**READING: PRECIS** (pronounced prey-see)

**Reading / Analysis / Précis / Discussion Preparation**

For major works we read, you must complete a precis.  All assignments must be typed and turned in on the day that we are scheduled to discuss the article.  Late assignments will not be accepted.  If you are absent, please e-mail the assignment to me.

1.    In preparation for the class discussion, read and analyze the assigned pages of the major work.

2. Write a précis (brief synopsis no more than 1/2 page, **single spaced**) of the pages assigned for reading ONLY, not the entire work.  These will be collected the day of our discussion and the grade will count as a reading assignment/class work.  The assignment must be typed (single spaced).  If the assignment is not typed and completed properly, the student will receive a "0" on the assignment and will have no opportunity to remove the grade.  At the top of the paper, label the title, author, and pages.  Within the precis, state the year the work was first published.  Make sure your précis is in your own words, not an outside source’s. (Underline or italicize titles of major works)

3.    List **5 examples** of significant style strategies that you find in the article along with the phrase or sentence in which the strategy occurs.  You may discuss any of the following strategies from the Literary Analysis handout: **Tone, Diction, Figurative Language, Imagery, Syntax, Characterization, Symbolism, and Irony**. Make sure to label the specific type of Figurative Language (simile, metaphor, etc.), Syntax (short sentences, freght-train, etc.), and Diction (pretentious, jargon, etc.) Cite page number or line number (for poetry) in parenthetical documentation.   In addition, write 1-2 commentaries below each example explaining the effectiveness of the strategy. Do NOT merely give a definition of the strategy (“It’s effective because it compares two things using ‘like’ or ‘as’.); instead explain why it is appropriate to the work or how it helps the author achieve his/her purpose. See example below:

**Figurative Language**: Simile- “My love is like a rose” (line 5)

**Effectiveness**: This simile is appropriate to the poem’s theme of fading love; like the rose, the speaker’s love starts as a bud, blooms magnificently, but eventually withers, fades, and dies.

4.    List two types of discussion questions about the work: Clarification and Application.

a)  One question that asks for **Clarification** of something within the work (Example:  What exactly did the mother do on that day?)

b) One question that **Applies** a theme or concept of the work to contemporary society or another area (Example: How do you think this character would react to the 2008 Presidential Election?)

5.    Write a theme for the pages assigned ONLY, not the entire work. Your theme should be a complete sentence (remember, a theme is NOT a one word subject like “love”; what about love?). Be prepared to explain in class how your theme is relevant to the assigned pages.

6. Include a quotation from the work that supports your theme above or that you found interesting, memorable, or provocative for other reasons and be prepared to read an interesting passage aloud to the class.

**EXAMPLE**

Johnny Student

Mr. Bautista/AP English

# “Guys vs. Men” by Dave Berry (pages 43-67)

        Dave Barry’s essay from the Miami Herald (1997) examines the differences between men and women in a humorous passage that confronts many societal stereotypes about gender roles.  Barry elucidates the disparity between a “man” and a “guy,” although he readily admits that even he is not sure of what it really means to be a “guy.”  Guys, he says, are not concerned with details or rearranging furniture; they like to play with complex and intricate things to occupy themselves.  Guys are also relentlessly competitive creatures, and they strive to be the best at whatever they do.  It does not matter if the contest in question is completely pointless and irrelevant; guys still have to outdo one another.  Many of the greatest inventions and technological advancements in history have come from the innate nature of men and their desire to perform as well as possible.  In addition to outdoing each other in physical competitions, guys also must outdo each other when it comes to other manly things, such as trucks or computers.  Even though the truck or computer a guy currently owns may be more than sufficient for his needs, he will inevitably upgrade to a bigger and better model within a few years.   Women often do not understand why men act the way they do, and the same is true regarding the man’s view of women in general.  Barry tackles age-old gender stereotypes and comments on them in a humorous way that enlightens readers about the differences between men and women.

**Style Strategies**

·      **Irony**: “being male primarily consists of … possessing a set of minor and frequently unreliable organs” (343)

Effectiveness: The story begins with an ironic sentence, which consequently sets the ironic and humorous tone for the rest of work.

·      **Figurative Language**: Hyperbole – “[my computer] is probably capable of supervising the entire U.S. air-defense apparatus while simultaneously processing the tax return of every resident of Ohio” (344)

Effectiveness: The hyperbole allows the author to express how guys always want the latest, greatest, and most technologically advanced gadgets without ever needed so many bells and whistles.

·      **Syntax**: Parataxis- “[my computer] sits there, humming impatiently, bored to death, passing the time” (344)

Effectiveness: By continuing the experience felt by the computer, through personification, the author makes it clear that such an advanced computer is really not necessary.

·       **Figurative Language**: Hyperbole – “twenty-three Advil in my bloodstream” (346)

Effectiveness: The exaggeration creates humor out of something that may not be humorous.

·       **Figurative Language**: Simile – “Guys are similar to my small auxiliary backup dog, Zippy” (347)

Effectiveness: The comparison to Zippy is appropriate because all the traits of the dog are similar to most guys the author describes, but also allows for a humorous comparison to an animal.

**Discussion Questions**

·        **Clarification**:  How do men and women tackle the same problem differently?

·      **Application**:  How do gender stereotypes affect the way we interact with each other?

**Theme**

Women are from Venus and men are from Mars.

**Quotation**

“[my computer] is probably capable of supervising the entire U.S. air-defense apparatus while simultaneously processing the tax return of every resident of Ohio” (344).

**Précis Rubric**

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| --- | --- |
| **Précis (synopsis)** | **20 points**:  Complete and concise summary of assigned reading only. |
| **5 Style Strategies/Effectiveness** | **40 points**:  4 points for each identification and 4 points for effectiveness analysis. |
| **Questions** | **20 points**:  10 points for a Clarification question and 10 points for an Application question. |
| **Theme** | **10 points:**  A complete sentence, not simply an idea or phrase. |
| **Significant Quote** | **10 points**:  Must be cited correctly. |

**STYLE STRATEGIES**

**Tone:** creator’s attitude toward subject, characters, and reader. Could be playful, serious, angry, ironic, formal, somber, satiric . . . find the right word (s)! Discuss how the creator creates tone(s) through plot, diction, syntax, imagery, figurative devices.

**Diction:** Analyze the creator’s word choices. Is the language formal, neutral, or informal? Explain and give examples. Is the language plain? Poetic? Concise? Strong? Pretentious? Full of jargon? Lewd, crude, rude, or shrewd? Does diction indicate social status, education, region? Are the sounds cacophonous (k, t, p, ch, ow, etc.) or euphonious (m, l, n, ah, etc.)? Does this seem patterned or random?

**Figurative Language (Tropes):** Language that is not literal. Metaphoric devices . . .simile, metaphor, personification, allusion (Mythology, Bible, Shakespeare, History, etc.)

**Imagery:** Words or phrases that appeal to the five senses—most commonly visual. Look for recurring images (light/darkness, colors, clothing, odors, sounds, etc.)

**Syntax (sentence structure):** Analysis of sentence and phrase patterns

1. Make some general observations: are the sentences predominantly simple, compound, complex, short, long, periodic, cumulative? Do the characters/narrative ramble, string together phrases, speak in fragments, form thoughts carefully?
2. How does the syntax help define character and set tone?

**Characterization:** General comments: flat/round characters? Believable? How are they revealed? How complex? Protagonist/antagonist? Describe the central characters: name, age, appearance, personality, function in the work, a short quotation that reveals character.

**Symbolism:** When an image is used to suggest complex or multiple meanings (hawk for war, dove for peace) it becomes a symbol. Point out images in the work that are used as symbols. Is the work highly symbolic? Allegorical? Use repetition?

**Irony:** Verbal, situational, dramatic irony . . . also paradox, oxymoron, euphemism, hyperbole, understatement. How is irony used?

**Literary Analysis**

**The Author and His/Her Times**: Born/died; biographical background important to understanding the work; important family, community, national, and world events that influenced the author and the work.

**Form, Structure, and Plot:** How is the work organized? Chapters? Stanzas? Books? Other? Discuss techniques such as flashbacks or dream sequences, stream of consciousness, chronological order of events, foreshadowing, parallel events, multiple, complex or simple plot. Identify exposition, initial incident, rising action, crisis/climax, and falling action. How much time is covered?

**Point of View (Narrative Perspective):** Is the work presented in first person (I), second person (you . . . very rare), or third person (he, she)? Is it a reminiscence or recent perspective, written in the present tense or the past tense? If in the third person, is the narrator omniscient (knowing everything), limited omniscient (knowing one character most often), or objective (no subjective commentary by the narrator, but limited omniscience)? Often a character may be autobiographical or reflect the views of an author, but not always; do not confuse the author with the speaker of the work (they may not have the same views).

**Setting:** Where and when does this work occur? Describe the environment. Any symbolic meanings in the settings? What atmosphere is created by the setting? Any important changes in settings, tensions between settings?

**Themes:** Identify at least three major themes: use a sentence for each theme (remember, theme is NOT a one word subject like “love”; what about love?). What universal truths are revealed? How are they revealed in the work?

**Memorable Quotations:** passages, sentences, fragments that capture the essence of story and style.

**Title:** Why this title? Does the title appear in the work? Where?

**Pivotal Point:** What is the pivotal point in the work and why? Describe the most important point in the work when the story or main character shifts.

**Things Unusual, Unique:** Where does this work fit in the history of literature? Anything groundbreaking, different, experimental? If so, to what purpose? Was this work influenced by others or has this work influenced others? Referenced or mentioned in painting, sculpture, music, pop culture, etc?

**Additional Comments and Analysis:** Do you like the work? Strengths, weaknesses, questions? Does it remind you of anything else?