

Investigating the Prose Question

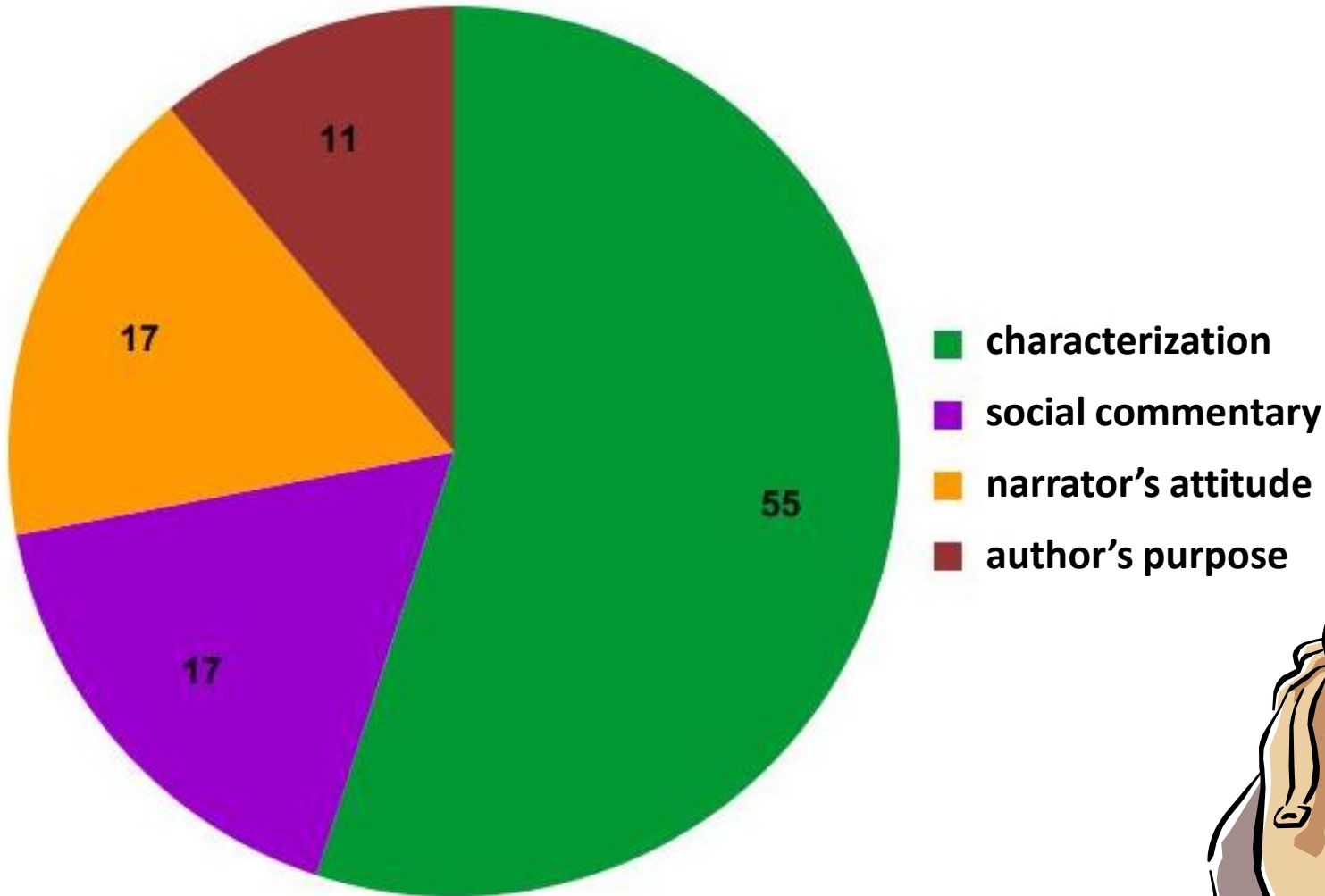


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Prose Prompts from 1998-2008



Prose Prompt Examples

- **55% characterization**

[2007 exam] Read carefully the following passage from Donald Trumbo's novel *Johnny Got His Gun* (1939). Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Trumbo uses such techniques as point of view, selection of detail, and syntax to characterize the relationship between the young man and his father.

