

# How to read literature like a professor essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## I. Every Trip Is a Quest (Except When It's Not)

The five most important things that make up a quest involve the main character actually going on the quest, a location of where the quester must go, the reason of going on the quest, challenges and problems faced along the quest, and then the actual reason why the quest was important. “ The real reason for a quest is always self-knowledge” (Foster 3). As the quest continues on, less is heard about the original reason why the quest is even started, and by then the character has already gone through some changes. In “ The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”, Huck and Jim embark on a quest along the Mississippi River to Cairo, hoping that Jim would finally be able to be a free man. During the journey, a friendship is formed between Jim and Huck, and they stumble upon obstacles almost everywhere they went because most of the south was still prejudice against blacks. By the end of the novel, Huck realizes that how society treats Jim and other blacks is wrong, and he chooses his friendship with Jim over the values and customs he has been surrounded by growing up.

## II. Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion

In chapter two Foster explains that anytime two or more characters are eating together, that that is an act of Communion, but not in a religious sense. Communion refers to the part of mass where everyone comes together as a whole and experiences one act together. Whenever characters in a scene come together and eat, it symbolizes a peace between them; it's rare to see characters not enjoy themselves while eating. Foster explains how, “ breaking bread together is an act of sharing and peace” (Irving 8). The placement of eating food is a very personal act in novels, because

usually it is around characters that you are comfortable with. At dinner tables is when you can figure out how each character feels about one another, and at dinner tables, the author usually shares the inner thoughts of a character. In William Golding's, "Lord of the Flies", Golding uses the campfire as a dinner table, as the kids center around eating whatever they had hunted. During these scenes, you can see how each character reacts to another, and how sides were drawn. In Raymond Carver's, "Cathedral", the main character overcomes his disliking of people who are different when he and the blind sit down for a meal and he realizes that they share a common bond.

### III. Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampire

Foster introduces the archetype of a vampire in this chapter. Vampires are not just good-looking, pale, burn-in-the-sun, violent bloodsuckers, vampires can be in human form. Literal vampirism, like the case of Dracula deals with a lot of lust, but in a more literal sense, vampirism deals with, "selfishness, exploitation, [and] a refusal to respect the autonomy of other people" (Foster 16). To figure out if there is, indeed, a vampire in a story, you must look out for an older man, or woman, that represents old-fashioned corruption. Then that character usually goes for a young innocent female and uses her all up, the "vampire" takes away her innocence and her youth. Until eventually, there is the death of the young female, not in the literal sense, and the older male continues to live on.

That is when you know there is a vampire in the story. A vampire is basically any character in a story that uses other people to get what they want, they are selfish. Much like the characters from "Mean Girls", they place their own desires before others. A lot of the characters in "The Great Gatsby" are

<https://assignbuster.com/how-to-read-literature-like-a-professor-essay-sample/>

vampires, they suck up all the wealth from their parents and when they have all that they want, they never hear from the parents again. The guests at Jay Gatsby's parties only use him because they want to get into the party, not because they like him. Daisy Buchanan is an example of a female vampire who only married Tom for his money, she also sucks up all of Jay's love. IV. If It's a Square, It's a Sonnet

Foster defines a sonnet as being, "fourteen lines long and written almost in iambic pentameter" (Foster 23). He tells the reader that a sonnet gets its meaning through its form, 14 lines. When you read a poem, look at the actual shape of all the lines put together, if it is, or close to, a square, then it is a sonnet. Foster then describes the types of sonnets. There is the Petrarchan sonnet which is an octave followed by a sestet. An octave being eight lines group together and a sestet being six lines group together. "These eight lines carry one idea, those six another related idea" (Foster 26). A Shakespearian sonnet is structured by 3 quatrains and then concluding with a couplet. Foster explains that the first 2 quatrains have a meaning all together while the third quatrain and the ending couplet have meaning together as well. The majority of Shakespeare's poetry is broken down into sonnets. Hence, we have the name, "Shakespearian Sonnet". Much of his untitled sonnets dealt with the matter of love. His last two lines of his sonnets would always tie in with the main idea presented in the first quatrain. V. Now, Where have I Seen Her Before?

