

Writing About Imagery

"In literature, imagery refers to words that trigger your imagination to recall and recombine images—memories or mental pictures of sights, sounds, tastes, smells, sensations of touch, and motions....Imagery is therefore one of the strongest modes of literary expression because it provides a channel to your active imagination, and along this channel, writers bring their works directly to you and into your consciousness...In studying imagery, we try to comprehend and explain our imaginative reconstruction of the pictures and impressions evoked by the work's images. We let the poet's words simmer and percolate in our minds...Images do more than elicit impressions. By the authenticating effects of the vision and perceptions underlying them, they give you new ways of seeing the world..." *Writing About Literature*

In preparing to write about imagery keep in mind the following steps:

1. Isolate the key images in your passage.
2. What types of imagery prevails? Visual, Auditory, Olfactory, Tactile, or Gustatory or a combination of these? Does the author use synaesthesia?
3. How vivid are these images? How is this vividness achieved?
4. Is there a pattern of similar or consistent images? Does the author break with the pattern? Why would this be significant?

Within a group of images, do the images pertain to one location or area rather than another? (i.e. natural scenes rather than interiors, snowy scenes rather than grassy ones, harsh sounds rather than soothing sounds...)

5. Do the images pertain to a specific allusion?(Biblical images, war images, classical literature images, etc.)
6. Are the images appropriate or do they seem odd or to create a feeling of confusion?
7. How do the images support or contrast with the content of the work? What is the lasting effect of the imagery? What mood or idea is evoked because of the imagery?