

## **Reading Standards Part II:**

### **Craft and Structure**

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Parts and the Whole:

Interpret words from context, How structure pieces connect,  
Point of view shapes content and style

The Anchor Standards for Section Two, Craft and Structure are:

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

This second group of three Standards address vocabulary, connotation, figurative meanings, word choice, tone, how text pieces connect, and how point of view or purpose shape content and style, all essential reading skills to comprehend text fully, and to deepen critical reading and critical thinking. These are skills that can begin to be taught in early grade levels.

If the author's purpose is to entertain, the reader may not see this until a bit later in the reading. If the author has a strong point of view on the topic, this may be stated in the first few sentences, certainly wrapped up to convey the point of view in the conclusion.

Words have different meanings depending on the context. The classic poem "Casey at the Bat" (see poem below) has clear movement from stanza to stanza. In the first stanza, "The outlook wasn't good for Mudville . . . a pall-like silence fell." Then hopes rose, "From five thousand throats and more there rose a lusty yell; . . . For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat." In the last line of the poem, "There is no joy in Mudville." Here we have connotation of the town's name, Mudville, context clues for the meaning of the words "pall-like" and "lusty" and clear point of view in each stanza as the poem—and the entire citizenry of Mudville -- move from gloom and doom to great hope back to despair.

Narrative poems are exemplars of pieces relating to each other and the whole. With such strong examples of how words are used in context, movement in a text, and how purpose shapes content and style, all students can learn the Craft and Structure concepts. We find Mentor texts appropriate to the students and grade level and gradually apply these concepts to more subtle text; we practice use of context clues for meaning with all text; and read for author's purpose, pointing to content and the style – language used, details cited, information provided, word choice,

A sports reporter doesn't shy away from expressing frustration and anguish in a lost game, nor exultation in winning. The statement, "The Patriots were worse than terrible," writes one sports writer after a humiliating 41 – 14 football defeat. This is not subtle. There's no lack of clarity in author's point of view. Word choice shapes meaning and tone here. Word connotation, such as the town of "Mudville" suggests a sluggish town that looks to their hero the mighty Casey to uplift their spirits, bring joy to their dreary lives, stuck in the mud. "Puddle-wonderful" in the poem "In Just-Spring" (see poem below) conveys a joyous tone. With informational text, how pieces connect with the lead sentence, title, subtitle, and conclusion are essential for comprehension.

This cluster of Craft and Structure in Standards Four through Six that stress word choice, structure, point of view shaping content and style, are all areas that often have been taught only to more advanced classes. But research and experience inform us that all students can understand such concepts. Moreover, sharpening reading with these skills adds to reading pleasure as well as comprehension. And sharpening reading promotes critical thinking. Students learn critical reading; discern author's purpose.

Craft – how the writer shapes a work with language – is first taught with clear examples. Children's book author Kate Feiffer is an example of a writer who always has an upbeat, happy tone to her work. Children can identify words that lead to this light-hearted tone. This author's point of view is always a fun, warm, humorous one, one that may start with a discouraged or perplexed child and leads to a happy ending.

We can use as Mentor Texts such as Edgar Allen Poe's short stories for a dark, horror story tone; Shakespeare's poetic style varies with his characters such as Romeo's passionate nature, the Nurse's crude expression; Robert Frost's simple word choice and use of nature convey ideas; e.e. cummings' upbeat, joyful child-like words convey a child's voice; and Emily Dickenson's tight, simple style hides depth of thought. All are different styles. Short poems, brief stories and read alouds can develop children's ability with learning how words convey varied meanings and authors purpose. Once seen in simple text, then the skill is applied to other more complex and more subtle text.

Newspaper opinion pieces teach point of view and purpose to shape content and style. Word choice and tone are seen clearly in selected newspaper opinion pieces, which can be used as mentor texts. One teacher obtained weekly delivery of a no-cost class set of the local newspaper for weekly study of word choice, tone, how pieces connect, and point of view. Students select strong examples from the newspaper, using readings close to home, bringing relevance.

Structure – how sentences and paragraphs relate to each other and the whole – can be taught with clear examples. The structure of a news report article can be examined for how information is presented for clarity for the reader, and also to capture the reader’s interest. The vignettes of the classic To Kill a Mockingbird or any lengthier novel relate to the whole.

### **Reading for Meaning Includes Skills Learning**

We can read the classic, commonly taught texts for pleasure and meaning while also teaching the skills of reading comprehension and these three higher skills of the area of craft and structure. A focus in Craft and Structure is on writer’s use of language to present a case or tell a story. Stressing the how and why of what the text presents doesn’t take away from love of content, ideas and meaning. Learning these reading Standards enhances students’ appreciation of the text and deepens understanding.

### **Word Choice**

Standard Four focuses on word meaning. Developing vocabulary and nuance open the door to comprehension. Standard Four states, “Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text.” This Standard includes the use of context clues to determine word meaning, a skill that must be explicitly, repeatedly, developed, with more complex text taught at each grade level to develop vocabulary and enhance comprehension. In Shakespeare’s famous lines, we have the familiar “Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? / Deny thy father and refuse thy name.” This is often interpreted as Juliet asking Romeo *where* he is. “Wherefore” is interpreted as “where.” But when we simply go to the next line for context, “Deny thy father and refuse thy name,” we see that “wherefore” actually means “why.” Why are you a Montague? Romeo’s family name is that of Juliet’s family’s worst enemy. Context is everything.

