



NATIONAL MATH + SCIENCE INITIATIVE

NMSI ENGLISH

AP Literature

Prose Analysis - 2015
Deconstruction Lesson

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2015 Prose Analysis

Deconstruction Lesson

Activity One: Deconstructing the Prompt and the Passage

This lesson is meant to review and revisit the prose free response question that was used for the mock exam. Please reread and annotate the prompt and passage. Then, review the essay you wrote in response to this prompt for the 2015-2016 mock exam.

Prose Prompt and Passage Reminders

- Read and annotate the prompt.
 - Remember that prose analysis questions are often excerpts of larger works.
 - Pay attention to the task sentence in the prompt. Paraphrasing the task can help provide clarity as you annotate the passage.
- Read and annotate the passage.
 - Mark small sections of the text you will cite directly in your response.
 - Construct annotations that identify technique and make connections to setting and characterization.

Deconstructing the Prompt

Examine the prompt below. Then, re-familiarize yourself with the prompt by considering the task and how an author depicts the impact of environment on the two children.

The following excerpt is from the opening of *The Beet Queen*, a 1986 novel by Louise Erdrich. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how Erdrich depicts the impact of the environment on the two children. You may wish to consider such literary devices as tone, imagery, selection of detail, and point of view.

1. Paraphrase the task sentence reprinted below.

Task: *Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how Erdrich depicts the impact of the environment on the two children.*

Paraphrase: _____

2. This prose free response question asks you to consider the interaction of two concepts.
 - a. What kinds of details might an author include to depict environment or setting in a prose excerpt?
 - b. How can environment/setting influence characters, specifically children?

Passage Deconstruction

Directions: *Reread the passage below. Mark any language that develops Erdrich’s depiction of the environment and its impact on the children.*

Long before they planted beets in Argus and built the highways, there was a railroad. Along the track, which crossed the Dakota-Minnesota border and stretched on to Minneapolis, everything that made the town arrived. All that diminished the town departed by that route, too. On a cold spring morning in 1932 the train brought both an addition and a subtraction. They came by freight. By the time they reached Argus their lips were violet and their feet were so numb that, when they jumped out of the boxcar, they stumbled and scraped their palms and knees through the cinders.

The boy was a tall fourteen, hunched with his sudden growth and very pale. His mouth was sweetly curved, his skin fine and girlish. His sister was only eleven years old, but already she was so short and ordinary that it was obvious she would be this way all her life. Her name was square and practical as the rest of her. Mary. She brushed her coat off and stood in the watery wind. Between the buildings there was only more bare horizon for her to see, and from time to time men crossing it. Wheat was the big crop then, and the topsoil was so newly tilled that it hadn’t all blown off yet, the way it had in Kansas. In fact, times were generally much better in eastern North Dakota than in most places, which is why Karl and Mary Adare had come there on the train. Their mother’s sister, Fritzie, lived on the eastern edge of town. She ran a butcher shop with her husband.

The two Adares put their hands up their sleeves and started walking. Once they began to move they felt warmer, although they’d been traveling all night and the chill had reached deep. They walked east, down the dirt and planking of the broad main street, reading the signs on each false-front clapboard store they passed, even reading the gilt letters in the window of the brick bank. None of these places

was a butcher shop. Abruptly, the stores stopped, and a string of houses, weathered gray or peeling gray paint, with dogs tied to their porch railings, began.

Small trees were planted in the yards of a few of these houses, and one tree, weak, a scratch of light against the gray of everything else, tossed in a film of blossoms. Mary trudged solidly forward, hardly glancing at it, but Karl stopped. The tree drew him with its delicate perfume. His cheeks went pink, he stretched his arms out like a sleepwalker, and in one long transfixed motion he floated to the tree and buried his face in the white petals.

Turning to look for Karl, Mary was frightened by how far back he had fallen and how still he was, his face pressed in the flowers. She shouted, but he did not seem to hear her and only stood, strange and stock-still among the branches. He did not move even when the dog in the yard lunged against its rope and bawled. He did not notice when the door to the house opened and a woman scrambled out. She shouted at Karl too, but he paid her no mind and so she untied her dog. Large and anxious, it flew forward in great bounds. And then, either to protect himself or to seize the blooms, Karl reached out and tore a branch from the tree.

