**Diction: Word Choice** --Read the sentences below and then answer t he questions concerning t he word choice(s) highlighted in each sentence.

Art is t he **antidote** that can call us back from the edge of numbness, restoring the ability to feel for another. -- Barbara Kingsolver, *High Tide in Tucson*

l . By using the word *antidote,* what does t he author imply about the inability to feel for another?

2. If we changed the word *antidote* to *gift,* what effect would it have on t he meaning of the sentence?

As I watched, t he sun broke weakly through, brightened the rich red of t he fawns, and **kindled** their white spots. -- E.B. White, *"Twins." Poems and Sketches of E.B. White*

l . What kind of flame does *kindled* imply? How does t he verb *suit* the sentence?

2. Would the sentence be strengthened or weakened by changing *the sun broke weakly through*

to *the sun burst through?* Explain the effect t his change would have on the use of *kindled.*

Meanwhile, the U.S. Army, **thirsting** for revenge, was **prow ling** the country north and west of the Black Hills, killing Indians wherever they could be found. -- Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*

l. What are the connotations of *thirsting?* What feelings are evoked by this diction?

2. What are the connotations of *prowling?* What kind of animals prowl? What attitude toward the U.S. Army does this diction convey?



**Detail:** Facts, observations and incidents used to develop a subject by creating a precise mental picture.

## Read:

My grandfather took me to the back of his house, to a room that my mother said was private, t hat she had yanked me away from when lance had tried to look. It had a bead curtain at the door and we passed through it and the beads rustled like tall grass. The room was dim, lit by candles, and it smelled of incense, and my grandfather stood me before a little shrine with flowers and a smoking incense bowl and two brass candlesticks and between them a photo of a man in a Chinese mandarin hat.

-- Robert Olen Butler, .Mr. Green," *A Good Scent* from a *Strange Mountain*

## Answer:

I . The first sentence states that the room is private. The author then uses specific detail to illustrate the privacy. How does this detail define and focus the privacy of the room?

2. Most of the passage is filled with detail describing the room. Which detail do you think adds most to the impact of the passage? Why?

## Read:

The truck lurched down the goat pat h, over the bridge and swung south toward El Puerto. I watched carefully all that we left behind. We passed Rosie's house and at the clothesline right at the edge of the cliff there was a young girl hanging out brightly colored garments. She was soon lost in the furrow of dust the truck raised. -- Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima*

## Answer:

1. Circle the words that provide specific detail and contribute to the power of the passage.
2. Contrast the third sentence with *"We passed Rosie's house and saw a girl hanging out the clothes* and explain t he difference in impact.

**Read:**

She was wearing her usual at-home vesture. It consisted mostly of a hoary midnight-blue Japanese kimono. She almost invariably wore it through the apartment during the day. With its many occultish­ looking folds, it also served as the repository for the paraphernalia of a very heavy cigarette smoker and an amateur handyman; two oversized pockets had been added at the hips, and they usually contained two or three packs of cigarettes, several match folders, a screwdriver, a claw-end hammer,

a Boy Scout knife that had once belonged to one of her sons, and an enamel faucet handle or two, plus an assortment of screws, nails, hinges, and ball-bearing casters - all of which tended to make Mrs. Glass chink faintly as she moved about in her large apartment. -- J. D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*

**Answer:**

l . What does the detail in this passage reveal about Mrs. Glass's character? I n other words, how does the detail give you a picture of her looks and insight into her character?

2. How would the meaning of t he fourth sentence *(With its many ... )* be different without t he detail t hat follows t he semicolon?

Imagery: Verbal representation of sensory experience.

Read:

The rainy night had ushered in a misty morning - half frost, half drizzle - and temporary brooks crossed our path, gurgling from the uplands. -- Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*

Answer:

l . Bronte uses both visual and auditory imagery in this passage. Which words create visual images? Which words create auditory images? Which words create both?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Visual | Auditory | Both |
|  | |  |  |
|  | |  |  |
|  | |  |  |

2. What feelings are traditionally associated with rain, mist, and frost? How would the feeling of t his passage be different if the *rainy night had ushered in* a *brilliant, sunny' morning*

Read:

I n t he midst of poverty and want, Felix carried wit h pleasure to his sister t he first little white flower t hat peeped out from beneath t he snowy ground. -- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Answer:

L What do you understand about Felix from t he imagery of this sentence?