Connotation and technical meaning in Standard Four can be hurdles to learning or create meaning. We may have to re-read a sentence to see a particular connotation missed on the first reading. Many technical words aren't understood through context. Often we must turn to a dictionary, on-line or text, building vocabulary. Learning Latin roots immensely aid vocabulary development.

Teaching that words have different connotations helps vocabulary and comprehension.

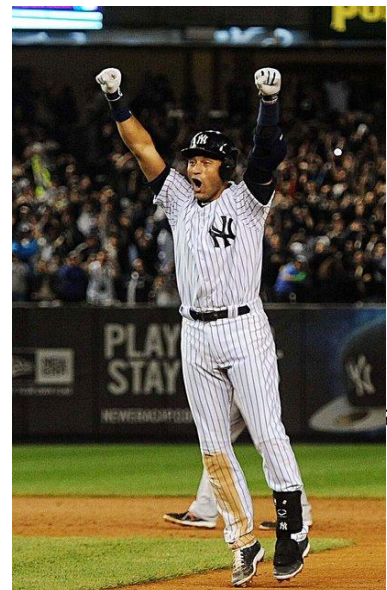
The word "snow" has varied connotations. Snow can mean a happy time for a child to go sledding, build a snow man, or conveys an annoying chore of shoveling, a barrier to getting to work for commuters, a happy no-school day for many, yet another cancelled school day interrupting school work (and adding a day in June) for others, or a good time to shovel and pick up extra cash for some older students. The simple word "snow" has varied connotative associations depending on our point of view. Cummings' "puddle-wonderful" in the poem "In Just-spring" shows delight in connotations of splashing in a puddle of water, not an adult's view.



Sports writers use colorful and advanced high level vocabulary; they care passionately about their field. Sports writers don't condescend. They write with enthusiasm, identifying with and delighting their comrades in love of the sport. Vocabulary is sophisticated, opportune for use of context clues instruction.

Technical terms may be understood by the students who follow the sport; incomprehensible to the teacher.

Sentences are complex. Writers argue that their team is magnificent or worst ever. Point of view isn't hidden. Last night's game was either a disaster or a thrill. Fans seek solace in their compatriot's writing, share joy in the





thrilling language, figurative language, and hyperbole. Selective use of these articles can become Mentor Texts for connotation, tone, language, use of context clues to build vocabulary, how point of view shapes content and style, imagery. Timeliness of an athletic competition compels close reading. Last night's game ignites

interest. A win is a joy to read about; a loss is an opportunity to parse language. Students can write their own views, conjuring images and using powerful verbs and hyperbole to convey tone. Best writing is read aloud in class, which may come from sports enthusiasts not normally otherwise engaged in text analysis. Students may condemn their heroes or praise them.



Figurative language is stated in Standard Four. Sports writers instinctively use figurative language to color their message, their point of view. Figurative language, again a traditionally taught reading skill, conjures images to convey meaning. Using figurative language, a sports writer compares one brilliant but laconic coach to the sleep-inducing power of NyQuil in his press talks. The writer knows a



simile, metaphor or image adds power to a thought. The laconic but lauded coach “has as much personality as a coffee-table book about coffee tables and could put NyQuil out of business with a press conference greatest hits CD” writes a *New York Daily News* columnist,

The narrative poem “The Highwayman” by Alfred Noyes conveys ominous, dark point of view, with the figurative language overshadowing musicality of the rhythm:

*The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,  
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon stormy seas,  
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,  
And the highwayman came riding –  
Riding – riding –  
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.*

One sixth grade teacher uses a Katy Perry *YouTube* clip to teach figurative language from a song. It sticks with her students. Figurative language adds meaning to reading. By interpreting the figurative language we grasp author's point of view, and enrich understanding. Using powerful examples to teach the skill, and referring back to these strong examples, is important for learning how words shape meaning and tone. When the umpire calls the first strike on Casey, the simile used to describe the Mudville fans' attitude conveys rage, vivid in this image:

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,  
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore

Teaching figurative language is not a new reading skill, but stressed with Common Core, and fun to teach. When taught with powerful examples that are close to the students – better yet, students create similes and metaphors, doing the work, for retention -- the Standard then is more easily grasped and retained. Simple comparisons stress the skill, as with “It was dark as \_\_\_\_\_. The full moon was \_\_\_\_\_. An unexpected “no school” snow day is \_\_\_\_\_. Figurative language conveys a new layer of meaning. Common Core Standard Four rightfully stresses not simply recognizing the terms, but “how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.”

Standard Five is “Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.”

Again, this attention to pieces of text is easily taught first with simple text, and then taught with increasingly more complex text. Standard Five applies to informational text. A simple newspaper hard news article can be used to teach the importance of headline, lead sentence, story organization, final lines. As with all the Standards, when we come across a good, strong example of how pieces of text relate to the whole, this is a treasure that we use to reinforce the understanding.

