Oak Meadow
INDEPENDENT LEARNING SINCE 1975

COMMON CORE SUPPLEMENT

American Literature

Welcome to the Oak Meadow Common Core Supplement for *American Literature*. These supplemental assignments are intended for schools and individuals who use Oak Meadow curriculum and who need to be in compliance with Common Core Standards.

Introduction

Oak Meadow curricula provide a rigorous and progressive educational experience that meets intellectual and developmental needs of high school students. Our courses are designed with the goal of guiding learners to develop a body of knowledge that will allow them to be engaged citizens of the world. With knowledge gained through problem solving, critical thinking, hands-on projects, and experiential learning, we inspire students to connect disciplinary knowledge to their lives, the world they inhabit, and the world they would like to build.

While our courses provide a compelling and complete learning experience, in a few areas our program may not be in complete alignment with recent Common Core standards. After a rigorous analysis of all our courses, we have developed a series of supplements to accompany our materials for schools who utilize our curricula. These additions make our materials Common Core compliant. These Common Core additions are either stand-alone new lessons or add-ons to existing lessons. Where they fall in regard to the larger curriculum is clearly noted on each supplement lesson.

Included in this supplement are the following

1. New reading, writing, speaking and critical analysis assignments designed to be used with the existing Oak Meadow curriculum readings and materials
2. Language usage lessons and explanations

Oak Meadow's *Write It Right: A Handbook for Student Writers* and *A Pocket Style Manual* by Hacker and Sommers are meant to be used in conjunction with with this supplement and the entire Oak Meadow curriculum. They provide essential background exmplantions about wriiting and langauge usage that are valuable to all lessons and that fulfille Common Core expectations.

SECTION 1: New Assignments

These assignments are meant to be integrated into the existing American Literature curriculum where indicated in regard to lesson and assignment number within an existing lesson.

Additional Assignment to Add to Lesson 3

Standards covered:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.A--11-12.1.D

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5

If you are in a classroom setting, or are able to collaborate with your fellow students either in person or online with your teacher's guidance, this assignment can be added

For question 3, respond in writing, and also be prepared to discuss the question, as well as your interpretation of the difference in Henry between the beginning of the novel and the end of the novel.

You will be asked to share your thoughts and ideas with your fellow students taking this course, or with your teacher if no other students are at this same point in the course. This assignment is not meant to be a debate, but rather a sharing of ideas and interpretations as a means to help you learn to express your thoughts clearly to your peers and teacher, and to expand your understanding of the text. Be prepared to cite evidence from the text to back up your thoughts and observations.

It is important that you keep in mind the importance of coming up with one or two probing questions you can present to your teacher or fellow students to help them better comprehend your position. After this discussion, you will be asked to write-up a brief evaluation restating each presenter's point of view, the reasoning behind their position, how their ideas link together to form a solid opinion, and how expertly they used words and language to present their thoughts clearly.

Once you are prepared to share in a discussion on this topic, let your teacher know and he/she will use either chat or Google classroom to set up a time for you to present your position to either your teacher or your classmates. It will be up to your teacher to decide whether this discussion will happen simply via chat or in a live "virtual" setting.

Additional Assignment to Add to Lesson 25

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7

Consider the chapter 7 passage in *The Great Gatsby* in which Myrtle is killed. View the scene in which Myrtle is killed in Baz Luhrmann's 2013 version of *The Great Gatsby* and in one of the three other movie versions of the novel. Compare how the episode is presented in the three sources. What are the similarities and differences that you discover between the novel and the films? Why do you think the film directors chose to portray Myrtle's death as they did?

Additional Assignment to Add to Lesson 29

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.5

Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

What was the editorialists' angle or main argument? How did the structure help to support the argument? In your answer, consider how the author concludes the editorial, and explore the relationship between the conclusion and the introduction.

Additional Assignment to Add to Lessons 34–36

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.C

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2

During your research, find ways to integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem. In writing your research paper, use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

Present your research paper to others. In your presentation, integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally.) As part of this process, evaluate the credibility and accuracy of each source you use and note any discrepancies among the data. By including this in your presentation, you and other students can exchange thoughts about each research project, and evaluate the research behind each conclusion that is drawn.

Additional Assignment to Add to Lesson 32

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5

Write a 4-6 page speech. Include digital media to make your speech interesting and informative. Media must be relevant to and support the content of your speech. A PowerPoint, Google Slideshow, or Prezi are possible types of digital software that are appropriate for this assignment.

