

Read. Think. Explain.

In trying to understand a poem, it's important to read through it carefully and thoughtfully by focusing on the words the author chose *and* by thinking about what the images in the poem represent. In this activity, you'll answer a series of questions about Julie Larios's "Phoenix" in order to grasp its full meaning.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the poem to back up your ideas.

1. In what ways does this poem retell the myth of the phoenix?

2. What does the phoenix in the poem do as she is being reborn?

3. Why do you think the phoenix is a popular image in the mythologies of many cultures? What is appealing about it?

4. How does the illustration match the poem? What do you see in it?

Myths, In Verse

Julie Larios's "Phoenix" is a description of an ancient myth, rewritten as a poem. In this activity, you will read a paragraph about the myth of the phoenix. Based on what you learn, you will answer critical thinking questions to help you understand Julie's poem on a deeper level.

Directions: Read the paragraph below about the myth of the phoenix. Then use the information to answer the critical thinking questions.

The phoenix is a mythical sacred firebird found in myths from ancient Egypt, Greece, China, and other cultures. It is a bird with beautiful gold and red (sometimes purple and blue) feathers and a melodious singing voice. At the end of its life cycle, the phoenix builds itself a nest and sets it on fire. Both nest and bird burn, and a new phoenix arises out of the ashes. Only one phoenix exists at a time. The new bird is destined to live as long as the old one, anywhere from 500 to 1,461 years. In many cultures, the phoenix was a symbol for rebirth, and hope.

1. What does the phoenix look and sound like when it's alive? What do these details tell you about the bird?

2. What does the phoenix do when it dies? What type of image does this create in your mind?

3. Why do you think ancient cultures saw the phoenix as a symbol for rebirth and hope? Is it a simile? A metaphor?

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Myths, In Verse page 2

Directions: Now reread Julie Larios’s gorgeous poem “Phoenix” and answer the critical thinking questions below, incorporating what you learned about the ancient myth.

Rising
from the ashes of her nest,
away she flies.
She is a bird that never dies.
Singer
and shape-changer,
she is a strange one:
Now a crane, now a drake,
now a turtle, now a snake,
now a swallow,
now a swan—
she burns and is reborn.
And then she’s gone.

4. What images does the poet use to symbolize rebirth? Why do you think she chooses these particular images?

5. In your opinion, does she succeed in transforming the ancient myth into a meaningful poem? Why or why not?

6. Can you think of a time in your life when you’ve felt like a phoenix?

Read. Think. Explain.

In trying to understand a poem, it's important to read through it carefully and thoughtfully, focusing on the words the author chose *and* how the poet used these words to convey a certain feeling or image. In this activity, you'll answer a series of questions about Linda Ashman's "Untidy Ursula" in order to grasp its full meaning.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the poem to back up your ideas.

1. What is the tone, or feeling of this poem? How does the author create it?

2. What is the rhyme pattern of this poem?

3. Why do you think the poet wrote this poem?

4. What literary device does the author use in the poem? What effect does it have?

Untidy Synonyms

In this activity, you'll reread Linda Ashman's quirky poem "Untidy Ursula" to understand why the language she uses is so meaningful. You'll also learn great new words and their synonyms! (Synonyms are two different words that share the same meaning.)

Directions: For each word in the word bank below, find its synonym in bold in the article, and write it in the blank on the right.

As usual, Ursula's room is **chaotic**,
Piled with junk, **mundane** and **exotic**—
A **wrecked** ukulele; buckets of dirt;
An **unused** umbrella; a torn undershirt;
An old unicycle, **encrusted** with rust;
Unearthly cobwebs; **unspeakable** dust;
Sticky utensils; **unraveling** rugs—
An **untidy** universe perfect for bugs.

Father, upset at this **unsightly** scene,
Says, "It's **unkempt**! I urge you to clean!"
Ursula, **peering** from under a heap,
Utters, "I would, but I'm buried too deep."