It was a large branch, from such a small tree, that blight would attack the scar where it was pulled off. The leaves would fall away later on that summer and the sap would sink into the roots. The next spring, when Mary passed it on some errand, she saw that it bore no blossoms and remembered how, when the dog jumped for Karl, he struck out with the branch and the petals dropped around the dog’s fierce outstretched body in a sudden snow. Then he yelled, “Run!” and Mary ran east, toward Aunt Fritzie. But Karl ran back to the boxcar and the train.

Activity Two: Examining the Passage in Smaller Pieces

You will examine the passage in three shorter excerpts. Answer the accompanying questions to appropriately build your understanding of how each child is impacted differently.

<p style="text-align: center;">Part I Lines 1-33</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Commentary For each bolded section, discuss the setting and/or the children’s characterization.</p>
<p>Long before they planted beets in Argus and built the highways, there was a railroad. Along the track, which crossed the Dakota-Minnesota border and stretched on to Minneapolis, everything that made the town arrived. All that diminished the town departed by that route, too. On a cold spring morning in 1932 the train brought both an addition and a subtraction. They came by freight. By the time they reached Argus their lips were violet and their feet were so numb that, when they jumped out of the boxcar, they stumbled and scraped their palms and knees through the cinders.</p> <p>The boy was a tall fourteen, hunched with his sudden growth and very pale. His mouth was sweetly curved, his skin fine and girlish. His sister was only eleven years old, but already she was so short and ordinary that it was obvious she would be this way all her life. Her name was square and practical as the rest of her. Mary. She brushed her coat off and stood in the watery wind. Between the buildings there was only more bare horizon for her to see, and from time to time men crossing it. Wheat was the big crop then, and the topsoil was so newly tilled that it hadn’t all blown off yet, the way it had in Kansas. In fact, times were generally much better in eastern North Dakota than in most places, which is why Karl and Mary Adare had come there on the train. Their mother’s sister, Fritzie, lived on the eastern edge of town. She ran a butcher shop with her husband.</p>	

1. How would you describe the environment in which the Adares find themselves?
2. What bodily reactions do they seem to have in response to the environment?
3. List the primary differences between the boy and the girl.

<p style="text-align: center;">Part II Lines 34-56</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Commentary For each bolded section, discuss the setting and/or the children’s characterization.</p>
<p>The two Adares put their hands up their sleeves and started walking. Once they began to move they felt warmer, although they’d been traveling all night and the chill had reached deep. They walked east, down the dirt and planking of the broad main street, reading the signs on each false-front clapboard store they passed, even reading the gilt letters in the window of the brick bank. None of these places was a butcher shop. Abruptly, the stores stopped, and a string of houses, weathered gray or peeling gray paint, with dogs tied to their porch railings, began.</p> <p>Small trees were planted in the yards of a few of these houses, and one tree, weak, a scratch of light against the gray of everything else, tossed in a film of blossoms. Mary trudged solidly forward, hardly glancing at it, but Karl stopped. The tree drew him with its delicate perfume. His cheeks went pink, he stretched his arms out like a sleepwalker, and in one long transfixed motion he floated to the tree and buried his face in the white petals.</p>	

4. How does the weather impact the Adares? Why is this important in light of what happens in the next paragraph?

5. Based on the description of the town, what arguments can you make about the setting?

6. There is a significant difference between Mary and Karl’s interaction with the tree.
 - a. Based on previous paragraphs, why might Mary ignore the tree?

 - b. What does Karl’s reaction to the tree suggest about the environment’s impact on him?

7. Why might the tree be so striking within this particular landscape?

<p style="text-align: center;">Part III Lines 57-84</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Commentary</p> <p>For each bolded section, discuss the setting and/or the children’s characterization.</p>
<p>Turning to look for Karl, Mary was frightened by how far back he had fallen and how still he was, his face pressed in the flowers. She shouted, but he did not seem to hear her and only stood, strange and stock-still among the branches. He did not move even when the dog in the yard lunged against its rope and bawled. He did not notice when the door to the house opened and a woman scrambled out. She shouted at Karl too, but he paid her no mind and so she untied her dog. Large and anxious, it flew forward in great bounds. And then, either to protect himself or to seize the blooms, Karl reached out and tore a branch from the tree.</p> <p>It was a large branch, from such a small tree, that blight would attack the scar where it was pulled off. The leaves would fall away later on that summer and the sap would sink into the roots. The next spring, when Mary passed it on some errand, she saw that it bore no blossoms and remembered how, when the dog jumped for Karl, he struck out with the branch and the petals dropped around the dog’s fierce outstretched body in a sudden snow. Then he yelled, “Run!” and Mary ran east, toward Aunt Fritzie. But Karl ran back to the boxcar and the train.</p>	

8. What does Karl’s behavior suggest about the environment’s impact on him?

9. The narrator of the passage suggests that Karl could have torn the branch from the tree to “protect himself or seize the blooms.” What does this suggest about Karl’s relationship to the scene?