In your visual presentation, limit yourself to 5-10 slides for the 10 minute speech. (In other words, the slides are not the focus of your speech.) Each slide should have one idea and a few supporting facts. Each slide should contain one powerful, high-quality image which helps the audience to understand the content or put it into context. The layout should be visually pleasing. A bibliography or works cited list should conclude the presentation.

SECTION 2: Language Usage

Oak Meadow English supplement for Common Core alignment Grade 9–10

The following assignments can be added to any Oak Meadow English course, within the context of existing lessons. It is recommended that each assignment be repeated as needed, with variations, to ensure students have ample time to develop each skill.

The Common Core standards addressed in this supplement are as follows:

Conventions of Standard English

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1.B

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2.A

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2.B

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.B

1. Practice with phrases and clauses

There are many different types of phrases and clauses that we use every day in our speaking and writing. Learning to identify each type and understand when and how to use it will strengthen your writing and make it more effective and interesting.

Phrases

Phrases are groups of words that lack a subject and verb combination. A phrase provides additional information in a sentence, but cannot stand alone. There are many different types of phrases, each with its own flavor and purpose.

Type of phrase

DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Noun: Contains a noun and its modifiers	**The steep and rocky trail** led to an inviting picnic spot.
Gerund: A noun phrase that starts with a gerund (*-ing* verb that functions as a noun)	**Singing songs** is my favorite thing to do on a long car trip.
Verb: Contains a verb and its modifiers	We **are going to swim** all the way to the island this year.

Adjectival: Modifies a noun (functions as an adjective)	The cat **with green eyes** scrambled up the tree.
Adverbial: Modifies a verb (functions as an adverb)	He complimented her **with obvious insincerity.**
Participial: Contains a participle (verb form) and functions as an adjective	The horse **whinnying over the fence** is my favorite.
Prepositional: Includes a preposition (on, after, from, etc.) and may act as an adjective, adverb, or noun	**In the morning**, we're going hiking. (adverb) The dog **with the curly fur** belongs to my neighbor. (adjective) **In the backyard** is where I lost my ring. (noun)
Absolute: Contains a noun and its modifiers; modifies an entire clause and stands independently	**His thirst overpowering**, he downed the water bottle in a single long gulp.

2. **Clauses**

Clauses differ from phrases in that they contain both a subject and a verb. There are two main types of clauses: dependent clauses, which cannot stand alone, and independent clauses, which convey a complete thought and can stand alone as complete sentences. There are several types of clauses and some overlap between them. For instance, relative clauses can be restrictive or non-restrictive.

Type of clause

DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Independent: Can stand alone as a complete sentence	**Most people love pizza**, and **the local pizza parlor is always busy**.
Dependent (or subordinate): Depends on something else to complete the thought; often starts with a conjunction (because, if, unless, when, etc.)	**While most people love pizza,** I can't stand it.
Noun: Functions as a noun	She wishes **that her sunflowers would grow tall enough to shade her patio.**
Relative (or adjective): Begins with a relative pronoun (who, whose, that, which, etc.) and functions as an adjective	The student **who won the spelling bee** was homeschooled.
Adverbial: Uses a subordinating conjunction and serves as an adverb (answering how, when, where, etc.)	**After the race is over,** we enjoy the post-race festivities.
Restrictive (or defining): Refers to only the preceding subject and influences the subject's meaning; it is necessary to the meaning of the sentence	That boy **in the blue socks** is my best friend.

Non-restrictive (or non-defining): Adds relevant information overall; it is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence, and is separated from the rest of the sentence by commas	James, **who wears blue socks**, is my best friend.

Assignments

1. Look for examples of each type of phrase in your current literature selection.
2. Write a sentence for each type of phrase.
3. Look for examples of each type of clause in your current literature selection.
4. Create a sentence for each type of clause.
5. Use a variety of phrases and clauses in your essays, reports, and other types of writing.

3. Practice using semicolon and colon

Semicolons and colons are two types of punctuation that are often misused. Knowing the difference between them will help you know when and how to use them. Semicolons separate independent clauses or items in a series, and colons introduce a list or a quote. Colons are always preceded by a complete sentence.

Punctuation

PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
Semicolon: Separates related independent clauses not joined by a coordinating conjunction (but, and, or, etc.) Separate items in a series that include internal punctuation	This year I have Mr. Walker for English, French, and history; Ms. Jacobs for science, health, and advisory; and Ms. Kramer for math. The weather is gorgeous today; we'll have to take a walk later.
Colon: Used to introduce a list Used to introduce a quotation	My favorite activities are as follows: running, biking, dancing, and watching movies. One of my favorite quotes is from Heschel: "Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement."