Word Bank

looking	_____
disordered	_____
unworldly	_____
ruined	_____
messy	_____
ordinary	_____
crazy	_____
gooey	_____
unusual	_____
untangling	_____
new	_____
says	_____
coated	_____
unmentionable	_____
abominable	_____

Continued ►►

Untidy Synonyms page 2

Critical Thinking

On a separate piece of paper, rewrite Linda Ashman's poem substituting each bolded word with its synonym from the Word Bank. Now read your newly created poem and answer the questions below.

Make sure to support your ideas using information and details from the new poem!

- 1. When you plugged in the new synonyms into the old poem, how did the poem's structure change? (Hint: What happened to the rhyme scheme?)**

- 2. Compare and contrast your poem with Linda Ashman's version. How are they alike? How are they different?**

- 3. Do you think your version is as poetic as Linda Ashman's? Why or why not?**

- 4. If you had to choose five adjectives to describe your room, what would they be?**

Extra Credit!

Now try writing a short poem about your room using the adjectives you picked above. You can use "Untidy Ursula" for inspiration.

Read. Think. Explain.

In this activity, you'll answer a series of questions about "What Happened to Dolly?" that will help you think more deeply about the devastating effects of polio in early 20th-century America and why the author was motivated to write about one lucky girl who survived against all odds.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the article to back up your ideas. Use a separate piece of paper if you need more room.

- 1. Where and when was the first polio epidemic? How did surrounding areas respond? Why?**

- 2. What is the cause of polio? What are its possible effects? Who was most at risk?**

- 3. Referring to both the text and the pictures, what were some treatments for polio? How do you think the treatments made people feel about the disease?**

- 4. What motivated the author to write this story?**

- 5. Why is it difficult for the author to find out what has happened to Dolly? Do you think she will eventually find out? Why or why not?**

Great New Words

"What Happened to Dolly?" uses some interesting and tricky new words to describe a difficult period in history. In this activity, you will use the dictionary and your brain to match the words below to their definitions.

Directions: Match the words on the left to the definitions on the right. Then choose four of the words and write a sentence using each.

beguile	weakened by old age or too much use
contracted	catch someone's interest with charm
dashing	very cleanly and neatly
decrepit	belief that things will turn out for the best
diagnosis	searching something thoroughly
immaculately	to catch, like a disease
mobilized	recover slowly from an illness or injury
optimism	looking smart or handsome
recuperate	put into movement
scouring	identifying the nature of a person's disease

Sentence 1: _____

Sentence 2: _____

Sentence 3: _____

Sentence 4: _____

Fitting the Dates Together

Lauren Tarshis's article "What Happened to Dolly?" tells two stories at once. One story follows the young polio survivor Dolly and her family, the other story explores how polio affected people in the United States. In this activity, you will track both stories and see how they fit together.

Directions: Reread the article, noting the dates of each event listed below. When you don't know the dates, use clues in the story and this activity to figure out how they fit into the sequence. Then connect each event to the closest place on the timeline. We've added one date for you!

DOLLY'S FAMILY HISTORY

Dolly contracts polio.

Date: _____

Great-Uncle Joe moves to the U. S.

Date: _____

Dolly is a flower girl for Grandmother's wedding.

Date: _____

Dolly is born.

Date: _____

Dolly graduates from high school.

Date: _____

UNITED STATES HISTORY

Franklin Roosevelt becomes President.

Date: **1933** _____

First major polio outbreak in the U.S.

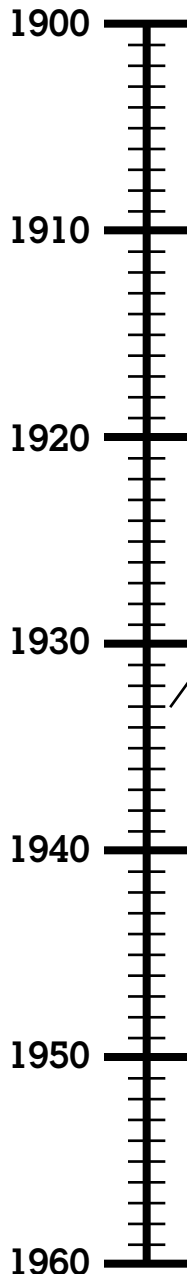
Date: _____

Jonas Salk develops polio vaccine.

