

Recognizing Allusions in Literature

Purpose: Literature satisfies basic emotional needs.

1. Students will increase their sense of belonging to a culture when they understand the symbols within it.
2. Students will increase their sense of achievement as they learn to recognize those symbols for themselves.
3. Students will enjoy the novelty – have fun – finding allusions.
4. Students will be encouraged to enjoy the freedom to find allusions in their own independent reading.

Book: King, Thomas. A Coyote Solstice. Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2009.

Lesson:

Before the story...

1. What is the solstice?
 - a. Shortest day of the year in December
2. What holiday comes after the solstice?
 - a. Christmas
3. What is the meaning of Christmas?
 - a. During the darkest days of the year, there is hope for peace among all people.
4. What is a coyote?
 - a. An animal common in indigenous stories of North America
5. What is the symbolism of a coyote?
 - a. A trickster
6. What might happen in this story?

While reading the story aloud...

Read so as to slightly emphasize the rhyming text.

Somewhere along, ask students to notice the literary device used. Once they notice the rhymes, ask why writers use rhyming. Answer: to create humour.

Key questions if you don't follow this guide:

1. What do you notice?
2. What is your evidence?
3. What else do you notice?

Questions you can use:

1. Read first page of text.
 - a. What is the setting of the story?
 - b. What time of year is it?
2. Read second page of text.
 - a. What is the mood at a feast?

- b. Why do people hold a feast?
3. Read 3rd page of text.
 - a. What is the mood in the forest?
 - i. Dark because the light is blocked
 - b. What animal is known to prance?
 - i. Reindeer
 - c. What is coming what when reindeer arrive?
 - i. Christmas and gifts
4. Read the 4th page of text aloud.
 - a. Why are Coyote's arms outspread?
 - i. A symbol of welcome
5. Read the 5th page of text aloud.
 - a. Who, in folklore, dresses in red?
 - i. Little Red Riding Hood
 - b. What do you know about her?
 - i. She gets lost in the woods
 - c. What is she dressed as and how do you know?
 - i. Rudolph: sticks in hair and red ball on nose
 - d. Why does she dress as a reindeer?
 - i. A symbol of Rudolph who will guide through darkness to bring joy and peace
 - e. Why does she have a green teddy bear?
6. Read the 6th page of text aloud.
 - a. How does the writer show that he is deliberately creating a mythical mood?
 - i. Acknowledges people and animals no longer really speak to each other
 - b. Why deliberately show that this is a myth?
 - i. Readers are supposed to understand that this is not just a humorous story but has a deeper life lesson.
7. Read 7th page of text aloud.
 - a. To what does coyote's question refer?
 - i. Little Red Riding Hood talked to the wolf, although she wasn't supposed to.
 - b. Why does the author put the question into the story?
 - i. To create suspense
8. Read 8th page of text aloud.
 - a. What will be that life lesson?
 - i. Something about goodwill and peace
 - b. In what setting will that peace be found?
 - i. In the world of nature: of animals and the woods
9. Read the 9th page of text aloud.
 - a. Why have a star-brightened meadow?
 - i. In the midst of darkness, there is hope
 - ii. Stars are a symbol of hope in the Christmas story
10. Read the 10th page of text aloud.

- a. What is the meaning of Christmas?
 - i. People are lost and need someone to help them. Jesus comes to help.
 - b. Who leaves a trail in folklore?
 - i. Hansel and Gretel, who are orphans and get waylaid by a witch in the woods.
- 11. Read the 11th page of text aloud.
 - a. How does the author set the old folktales upside down?
 - i. Animals are the rescuers in this story.
- 12. Read the 12th page of text aloud.
 - a. Why the question?
 - i. Create suspense
- 13. Read the 13th page of text aloud.
 - a. In the Christmas story, what lights up the sky?
 - i. The star that the shepherds followed
 - b. What did that star lead to?
 - i. Baby Jesus, a symbol of hope
 - c. How do you know that author wants you think of Jesus?
 - i. “wonder and fear” are from the story and the Christmas carols
 - ii. the star is new and hasn’t been seen before
- 14. Read the 14th page of text aloud.
 - a. Why the warning?
 - i. Create suspense
 - ii. Tell that this story will be different than the Christmas story
- 15. Read the 15th and 16th and 17th page of text aloud.
 - a. How can we tell that the mall will not bring true peace?
 - i. “faux-marble floors” and “lights were dynamic and hot”
 - ii. “noise...unnerving”, “music a pain”, “bumping and pushing”
 - iii. “rough herds of humans”, “murderous looks”
- 16. Read the 18th page of text aloud.
 - a. Who is fooled?
 - i. Coyote
 - b. In the Christian mythology, who is fooled and is there a good outcome?
 - i. Eve and no
 - ii. She wants something that will not bring her peace with God but instead promote individuality and setting oneself above others, the very opposite of peace
- 17. Read the 19th and 20th page of text aloud.
 - a. How do the items reflect the animals?
 - b. How does the bill allude to the hidden cost of greed?
- 18. Read the 21st and 22nd and 23rd page of text aloud.
 - a. How does modern life encourage greed?
 - b. Why does the author use the word “excess”?
 - c. How does the author show that people don’t realize the cost of their greed until too late?

19. Read the 24th page of text aloud.
 - a. Why are the stars so resplendent outside the mall?
 - i. There is still hope in this world if you escape greed?
 - b. Why does the girl dress as a reindeer and what does nature represent in this story?
 - i. Respect for the earth will lead us to a better world
20. Read the 25th page of text aloud.
 - a. Why does the author have the girl only be allowed to visit once a year?
 - i. The younger generation is our only hope in this world
 - ii. Slowly, our materialistic culture may change with the next generation.
21. Read the 26th and 27th page of text aloud.
 - a. Why the reference to a “light in the east”?
 - i. The Christmas story has a light in the east to symbolize hope
 - b. Why have the animals “stroll” and coyote says he will have to wait for “refreshments”?
 - i. The change from greed to sharing will not happen quickly.
 - ii. Our earth is not being properly cared for at present and it may be some time until people change their ways.
22. Read the 28th to 30th page of text aloud.
 - a. Does the author believe there is hope in the world?
 - i. Yes: “light filled the heavens”
23. Read the 31st page of text aloud.
 - a. Why does the story end with Coyote thinking that peace could be purchased at the mall?
 - i. Humour
 - ii. Coyote is a symbol for a trickster in indigenous mythology
 - iii. A reminder that we readers, we people, should not be tricked

After the story...

Do you agree or disagree with the theme of this story?

What other stories have you heard or read that are similar to this story?

How can peace really be found in this world?

What can we do to help bring peace to this world?