How to choose literature

⁻ Books Children Love (Wilson)

⁻ Honey for a Child’s Heart (Hunt)

⁻ Excellence in Literature’s five-year classics list

⁻ Beware of literary indigestion (too many heavy classics, too soon)
Why literature seems hard

- Wide vocabulary
- Wordiness
- Complex sentence construction
- Archaic references
Good books prepare the mind for great books

- Little House series
- Anne of Green Gables
- Island of the Blue Dolphins
- Little Britches
- Little Colonel books
- Chronicles of Narnia
- Hank the Cowdog
- Landmark Biographies
- Old Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew
- G.A. Henty
- Across Five Aprils
- Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farms
- Johnny Tremain
- Emily of New Moon
- Wind in the Willows
- Redwall series (Jacques)
- Noel Streatfeild
- Ruth Fielding, Cherry Ames, Beverly Grey
How do you eat an elephant?

- One bite at a time!
- Daily reading time
- “Right” length of time based on age and ability
Context clues

- Who is the author, and what was his/her life like?
- What’s going on at that time in history?
- What music, art, and poetry were being created and discussed?
Three types of context

1- Author profile
2- Cultural context—art, music, literature
3- Historical context

Keep context items brief
Remember, context is the setting, not the focus
Author information

- Write a brief author profile, including:
  - Major events, accomplishments
  - Great quote or most famous work
  - Writing associates
  - Other points of interest
Resources for cultural context

- **Music**: concerts, online classic radio stations, etc.
  - Sample music clips at [www.ClassicalArchives.com](http://www.ClassicalArchives.com)

- **Art**: art museums and classes
  - Art history book (chronologically arranged)

- **Literature**: Chronologically-organized anthologies (Norton, etc.) provide a broader look at writing trends and culture of the time
Add historical context

- Overview from the encyclopedia or authoritative online sites
  - For formal research, cite only reliable sources (not Wikipedia)

- Timeline for chronology and visual organization
  - Example: QuickStudy Chart (pre-made) or TimeFrame Timeline (you record information)

- College textbooks can be useful for history overview
  - Example: Western Civilization (Spielvogel)
Literary Period: Examples

- Literary periods reveal general worldview and focus of the period.
  - Renaissance: Shakespeare, Cervantes
  - Neo-Classical: John Milton, Ben Franklin, Jonathan Swift
  - Romanticism: Sir Walter Scott, Wordsworth
  - Victorian: Dickens, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville
  - Realism: Mark Twain, George Eliot, George Bernard Shaw
  - Edwardian: Edith Wharton, Joseph Conrad
  - Modernism: Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway, W.B. Yeats
Learn from the Literary Period

- Literature changed through time in response to historic events and philosophic shifts
  - Focus and themes reflect changing values of place and time
  - Heroic type: movement from heroic ideal to anti-hero
  - Intended audience: movement from aristocracy to commoners
  - Literary form/style, e.g. epic poetry, Greek tragedy, allegory, stream of consciousness, etc.

