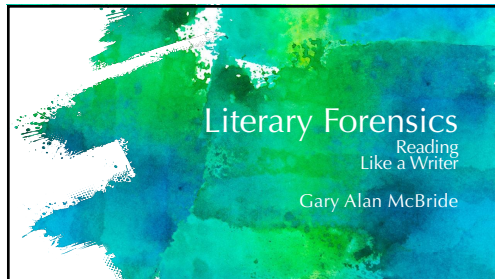
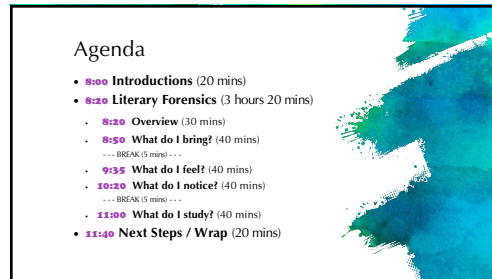


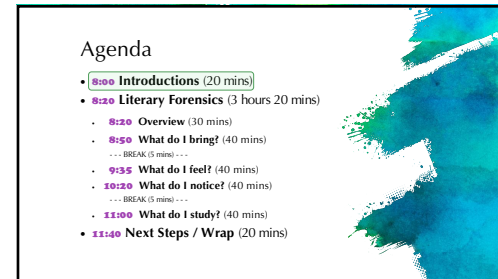
# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer



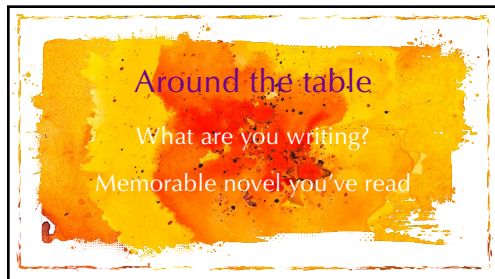
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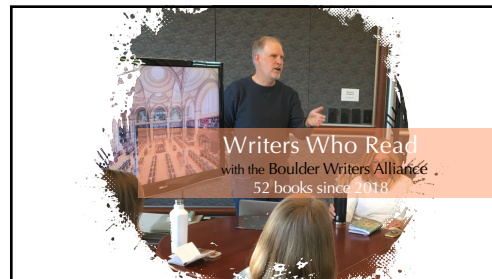
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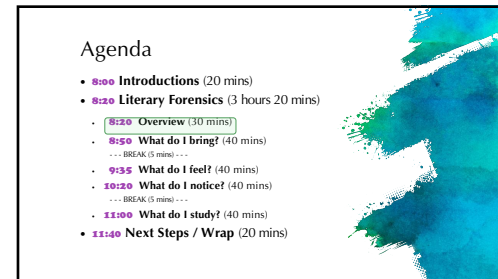
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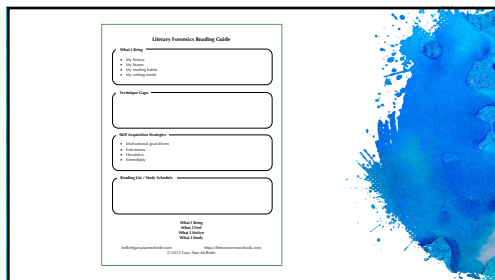
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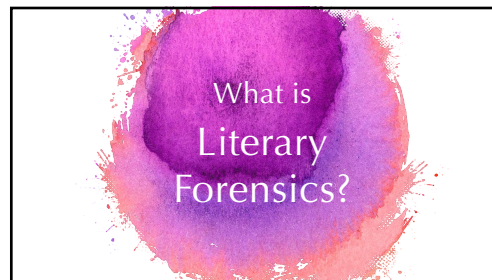
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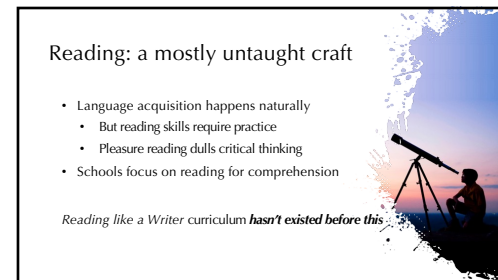
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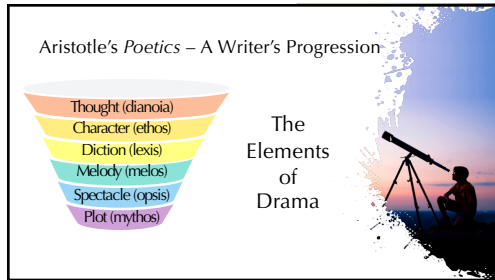