The main idea in this chapter is that, "stories grow out of other stories, poems out of other poems. And they don't have to stick to genre. Poems can learn from plays, songs from novels" (Foster 33). Stories all stem from other <https://assignbuster.com/how-to-read-literature-like-a-professor-essay-sample/>

original work and original work stem from other works. Basically, all stories and characters have been inspired by other author's stories and characters. Authors get their unique style from other novels or poems they have read. They also write based off their childhood, talks with friends, songs, and movies. There is so much that goes on within an author's head when he or she writes. History is another source of inspiration. When you gradually begin to read other books, you will gain delight when spotting out those similar situations that you read three years ago.

It becomes a sort of "Where's Waldo" game. The most important part is when the readers "recognize elements from some prior text and begin drawing comparisons and parallels that may be fantastic, parodic, tragic, anything" (Foster 34). Both the "Harry Potter" series and the "Lord of the Ring" series both center around a young character who does realize that he is destined for something bigger than himself. Both Harry and Frodo encounter mythical creatures that they only defeat because they have something that their enemies don't have, friends. Friends whom are loyal sidekicks. At the end of each series, they both realize that they both have to die for the greater good. VI. When in Doubt, It's From Shakespeare...

This chapter glorifies the popular occurrence of William Shakespeare in many many works. "He's everywhere, in every literary form you can think of. And he's never the same: every age and every writer reinvents its own Shakespeare" (Foster 38). Shakespeare has become stuck in our culture and heads. His quotes are said and written in novels and movies even if you don't realize that they are from Shakespeare. "We love the plays, the great characters, the fabulous speeches, the witty repartee even in times of <https://assignbuster.com/how-to-read-literature-like-a-professor-essay-sample/>

duress” (Foster 42). The reason that Shakespeare is referenced so often is because the language he uses in his quotes is beautiful and memorable. They enhance meaning. Authors also write their stories while putting a different angle of Shakespeare’s story so that they can present their own meaning. Speaking of retellings, the 1996 remake of “Romeo and Juliet” was a modern-day version of the original play which young people could relate to. “The Accidental Billionaires” was a story of Mark Zuckerberg and his rise to power, and his growing greed for it, much like the story of Julius Caesar. “The Great Gatsby” relates to “Romeo and Juliet” because both stories deal with class differences that create a conflict within love. Romeo and Juliet came from different families, therefore not able to express love with each other. On the other hand, Jay Gatsby and Daisy came from different classes growing up, so Daisy had moved on and married a man within her class. VII. ...Or the Bible

It’s hard reading a story, “without running into quotations, plots, characters, [and] whole stories drawn from the Bible” (Foster 52). Similar to Shakespeare, the many references to the Bible comes from the fact that the writing in the Bible is beautiful, which includes many parables. Another reason why the Bible is such an important tool for an author is because of the moral lessons and stories that are in the Bible. The story of Adam and Eve tells the story of Eve’s loss of innocence and committing sin. This is a story that can be seen everywhere, especially in cheesy teen sitcoms. Some authors take allusions from the Bible and use them for the sake of irony. They are used to “heighten continuities between the religious tradition and the contemporary moment but to illustrate a disparity or disruption” (Foster

52). The stories from the Bible are heavily used because it shows the emotions and moral choices that occur in both the past and the present. “Rebecca” is a perfect example of biblical irony. The main character marries Maxim, a rich man who has had a wife before. The main character becomes obsessed believing that her husband is still in love with Rebecca. This alludes to the Rebekah in the bible who was so beautiful that her husband pretended that she was his sister so that he would not be killed over her. Ironically, in this story, Maxim killed Rebecca because of how horrible she was.

#### VIII. Hanseldee and Greteldum

In this chapter, Foster expresses how “modern writers can’t assume a common body of knowledge on the part of their readers” (Foster 59). Because for me, and most of the other students who had to read “How to Read Literature Like a Professor”, we have not read all of Shakespeare’s plays or the whole Bible. So what are authors to do? Simple, relate to our childhood favorites. Authors use elements from childhood books “to add depth and texture to your story, to bring out a theme, to lend irony to a statement, to play with readers’ deeply ingrained knowledge of fairy tales” (Foster 62). They use the stories from childhood fantasies so that readers will be familiar with the story, while the author might use this knowledge so that they can put a twist to the story. In a new novel, readers look for the childhood references so that they can make sense of the story and that will help the reader learn the meaning of the work.

