

WRITING ESSENTIALS IN STYLE & COMPOSITION

Week 5: Allegory, Fable, and Parable

What do the following three literary devices have in common? How are they different?

(source: literarydevices.net)

Definition of Allegory:

Allegory is a figure of speech in which abstract ideas and principles are described in terms of characters, figures and events. It can be employed in prose and poetry to tell a story with a purpose of teaching an idea and a principle or explaining an idea or a principle. The objective of its use is to preach some kind of a moral lesson.

Definition of Fable:

The word fable is derived from a Latin word “*fibula*” which means a story that is a derivative of a word “*fari*” which means to speak. Fable is a literary device which can be defined as a concise and brief story intended to provide a moral lesson at the end. In literature, it is described as a didactic lesson given through some sort of animal story. In prose and verse, a fable is described through plants, animals, forces of nature and inanimate objects by giving them human attributes wherein they demonstrate a moral lesson at the end.

Definition of Parable:

Parable is a figure of speech, which presents a short story typically with a moral lesson at the end. You often have heard stories from your elders such as *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* and *All is Vanity*, etc. These are parables, because they teach you a certain moral lesson. Parable is, in fact, a Greek word, *parable*, which means *comparison*. It is like a succinct narrative, or a universal truth that uses symbolism, simile, and metaphor, to demonstrate the moral lesson intended to be taught. Like analogy, we find the use of parables in verse, and prose form specifically in religious texts such as the Upanishad or the Bible.



Read the following excerpts. Identify which is a parable, a fable or allegory. Think of other examples of these literary tools.

Reading 1: Everyman Play excerpt, author unknown

<https://coldreads.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/everyman.pdf>

(...)

DEATH

Almighty God, I am here at Your will,
Your commandment to fulfill.

GOD

Go thou to Everyman,
And show him in My name
A pilgrimage he must on him take,
Which he in no wise may escape;
And that he bring with him a sure reckoning
Without delay or any tarrying.

DEATH

Lord, I will in the world go run over all,
And cruelly out-search both great and small;
Every man will I beset that liveth beastly,
Against God's laws, and dreadeth not folly:
He that loveth riches I will strike with my dart,
His sight to blind, and from heaven to depart,
Except that alms be his good friend,
In hell for to dwell, world without end.
(Enter EVERYMAN)

GOD (CONT'D)

Lo, yonder I see Everyman walking:
Full little he thinketh on my coming:
His mind is on fleshly lusts and his treasure;
And great pain it shall cause him to endure
Before the Lord, heaven's King.
Everyman, stand still; whither art thou going
Thus gaily? hast thou thy Maker forgot?

EVERYMAN

Why askest thou? Wouldest thou wit?

DEATH

Yea, sir, I will show you; in great haste I am sent to thee

From God out of His majesty.

EVERYMAN

What! sent to me?

DEATH

Yea, certainly:

Though thou hast forgot Him here,
He thinketh on thee in the heavenly sphere;
As, ere we depart, thou shalt know.

EVERYMAN

What desireth God of me?

DEATH

That shall I show thee;
A reckoning He will needs have
Without any longer respite.

EVERYMAN

To give a reckoning longer leisure I crave;
This blind matter troubleth my wit.

DEATH

On thee thou must take a long journey (...)

EVERYMAN (to GOODS)

And all my life I have had joy and pleasure in thee,
Therefore I pray thee, go with me;
For, peradventure, thou mayest before God Almighty
My reckoning help to clean and purify,
For it is said ever among,
That money maketh all right that is wrong.

GOODS

Nay, Everyman, I sing another song;
I follow no man in such voyages,
For, if I went with thee,
Thou shouldest fare much the worse for me:
For because on me thou didst set thy mind,
Thy reckoning I have made blotted and blind,

That thine account thou cannot make truly;
And that hast thou for the love of me.

EVERYMAN

That would grieve me full sore,
When I should come to that fearful answer:
Up, and let us go thither together.

GOODS

Nay, not so; I am too brittle, I may not endure:
I will follow no man on foot, be ye sure.

EVERYMAN

Alas! I have thee loved, and had great pleasure
All my life-days on my goods and treasure.

GOODS

That is to thy damnation, without lying,
For my love is contrary to the love everlasting;
But if thou had me loved moderately during,
As to the poor given part of me,
Then shouldest thou not in this dolour have been,
Nor in this great sorrow and care.

EVERYMAN

Lo, now was I deceived, ere I was aware,
And all, I may see, mis-spending of time.

GOODS

What, thinkest thou that I am thine?

EVERYMAN

I had thought so.

GOODS

Nay, Everyman, I say no:
As for a while I was lent thee;
A season thou hast had me in prosperity;
My condition is man's soul to kill;
If I save one, a thousand I do spill:
Deemest thou that I will follow thee?