Assignments

1. Write pairs of related but independent clauses, and use a semicolon to link them into one sentence.
2. Edit a current piece of writing by using a semicolon to create compound sentences from related sentences or to replace a conjunction.
3. Find examples of semicolon and colon use in a current literature selection or textbook.
4. Use a colon in two sentences, one to introduce a list, and the other to introduce a quotation.
5. Find a way to use a semicolon and a colon in your next essay or report.

4. Identify and use patterns of word changes

Learning to identify base words and use derivatives or grammatical variants of the word will give you more flexibility as a writer. There are consistent patterns you can use to express a root word in a variety of ways within a sentence, based on its purpose and role in the sentence. The chart below shows the main patterns of word building.

PATTERN	EXAMPLES
Adjective to noun	dark → darkness coltish → colt defining → definition
Adjective to verb	picturesque → picturing hard → harden dark → darkness
Adjective to adverb	slow → slowly light → lightly equal → equally
Noun to verb	friend → befriend indicator → indicate analysis → analyze
Noun to noun	friend → friendship floor → flooring king → kingdom
Noun to adjective	activity → active king → kingly humor → humorous
Verb to noun	write → writer agree → agreement bake → baker
Verb to adjective	live → lively pierce → piercing attract → attractive

Assignments

1. Choose one word and list as many variations as you can think of. For example, the word *definite* can have these variations: define, definitive, defining, definitely, definitively, definition.
2. Identify three adjectives, and then try to change each one into a different part of speech.
3. Write several pairs of words in the noun-to-verb and verb-to-noun patterns.

Oak Meadow English supplement for Common Core alignment Grade 11–12

The following assignments can be added to any Oak Meadow English course, within the context of existing lessons. It is recommended that each assignment be repeated as needed, with variations, to ensure students have ample time to develop each skill.

Evolution of Word Usage

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.1.A and B

Knowledge of Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.3.A

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.A

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.B

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.C

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.D

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.B

Evolution of word usage

English is a living language that is ever-evolving. Words that were once in common usage, such as *balderdash* or *twitter*, are rarely used or have an entirely different meaning. New words come into being each year, such as *listicle* and *eco-warrior*, while others morph into a new form of speech, such as *texting* and *friend* as a verb.

One of the best ways to explore how language has changed over time is to study classic literature. Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mark Twain are just a few authors whose works offer a lively glimpse into language as a living, changing thing.

Since language is always changing, there will always be people who differ on word usage or other points of style. Here are just a few examples:

- all right vs. alright
- one space after a period vs. two spaces after a period
- B.C.E. and C.E. vs. B.C. and A.D.
- US vs U.S.
- lack of a gender neutral singular pronoun (*they* used in place of *he or she*)

Assignments

1. Read a classic work of literature and identify five examples of words used in ways that are uncommon today. Describe the words meaning in the literary context, and then explain how that word is normally used today. Pay particular attention to the nuances of each word.
2. Find a current usage issue and argue one side or the other.
3. Resolve issues of complex or contested usage by consulting references such as *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, Garner's Modern American Usage*.

Knowledge of Language

1. Complete World Literature lesson 13 on writing introductions and conclusions (found below). In your review of the essays that you read, give attention to how author is using language to make effective choices for the meaning or style. In writing your own introductions and conclusions, vary syntax for effect, consulting references such as Tufte's *Artful Sentences,* for guidance as needed.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

1. Add the following steps to the given vocabulary assignments from your coursebook:
    a. Before looking up the word in a dictionary, use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
    b. Once you look up the word in a dictionary, verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
    c. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., *conceive, conception, conceivable*).
    d. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.
    e. Study the given synonyms, and analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.
2. Study the pages 15–18 on on literary devices in *Write it Right*. Do World Literature lesson 29 on figurative language (found below).
3. Complete World Literature lesson 19 on quote incorporation, writing versus speaking and mixed construction and sentence logic (found below).

Oak Meadow World Literature Lesson

Lesson 13: Introductions and Conclusions

In the art of essay writing, the importance of effective introductions and conclusions cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, these sections are often glossed over and rushed through. In the following week, you will practice refining these essential sections of the essay.