2. How would t he effect be different if Felix carried his sister a big bouquet of spring flowers?

Read:

All t he hedges are singing with yellow birds! A boy runs by wit h lemons in his hands.

-- Rita Dove, "Notes From a Tunisian Journal"

Answer:

I . How does the image of the boy in the second line intensify your understanding of the hedges in the first line?

2. How would the effect be different if the second line read, "A boy runs by wit h apples in his hands"?

**Symbols:** A symbol is something that stands for something else. Like metaphors and similes, symbols mean more than they say. However, a symbol means something else *and* itself. In other words, symbols actually appear in the text, but they also represent an idea, something else.

-- Nancy Dean, *Discovering Voice*

## Read:

The one tree in Francie's yard was neither a pine nor a hemlock. It had pointed leaves which grew along green switches which radiated from the bough and made a tree which looked like a lot of opened green umbrellas. Some people called it the Tree of Heaven. No matter where its seed fell, it made a tree which struggled to reach the sky. It grew in boarded-up lots and out of neglected rubbish heaps and it was the only tree that grew out of cement. It grew lushly, but only in the tenement districts. -- Betty Smith, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

# Answer:

l. Remember that a symbol is itself *and* something else. This paragraph is about a tree, but it's also about something else. What is that something else?

## Read

As I reached for the porch to steady myself, there was a sense of quiet movement in the darkness. The moon slid from its dark covers, cloaking the earth in a shadowy white light, and I could see Mr. Morrison clearly, moving silently, like a jungle cat, from t he side of the house to the road, a shotgun in his hand. -- Mildred 0. Taylor, *Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry*

# Answer

1. Traditionally, darkness symbolizes evil and deception, and light symbolizes goodness and truth.

What is going on in this paragraph? How does the use of traditional symbolism help you understand the passage?

1. Mr. Morrison is described as *moving silently, like a -jungle cat.* Is *jungle cat* a symbol? Explain your answer thoroughly.

**Tone:** Tone is t he author's attitude toward his/her audience and subject matter.

## Read:

Rachel/Rachelle and some other twit natter about the movie date before Mr. Stetman starts class. I want to puke. Rachel/Rachelle is just "Andy this" and "Andy that." Could she be more obvious? I close my ears to her stupid asthmatic laugh and work on the homework that was due yesterday. --Laurie H. Anderson. *Speak*

**Answer:**

* 1. What is the attitude of the narrator toward Rachel/Rachelle? Circle and explain the diction, details, and imagery that reveal this attitude.

2. What is the tone of the passage? How do you know? Look at your list of tone words and decide which words best describe the tone of this passage. If you think of new words, add them to the list.

## Read:

It is my observation that dogs feel certain basic emotions like affection, fear, confusion, and joy. I'm not sure they're capable of feeling sadness or jealousy or if they can get their feelings hurt. But I believe a dog can get embarrassed!

Take the Sunbeam clippers to a long-haired dog and see if he doesn't slink off behind the barn.

--Baxter Black, "Dog Emotions," *Cactus Tracks* & *Cowboy Philosophy*

## Answer:

l. Does the narrator like or dislike dogs? How do you know?

2. What is the tone of the passage? How do the detail and diction of the last sentence affect the tone of the passage?

**Figurative Language**

Identify the correct form of figurative language used in each selection. Write the correct word in the blank: *Alliteration, Idiom, Hyperbole, Onomatopoeia, Personification, Metaphor, or Simile (Yes, some lines can have more than one answer).*

l. The savory, salty, sweetness of pancakes and bacon wafted from the kitchen. \_

1. This exercise is as easy as pie.
2. She's short and shrimpy and has shiny hair. \_
3. The sly fox smiled at me as he licked his lips. ----------
4. He made about a billion mistakes in his essay. ----------

6. She never shuts up. ---------------

1. Splat went the squirrel under the wheel of the car! -----------
2. She arrived at her appointment on the dot. ------------
3. The Jello squished in my mouth when I ate it. -------------

10. He is as dumb as a rock ----------------

11. Cars danced across the icy road. ----------

1. We would have had more pizza to eat if Bob hadn't been such a hog. \_
2. Ms. Davis works us like dogs. ----------
3. Cindy was such a mule. We couldn't get her to change her mind. \_
4. Poppy and peter picked up the popcorn. -----------