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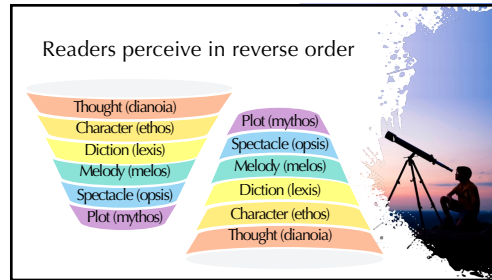


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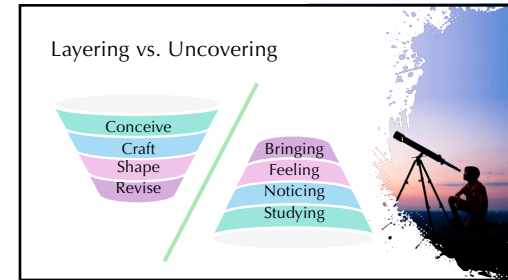
# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer



10



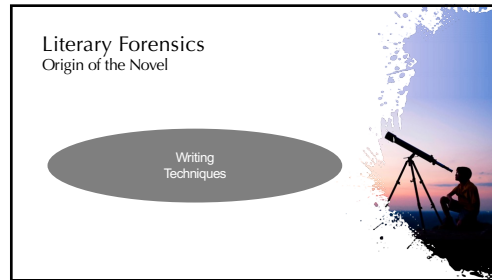
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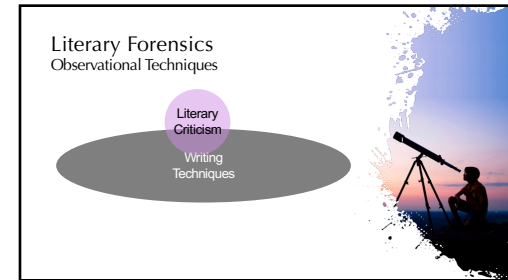
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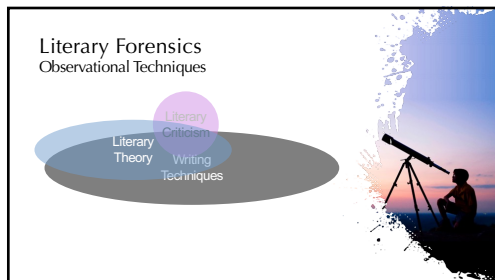
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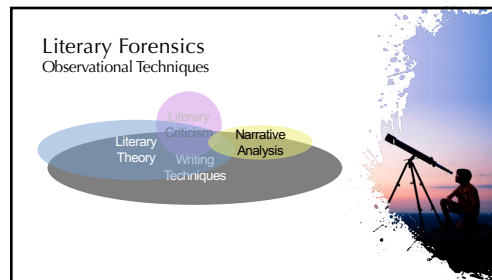
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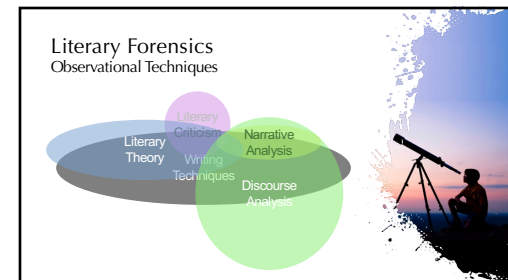
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16

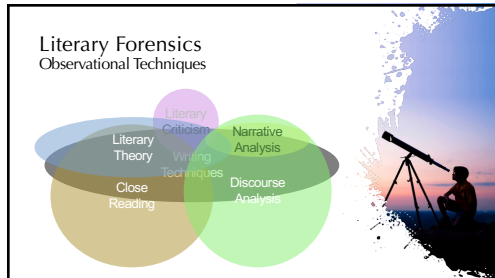


17



18

# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer



19



20

Literary Forensics  
Lines of Inquiry

- What do I bring?
- What do I feel?
- What do I notice?
- What do I want to learn?