The story of “Hansel and Gretel” relates to “The Kite Runner” because the narrator, Amir and his friend Hassan gets into trouble as kids. As the story goes on, Amir tells the story of how he left his home and escaped to <https://assignbuster.com/how-to-read-literature-like-a-professor-essay-sample/>

America, as how Hansel and Gretel left their home in search of something new. While in America, Amir reflects upon his homeland and gets a letter that calls him to go back. His homeland becomes foreign to him and he feels threatened, like how Hansel and Gretel are in danger in the witch's home. Eventually the kids kill the witch, and Amir blinds Assef who would be the villain in this novel. IX. It's Greek to Me

This chapter offers another genre that novels allude to, the stories of ancient Greek myths. What Foster means by "myth" is story, "the ability of story to explain ourselves to ourselves in ways that physics, philosophy, mathematics, chemistry- all very useful and informative in their own right- can't" (Foster 65). They help explain certain supernatural ideas but also provide its own lessons. These lessons shape our culture and help us live with a certain view of life.

Authors may use tribal myths that pertain to their background or community. They use these stories because they matter to not only him, but to his community. Authors also use classical myth to help understand the context of the work. Some characters are named after Greek or Roman characters to help characterize where they stand. Authors use ancient stories to help readers understand the context of the story, just like how authors use the Bible, Shakespeare, and childhood stories. "Homer gives us four great struggles to of the human being: with nature, with the divine, with other humans, and with ourselves" (Foster 71).

Amir struggles to return home in "The Kite Runner". Like Odysseus, Amir must go through difficult obstacles before he feels like he is home. His



father, Baba, reminds us of Hector because Baba sacrificed his fortune to protect his family by escaping to America. Baba is also like Achilles because during his fame in Afghanistan, he strived to maintain his pride, dignity, and his name. X. It's More Than Just Rain or Snow

Foster states that “ Weather is never just weather. It's never just rain. And that goes for snow, sun, warmth, cold, and probably sleet” (Foster 75). Rain is used as a plot device because it adds an uncomfortable setting to both the characters and the situation. It also can add suspense or mystery to a setting; I mean when is fog used for a happy walk in the park?

Rain can symbolize the cleansing of someone. Water is associated with rebirth, starting over, much like how baptism washes away our sins. Rain can wash away whatever troubles the character has had, and they will be replenished into a new life. Rain is life-giving, It helps the animals and the plants in the world thrive, it's the essential ingredient that every human needs.

Fog symbolizes confusion, as one cannot clearly see while in fog, “ fog is mental and ethical as well as physical” (Foster 80). Snow is much like rain, it is very pure, very clean, but too much of it can become dirty or overwhelming. Snow can cover a past moment, much like how rain washes away what is dirty.

In “ The Awakening”, the main character becomes sick of her place in society and is sick of her actual place where she lives. She always ponders about the ocean as a place where she can finally be free. At the end of the novel, she

runs into the ocean naked and drowns herself, the ocean being the baptismal font to awaken her into a new life, a life of freedom she always wanted.

#### XI. ...More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence

Foster emphasizes that “ Violence is one of the most personal and even intimate acts between human beings, but it can also be cultural and societal in its implications” (Foster 88). Violence in real life is just violence in real life, while violence in literature often has a deeper meaning. Unlike mystery books, violence is symbolic action.

The death of humans can show how little we are to the world. It can show how alone we really are in this world, and it can help us realize that we should not take life for granted. Authors are the God of their own written Earth and so they have the power to kill off any of the characters for the sake of the story. Sometimes a death occurs to raise conflict, or just a complication within the story.

Some authors would use certain types of violence to show the era the setting is in. Other times, violence represents a struggle, either political, or a struggle from one's inner self. When Tom Buchanan slaps Myrtle Wilson during a party at Tom's apartment in “ The Great Gatsby”, this was not just a random slap of no reason; it showed the treatment that men gave to women during those times. The act of violence also showed the value of Myrtle to Tom compared to Daisy's value to Tom.

Romeo's suicide was an act of irony because he did not know that Juliet was sleeping the whole time. His killing represented the struggle between their

love and their families' hatred. In the end, the only way they could ever be together, was if they both died, and left their world. XII. Is that a Symbol?

According to Foster, symbols are all relative, it's all perspective. " Some symbols do have a relatively limited range of meanings, but in general a symbol can't be reduced to standing for only one thing" (Foster 98). Foster explains that if you ever come across something that directly stands for something else, then that is an allegory. An allegory is meant to give a message, if you are unsure about the certain message, then the allegory fails.