Standard Five is an especially important Standard to comprehend non-fiction informational text. Students must know to review a table of contents, chapter titles, introductions, and index to understand how the pieces fit together as a whole and how each piece is key to understanding the text. Ideally this is taught initially with an appealing Mentor Text close to the particular students, again then moving to more complex challenging text to pin down the skill.

An activity for any grade level could be to cut up a text into different sections and have students work together in small groups to put them together in order, to comprehend the whole. With manual technology, students may work together to move text boxes around, then present their organization via a Smartboard, explaining their reasoning to the class. Adding irrelevant text to the text pieces and asking students to exclude what they see as irrelevant increases students' understanding of this skill of Standard Five. Learning by doing increases understanding and retention.

Standard Six is “Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text,” another a high level thinking Standard that can be taught at any age. We ask, How does first person narrator shape this story? How would this story change if it were told from this other character's point of view? How does the fact that the story is from this character's point of view shape the style of the expression, word choice, selective details and information? Why is it important that *The Diary of Anne Frank* is from first person point of view? How does this affect our reading?

The classic text *Catcher in the Rye's* narrator Holden Caulfield seeking the best in people, abhorring what he sees as “phoniness,” tells us much about Holden. This Mentor Text illustrates how point of view shapes content and style. We love Holden's admiration for those with his values, understand his disdain for hypocrisy. Holden holds goodness precious; has no use for pretense. Salinger speaks to adolescents. Holden is the young person's version of author Kingsley Amis' character in *Lucky Jim*, a self-described “crap detector,” who feels he should be sent in to a room to determine the level of meaningless, simpleminded exchange.



Satire is also a strong example of how purpose shapes content and style. When the state of Utah voted that guns are permitted on state college campuses, a brilliant professor protested in *The New York Times* the response, “When Can I Shoot My Students?” -- a satirical case for self-defense. Short poems illustrate point of view shaping content and style. We collect these as exemplars, to illustrate this reading analysis understanding of how author’s purpose shapes text.

Craft and structure knowledge deepen text understanding while helping students to be better readers, taking a step away to see how the story is shaped, and how purpose shapes the text. As one becomes a critical reader, critical thinking develops and extends beyond reading text to life views.

Many texts available at varied reading levels can be strong readings to teach these areas. A rich text that fits well with one’s students, can be used for more than one purpose.

IN Just-  
spring when the world is mud-  
luscious the little  
lame baloonman  
whistles far and wee  
  
and eddieandbill come  
running from marbles and  
piracies and it's  
spring  
when the world is puddle-wonderful  
the queer  
old baloonman whistles  
far and wee  
and bettyandisbel come dancing  
from hop-sotch and jump-rope and  
it's  
spring  
and the  
goat-footed  
balloonMan whistles  
far  
and  
wee



*e e cummings (1894-1962)*

## Casey at the Bat

1. The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day:  
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play,  
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,  
A pall-like silence fell upon the patrons of the game.
2. A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest  
Clung to the hope which springs eternal in the human breast;  
They thought, "If only Casey could but get a whack at that—  
We'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat."
3. But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,  
And the former was a hoodoo, while the latter was a cake;  
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,  
For there seemed but little chance of Casey getting to the bat.
4. But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,  
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;  
And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,  
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.
5. Then from five thousand throats and more there rose a lusty yell;  
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;  
It pounded on the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,  
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.
6. There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;  
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile lit Casey's face.  
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,  
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.
7. Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;  
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;  
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,  
Defiance flashed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.
8. And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,  
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.  
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—  
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one!" the umpire said.
9. From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,  
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;  
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted someone on the stand;  
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

10. With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;  
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;  
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the dun sphere flew;  
But Casey still ignored it and the umpire said, "Strike two!"

11. "Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered "Fraud!"  
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.  
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,  
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

12. The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate,  
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;  
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,  
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

13. Oh, somewhere in this favoured land the sun is shining bright,  
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;  
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,  
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.

by Ernest Lawrence Thayer

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- See more poetry at:

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15500#sthash.XcQdxNsS.dpuf>

Socratic Seminar Fishbowl inner circle discussion questions example:

1. Read the poem to yourself, Then read aloud twice (two people volunteer)
2. What brief story is in this poem? What words and phrases convey this? (Standard 1)
3. How do individuals, events, ideas develop over the course of the poem? (Standard 3)
4. What is the tone (sad, happy, angry) of this poem, How does it change?
5. What words contribute to the tone? **What words develop tone?** (Standard 4)
6. What is the central idea of this poem? Provide key supporting details (Standard two)

7. What is a life lesson you can find from this poem? (Reading for meaning)

8. How does the form (rhyme and rhythm) help convey meaning?

9. Where is irony?

10. What do these words mean, **how do you know (Use context clues for vocabulary)** What **context clues** provide clues to the meaning of each of these words?

Stanza 1: Died (line 3) pall. Stanza 3: Hoo doo, cake, melancholy Stanza 5: Dell, recoiled

Stanza 6: Doffed Stanza 8: haughty grandeur Stanza 10:visage, dun sphere

Standard 11:fraud