Date: _____

Franklin Roosevelt contracts polio.

Date: _____



My Family in History

In the story "What Happened to Dolly," *Storyworks* editor Lauren Tarshis learned about the polio epidemics in America through the experience of her own distant relatives.

In this activity, you will interview a family member to learn how important events from history affected their life in big and small ways.

Directions: Directions: choose a relative or family friend and ask them to think of two important news events that happened when they were around your age. Ask them about the event, and how it affected their life. Write your answers in the boxes below.

Year	In the News	How It Affected _____ your relative's name

Critical Thinking

We are all affected by events around us, even if those events don't happen directly to us. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Make sure to support your answer with examples from the chart above and your own ideas.

Read. Think. Explain.

In trying to understand an article, it's important to read through it carefully and thoughtfully, focusing on the words the author chose *and* thinking about the article's big ideas.

In this activity, you'll answer a series of questions about America's first roller coaster and the thrill rides of today to understand how they are alike and how they are different.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the article to back up your ideas.

1. What traits did Thompson have that made him a good roller coaster inventor? Would you be a good roller coaster designer? Why or why not?

2. What are some ways in which the Switchback Railway in Coney Island was different from roller coasters of today?

3. According to this article, what makes a roller coaster thrilling today?

4. What can you conclude from the ongoing construction of ever-scarier roller coasters?

5. Why do you think that through the ages, from the Switchback Railway to the X2, people like scary rides? How do you feel about roller coasters?

Five & Five

In this activity, you will compare and contrast innovative roller coaster rides—Coney Island’s Switchback Railway and Magic Mountain’s X2—using this month’s “Yesterday & Today” feature.

Directions: In the box on the left, write five facts about the Switchback Railway that you learned from the “Yesterday & Today” article. In the box on the right, write five facts about Magic Mountain’s X2.

Facts	
The Switchback Railway	The X2
1. _____ _____ _____	1. _____ _____ _____
2. _____ _____ _____	2. _____ _____ _____
3. _____ _____ _____	3. _____ _____ _____
4. _____ _____ _____	4. _____ _____ _____
5. _____ _____ _____	5. _____ _____ _____

Critical Thinking

Use your list to write a well-organized paragraph in which you compare and contrast the first American roller coaster with Magic Mountain’s latest state-of-the-art thrill ride, X2. (Use a separate piece of paper.)

Read. Think. Explain.

An active reader is always looking for deeper meaning in a story. In this activity, you'll answer questions about the characters, their motivations, and how they work together to find solutions to their problems in "Science Fair Creatures Attack."

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the story to back up your ideas. Use a separate piece of paper if you need more room.

1. Why do you think the author includes the part when Milo slips and slides across the floor? What does it tell you about the story?

2. How could you describe Peggy? How do her characteristics support what she wants to be? What about Milo?

3. What is the main problem that Milo and Peggy face? How do they solve it?

4. What does Peggy want to discover in her science fair project? Do you think her idea is interesting? Why or why not?

5. What do Peggy and Milo find out about each other while they are trying to work out their differences? How does this help them?

Milo's New Words

How does Milo, the newest reporter for his school paper, impress the principal? With a good word. You can learn some more good words from Paul Acampora's story. In this activity, you will use the dictionary and your very own brain to match the words below to their definitions.

Directions: Match the words on the left to the definitions on the right.
Then choose four of the words and write a sentence using each.

audacious	pushed something in quickly or suddenly
brunt	prevented from taking part in an activity
chaos	frightens someone greatly
disqualified	greater part
massive	runs lightly and quickly
plunged	escorts to a place
recruit	daring and bold
scampers	large, heavy, and solid
terrorizes	get someone to join
ushers	total confusion

Sentence 1: _____

Sentence 2: _____

Sentence 3: _____

Sentence 4: _____

Secrets From Great Writers!

THIS MONTH'S SECRET: HOW TO WRITE ACTION SCENES

Paul Acampora's story "Science Fair Creatures Attack" is so action packed that it seems as if Peggy's dog will come leaping off the page. In this activity, you will learn Paul's secret so that you can bring your own stories to life.