A symbol has a plethora of meanings and it can be interpreted in a number of ways. Most of the time, a symbol isn't always cut-and-dry. It will be up to you to figure out what the symbol means, and you must use " questions, experience, [and] preexisting knowledge" (Foster 100) to figure it out. The more you question the text, or the symbol, the easier it will be to group your thoughts together and come up with a conclusion that might apply. It comes down to your imagination; it is the reader's job to figure out what they think the message is.

In " The Great Gatsby", the eyes of T. J Eckleburg are plastered onto a big billboard. They look over the characters in the valley of death; they symbolize God's little presence in their lives. The fading of the billboard causes his eyes to become full of sorrow, as if he is judging the characters and frowning upon their failed moralities.

In " Lord of the Flies", the conch symbolizes the civilization that they had left behind, the conch commands respect and it helps enforce the rules. Like <https://assignbuster.com/how-to-read-literature-like-a-professor-essay-sample/>

most ideas that promote order, the conch loses its power as time on the island moves on, and it is completely disregarded as the kids fall into savagery. XIII. It's All Political

Hidden within written works are the political viewpoints and opinions of the government. In fact, there was probably 200 pages worth of banishing the government in “ A Prayer for Owen Meany”, but we aren't allowed to use that book as a reference so I won't explain. “ Nearly all writing is political on some level” (Foster 111). The political portion of novels can deal with the problems of the people and wrongs done by those in charge.

Sometimes an author characterizes a person and gives him certain political aspects just so the author can get his opinions spoken without being very upfront about how he feels. Trying to achieve ones free will is another political problem that authors tend to create conflict around. The fight for your individualism is always there, its enemies being the society around him or the type of government the character lives in.

“ The Jungle” is a massive political novel sugar-coated in pig's blood and dissolved rats. It shows the harsh economic troubles that lower-class families starved in while centering around a family man who loses hope as the story goes on. It also gives light to the corruption and unsanitary conditions that went on in the factories. By the end of the novel, after Jurgis' wife dies, he loses all hope in the world, until one day his life becomes changed because of a certain socialist movement. And here enters the author's political opinions, which actually encompasses the whole last chapter of the book. The author uses the story of Jurgis and his family as pathos so that we, the

readers, will be empathetic and lend a bigger ear towards socialism. XIV.

Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too

Even if you are Jewish, Muslim, or Atheist, you will notice Christian themes all around you. “ We live in a Christian culture” (Foster 117), and in most novels, you will see Christian influences. No matter what religion you are, it is important to know the context of the bible so you can comprehend in depth European and American literature.

You must be on the lookout for Jesus-like figures when you are reading. They will never be perfect carbon copies of him, but they will be similar. The character will probably exhibit some glow upon him, he should be morally good, although not always the case. If the character seems to always sacrifice for others, then you are one inch closer to having a Christ figure. Like Jesus, if the character is tempted to do wrong-doing, then that is another characteristic.

I would have use the other summer reading book for an example, but again, I am sorry to say that we can't reference to that big, and that would be cheating for this chapter. But another example of a Christ-like figure would be Simon from “ Lord of the Flies”. He was unlike the other boys, he was genuinely good, he followed his morals, and he cared for the little children. Jesus has his word to spread but Simon had the truth he had to share, and they both died in the act of speaking what they had to speak. There is an ironic difference though, when Jesus died, his message was finally spread, and things got better. But when Simon dies, the boys are still following a savage movement, and things get darker and worse. XV. Flights of Fancy

<https://assignbuster.com/how-to-read-literature-like-a-professor-essay-sample/>

Flight has a strong literary meaning in stories. They can, “ introduce a specific historical and racial reference that is outside the experience of most readers” (Foster 127), which is what Morrison did in “ Song of Solomon”. The character, Solomon, went back to Africa by flying off, relieving him of the chains and shackles that kept him bounded. So flying, basically, means freedom.

Flying can help a character earn freedom from specific situations, or everyday things that bring weight upon your shoulders. It doesn't necessarily mean flying in the literal sense either. Your soul can fly away, as in you let go of whatever negative energy within you, and the world around you becomes newer.

When irony strikes, as it always does, flight can become the opposite of freedom. When one tries to escape their situation, they sometimes fail and then life becomes worst for them, they will still be imprisoned. Falling is also symbolic because in novels, some authors allow their characters to live those certain falls. The fall allows the character to realize whatever he has been missing in his life, “ there is an element of rebirth in their cheating what would typically prove to be certain death” (Foster 131).

In the Harry Potter series, flying was always Harry's chance of escaping. He escaped from his uncle and aunt's house by a flying car in “ The Chamber of Secrets”, he flies away from the Hungarian Horntail on his broomstick in “ The Goblet of Fire”, and he escaped a bunch of death eaters in Hagrid's flying motorbike in “ The Deathly Hallows”. XVI. It's All About Sex

Anything and everything can stand for sex. Sex does not have to be the literal: a two people having sexual intercourse with each other, sex can be used with fruits or how a landscape is shaped. “ The knight becomes the emblem of pure, if untested, maleness in search of a chalice, the Holy Grail, which if you think about it is a symbol of female sexuality as understood once upon a time: the empty vessel, waiting to be filled” (Foster 136). You must be keen in searching for these hidden sexual acts.

Masturbation can also be symbolized with any actions or any items, no joke intended. Whenever a character is doing an odd action with intense passion, there is a good chance that the character is masturbating. Most of the time, the author will detail this action very carefully so you can see how this action pleases the character.

In “ Lord of the Flies”, the boys participate in a mass ritual-like dance around the campfire. This could represent an intense orgy, for the boys are acting animal-like, screaming and hollering, while the only light comes from the campfire which can only show some of the boys monstrous faces. The main character Ralph, and his pal Piggy began to take part of this action that resembles a late night rave. This symbolizes the seduction of the boys hearts into this lustful like party. XVII. ...Except Sex

The act of sex itself is not really interesting in novels. Unless you are a 9th grader going through hormonal changes, and if so, then that explains all those sensual love books I saw my friends read. “ The further truth is that even when [writers] write about sex, they’re really writing about something

else” (Foster 144). I hope you have noticed a pattern by now, that everything always means something.

Sometimes when a character has sex, it is so they can feel freedom. Sex can symbolize an individual’s freedom from whatever restrictions she has. It also shows the author’s freedom in his writing, his response towards censorship. Some sex is political sex, “ O’Brien’s writing about sex is really writing about liberation, or sometimes the failure of liberation; it’s religious or political or artistic subversion” (Foster 149). In most novels that are post-modern era, most sex by women was an attempt to break from the social hierarchy, because we all know that men would have mistresses and affairs.

In “ 1984”, the sex that Winston Smith and Julia have is just an act of rebellion against the government and Big Brother. Julia herself admits to having sex with other members of the “ party”, showing that she just uses other’s bodies for her own selfish act of rebellion.

In “ The Awakening”, Edna cheats on his husband because of her new found freedom and self-expression she feels. She hates the world she lives in, which classifies her under a certain type of woman. Edna wants to break the woman-like stereotypes, so by having sex, she is rebelling against society.

#### XVIII. If She comes Up, It’s Baptism

If one falls into water, he will either die or be saved. If the character is saved, then gets one more chance with life, a life he probably did not value before this near-death experience. “ Symbolically, that’s the same pattern we see in baptism: death and rebirth through the medium of water” (Foster 155). The



person goes in the water welcoming death, and then still lives, but with a new perspective on life, the person will be a changed man afterwards.

To parallel the previous statement, one can choose to drown himself. Instead of drowning in water, you can drown in the hardships of life. By choosing suicide, you choose, “ not only [the] relation to the world around [the character] but his manner of leaving it” (Foster 156). A troubled person might have lived an area where his free will was stripped from him, so the only choice he had available was death.

Whether the person lives or dies, they will leave their old life behind and become a new person. At the end of “ The Awakening”, Edna chooses to kill herself by plunging herself into the ocean. Edna was drowning in a society which just kept suffocating her from what she wanted to be. She decided to leave her world and achieve freedom in another better world. By drowning in the water, she finally achieved becoming a person of her own, a individual she always wanted to be. XIX. Geography Matters...

Location. Location. Location. Yes I shall start this page with a cliché. But what is not cliché, is setting in a story. The location of the story is crucial, and I do not mean just a place, “ geography is setting, but it’s also (or can be) psychology, attitude, finance, industry- anything that place can forge in the people who live there” (Foster 166).