21

Literary Forensics - Rules of the Road

1. *The Unspoken Contract:*  
darkness->light chaos->order
2. Every scene has a purpose
3. What happens isn't what's discussed
4. You probably missed it the first time

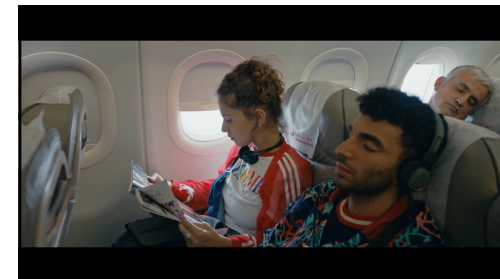
**READ & REREAD**

22

Game #1  
Notice what's happening

1. Establish context
2. Look for writing tricks
3. Who has status?

23



24



25

Literary Forensics  
Truth #1

You're being played

26

Agenda


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  - 11:00 What do I study? (40 mins)
  - 11:40 Next Steps / Wrap (20 mins)

27

# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer

**Literary Forensics**  
What do I bring?

- My point of reference
  - Reception theory & our cultural bias
  - Lit-crit frames of reference
  - How do I judge quality?




28

**Literary Forensics**  
What do I bring?

How I read & What I choose to read

- Paper or e-reader or audio?
- Frequency / Timing / Cadence
- Close reading levels / resistance to the text
- How do I choose what to read?
  - Canon / genre / topic
  - Recommendations



29

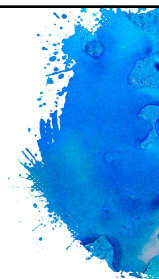
bibliomancy  
stichomancy  
rhapsodomancy



30

**Quiz**  
Rapid-fire – around the table

1. Last novel I've read
2. How many novels do I read? (per week/month/year)
3. Favorite genre(s)
4. Paper or e-reader or audio?
5. Ratio of fiction to non-fiction
6. Ratio of reading to writing



31

(Re)Introductions

My history / culture / biases

My reading

My writing path

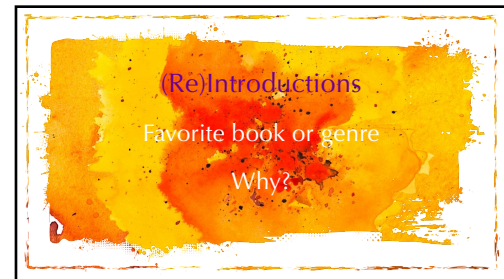


32

(Re)Introductions

Favorite book or genre

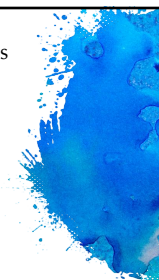
Why?



33

**Developing New Reading Goals**

- Reflect on your answers and others'
- Any (new) aspirations or goals?
- Study specific writing techniques?
- New ways of reading



34

**Literary Forensics Reading Guide**

What I bring

How I read

What I choose to read

My history / culture / biases

My reading

My writing path


Reading Skill Acquisition Strategies



35

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36

# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer

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37

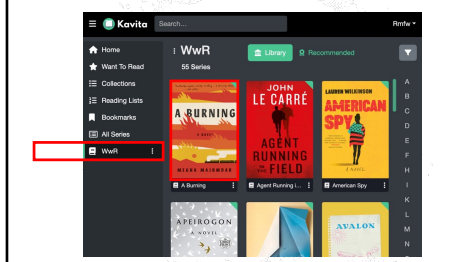


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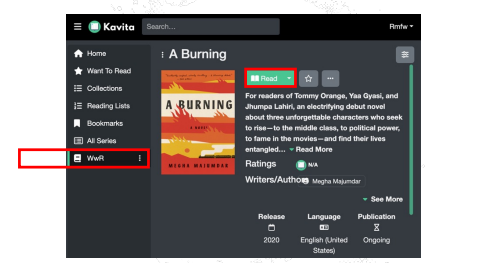
**Bookmark it!**

rmfw  
writerswhoread

38



39

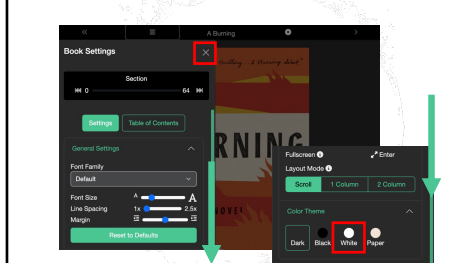


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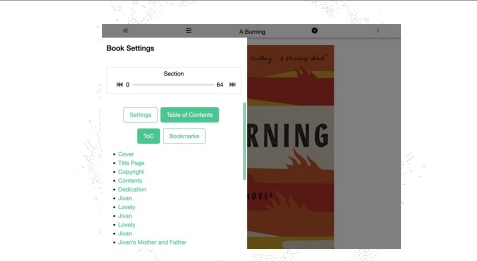
Previous Section **ToC** Exit Book Next Section