Introductions

An effective and appealing introduction does two things: It interests the reader while establishing the tone and intention of the paper. Too often introductions are undeveloped and dry. Take a look at this example:

> *For decades, doctors have highlighted the benefits of exercise. However, many people still do not exercise enough. In the following essay, I will explain why regular exercise is so important to your physical and mental health.*

While this introduction is clear and informative, it is rather dry. Does it make you want to read what follows? And while it explains what the essay is about, it does not draw the reader in. This is especially important when writing about a topic that is not controversial or compelling in its own right. If you were writing about the existence of UFOs, your topic itself might have enough power to interest the reader. Still, this does not exempt it from the need for an interesting introduction. Let's look at an alternative to the introduction above:

> *You reach for the TV remote control, only to find that the batteries are dead. You know what this means: You will have to walk to the television and change the channel! Moving across the living room, you are alarmed to find yourself panting for breath. "Maybe you should get a little exercise," a voice inside your head warns, "before it's too late." In the following essay, I will explain why regular exercise is so important to your physical and mental health. After reading the evidence firsthand, let's hope you get off the couch and hit the trail!*

Though this approach might not be your style, notice how the writer tries to catch the reader's interest. This is called a hook. Framing the topic in a comic anecdote, the writer wants you to read on, to find out what happens. Then notice how the introduction also states the intention of the essay, letting the reader know what to expect. Of course, the hook can also be dramatic. Here's another version of the same introduction:

World Literature Lesson 13 *(continued)*

> *After collapsing from a heart attack in May 1992, Mr. Smith finally realized that years of nonactivity had caught up to him. Fortunately, it was not too late. For the past five years, Mr. Smith has been on a steady exercise program, with excellent results. For millions of others, the story does not have such a happy ending. In the following essay, I will explain why regular exercise is so important to your physical and mental health.*

This introduction is sentimental and serious, appealing to the reader's heart. Whichever strategy you use for your hook, it is important that you consider what is appropriate for your topic and your audience. If you are writing about the benefits of exercise to a group of high schoolers, the humorous introduction would be appropriate; the more serious one would work for a group of adults.

Finally, when writing an interpretive essay, be sure to state the title of the work and the author's name in the introduction. You do not have to do this right away; you can hook the reader first before giving the basic facts. Here's an example:

> *It was his last day on earth. In a few hours he was scheduled for execution. As he was led through the streets, he promised himself that should he be pardoned he would live each moment to its fullest. However, when he was pardoned, it took only a short time until he was drunk and gambling. This episode from Fyodor Dostoevsky's* The Idiot *can tell us a great deal about the author. By examining it more closely, we can learn about Dostoevsky's profound message.*

Conclusions

An effective conclusion, like a good introduction, should be compelling, but it should also bring the essay full circle by referring back to the introduction in the process. Your main goal is to bring the essay to a smooth, logical close while sending the reader off with a "bang." You will find that "hook" strategies apply here as well. For learning purposes, let's begin by taking a look at a weak conclusion. We will stick to our "exercise" paper.

> *In conclusion, the benefits of steady exercise are indisputable. As I have shown, a fit person will enjoy the following: a healthy heart, increased energy, and less stress. Clearly, exercise keeps you stable both physically and mentally.*

This conclusion restates what took place in the essay and brings it to a close. However, it is dry and dull. Notice the phrase, "In conclusion." Though it is a handy phrase, try to avoid it. Not only is it predictable, but it sets you up for a boring follow-though. Keep in mind that you should be graduating from some of the basic strategies you have been taught. For example, you should not feel the need to restate each section of your paper: "a healthy heart, increased energy, and less stress." At this stage in your writing life, you should be drafting conclusions that draw on the tone and flavor of each individual essay. Now, remembering the humorous introduction above, let's look at a more interesting alternative:

World Literature Lesson 13 *(continued)*

> *So tomorrow or the next day, when you find yourself back in couch-potato mode, remember what you just read. Instead of lying there while your arteries clog and your back stiffens, you could be burning calories, increasing your stamina, and releasing stress. Finally, remember that changing the channels does not count as exercise!*

This conclusion does its job, bringing the essay to a close while resetting the main points. Note that it uses an "envelope" strategy—that is, it picks up the same anecdotal thread as the introduction. This is a common literary device, useful in essays. The "envelope" strategy would be useful in our third example as well, especially if the tone of the essay remains serious.