Directions: Read the passage below, from "Science Fair Creatures Attack" and then rewrite the sentences below.

A bunch of rock salt crystals slide out of a funnel and plop, plop, plop into two liters of Diet Coke. Nothing happens at first, but then the soda bottle explodes into a massive cola volcano. In the chaos, a pink bubble solution jug spills onto the floor. My shoes hit the bubble puddle, and I'm like a rocket car on an ice patch. I skid past microscopes and test tubes, past science fair posters, and past most of my fifth-grade classmates. I slide by our stuffed squirrel, and whiz past a dozen glass jars filled with dead frogs that, I must say, all look pretty surprised.

If you read the passage above closely, you can see how much care Paul takes in writing descriptions. Notice how the salt crystals don't just fall into the Diet Coke. They go "plop, plop, plop." And Milo doesn't merely slip in the puddle. He slips and slides and whizzes "like a rocket car on an ice patch." Paul breaks his image apart like pieces of a puzzle and describes each separate segment to create a wonderfully vivid image for you. Use Paul's writing as an inspiration as you rewrite the sentences below.

- I was so scared I ran home. (Hint: how fast did you go? Can you compare yourself to a fast-moving object?)

Continued

Secrets From Great Writers! page 2

2. The snake slithered into the crowd. (**Hint:** How did the snake move? What did people in the crowd do?)

3. The storm was fierce. (**Hint:** what did the wind do? How did the rain sound? What happened to the trees?)

4. The first-baseman tagged the runner, so he was out. (**Hint:** describe each player and the ball and the sound of the umpire's voice.)

5. The little girl gobbled her cake. (**Hint:** did she use her hands? What happened to the icing and the crumbs? What sounds did she make?)

Read. Think. Explain.

An active reader is always looking for big ideas and deeper meaning in a play by paying attention to things like dialogue, character development, setting, and the sequence in which events happen.

In this activity, you'll answer questions about these elements in *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the play to back up your ideas.

1. What is the Villainous Narrator's first line in the play? Why do you think he says it? Is he convincing? Why or why not?

2. How does the Narrator react when the police officers first come to the door? What do you think he was thinking?

3. What do the policemen do while at the house? What effect does it have on the Narrator?

4. What do you think the Narrator is actually hearing when he hears "BUMP BUMP. BUMP BUMP."?

5. In what ways do the Villainous Narrator's words differ from his actions?

Crazy for Words!

The Tell-Tale Heart is a spooky story, but don't let the big words scare you!

The play includes some great vocabulary that you may not know—yet. In this activity, you will use the dictionary and your very own brain to match the words below to their definitions.

Directions: Match the words on the left to the definitions on the right. Then choose four of the words and write a sentence using each.

belittled	hated
curdling	shocking or scary
despised	becoming thick and lumpy
extinguish	talking or shouting in an angry way
gargoyles	quick or alert
horrific	wicked
keen	spoke slightly of something
mocking	stone figures carved on buildings
ranting	making fun of someone in an unkind way
villainous	put out a flame or light

Sentence 1: _____

Sentence 2: _____

Sentence 3: _____

Sentence 4: _____

A Not-So-Perfect Narrator

Sometimes, the narrator of a story is unreliable—he will lie about or misunderstand a situation. That is certainly true of the Villainous Narrator, who cannot be trusted. That leaves it to you—the reader—to figure out what is really happening. In this activity, you will rewrite passages from the play to show what the narrator doesn't quite tell you.

Directions: Reread each section of the play listed below. Then write a synopsis of the section telling what really happened. Use clues from the narrator, the police officers, and the Raven Chorus to figure out the story.

Section I: The introduction of the Villainous Narrator, the Raven Chorus, and the Old Man (Hint: Are the ravens right that the narrator is mad? Why does he get upset? Does the Old Man know what's wrong?)

What happened:

Section II: Before and after the attack (What happens between the narrator and the Old Man? What does the narrator do after the Old Man is dead?)

What happened:

Section III. The police call on the narrator. (Do they know what the narrator has done? Do they hear the Old Man's Heart like the narrator does? How does he react to the heart and the police officers' chat?)

What happened:
