

QUOTE EXAMPLES and COMMENTARY SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions for Writing Commentary on Characterization

Characters are the individuals who participate in the action of a literary work. Like real people, characters display certain qualities or character traits; they develop and change over time; and they usually have motivations or reasons for their behaviors.

The way a writer creates and develops characters' personalities is known as **characterization**.

There are four basic methods of characterization:

1. The writer may make direct comments about a character's personality or nature through the voice of the narrator.
2. The writer may describe the character's physical appearance.
3. The writer may present the character's own thoughts, speech, and actions.
4. The writer may present pertinent thoughts, speech, and actions of other characters. (What other characters say, feel or act towards another character can reveal important information about the character you are analyzing.)

As you read the novel, search for quotes that reveal something about the character. The quote may/may not be attributed directly to the character. Your commentary should be insightful and thorough.

Examples

Character: Orleanna/page 10

Quote: "We aimed for no more than to have dominion over every creature that moved upon the earth. And so it came to pass that we stepped down there on a place we believed unformed, where only darkness moved on the face of the waters."

This observation by Orleanna is as close to satire as she gets. Her original impression of Africa was that it is a place that they would dominate. She is commenting on the fact that her husband places himself in a god-like position over his family and over the people he is attempting to convert even though he himself is emotionally prostrate before God. The reality is that neither she nor her husband has dominion (control) over themselves, let alone the "creatures" of the earth. The darkness which she imagines to be a part of Africa is in reality blindness in her own heart.

Character: Adah/page 141

Quote: "I wonder that religion can live or die on the strength of a faint, stirring breeze. The scent trail shifts, causing the predator to miss the pounce. One god draws in the breath of life and rises; another god expires."

The quote reflects the fragile nature of her faith. She narrowly escaped being killed by a lion as she was walking back from getting water with Leah. Tata Ndu comes to tell her father that she was killed, not realizing that she was in fact alive. He felt vindication because he had been predicting something would happen if people stopped serving old gods. Adah's comment shows that to her, one's fate is easily swayed by the gods. Her faith is not as firm as it once was.

<i>The Poisonwood Bible</i>	Directions: While reading the novel, find quotes that represent the different characters. Discuss the quote in the commentary section and connect to literary terms or devices. Remember characterization or character development is the focus.	
Character: _____	MAKE A COPY OF THIS PAGE FOR EACH OF THE FIVE MAIN CHARACTERS: Olreanna Price, Leah, Rachel, Adah and Ruth May	Name: _____ Block: _____
(Quotes: 4 separate quotes, noting book and page number/Commentary: Connect quote to literary terms that analyze characterization)		
Quotes	Dialectical Journal Commentary (Incorporate quote explanation into commentary, using a minimum of 5 sentences to complete the character and literary analysis.)	

Name: _____
Block: _____

Date: _____
Pre AP English II

The Poisonwood Bible
Summer Reading Assignment Rubric

Orleanna Price	
Score Quote/Commentary One:	Teacher Comments:
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Score Quote/Commentary Four:	Teacher Comments:
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Score Quote/Commentary Two:	Teacher Comments:
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Leah Price	
Score Quote/Commentary One:	Teacher Comments:
4	
3	
2	
1	

EXAMPLE

Score Quote/Commentary Three:	Teacher Comments:
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Score Quote/Commentary Two:	Teacher Comments:
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Name: _____

Block: _____

Date: _____

Pre AP English II

The Poisonwood Bible

Point Explanation:

- 5 Quote choice and commentary demonstrates depth in understanding of the character, the book or the novel as a whole. Commentary meets the requirements of a four while showing maturity in thought and writing style.
- 4 Quote is a valid choice and is connected to the focus or purpose. Commentary meets the requirements for a three and shows insight and depth of thought.
- 3 Quote choice is connected to the purpose or focus and shows understanding but may lack insight. Commentary does meet minimum requirement of five sentences.
- 2 Quote choice is valid, but commentary may be too short or may not adequately relate to the focus, purpose, and/or the book as a whole. Discussion shows periodic signs of being invalid or lacks understanding.
- 1 Quote is not well chosen or fails to meet requirement. Commentary is minimal or is not in a complete sentence(s). Commentary may also simply restate the quote or action/plot within the novel and not offer any sign of understanding or depth.

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