why we want you to learn to love them. Isn't that right, Miss Aitcheson? Isn't that right? Now who else is going to be brave enough to touch teacher's snake?"

Two girls came out. They stood hand in hand side by side and stared at the snake and then at Miss Aitcheson.

I wondered when the torture would end. The two little girls did not touch the snake, but they smiled at it and spoke to it and Miss Aitcheson smiled at them and whispered how brave they were.

"Just a minute," the attendant said. "There's really no need to be brave. It's not a question of bravery. The snake is *harmless*, absolutely *harmless*. Where's the bravery when the snake is harmless?"

Suddenly the snake moved around to face Miss Aitcheson and thrust its flat head toward her cheek. She gave a scream, flung up her hands, and tore the snake from her throat and threw it on the floor, and, rushing across the room, she collapsed into a small canvas chair beside the Bear Cabinet and started to cry.

I didn't feel I should watch any longer. Some of the children began to laugh, some to cry. The attendant picked up the snake and nursed it. Miss Aitcheson, recovering, sat helplessly exposed by the small piece of useless torture. It was not her fault she was city-bred, her eyes tried to tell us. She looked at the children, trying in some way to force their admiration and respect; they were shut against her. She was evicted from them and from herself and even from her own fear-infested tomorrow, because she could not promise to love and preserve what she feared. She had nowhere, at that moment, but the small canvas chair by the Bear Cabinet of the Natural Science Museum.

I looked at my watch. If I hurried, I would catch the train from Thirtieth Street. There would be no time to make the journey through the human heart. I hurried out of the museum. It was freezing cold. The icebreakers would be at work on the Delaware and the Susquehanna; the mist would have risen by the time I arrived home. Yes, I would just catch the train from Thirtieth Street. The journey through the human heart would have to wait until some other time.



QUESTION

What is the attendant failing to acknowledge?

QUESTION

What does the narrator mean by saying Miss Aitcheson "was evicted from them and from herself and even from her own fear-infested tomorrow"?

EVALUATE

How would you judge the author's reaction to Miss Aitcheson's ordeal?



Responding to Literature

Personal Response

Did you find this story humorous? Serious? Both? Describe your impressions.

Analyzing Literature

Recall

1. What exhibit does the narrator want to view at the Franklin Institute? In what kind of condition is it?
2. Where does the narrator go, and what does she end up observing?
3. Describe what the attendant does to the teacher.
4. How does the teacher react to the situation?
5. What does the narrator do at the end?

Interpret

6. How is the exhibit at the Franklin Institute related to what happens in the rest of the story?
7. What does the narrator suppose about Miss Aitcheson's life and her inner feelings? How does the narrator gain such insights?
8. Why does the attendant ignore the teacher's fear?
9. Why does the teacher react as she does, both initially and at the end?
10. **Irony** is a contrast or discrepancy between appearance and reality (see page R6). What is ironic about the narrator's final statement, "The journey through the human heart would have to wait"?

Evaluate and Connect

11. What kind of person is the attendant? Support your opinion with evidence from the story.
12. What do you think of the children's behavior? Do you find their behavior realistic? Why or why not?
13. What do you most fear? Why?
14. How does the title fit the story?
15. What does this story suggest about the real exhibits to be observed in life? Do you agree? Give reasons for your opinion.

Literary Criticism

Commenting on Frame's fiction and autobiography, poet Fleur Adcock writes, "[Frame] can be detached and passionate at the same time." How might Adcock's comment apply to the narrator of the selection? Does the narrator seem both detached and passionate? Using specific examples from the story as evidence, explain your response in a brief paragraph.

Literary ELEMENTS

Point of View

The term **point of view** refers to the relationship of the narrator to the story. A story with **first-person point of view** is told by one of the characters who uses the pronoun *I* to refer to him- or herself. "You Are Now Entering the Human Heart" is told from the first-person point of view. However, the handling of the point of view is unusual because the narrator takes the reader into the minds of the other characters. The author manipulates the point of view so expertly that it almost seems to be shifting as the story progresses.

1. An interactive museum has exhibits that help people experience an object, a process, or an event. How does the point of view make this short story function like an interactive museum exhibit?
 2. What kind of person is the narrator? How is the narrator's personality revealed?
- See **Literary Terms Handbook**, p. R9.

Literature and Writing

Writing About Literature

Examining Parallels Reread the first paragraph of the story and think about the parallels between the description of the heart exhibit and the events in the story. Note especially the condition of the heart and how the children react to it. Write a few paragraphs explaining the parallels.

Creative Writing

A Heartfelt Journey For the Reading Focus on page 4, you jotted down notes about an encounter in which you observed the unspoken feelings of another person. Use your notes to take a brief journey through that person's heart and relate the feelings you see.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Questions to Ponder In your group, discuss the following questions: What does this story suggest about human fears? Is it possible to overcome deep-seated fears by confronting them? What is the source of such fears? What other questions does this story make you think about? Share a brief summary of your discussion with the rest of the class.

Performing

A Pantomime Work with a partner to prepare and stage a pantomime of the actions of Miss Aitcheson and the attendant. Remember that in a pantomime, ideas and feelings must be conveyed through facial expressions and body movements, often by exaggeration.

Internet Connection

Exploring Museums On the Internet, find the Web site of the Franklin Institute Science Museum or the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Explore the site and share the information you discover in an oral, written, or visual report.

Reading Further

You might enjoy reading the following stories by New Zealand writers:

"Journey," by Patricia Grace, and "Archaeology," by John Cranna, from *The Oxford Book of New Zealand Short Stories*, edited by Vincent O'Sullivan.

 **Save your work for your portfolio.**

Skill Minilesson

VOCABULARY • Prefixes

A prefix added to the beginning of a base word changes its meaning. *A* is a prefix meaning "in," "on," "to," or "at." In the word *askew*, the prefix *a* is added to the word *skew*, meaning "to swerve or twist," creating a new word meaning "at a slant" or "crooked."

PRACTICE Write the prefix used in each word below. Then write the meaning of the word, taking into account the meanings of both the prefix and the base word. You may use a dictionary.

Example: a + board = aboard, meaning "in, on, or into a ship, train, bus, or airplane"

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. precaution | 6. prejudice |
| 2. resurge | 7. anticlimax |
| 3. converse | 8. trilevel |
| 4. incomplete | 9. misconstrue |
| 5. commerce | 10. impenitent |



Genre Focus

Nonfiction

Nonfiction—writing about real people, events, and ideas—is the broadest category of literature. Under this term come autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, diaries, letters, essays, speeches, travelogues, news articles, reports, and many more types of writing. Like works of fiction, all types of nonfiction writing can be inventive and creative, even though they deal with real, rather than imaginary, subjects.

Narrative Nonfiction

Some works of nonfiction tell a story, just as works of fiction do. Autobiographies, memoirs, biographies, and narrative essays are types of narrative nonfiction.

- An **autobiography** presents the story of a person's life written by that person. Most autobiographies are told from the first-person point of view, using the pronoun *I*. Writers of autobiographies typically focus on themselves and events in their own lives.
- A **memoir** is also a first-person account of events in the writer's life. However, memoirs tend to emphasize subjects outside the writer's personal life, such as significant historical events the writer has been a part of or has witnessed, or other people the writer has known.
- A **biography** is an account of a person's life written by someone else. It is presented from the third-person point of view.
- A **narrative essay** is a short composition that relates a true story from either the first- or the third-person point of view.

Because they tell stories, autobiographies, memoirs, biographies, and narrative essays share many characteristics of fiction. Like fictional stories, they may include such elements as setting, character, theme, plot, and conflict. Often they are organized like fictional stories. A writer might choose to present events in **chronological order**, the order in which they occurred. Or the writer might use a **flashback**, going back in time to present incidents that happened before the beginning of the story.

Informative Nonfiction

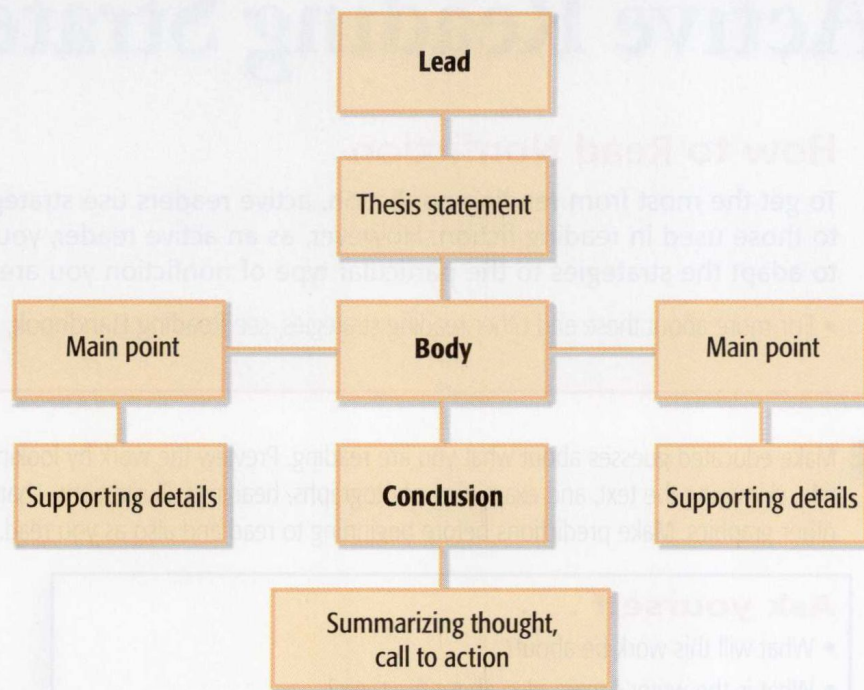
While narrative nonfiction tells a story, informative nonfiction explains a topic or promotes an opinion. Examples of informative nonfiction include essays, speeches, reports, letters, and news articles. The differences between narrative and informative nonfiction are not always clear, however, because writers of informative works sometimes weave stories into their writing, and writers of narratives sometimes explain topics and promote opinions.