10. Only after witnessing the event between Karl and the dog does Mary pay attention to the tree.
 - a. Why is it important that Mary pays attention to the tree the following spring?

 - b. Now, how does the environment impact Mary?

Activity Three: Original Essay Review

Now that you have discussed some possible evidence and commentary for this prose free response question, examine your original essay. For each category listed below, choose a different colored highlighter. Then, highlight each section of your essay accordingly. Color code the list below by highlighting each of the categories or by writing the color next to each bullet.

- Thesis
- Claim/Topic Sentences
- Evidence Sentences/Summary Sentences
- Commentary/Analysis Sentences

Note: Be sure that you do not confuse your evidence sentences with meaningful analysis. If you are simply retelling the evidence, you are not constructing analysis. Highlight appropriately.

Thesis Wringer

Examine the thesis statement you have highlighted from your original essay. Complete the tasks below. If you have not written the essay, examine the tasks and then construct a thesis.

Write your original thesis here: _____

Tasks

- Draw a dotted line under the portion of your thesis statement that describes the environment.
 - This should be a specific description with meaningful adjectives that clearly describe the major aspects of the landscape/setting.
- Draw a wavy line underneath the portion of your thesis statement that discusses how the environment impacts the children.

Note: If either of the categories above are missing from your thesis, add them to your revision. If your original thesis contains both categories, construct a more thoughtful version.

Revised Thesis: _____

Revising Body Paragraph Assertions, Evidence Sentences, and Commentary

Choose the **weakest body paragraph** from your original essay. Then, using that body paragraph, review and revise your original writing.

Topic Sentences—Write the topic sentence from your weakest body paragraph below.

Original Topic Sentence: _____

Topic Sentence Pitfalls—Check each box that applies to your topic sentence.

- Limited Vocabulary
 - **Example:** Erdrich uses great language to describe the environment’s impact.
- Limited/No Argument
 - **Example:** Erdrich says that the environment was dull and gray.
- Struggled to Understand the Environment’s Impact on the Children
 - **Example:** In the first part of the passage, the environment makes it difficult for the children since it is cold.
- Employed Sweeping Generalizations
 - **Example:** Erdrich uses details to create an image in the reader’s mind about how the children are impacted by the environment.
- Other:** _____

Considerations

- Topic sentences should examine a section of the text, discuss the technique prevalent in that section, and then discuss the primary aspect of setting/character that is revealed.
- Topic sentences should make a strong and reasonable argument that describes an implicit issue, something that is suggested but not directly stated, about the setting/character.

Revised Topic Sentence—Revise your topic sentence based on the issues identified above.

Activity Four: Revising Evidence Sentences and Commentary

Examine the commentary in the body paragraph that you have chosen. Complete the commentary revision chart below. The annotations from the beginning of this deconstruction lesson should be used in the revised evidence and commentary sections. Identify the best close reading observation for this revision activity. Complete the left-hand column first.

Evidence

<p style="text-align: center;">Original Evidence Sentence</p> <p>Write the first evidence sentence from your weakest body paragraph below.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Revised Evidence Sentence</p> <p>After you have completed the left hand column, construct a new evidence sentence.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Observations</p> <p>Identify the areas in which this evidence is weak. Then, explain how you plan to improve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Citation Length too Long <input type="checkbox"/> Usefulness of Citation <input type="checkbox"/> Citation Embedded Incorrectly <p>Improvement Plan:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Observations</p> <p>Explain how your revised evidence sentence is a better attempt.</p>

Commentary

<p style="text-align: center;">Original Analysis</p> <p>Write the analysis sentences from your weakest body paragraph.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Revised Evidence Sentence</p> <p>After you have completed the left hand column, construct new/ improved analysis sentences.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Observations</p> <p>Identify the areas in which this analysis is weak. Then, explain how you plan to improve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Summary instead of Analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Repetitive Thoughts/Arguments <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Discussion of Characterization <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Discussion of Significance <p>Improvement Plan:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Observations</p> <p>Explain how your revised analysis sentences offer deeper commentary.</p>

Activity Five: Examining Student Samples

Examine the student samples below and discuss the attributes of each.

<p style="text-align: center;">Student Sample Score: 4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Sample Score: 6</p>
<p>In this excerpt from “The Beet Queen”, we can see that the changes in the environment had different impacts on Karl and Mary. It appears that the story is written during the time of the Dust Bowl, and the kids moved with their aunt for that reason. Because of this, it has probably been a while since Karl has been able to see the beauty in nature. Mary, being younger, probably didn’t understand the significance of nature, and what it provides, like Karl did.</p> <p>When Karl sees the tree with the flowers, he is immediately drawn to them because he hasn’t seen flowers in a long time. He is captivated by their beauty. The author uses the simile “he stretched out his arm like a sleepwalker” to describe how he approached the tree. In this we can see how he marveled at the sight of nature’s beauty. The author also uses great imagery when she talks about how Karl’s “cheeks went pink”. We are truly able to visualize just how in awe he his.</p> <p>Mary on the other hand, doesn’t understand what Karl is doing. She may be too young to remember or understand just how gorgeous and wonderful nature is. She is confused by her brother’s actions. The author even states that she was “frightened”. Mary is simply more simple minded and isn’t concerned as much about the bigger picture.</p> <p>In conclusion, Karl and Mary were effected completely different. Mary is okay with how life is no, but Karl is eager never to miss out on nature’s beauty. Mary runs back to Aunt Fritzie and will be fine with being with her. In contrast, Karl is running and searching for better and will not give up until he finds it. He doesn’t want to miss out on nature and life’s beauty.</p>	<p>In the excerpt from <u>The Beet Queen</u>, two children are impacted very differently by the nature of the world. Erdrich uses details, imagery, and point of view to emphasize these two children’s qualities. Throughout the passage, Erdrich gives you small hints towards the childrens’ personalities, but as you get to the final paragraph, you understand Erdrich’s true meaning.</p> <p>Starting with the first paragraph, Erdrich foreshadows the foreboding outcome of this work by indicating the train brought “both an addition and a subtraction.” After a long trip, Karl and Mary Adare are introduced. With the use of imagery, we see that Karl is a “very pale” fourteen year old male with “girlish” skin. Mary, on the other hand, is eleven years old, both her appearance and her name was “square” and bland. Mary was overall monotonous. The two were shipped out east for the better economy. As the two walk through the town, Karl becomes entranced by a tree, a blossoming tree with a small compared to a “delicate perfume.” His cheeks turn “pink,” which corresponds with the pink and white colors of a blossoming tree. The nature draws him closer, and nothing can pull him out of the trance. The environmental impact on Karl is that he loves the nature of things. The beauty and the empowerment of all the surrounds him pulls him in and he can’t let go. When the dog comes to attack, he takes a branch of the tree and yells “Run!”. “Karl ran back to the box car and the train.” Using the detail of the branches and the imagery of Karl being mesmerized by the tree gives the reader the idea that Karl is going to explore the world and find more amazing trees, and other nature.</p> <p>In contrast to Karl, Mary is very ordinary. When passing the tree “Mary trudged boldly toward, hardly glancing at it.” The beauty of the blossoming tree does nothing for Mary, as she just continues to move on. The next year, when she passes the tree, and notices no blossoms, she doesn’t feel melancholy at the loss of that beauty from her life. When Karl yelled “Run!” she ran toward Aunt Tritue.</p>

<p>The new life out east for her was the economy, making a good life for herself, and ignoring the nature of things.</p> <p>Erdrich, for this passage, used third person narrator, which as a literary technique applied to show the big picture of events. If this passage was told in first person by Karl or Mary, the environmental impact on these kids would be invisible to the reader.</p> <p>Overall, Erdrich's use of a variety of literary techniques allowed for the emphasis of both Karl and Mary's behaviors. Mary being the "addition" to the town, and Karl being the "subtraction." Erdrich showed the characteristics of two different people and how nature, and society, and the future can impact them.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Observations</p> <p>Identify the characteristics of these body paragraphs. Create a list of improvements the author could make.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Observations</p> <p>Identify the characteristics of these body paragraphs. Create a list of improvements the author could make.</p>	