- Changes are visually and aurally reflected in the art and music of the period
# Excellence in Literature’s Literary Period Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Period</th>
<th>Approximate Dates</th>
<th>Focus/Subjects/Themes</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medieval</td>
<td>A.D. 500-1500</td>
<td>Focuses on the heroic ideal Christian in its themes after 7th C.</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon literature</td>
<td>Beowulf</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Everyday people/situations Christian in its themes after 7th C.</td>
<td>Based on oral storytelling</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Written for aristocracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renaissance/Reformation</td>
<td>1500-1660</td>
<td>Age of exploration and expansion</td>
<td>Bold, intricate plots</td>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Classical learning/humanities</td>
<td>Early poems used elaborate technique</td>
<td>Edmund Spenser</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Function of true religion</td>
<td>Later poetry featured odes and sonnets</td>
<td>John Donne</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Form and structure of government</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anne Bradstreet</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Focus on love (both romantic and Platonic)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Psychological and moral analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neoclassical</td>
<td>1800-1865</td>
<td>Saw man as a limited being in a hierarchical society</td>
<td>Simplicity, clarity, order</td>
<td>Benjamin Franklin</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Discover meaning in the order of things</td>
<td>Restraint, regularity</td>
<td>Daniel Defoe</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Placed society before the individual</td>
<td>Imitated Roman writers such as Virgil</td>
<td>Jonathan Swift</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Valued human reason over natural passions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic</td>
<td>1800-1865</td>
<td>Saw the individual as god</td>
<td>Emotion, imagination, and intuition valued above reason and restraint</td>
<td>Sir Walter Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Belief in man’s innate goodness, equality, and potential for achievement</td>
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<td>James Fenimore Cooper</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Nature as a symbol of freedom</td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry David Thoreau</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Scenic beauty as a model for harmony</td>
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<tr>
<td>Realist - Naturalist</td>
<td>1840-1914</td>
<td>Saw the individual as a common man</td>
<td>Works dealt with issues such as industrialization, poverty, and inequality</td>
<td>Charles Dickens</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Realists sought to portray the world and man realistically</td>
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<td>Broteh sisters</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Interested in the relationship between traditional religion and new philosophies such as Darwinism</td>
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<td>Mark Twain</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Saw the individual as a helpless animal for whom free will was only an illusion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Belief that chance, rather than Providence or Fate, determined man’s destiny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modernist</td>
<td>1900-1945</td>
<td>Belief that all traditional structures of human life—religious</td>
<td>Fragmented form</td>
<td>F. Scott Fitzgerald</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>social, political, economic, and artistic—had either been destroyed or proven false</td>
<td>Aimless and frustrated protagonists</td>
<td>Ernest Hemingway</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Willa Cather</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Johannes Gutenberg created the Movable Metal Type Printing Press by in 1439, which encouraged authors to write in the local vernacular rather than in Greek or Latin classical languages. This widened the reading audience and promoted the spread of Renaissance and Reformation ideas.

Many writers have characteristics from more than one period. After World War II, the Modernist movement split into fragments such as Postmodernism, Imagism, the Harlem Renaissance, Surrealism, Beat poets, Postcolonialists, and others. It is not clear which, if any, of these will prove dominant in historic hindsight.
Include audiobooks in literature study

- Audiobooks can aid in:
  - Understanding
  - Retention
  - Pronunciation
  - Rhythm and cadence
Ask questions (sometimes) but don’t ruin the book

- Why?
- What if?
- How?
- Consider alternate endings

Remember, some of the best book conversations happen when you’re doing something else.
Use annotation rather than comprehension questions

- Use pencil
- Vertical line beside significant paragraphs
- Underlines for most important phrases, ideas, etc.
- Comments, questions, vocabulary in the margins and inside covers
Ideas for creative annotation of challenging literature

- Character charts
- Chronology of events (timeline)
- Challenging passages
- Questions that come to mind as you read (look up information later rather than interrupting reading)
- Context information
For fuller understanding, read, then write

- Write analytically
- Approach papers, literature summaries (short)
- Essays, poetry analysis, etc.
- “Write like” assignment
- Learn to use a writer’s handbook
Study guides can be useful for parents

- “Portable professor”
- Tutor for parent
- Extra essay questions
- They offer one possible explanation of theme; but remember, other interpretations can be valid.
Literature: the heartbeat of history

- History tells what happened
- Art shows it
- Music plays it
- Literature brings it to life
Resources

www.IEW.com/EIL-3
www.IEW.com/EIL-4
www.Excellence-In-Literature.com
Any questions?
Upcoming IEW Webinars:

8/13
Learn to Read and Write with PAL (Primary Arts of Language) with Jan Miller

8/26
Starting Strong in September Units 1 & 2: Structure & Style with Andrew Pudewa

9/10
Experience Excellence in Writing with Cathy Flowers

We will record the webinars and make them available a few days after taking place.

Homeschool Webinar Archives (Recordings)
School Division Webinar Archives (Recordings)