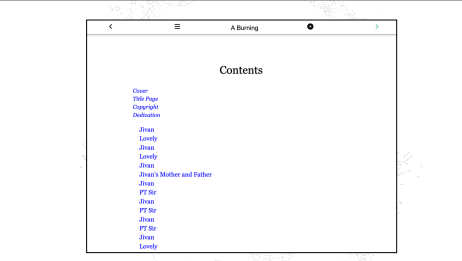
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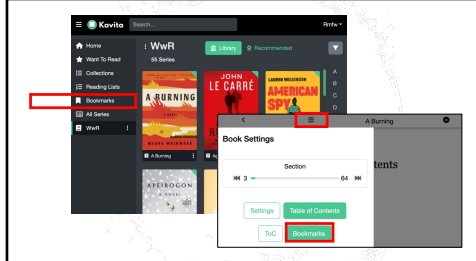
42



43



44




45

# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer

Literary Forensics  
What do I feel?


- We always monitor our feelings
- Our initial reaction to our reading
- Pay attention to mood changes
- Usually indicates where to dig



46

Literary Forensics  
What do I feel?


- Bored
- Distracted
- Upset
- Confused
- Engaged
- Clever



47

Game #2  
Pick a book, any book


1. Open any book to any chapter
2. Read until you notice *anything*
3. Pause and reflect on your emotional response
4. Keep your book open—we'll read your selection!



48

Game #2: Reading for reaction

- What in the **reading** elicited that feeling?
- Every feeling and observation is valid...  
...but every conclusion should be questioned
- We practice serendipity
  - no connection is too crazy
- **Always refer back to the reading**



49


Around the table  
Always refer to the book



50

Literary Forensics  
Truth #2

Noticing requires self-awareness




51

Literary Forensics  
What do I feel?

**Bored**

- Monotony: Predictable and repetitive
- Non-specificity: Vague without description
- Passivity: Lack of action
- Coldness: Lack of emotion or sensual engagement
- Inconsistency: Lack of clear structure or transitions
- Complexity: Unusual syntax or vocabulary
- Simplicity: Over-explained, requiring no engagement




52

Literary Forensics  
What do I feel?

**Upset** setups include:

- Genre
- Consistency
- Representation
- Agency
- Morality
- Trust & Truth




53

Literary Forensics  
What do I feel?

**Distracted** – The spell was broken  
because of a jagged edge

- Historical Eras
- Location and culture
- Life Experiences
- Professional expertise
- Physical predisposition




54

# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer

**Literary Forensics**  
What do I feel?

**Clever** – I figured it out!


- Misunderestimating (sic) readers
- Oversharing
- Relying on
- No B-story
- Chekov's AK-47



55

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- **11:40** Next Steps / Wrap (20 mins)



56



garyalanmcbride.com/workshop

**Bookmark it!**

57

**GARY ALAN MCBRIDE**  
words, words, words

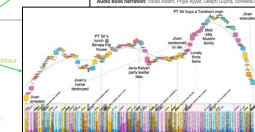
**WORKSHOP**

**STUDY NOVELS**

- *Johnny* – Maggie Hummer (USA) – **Contour**
- *Agent Bunting in the Field* – Johnnie Carr (USA) – **Contour**
- *American Spies* – Lauren Wilkinson (USA) – **Start – Contour**
- *Anonymous* – Claire McCormack (Ireland) – **Start – Contour**
- *Asymmetry* – Lisa Halliday (USA) – **Start – Contour**

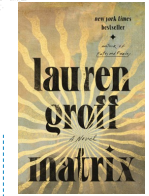
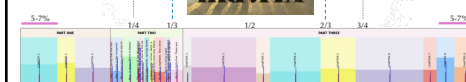
**A Burning – Stats**