Assignment

This exercise has two parts. First, visit your local library and check out a book of essays. The more contemporary the pieces, the better. Discuss the introductions and conclusions of at least three different essays. Write down the author's approach to the opening and closing. Are you drawn in? What is the tone? Does the introduction give you a clear idea of the topic? Does the conclusion send you off with an image? A quotation? Is either part ineffective? Why or why not? **NOTE:** If possible, photocopy the introductions and conclusions of the essays you study. Send these to your teacher. If you cannot photocopy them, write down the author, title, and copyright date of the essay.

Next, put what you have learned into practice. Choose five of the following topics, and write an effective, thorough introduction and conclusion for each. You may come up with your own topics as well. It is important that you consider the main points of the essay before writing the introduction (even though you don't have to write the whole essay). These points will help you envision the piece as a whole.

- Should boxing be illegal?
- Sailing
- How to listen to your teenager
- The evils of the computer age
- The wonders of the computer age
- The history of my town
- Endangered species
- The United States' obsession with sports
- Campaign financing reform
- UFOs—do they exist?

Oak Meadow World Literature

Lesson 19: Composition Nuts & Bolts

This week's lesson will take into account some of the "nuts & bolts" of composition. It is broken up into three different parts:

1. Quote incorporation
2. Writing versus speaking
3. Mixed construction and sentence logic

These areas have been selected because of their common use—and misuse—in student essays.

Part I: Quote Incorporation

As you know, one of the essential elements of essay writing is using supporting details. These details often come in the form of direct quotes. In an interpretive paper, you would use quotes from a piece of literature, while a persuasive essay might draw on the words of an expert. In either case, how you use the quote in your paper will, to a large degree, determine its effectiveness.

Let's begin by looking at different ways to incorporate quotes. Always remember that you *must* incorporate a quote smoothly into your writing. If you don't, you have a "floating quote." Here's an example of a floating quote:

> *Unlike most presidents, Abraham Lincoln was not vindictive towards his opposition. "With malice towards none, with charity towards all."*

While the quote is well-chosen, it appears as its own sentence without linking to the writer's words. This is an error in grammar as well, since the quote is not a complete sentence. Using the same example, let's look at five different quote incorporation strategies.

> *Unlike most presidents, Abraham Lincoln was not vindictive towards his opposition: "With malice towards none, with charity towards all."*

Notice how the colon functions to present the information while relating it to the writer's words. If the colon could speak, it would be saying, "Here's an example," or "Read the following."

World Literature Lesson 19 *(continued)*

> *Unlike most presidents, Abraham Lincoln was not vindictive towards his opposition. "With malice towards none, with charity towards all," he announced in his Second Inaugural Address.*

Here, the sentence begins with the quote, and the writer completes the sentence by adding more relevant information. It would be suitable, however, to simply add, "announced Lincoln," at the end of the quote.

> *Unlike most presidents, Abraham Lincoln was not vindictive towards his opposition. What other president, in the midst of a bitter war, would say, "With malice towards none, with charity towards all"?*

Here the writer comes in before the quotation. Notice how the sentence is then framed in a rhetorical question, incorporating the quote within it. This is a useful strategy, since it supports your point while maintaining momentum.

> *Unlike most presidents, Abraham Lincoln was not vindictive towards his opposition. "With malice towards none," he declared in the midst of a bitter war, "with charity towards all."*

Breaking the quote at an appropriate pause is a common strategy, but one that young writers often overlook. It allows lots of flexibility and is very useful for establishing rhythm and dividing long quotes that might be boring or might call for an excerpt (see below).

> *Unlike most presidents, Abraham Lincoln was not vindictive towards his opposition. Instead, he approached his task "With malice towards none, with charity towards all."*

Quotes do not always need added punctuation to fit into a sentence. Notice how this quote segues in from the grammar and thought process of the sentence. This is a terrific strategy.

Quotes and Punctuation

The "nitty-gritty" of grammar comes alive when quoting material. Here are some answers to commonly asked questions:

A. **How do I quote dialogue from a book, or a quotation inside a quotation?** When quoting dialogue from a book, or using a quote within a quote, use single quotation marks within the regular quotation marks:

> *When Jan said, "I told him, 'It's not an issue I'd like to discuss,'" I knew the novel would end unhappily.*

> *"My favorite line in that song," said John, "is 'You can't please everyone.'"*

World Literature Lesson 19 *(continued)*

B. **How do I quote poetry?** Quoting poetry follows the same rules as quoting prose, except when it comes to line breaks. Line breaks (the divisions between adjacent lines of poetry) are signified by a slash (/). Here is an example using the following lines:

The sunlight on the leaves
About to fall on this autumn day.