Geography adds plot and conflict. A sudden snowstorm, a hurricane, a flood, and the long steep hills that teases a schoolboy in a chair. Speaking of schoolboys in chairs, geography can help define a character. A character

may leave their hometown to a new place, and once there, they do things they would never do, they become a totally different person.

Geography can also be a character. A foreign place can cause a character to feel intimidated, it can defeat the character if it is that dangerous.

In “ The Adventures of Huck Finn”, Huck and Jim travel down the Mississippi River, which provides them with freedom and danger. The raft of the river helps them escape the land they step on because if you have realized, every time they go on land, they always get into trouble, which plays into the fact that they do not know the racist south area. The island in “ The Jungle” forces the boys into isolation and causes tension between each other. The island presents itself as an opportunity for the kids to go crazy with no rules and no structure, but the island also brings out the savage in their hearts.

XX. ...So Does Season

Season symbolizes the changes of time, and also the changes of characters with their age. The writers use imagery and very descriptive wording to make the readers feel as if we are changing with the character.

Names and nicknames go along with seasons, “ she’s all spring and sunshine: he’s all frosty stiffness” (Foster 178). Seasons represent different emotions and feelings. Summer means happy and winter means harsh or sad. Foster educates us and states that, “ spring has to do with childhood and youth, summer with adulthood and romance and fulfillment and passion, autumn with decline and middle age and tiredness but also harvest, winter with old age and resentment and death” (Foster 178). Whatever season it is,

it affects the mood of the characters and the point of the story you are reading.

Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" wouldn't have been the same if there were no blistering blizzards in the story. In the story, the coming of winter caused fear and panic. Jurgis and his son had to walk to work in the snow, the snow made the factory more dangerous and colder, and everyone would get sick, which they couldn't afford. The bitter cold made their struggle crueler for them. The winter became a winter towards the family, in the way it didn't care who it hurt or even killed, it was ruthless.

The end of winter was a blessing for Jurgis and his family, they used that time to replenish themselves, although there was really nothing to replenish, and they could walk to work, and put in the hours they needed to pay for the bare essentials.

#### XXI. Marked for Greatness

Basically, if a character has some sort of deformity, scar, missing limb, broken limb, or something along those lines, they are going to do something incredible or heroic. These marks can tell different things concerning the character.

"It has to do with being different, really. Sameness doesn't present us with metaphorical possibilities, whereas difference- from the average, the typical, the expected- is always rich with possibility" (Foster 194). The mark sets them apart from the crowd, causing them to be more noticed. Some scars are also meant to impede the character from doing certain things in life, forcing them to adapt or sulk in their misery of why they had to be this way.  
<https://assignbuster.com/how-to-read-literature-like-a-professor-essay-sample/>

A marking can be how a character is, dealing with their attitude or personality.

Some markings are reminders of something significant that happened to them in their past. Usually, these markings bear strong emotions with them; the mark could deal with a historical era, like scars from being a slave. Characters can be scared mentally and physically too. It is just like post-traumatic stress after war.

Harry Potter's infamous scar is a reminder of his mother's love. It was her love which protected Harry from dying as a child. The scar also differentiates him from everyone else, whereas he rises as the chosen one. Ironically, the scar is a link between him and Voldemort because they are somewhat one. The scar helps him defeat Voldemort in the end of the series because he can feel what Voldemort feels, and eventually kills him, becoming bigger than his scar, and defeats Voldemort once and for all. XXII. He's Blind for a Reason, You Know

Whenever a character is blind it means, " Every move, every statement by or about that character has to notice, to behave differently, if only in subtle ways" (Foster 202). Basically, the character becomes a nuisance to others and himself, the blind character must adapt to his surroundings and other people have to adapt to him.

But a blind character is never just blind; it usually means they have a sense of sight spiritually. Foster says that when an author introduces a blind character that they should start looking for other images or dialogue that relates to sight.

<https://assignbuster.com/how-to-read-literature-like-a-professor-essay-sample/>

A person doesn't necessarily have to be literally blind; it can be an extended metaphor. They can be blinded by the truth, or blinded by anger, and even blinded by love. Foster also explains that "if you want your audience to know something important about your character (or the work at large), introduce it early, before you need it" (Foster 205).