**Marketing** – Terrorism, Thriller, Political Fiction, Political Thriller  
**Genre** – Mystery, Suspense, Spy, Action/Thriller, Language  
**Word count** – 11,147  
**Print Pages** – 241  
**Reading Level** – 7th Grade  
**Plot** – See *Contour* PPT for details  
**Topic** – Velocity plot?  
**Prose** – *Contour* (see PPT for details)  
**Publication** – HC, OAG, BR  
**Available since** – Jan 2, 2015  
**Publisher / Sold By** – Tor  
**Audio book available** – *Johnnie Carr* (see *Contour* PPT for details)

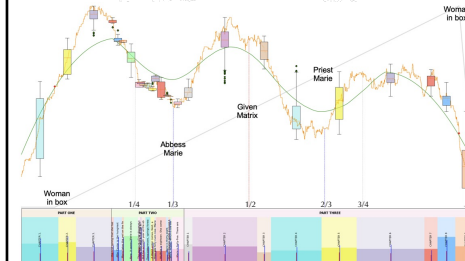


58

**lauren groff**  
**matrix**


59



60

**Literary Forensics**  
What do I notice?

- Language and Grammar
- Context in scene
- Point of view
- Character & character development
- Pacing
- Horizontal structure
- Layering of themes
- Overall effect




61

**Literary Forensics**  
What do I notice?

**Language and Grammar**

- Vocabulary
- Intonation
- Subjects and Predicates
- Person, Place, and Time
- Integrating Information



62

Keep a  
**DICTIONARY**  
handy




63

# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer


Literary Forensics  
What do I notice?

Context in scene

- Context of **facts** (raw elements, adjectives, +/- relative meanings)
- Context of **juxtaposition** (harmony / conflict, power / status, objects, surroundings)
- Context of **order** (chaining, power, and meaning)
- Context of **intention** (why scene exists, why here, scene/sequel, action/reflection, categorization)




64



Game #3

- What's the **setup** (POV)?
- How is **context** influencing meaning of the **words**?



65

When people ask me what I do—taxi drivers, hairdressers—I tell them I work in an office. In almost nine years, no one's ever asked what kind of office, or what sort of job I do there.


66

But last night, I'd found the love of my life. When I saw him walk onstage, I just *knew*.

67


"Good-bye, Mummy," I said. The last word. My voice was firm, measured, certain.

68



Game #4

- Parse the **language**
- Ask what's **omitted**?



69

When people ask me what I do—taxi drivers, hairdressers—I tell them I work in an office. In almost nine years, no one's ever asked what kind of office, or what sort of job I do there.

70

But last night, I'd found the love of my life. When I saw him walk onstage, I just *knew*.

71

"Good-bye, Mummy," I said. The last word. My voice was firm, measured, certain.


72



# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer

## Literary Forensics Truth #3

Omissions are clues, too




73

## Literary Forensics

What do I notice?

Point of view – as expressed in:

- Tone
- Position
- Exposure
- Movement
- Manipulation



74

## Points of View—How many is too many?



1-ish ... But it's not who you think ...


3 [2] Alice, [Amar], Ezra

5 THE FEMALE PERSUASION WEB VOLITZER



75


## Points of View—How many is too many?



8

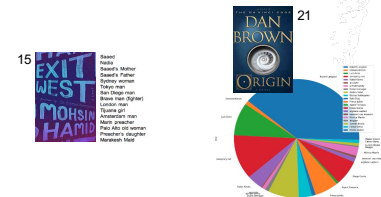
12

13




76

## Points of View—How many is too many?



15

21




77

## Literary Forensics

What do I notice?