When the poet notices "The sunlight on the leaves/About to fall on this autumn day," he is absorbed in the passing of time.

C. **What if I want to quote only part of a sentence?** This is when ellipses come in handy. As long as the quoted material still flows smoothly, simply use ellipses to signify the missing words. Here's an example. Notice the sentence before and after:

The fireman said, "If the winds pick up and the fire spreads west, where most of the residents live, they will have to evacuate."

The fireman said, "If the winds pick up... they will have to evacuate."

Make sure your omission of part of the quote does not change the meaning of the passage. For example, if a movie review says, "This film will stand as one of the greatest failures of all time," you can't quote it as "This film will stand as one of the greatest... of all time," and then claim it's a positive review!

D. **What if I want to quote a whole paragraph or a long passage?** If you are using a quotation of four or more lines, indent instead of using quotation marks. By indenting the quote, you are signifying that it's a direct quote. Of course, you would still use quotation marks if you were citing a piece of dialogue. Here's an example:

The truth became evident in the final passage of chapter four:

I had never known Ruby to be the truth-telling type. However, when she whispered "It's all over" under her breath, I was convinced she and Joey were involved in the bank robbery. Two months later, they were sentenced to twenty years each.

NOTE: If you are quoting more than four lines of a poem, simply indent and write it out as it appears in original form. Present the line breaks as they are, without slashes.

World Literature Lesson 19 *(continued)*

Assignment

1. This is a two-part assignment. Begin by finding a short quote. Now write five sentences, each one incorporating the *same* quote in a *different* way. Use the examples above as models.

2. Now repeat this process with a different quote. You are encouraged to use a quote from a poem.

Send all ten sentences to your teacher at the end of Lesson 20.

Part II: Writing Versus Speaking

By now, the distinction between speaking and writing should become more noticeable and more relevant. Many common grammar mistakes are the result of talk being written. For example, "I could of gone to the show last night" sounds like something you might hear someone say. Could of is bad grammar, of course—the correct phrase is could have. The phrase a lot is often spoken as one word, *alot*—however, it is actually two words. Mistakes such as these are the consequence of listening to spoken language without an understanding of how the phrases are properly written.

Another habit of speaking is the tendency to use *intensifiers* and *qualifiers*. Below are examples of each:

Intensifiers

- It's *really* something I'd rather not do.
- She's *so* nice to us when we visit.
- It's *very* cloudy today.

In most cases, intensifiers are unnecessary, though they are common in everyday speech. In fact, removing them from sentences can *enhance* the meaning. Try removing the intensifiers from the sentences above. Do the sentences feel more concise?

Qualifiers

- *In a sense*, there's nobody who wants the job.
- I live in a place that's *sort of* crowded.
- *It seems that* he's not applying himself.
- She's *somewhat* taller than her brother.
- The kitten is *kind of* shy until she gets used to you.

Qualifiers are often used to "duck out" of saying something for certain, or to avoid being specific. "She's *an inch* taller than her brother" is better than "*somewhat* taller..." Qualifiers are also habits of speech that don't have clear meanings: How can a place be *sort of* crowded? How can a kitten be *kind of* shy?

World Literature Lesson 19 *(continued)*

Do these qualifiers add to the meaning? Remove the qualifiers from the sentences above and notice how much cleaner they are.

Of course, intensifiers and qualifiers are sometimes necessary. The key is to be able to decide when they are needed, rather than letting them slip in habitually.

Another habit of speech that creeps into writing is the informal transition:

- *Well*, the rain stopped and we went to the park.
- *So*, the rain stopped and we went to the park.
- *What I'm trying to say is that* the rain stopped and we went to the park.
- *Anyway*, the rain stopped and we went to the park.
- *I mean*, the rain stopped and we went to the park.

Sound familiar? These might work in conversation, but they weaken writing.

Always remember that every word counts in writing.

Finally, you have to be watchful that your regional dialect or slang does not infect your writing. Dialect will differ, of course, depending on your region. Here are some examples:

- The sun is *totally* hot today.
- It's *such a drag* to go to the lecture.
- That was a *radical* movie!

We are not suggesting here that dialect or slang is less valid than Standard English. It is merely a matter of distinguishing between written and spoken English. If you consciously choose to use slang, then it's a writer's choice; otherwise, it's habit.

Assignment

1. This is a two-part assignment. First, write a full-page story using lots of qualifiers, intensifiers, dialect, and/or slang. Have fun with it!

2. Now rewrite the piece, omitting or refining the ineffective sentences.

Send both drafts to your teacher at the end of Lesson 20.

Oak Meadow World Literature

Lesson 29: Figurative Language

Before beginning this week's lesson, we have to establish the difference between *literal* and *figurative* language. Literal language is straightforward—it means what it says. Though it can be complex, there are no "hidden meanings." Figurative language, on the other hand, departs from literal meaning to gain resonance and significance. When you say, "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse," you are using figurative language (because you wouldn't *really* want a horse for lunch!).

In this lesson, we are going to focus on figures of speech, symbolism, and irony. You are probably acquainted with such figures of speech as simile, metaphor, imagery, and personification. We will begin with an in-depth review of these literary tools. We will also try to gain a sophisticated appreciation for them. It is important to remember that these are tools—they are not ends in themselves. As you will see, unless you have a legitimate reason for employing these tools, they come across as pretentious.

Figures of Speech

It's likely that you can define the terms simile, metaphor, and personification. But have you ever tried to employ this figurative language? When is it appropriate and what effect does it have? A good writer knows that these techniques must be used for good reason. First, let's review the terms.

A **simile** is a comparison that uses *like* or *as*: "The squirrels are like children in the playground"; "She drives as fast as a shooting star." Sometimes humorous, sometimes dramatic, a well-chosen simile adds flavor and substance. (Similes are especially common in poetry, but they can also be overused.) They should *add* to the overall meaning, giving it resonance by extending the reader's imagination. Remember that coming up with a clever simile is not enough in itself. It must be appropriate in tone, language and spirit. If you're writing about the potato famine in Ireland, for example, which one of these similes is appropriate?

> *Like a forest overcome by an approaching desert, the potato famine left the poor farmers searching for nourishment.*
>
> *The potato famine was as horrible as filing for bankruptcy.*

Obviously, the tone and the comparison of the second example are not appropriate. Finally, be sure to use similes sparingly. Like all techniques, if overused, similes lose their punch.

World Literature Lesson 29 *(continued)*

While a simile is a direct comparison, a **metaphor** is an implied comparison. Consider the difference between the following simile and metaphor: "Our love is like a flame that will not be extinguished" and "Our love is a flame that will not be extinguished." Here are two more metaphors: "This is a nation of lionhearted citizens" and "the sky is weeping." Now, unless they had a strange heart transplant, citizens are not really "lionhearted." But the metaphor does add color to the more predictable, "This is a nation of courageous citizens." The same applies to the "weeping sky" metaphor. Rain, not tears, falls from the sky. However, if you were having a miserable day, the rain might as well be tears.

This brings up an important point. Since we all see the world filtered through our personal life experiences, metaphors (and other figures of speech) serve a useful purpose: They can capture a *perception* of the world.

This perception is often made clear with **extended metaphors**, which take place when a metaphor expands beyond an image. Here is an example:

> *The rainbow smiled across the valley, its arch a promise of happiness. The rainbow spoke of riches that could not be touched, and the people were one as the message poured through.*

Here, the "smiling rainbow" metaphor gains meaning as it is developed. But if you extended this metaphor much longer, it would probably lose its impact and become dull. Nevertheless, if done right there are no limits to the extension of metaphor. In fact, some books can be entirely metaphorical. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, by L Frank Baum, can be seen as a metaphor for the human journey. Some critics argue that Dorothy's travels and her search for a way home can be interpreted as the search for salvation.

Personification is defined as the attribution of human qualities to a nonhuman or inanimate object. You can probably think of several movies that employ overt personification. Novels such as George Orwell's *Animal Farm* use personification to highlight the evils of political power. Keep in mind that personification does not mean that the object or animal must think or speak—it can simply be described in human terms: "The barbed wire guarded the private acreage." Metaphors and similes often employ personification, as our earlier example, "the sky is weeping," illustrates. Like the other techniques, personification must be used with care.

Symbolism

Symbols are defined as something that represents something else. This something else is usually an abstract idea, though lots of companies (and even some people) have their own symbols. The dove is widely accepted as the symbol of peace, while the cross is the abiding Christian symbol. There is really no limit to what can serve as a symbol: objects, animals, shapes, letters. Flags, of course, are symbolic of countries, states, cities, and so forth. If you pay special attention to the symbols in the world and in your community, you will probably find that we live in a world rich in symbolism.

