

Cambridge O Level Literature in English 2010

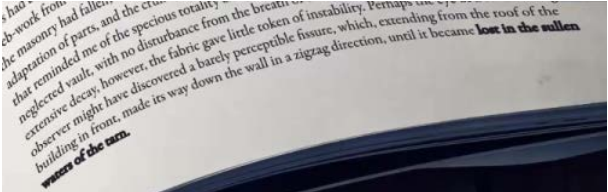
Teacher notes: Prose AO2

Note: These teacher notes accompany a video available on Resource Plus.

AO2: Understand the meanings of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond surface meanings to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes.

Visuals	Notes
	<i>'Son Coeur est un luth suspendu; Sitot qu'on le touche il résonne.'</i> Wow! I thought I was taking Literature in ENGLISH! This is from the start of Poe's <i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i>. And there is a complexity of meanings. In fact, all of the Prose texts on the Set Text list for Cambridge IGCSE Literature in English, Paper 1, communicate meanings • on different levels • in different ways, and • at different stages of your narratives. This is more obvious in Poe's opening epigraph, than it is in any of the other texts. It means that you must translate the meaning from another language. But, no matter what text you have chosen, the problem of how to unpack the layers of meaning in a manageable and understandable way is often an ongoing battle.
AO2: 'Understand the meanings of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond surface meanings to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes.'	However, it is a battle you must win as assessment objective 2 requires that you to: 'Understand the meanings (plural!) of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond surface meanings to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes.'

Visuals	Notes				
 AO2: 'Understand the meanings of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond <u>surface meanings</u> to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes.' △ Know what it is Understand what other types of meaning there are Know how to comment upon the effects that they create	Perhaps a good way of thinking about surface meanings and other meanings is to recall Lewis Carroll's <i>Alice In Wonderland</i>. Before Alice goes through the rabbit hole and discovers a world of reality and meaning she never imagined existed, all she knew was the regular, everyday surface meaning of her existence. Her eyes and mind were never exposed to the layers of hidden meaning that existed beyond this. It is like Alice (before she plunges through the rabbit hole), when you read a text for the first time as your mind tends to focus on the narrative events, the surface meanings, rather than the writer's hidden, implied and figurative meanings. So, what does this require you to do in your essay responses? The assessment objective AO2 mentions surface meaning. Therefore, it is important that the you • know what it is • understand what other types of meaning there are, and • know how to comment upon the effects that they create. A good starting point in this would be to explore the word meanings. • How can there be more than one meaning to a text? • What is the 'surface meaning of a text'? • What other types of meanings are there (for example, hidden, implied, and figurative)? • How is a text able to communicate more than one meaning?				
<table border="1"> <tr> <th data-bbox="210 1034 434 1066">Surface meanings:</th><th data-bbox="546 1034 786 1091">Hidden, implied and figurative meanings</th></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="210 1070 472 1187"> Narrative/events How characters think and behave Relationships between characters Themes Settings </td><td data-bbox="546 1098 674 1283"> Dramatic irony Narrative style Red Herrings Foreshadowing Symbolism Allegory Imagery Use of flashback </td></tr> </table>	Surface meanings:	Hidden, implied and figurative meanings	Narrative/events How characters think and behave Relationships between characters Themes Settings	Dramatic irony Narrative style Red Herrings Foreshadowing Symbolism Allegory Imagery Use of flashback	Here's a way of looking at the two layers of meaning to help consolidate ideas. For surface meanings think about narrative, how the characters think and behave, the relationships between characters, the themes of the text and the settings. For hidden, implied and figurative meanings – explore the effects of dramatic irony, narrative style, red herrings, foreshadowing, symbolism, allegory, imagery, use of flashback.
Surface meanings:	Hidden, implied and figurative meanings				
Narrative/events How characters think and behave Relationships between characters Themes Settings	Dramatic irony Narrative style Red Herrings Foreshadowing Symbolism Allegory Imagery Use of flashback				

Visuals	Notes
	What makes up the surface meanings of a text constitute your literal understandings of the events, characters and how you understand the writer's messages. Yet, the surface meanings are the tip of the iceberg, not the hidden bulk below. The hidden, implied and figurative (or allegorical) meanings need to be explored and unpacked carefully as these contain the writer's key ideas. They aid us in grasping a more secure and in-depth ownership of both the events, and the writer's messages. If you like, these other meanings are what give the text its buoyancy. Therefore, a careful consideration of more hidden and complicated meanings enables you to develop explanations and analysis that maximises your chances of achieving higher marks in the exam. But remember to support your ideas with detailed reasons, and link your ideas to the focus of the essay question.
	Ok, let's go back to Edgar Allen Poe's <i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i>, and look at the narrator's first observations of the House of Usher. Look at the first five paragraphs of the text ending with the line '...lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.' A way to unpack the surface meaning here would be to consider what descriptions of the setting add to the sense of atmosphere at the start of the story and how these descriptions help create a strong feeling of tension and suspense. Then explore how these descriptions convey ideas about the narrator's apprehension and fear of entering the place. To help explore the figurative, implied and hidden meanings explore the symbolism contained in these descriptions. Think about, how the descriptions of the House of Usher helps to communicate meanings about Roderick, his sister and the Usher family. An obvious example would be the 'fissure' that runs down the building as he arrives. How does this structural crack represent similarities in the Usher family and in the character of Roderick? Explore how these descriptions give clues about subsequent events and how they foreshadow later parts of the story?

Visuals

- 1) Explore your **first impressions of setting, a character** (or narrator, or characters) after reading up to an appropriate point of the story or novel. Once you have finished reading the novel reflect on initial thoughts and feelings and identify examples of **foreshadowing** in the first few pages. Support these ideas at all times with **quotations** from the text.

- 2) After reading the whole text. Select 4 or 5 quotations that give ideas about character, setting, events or atmosphere. Then complete a table:

Quotation	Surface meaning	Symbolism
Character quotation		
Setting quotation		
Atmosphere quotation		

"insert quotation" This means that.../ This emphasises .../ This highlights .../ This shows .../ This suggests... because/as/ since... However/At the same time, this also makes the reader feel .../ this implies .../ this conveys the idea that... ...because/as/since...



Notes

Here are some other activities to help secure your knowledge and understandings of a text's meanings.

AO1 is an important part of any investigation of meanings as you must always be able to illustrate your ideas by referring to evidence from the text. Any explanation of meaning must be rooted in evidence from the text (whether it is a passage-based question or a question about the whole text). In other words, if you were to make a claim about the text (surface or figurative) this must be supported with a quotation, an explanation and analysis in line with the writer's intended meanings, themes and messages.

So how can you make use of these layers of meaning in your examination responses?

Well, there are a number ways of utilising your knowledge of the surface and hidden meanings of a text. It is important to look at the layers of meaning.

Use these sentence starters to help form explanations and analysis of quotations to discuss both the surface and figurative meanings of a text, in an examination response.

'His heart is a tightened lute;

As soon as one touches it, it echoes.'

The Epigraph of Poe's Gothic short story offers much in terms of preparing the reader for the surface meaning of the text, and signalling the important meanings relating to the character of Roderick (and perhaps, the narrator) as well as the story's events. After the first reading, this is the entrance to the rabbit hole!

Here are some words which you may want to check your understanding of:

Your notes	
epigraph	
dramatic irony	
hidden, implied and figurative meanings	
narrative style	
red herrings	
symbolism	
allegory	
Imagery	
flashback	

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