Horizontal structure

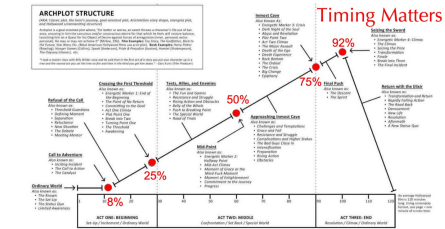
- Major / minor divisions
- Pivot points
- Story arcs
- Time structures



78

## ARCHPLOT STRUCTURE

Timing Matters

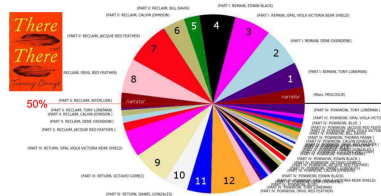


8% 25% 50% 75% 92%

first 25 pages

79

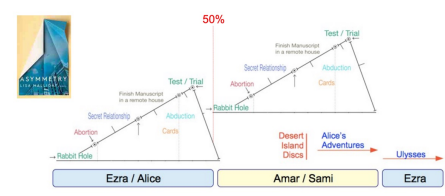
## Editors At Work: The Magical Mid-Point



50%

80

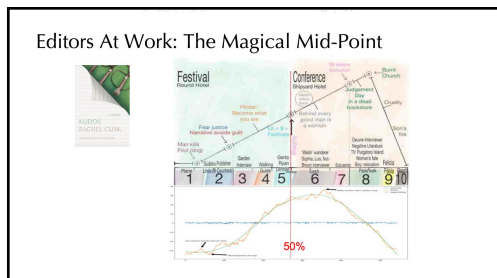
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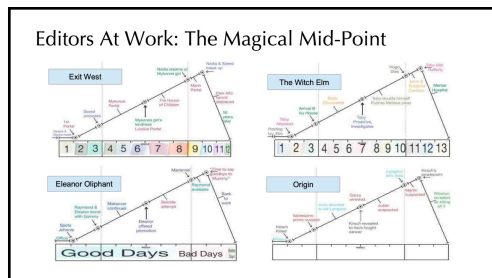
50%

Ezra / Alice Amar / Sami Ezra

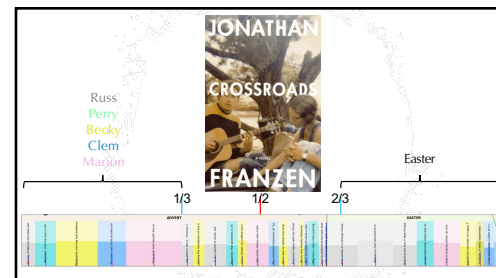
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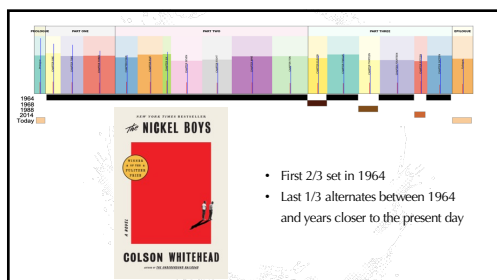
82



83



84



85

**Kishōtenketsu**

- **Introduction (ki)**: introducing characters, era, and other important information for understanding the setting of the story.
- **Development (shō)**: follows leads towards the twist in the story. Major changes do not occur.
- **Twist (ten)**: the story turns toward an unexpected development. This is the crux of the story, the yama (ヤマ) or climax. In case of several turns in the narrative, this is the biggest one.
- **Conclusion (ketsu)**, also called ochi (落ち) or ending, wraps up the story.

The kishōtenketsu form is used frequently in the anime movies of Hayao Miyazaki and his *Studio Ghibli*

86

Literary Forensics  
Truth #4

Structure informs every choice

87

Literary Forensics  
What do I notice?

- Language and Grammar
- Context
- Point of view
- Character & character development
- Pacing
- Horizontal structure
- Layering of themes
- Overall effect

88

Game #5  
Pick a book, any book

1. Open any unfamiliar book to Chapter One
2. Read and re-read the opening paragraph(s) — parse every word
3. **Predict the theme and the plot**
4. Consult the STATS and CONTOUR to see if you were right
5. Keep your book open—we'll read your selection!

89

Around the table

Always refer to the book

90

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### Literary Forensics

What do I study?

- Publishing industry
- Other narrative forms
- Academic theories
- Digital humanities
- Forming/joining a study group

93

### Literary Forensics

What do I study?

**Publishing industry**

- Fiction categories from BISG
- Podcasts: [NYT Book Review](#), Book Riot, First Draft
- Best Sellers: [Publisher's Weekly](#), [New York Times](#)
- Fiction Sales in 2023 ([Amazon](#)),
- Agents, Publishers, Contests: [Writer's Market](#) (\$)
- Publishing News: [Publisher's Lunch](#) (\$)

94

### Literary Forensics

What do I study?