World Literature Lesson 29 *(continued)*

On a visual level, symbols are quite apparent, especially if they are established ones. In literature, symbolism can also be straightforward: A shooting star crosses the sky when a child is born.

But writing also allows for more complex and subtle symbolism. The writer has room to enrich a popular symbol, either by heightening its relationship to the story or by making the symbol itself have levels of irony (see below). For example, fire is often symbolic of destruction, but it can also mean cleansing and rebirth. This might depend on what is being burned and for what reason. Interestingly, the Nazi swastika is actually derived from a much earlier Hindu symbol, but the Nazi symbol is drawn in reverse. The Hindu swastika is a symbol of renewal and the wheel of life, while the Nazis' version has come to represent racial intolerance. As a writer, you can see that there are lots of opportunities to play with established symbols.

Just as a company comes up with a logo, an author may create original symbols. Something can *come* to be symbolic as the story or poem moves on. For example, let's say a young soldier wants badly to go to war to prove his manhood. He sets off, carrying a rifle that is much too heavy for him. He is afraid of battle and suffers horribly from self-doubt. At this point, the cumbersome rifle is symbolic of the soldier's weakness and of the horrors of war. But by the end of the story, the soldier has grown up, conquered his fears, and fought well. He carries the rifle easily now, and it has come to symbolize his maturity and independence. Finally, he decides he was mistaken about manhood and is sickened by the slaughter. He walks away from the battlefield, leaving his rifle behind, an act that symbolizes, paradoxically, the message of peace.

Developing symbolism is fun. But again, like all techniques, it must be suitable and warranted. Since most objects can carry symbolic meanings, you don't have to look far for material. The magic happens when you *discover* the symbolic resonance as you write.

Irony

You probably know what sarcasm is. Let's say you hate doing chores. You are out shopping and your mom reminds you of your duties. "Yes, Mom, I *really* want to go home and do my chores" is your sarcastic response. This is actually a form of blatant irony; that is, you mean the opposite of what you are saying. **Irony** is more subtle than sarcasm, but operates in the same way. It can exist in many forms, but most often it occurs when the outcome of something is the opposite of what is expected: "It's ironic that they left an hour early to beat traffic, only to arrive late after a tanker spilled gas all over the freeway." If you consider the "rifle" symbol above, you see it is loaded with irony: What began as a symbol of fear and horror became a symbol of independence and peace.

Of all the literary tools we have studied, irony is the most abstract and the most difficult to grasp. It may take a while until you understand it. Ironically, it visits our everyday lives quite often! This brings up an important point: Like the other literary tools, irony works best when it's *integral*. Most writers will tell you that they *discover* irony as they write, just as we discover it in our lives. You will probably find that irony exists in most stories. Returning to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, it is ironic that Dorothy

World Literature Lesson 29 *(continued)*

travels so far and risks so much to return home, when she could have gone home all along. The same applies for the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Lion: They already possessed what they were searching for.

The implication, of course, is that we also have what we are searching for. And that is the beauty of literature: The reader should *experience* with the writer. That is why it is essential that the writer be authentic in using these techniques.

Assignment

This week's lesson has two parts. In the first, you will be identifying literary tools and making up a few of your own. This is meant to help you familiarize yourself with them. It is not intended as a writing strategy. Here are the directions:

1. Drawing from fiction or poetry, find five examples of similes. Write them down, along with the sources they came from. Next, make up five of your own.

2. Do the same with metaphors. You may list metaphorical phrases you are familiar with already, since hunting them down might be too time-consuming. For instance, you can list "Richard the Lionhearted" as an example. Be sure to make up five of your own. Then write at least two extended metaphors.

3. Do the same with personification. You can probably think of five examples from literature. In your own list, try to use subtle personification.

4. Make a list of ten well-known symbols, including their meanings. Add five original ones.

5. Explain the irony involved in three different stories. Next, describe two ironic situations that you have experienced or witnessed.

The second part of the assignment is straightforward: Write a story (at least three pages, typed, double-spaced). *Do not* go out of your way to use similes, metaphors, personification, symbols, or irony. Rather, as your story develops, see if any of these elements evolve naturally. If a description needs to be enriched by a simile, go ahead; the same applies to metaphor or personification. If there is symbolic resonance, follow it. Irony, interestingly enough, usually takes care of itself. When you are done with your story, see if there are any ironic elements.