The Soothsayer in "Julius Caesar" could see Caesar's faith but he never heard of what would happen, which is ironic. Oedipus Rex has no idea that his wife is mother and is blinded by this truth all the way until the end of the play. This gives the play a great splash of dramatic irony, since the audience knows the truth the whole time, but Oedipus Rex and the other characters can't see the audience. XXIII. It's Never Just Heart Disease...

"In literature there is no better, no more lyrical, no more perfectly metaphorical illness than heart disease" (Foster 208). The reason why is because the heart is the source of all our emotion and character. You can be brave and have a strong heart, or get dumped by a girl and be heart-broken.

Whatever the character is feeling, sad, mad, or lonely, it can take over the heart disease and be the real reason for a character's demise. An author also can use what a character's heart is feeling and mix and match it with a situation or a setting and make it perfectly ironic. "A man who in life has put so much stock in "heart"- in loyalty and trust, in courage and fidelity, in having a true heart- can only die by a blow to the heart" (Foster 211).

When heart disease is mentioned in a novel, it should not be hard to figure out the significance. On the other hand, if a character's heart is just having

emotional problems or some sort of struggle which will soon allow the heart disease to occur.

In Edgar Allen Poe's, "The Tell-Tale Heart", the narrator is a murderer who begins to hear a heart beating within his floorboards. He believes it is the man who he killed when in actuality; it is just his guilt in his heart which is consuming him until he goes insane. By the time the police get there, he confesses to the murder. XXIV. ...And Rarely Just Illness

Illnesses in literature can be powerful only if you use certain illnesses. Foster summarizes some rules that you should know concerning illnesses in literature. The first thing you have to know is that some diseases are better than others, to use in a story I mean. The disease you should choose should make for a good image. It should show in the character at first glance, so that it helps develop a character. The more mysterious the disease is, the scarier it is, and the more fear and panic that comes from the mass of people. And most importantly, "it should have strong symbolic or metaphorical possibilities" (Foster 217).

Some authors will use a character's sickness to show their personality type. An author would also bring a sick character in to cause more conflict and bring it possible conflicts with the outside world. Foster then explains how authors use AIDS for the "political angle". It also has the metaphor approach by being dormant and then appearing randomly while also affecting oblivious victims. Death by sickness also can symbolize the fragility of life and the question of controlling ones faith.

In “ The Jungle”, Jurgis’ grandfather dies of illness stands for the unsanitary conditions that he had to work in. The cruelty of the world to force an old man to work just to bring in money. Many other characters in the book died of disease, showing how the environment affects their physical and mental health. XXV. Don’t Read with Your Eyes

Foster describes how you cannot simply just read a book, you must understand the ethics and morals of the time. If you don’t transport back to the gladiator days, you’ll just think that they are savages and cruel. You have to figure out the intention of why the author wrote what he wrote. “ Try to find a reading perspective that allows for sympathy with the historical moment of the story, that understands the text as having been written against its own social, historical, cultural, and personal background” (Foster 228). Upton Sinclair might repel off some readers because of his favoritism of socialism but you have to look at the situation through his eyes. He was a muckraker, he investigated the factories, and he saw the pain in many people. Seeing those things would probably because you to question the government you live in, he probably just wanted a change for the better, for the workers. XXVI. Is He Serious? And Other Ironies

In the last chapter, Foster explains the significance of irony. What irony does is that it shatters our expectations of the outcome, “ irony trumps everything” (Foster 235). Whatever we expect to happen, the unthinkable will probably happen instead. You can work irony into almost every scenario imaginable. Foster then just lists several examples of irony in different stories. Such as the one about the man who loved to read dies of a heart attack and, “...the last thing he sees are the books from the bookcase he has  
<https://assignbuster.com/how-to-read-literature-like-a-professor-essay-sample/>

pulled over on himself” (Foster 241). Nowadays, most writers use irony in their works, it keeps the reader light on their toes. But for those who have not reached that point, “ Irony...provides additional richness to the literary dish...inviting us, compelling us, to dig through layers of possible meaning and competing signification” (Foster 244). In Romeo and Juliet, the two star crossed lovers’ deaths are ironic. Juliet took a potion that put her into a deathlike state, but not really dead. The message of the plan never reached Romeo because the friar did not reach him in time, and when he finds her, he is heartbroken and decides to kill himself rather than living without her, when they were alive next to each other the whole time. When Juliet sees that Romeo and killed himself because of this misunderstanding, she in return kills herself, too.