**Publishing industry (per book)**

- Acknowledgements
- YouTube interviews
- Reviews (incl. Goodreads)
- Marketing:
  - Amazon.com – lots of detail!
  - Blurbs – more about who's who
  - Cover art – you CAN judge a book

95

Book covers and promotional materials for 'Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine' by Gail Honeyman, including a framed quote, the book cover, and a promotional card.

96

### Literary Forensics

What do I study?

**Academic Theory & Digital Humanities**

- Literary Theory & Criticism
- Educational readability indexing
- Corpora studies

97

**Genre:** Realistic, Present-Day, Arch-Plot Long-Form  
**Print Pages:** 336  
**Tense:** Past

Number of characters (without spaces):	425,017.00
Number of words:	102,562.00
Number of sentences:	9,188.00
Lexical Density:	46.55
Average number of characters per word:	4.15
Average number of syllables per word:	1.43
Average number of words per sentence:	11.18

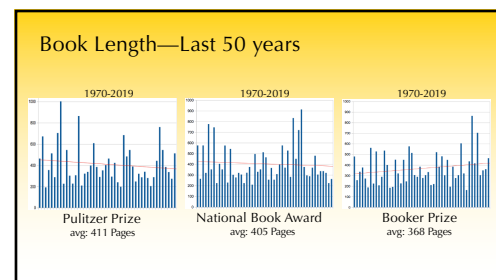
Indication of the number of years of formal education that a person requires in order to easily understand the text on the first reading  
 Gammon's Flesch Index: 7.35

Approximate representation of the U.S. grade level needed to comprehend the text:

Coleman-Liau Index:	5.94
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:	5.68
ARI (Automated Readability Index):	3.69
SMOG:	8.70
Flesch Reading Ease:	74.28

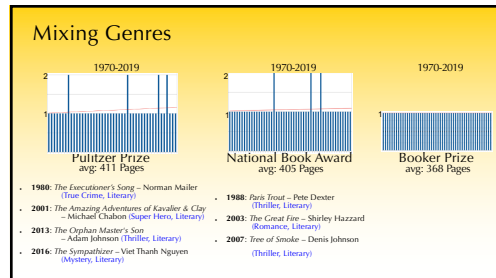
[More books on this topic](#)  
[How to improve readability, text and grammar](#)

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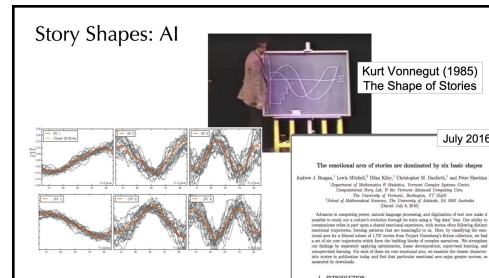


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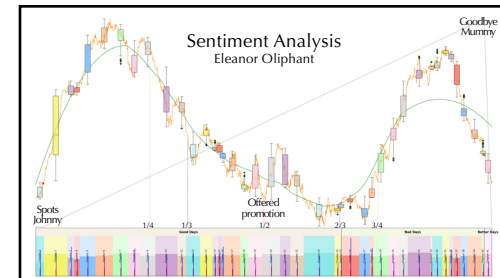
# Literary Forensics – Reading like a Writer



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**Agenda**

- 8:00 Introductions (20 mins)
- 8:20 Literary Forensics (3 hours 20 mins)
- 8:20 Overview (30 mins)
- 8:50 What do I bring? (40 mins)
  - ... BREAK (5 mins) ...
- 9:15 What do I feel? (40 mins)
- 10:20 What do I notice? (40 mins)
  - ... BREAK (5 mins) ...
- 11:00 What do I study? (40 mins)
- 11:20 Next Steps / Wrap (20 mins)

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**Literary Forensics Reading Guide**

What I bring

What I feel

What I notice

What I study

Next Steps / Wrap

Sounds like a plan

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As you read...

- Be aware of your biases
- Listen to your emotions
- Search for underlying techniques
- Question everything!

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**You're invited to join us!**

Writers Who Read (through BWA meetup.com)  
Monthly on 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday @ 2:30pm in Boulder, CO  
& online

Upcoming meetings: [GaryAlanMcBride.com](http://GaryAlanMcBride.com)

Bookmark it!

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It's FUN!

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Happy Sleuthing!

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