Essays are one of the most common types of literary nonfiction. An essay is a short piece of writing devoted to a single topic. Two main kinds of informative essays are expository and persuasive.

- **Expository essays** offer information about a topic—from explaining how a process works, to analyzing or commenting on a political or historical event, to reviewing a theatrical production.
- **Persuasive essays** promote an opinion or position. Commonly, persuasive essays describe a situation and then offer reasons that the reader should believe or act in a certain way regarding the issue.

Many expository and persuasive essays follow a general structure. They begin with a lead (introduction), followed by a body and a conclusion. The diagram at the top of the page shows the structure of a typical informative essay.

- The **lead**, or introduction, serves to pique the reader's interest. It also often includes the **thesis**, or main idea, of the essay. Sometimes, though, a writer saves the thesis statement for the end of the work.



- The **body** develops and supports the thesis by providing **supporting details**, such as facts, reasons, statistics, sensory details, examples, observations, and personal experiences. This part of the work might also include quotations from expert sources and graphics, such as diagrams, graphs, and illustrations.
- The **conclusion** typically restates the thesis and provides the reader with a final or summarizing thought. A persuasive essay usually concludes by calling on readers to accept a new idea or to take a specific action.

Analyzing Nonfiction

The first step in analyzing nonfiction is to identify the type of work you are reading. By looking at the title and skimming the first few paragraphs, you can usually tell whether the work is an autobiography or a memoir, a

biography, an essay, or another type of nonfiction.

As you read, you might further classify the type of work by identifying the **writer's purpose**, or reason for writing. Ask yourself what the writer is trying to achieve. Is the writer's purpose to entertain, to inform, or to persuade the reader? The answer to that question will help you classify the work you are reading.

Once you know the type of work you are reading, you will know what to look for, such as elements of fiction, a thesis and supporting details, or persuasive techniques. Be aware, however, that writers may combine various elements, and purposes, in a single work. For example, you might read a persuasive essay that is not only entertaining but also tells a story. Perhaps the best approach is to think of each work of nonfiction as a unique combination of familiar elements.

Active Reading Strategies

How to Read Nonfiction

To get the most from reading nonfiction, active readers use strategies similar to those used in reading fiction. However, as an active reader, you will need to adapt the strategies to the particular type of nonfiction you are reading.

- For more about these and other reading strategies, see *Reading Handbook*, pp. R82–R84.

PREDICT

Make educated guesses about what you are reading. Preview the work by looking at the title, skimming the text, and examining photographs, headings, illustrations, charts, and other graphics. Make predictions before beginning to read and also as you read.

Ask yourself . . .

- What will this work be about?
- What is the writer's main idea about the topic?
- What supporting evidence might the writer use?
- What point will the writer make next?

CONNECT

Make connections with what you already know about a subject.

Ask yourself . . .

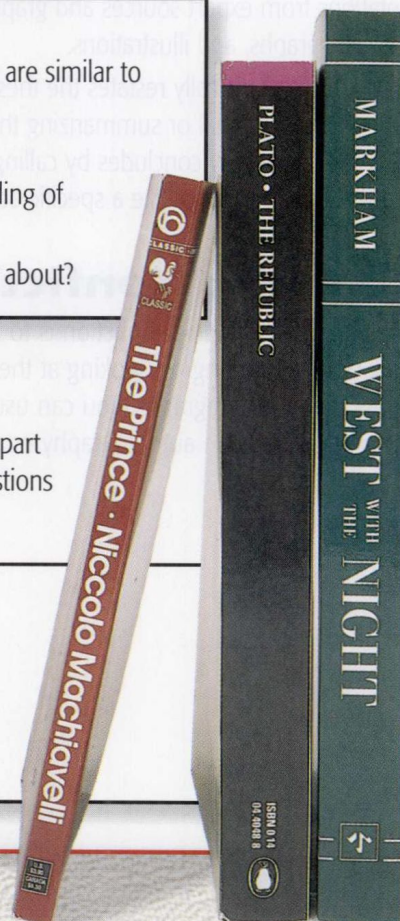
- What people, events, and experiences in my own life are similar to those written about here?
- What have I heard or read about the subject?
- How does this work add to or change my understanding of the subject?
- How does this subject relate to other subjects I know about?