- **17% social commentary**

[2006 exam] The following passage is an excerpt from *Lady Windermere's Fan*, a play by Oscar Wilde, produced in 1892. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the playwright reveals the values of the characters and the nature of their society.

- **17% narrator's attitude**

[2005B exam] Read the passage below and write an essay discussing how the characterization in the passage reflects the narrator's attitude toward McTeague. In your essay, consider such elements as diction, tone, detail, and syntax.

- **11% author's purpose**

[2000 exam] In the following passage from *The Spectator* (March 4, 1712), the English satirist Joseph Addison creates a character who keeps a diary. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how the language of the passage characterizes the diarist and his society and how the characterization serves Addison's satiric purpose. You may wish to consider such elements as selection of detail, repetition, and tone.

Literary Concepts to Teach



- **characterization**
- **point of view**
- **tone**
- **satire**

***See handouts for detailed concepts and vocabulary to teach students.**

Organizing the Essay

Introduction:

- Be brief.
- Do not parrot the prompt.
- Compose a thesis that clearly responds to prompt and provides insight into topic. It should provide focus for the essay and should not contain a list.

Body:

- Organize paragraphs according to ideas related to meaning rather than literary device.
- Provide at least two specific textual references as support in each body paragraph.
- Do not allow long quotations to control the paragraph. Use pointed and precise textual references.
- Only include references and literary elements that clearly support the thesis.

Conclusion:

- Do not repeat the thesis.
- Make a thematic connection. Explain what the passage can teach us about the human experience.



Incorporating Evidence

1. ***Expose***

After clearly expressing an idea, introduce the evidence and provide context.

2. ***Excerpt***

Cite the evidence. When using a quotation, introduce it at the beginning of sentence.

3. ***Explain***

Provide an explanation of the significance of the evidence and reveal how the evidence supports your idea.

Example :

In *As I Lay Dying*, Cash's acts of devotion reveal that love, a verb more than a noun, is selfless. Before her death, he toils to make his mother's life less burdensome, completing Jewel's chores—"work that pa still thought Jewel was doing and that ma thought Dewey Dell was doing" (119)—without recognition. As Addie dies, Cash labors unceasingly in the rain, "soaked, scrawny, and tireless" (69), to construct a coffin that will provide a fitting burial for his mother. Cash functions without concern for himself and conveys the theme that love involves action instead of words.

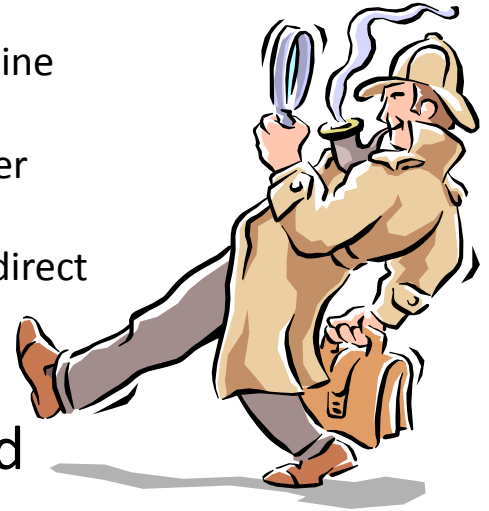
Prose Prompt Practice

1. Require characterization analysis for assigned novels.

Example: Jane Austen wrote about Emma, “I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like.” She is certainly a complex character, one whose strengths may be equaled or outnumbered by her flaws. As you read *Emma*, focus on the ways in which Austen reveals Emma’s complex character by choosing **four** quotations of direct or indirect characterization. In a detailed paragraph for each, explain how the quotation illuminates Emma’s character.

- Ask students to analyze point of view in assigned novels.

Your task is to analyze McEwan’s use of shifting point of view in the four sections of *Atonement*. How does McEwan’s choice to use different points of view in each section affect the reader’s understanding of events and characters? For each section, you must compose a unified analysis of 250-500 words, beginning with a clearly stated central idea about how the point of view functions in that section and supported with textual evidence. You need to integrate into your analysis four supporting quotations that clearly illustrate the point of view and support your central idea.



Punctual Prose Prompt Practice



- **5 minutes:**
Craft thesis statement and concluding thematic statement.
- **10 minutes:**
Write thesis statement and list of four supporting details, identifying literary devices.
- **15 minutes:**
Create thesis statement, outline, and concluding thematic statement.
- **40 minutes:**
Compose an entire essay.