QUESTION

Question anything you do not understand. Reread any part that confuses you, and then read on to see if your questions are answered.

Ask yourself . . .

- Do I understand what the writer is saying here?
- Why is the writer giving me these facts?
- What does this concept have to do with what I just read?



VISUALIZE

Use details the writer gives you to form mental pictures of people, places, and objects, and to see the steps in a process or how something works.

Ask yourself . . .

- What does this person look like?
- How does this scene or object look?
- Where does this part fit with the others?
- How does this step relate to the next one? the one before?

EVALUATE

Make judgments about what you read.

Ask yourself . . .

- Is this a fact or an opinion?
- Does this information really support the thesis?
- Do I agree with the writer's opinions and interpretations?
- What does this action reveal about this person or situation?

REVIEW

Pause often to think about and to summarize what you have read.

Say to yourself . . .

- The main idea is . . .
- Details supporting this thesis include . . .
- The steps in this process are . . .
- The writer's purpose is to . . .

RESPOND

React to what you are reading. Identify and consider the spontaneous thoughts and feelings you have about what the writer is saying. Decide what you like or dislike about the work.

Say to yourself . . .

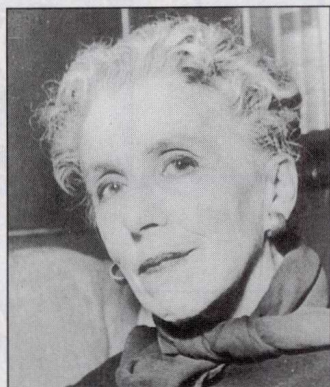
- I'd like to ask the writer why . . .
- I think this thesis is . . .
- That's pretty interesting. I'd like to know more about . . .
- Who else might benefit from learning this information?

Applying the Strategies

Read the next selection, from *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen, using the Active Reading Model notes in the margins. Then practice the strategies as you read another work of nonfiction.

Before You Read

from *Out of Africa: The Iguana*



Meet Isak Dinesen

“I belong to an ancient, idle, wild, and useless tribe. . . . I am a storyteller.”

Isak Dinesen (ē' sāk dē' nə sən) was the pen name of Karen Blixen, a Danish author who came from an upper-class family. As a teenager she studied painting; later she said that this training taught her how to observe nature. She also wrote short stories. In 1914 she married Bror Blixen and moved to Africa. They bought a large coffee plantation near Nairobi, Kenya. By 1921 their marriage had fallen apart, so Dinesen ran the plantation by herself for another decade.

Towards the end of her stay in Africa, Dinesen renewed her interest in writing. After she returned to Denmark, she completed a volume called *Seven Gothic Tales*. The book was successful, especially in the United States, where she developed an enthusiastic following. Dinesen wrote all of her major works first in English, then in Danish. She is best known for *Out of Africa*, an account of her experiences in Kenya.

Isak Dinesen was born in 1885 and died in 1962.

Reading Focus

Think of a time when you came to dislike something after you purchased it. Why did you change your mind about this object?

Share Ideas Describe your experience to the class.

Setting a Purpose Read “The Iguana” for insight into the elusiveness of beauty.

Building Background

Life on the Plantation

Dinesen became an international celebrity when *Out of Africa* was published in 1937. In the memoir, she portrays incidents that occurred on the plantation, her friendships with Africans and colonists, and her relationship with an English hunter named Denys Finch-Hatton. Although *Out of Africa* is factual, Dinesen shaped her material by focusing on certain kinds of experiences and downplaying others. The book also reflects her deep love for Africa. In a letter to her mother, she expressed her romantic view of the African landscape: “A great world of poetry has revealed itself to me and taken me to itself here, and I have loved it. I have looked into the eyes of lions and slept under the Southern Cross, I have seen the grass of the great plains ablaze and covered with delicate green after the rains.”

Reading Further

If you like “The Iguana,” you might enjoy the following stories: “The Death of Kinanjui,” “The Grave in the Hills,” and “Farewell” from *Out of Africa*, Dinesen’s acclaimed memoir.

Vocabulary Preview

- reserve** (ri zurv') *n.* land set aside by the government for a specific purpose, such as wildlife preservation; p. 17
- luminous** (lōō' mə nə s) *adj.* emitting light; p. 17
- impetuous** (im pech' ōō ə s) *adj.* impulsive; p. 18
- pulsate** (pul' sāt) *v.* to throb or beat rhythmically; p. 18
- suppress** (sə pres') *v.* to keep secret; p. 18