Nay, not from this world, verily.

EVERYMAN

I had thought otherwise.

GOODS

Therefore to thy soul Goods is a thief,
For when thou art dead, this is my guise,
Another to deceive in the same wise,
As I have done thee, and all to his soul's grief.

EVERYMAN

O false Goods, cursed mayst thou be,
Thou traitor to God, thou hast deceived me,
And caught me in thy snare.

GOODS

Marry, thou broughtst thyself in care,
Whereof I am right glad:
I must needs laugh, I cannot be sad.

EVERYMAN

Ah, Goods, thou hast had long my hearty love;
I gave thee that which should be the Lord's above:
But wilt thou not go with me indeed?
I pray thee truth to say.

GOODS

No, so God me speed;
Therefore farewell, and have a good day
(...)

Reading 2: The Wheat and Tares from the Gospel of Matthew

... He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot

the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' ' "

Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

-Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

Reading 3: The Pilgrim's Progress Part I by John Bunyan

(source: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/131/131-h/131-h.htm>)

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den;[1] and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and, behold, "I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back," (Isa. 64:6; Luke 14:33; Psa. 38:4; Hab. 2:2; Acts 16:31). I looked, and saw him open the book,[2] and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do?" (Acts 2:37).[3]

In this plight, therefore, he went home, and refrained himself as long as he could, that his wife and children should not perceive his distress; but he could not be silent long, because that his trouble increased. Wherefore at length he brake his mind to his wife and children; and thus he began to talk to them: "O my dear wife," said he, "and you, the children of my bowels, I, your dear friend, am in myself undone, by reason of a burden that lieth hard upon me; moreover, I am for certain informed that this our city will be burned with fire from Heaven; in which fearful overthrow, both myself, with thee, my wife, and you, my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin, except (the which yet I see not) some way of escape can be found, whereby we may be delivered." At this, his relations were sore amazed; not for that they believed that what he had said to them was true, but because they thought that some frenzy distemper had got into his head;[4] therefore, it drawing towards night, and they hoping that sleep might settle his brains, with all haste they got him to bed. But the night was as troublesome to him as the day; wherefore, instead of sleeping, he spent it in sighs and tears. So when the morning was come, they would know how he did; he told them, worse and worse; he also set to talking to them again, but they began to be hardened. They also thought to

drive away his distemper by harsh and surly carriages to him. Sometimes they would deride, sometimes they would chide, and sometimes they would quite neglect him. Wherefore he began to retire himself to his chamber to pray for, and pity them, and also to condole his own misery. He would also walk solitarily in the fields, sometimes reading, and sometimes praying; and thus for some days he spent his time.[5]

Now I saw upon a time, when he was walking in the fields, that he was, as he was wont, reading in his book, and greatly distressed in his mind; and as he read, he burst out, as he had done before, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30, 31).

I saw also that he looked this way and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still, because, as I perceived, he could not tell which way to go.[6] I looked then, and saw a man named Evangelist coming to him, who asked, "Wherefore dost thou cry?"

He answered, Sir, I perceive, by the book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment, (Heb. 9:27); and I find that I am not willing (Job 16:21, 22) to do the first, nor able (Eze. 22:14) to do the second.

Then said Evangelist, Why not willing to die, since this life is attended with so many evils? The man answered, Because I fear that this burden that is upon my back will sink me lower than the grave; and I shall fall into Tophet (Isa. 30:33). And, Sir, if I be not fit to go to prison, I am not fit, I am sure, to go to judgment, and from thence to execution; and the thoughts of these things make me cry.

Then said Evangelist, If this be thy condition, why standest thou still? He answered, Because I know not whither to go. Then he gave him a parchment roll, and there was written within, "Fly from the wrath to come" (Matt. 3:7).

The man therefore, read it, and looking upon Evangelist very carefully, said, Whither must I fly? Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder wicket gate? (Matt. 7:13). The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? (Psa. 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19). He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.[7] So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now, he had not ran far from his own door, but his wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return (Luke 14:26); but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, Life! life! Eternal life ! So he looked not behind him (Gen. 19:17), but fled towards the middle of the plain.[8]

The neighbours also came out to see him run, and as he ran, some mocked, others threatened, and some cried after him to return; and among those that did so, there were two that were resolved to fetch him back by force (Jer. 20:10). The name of the one was Obstinate, and the name of the other

Pliable.[9] Now by this time, the man was got a good distance from them; but, however, they were resolved to pursue him; which they did, and in a little time they overtook him. Then said the man, Neighbours, wherefore are ye come? They said, To persuade you to go back with us. But he said, That can by no means be. You dwell, said he, in the City of Destruction, the place also where I was born; I see it to be so; and dying there, sooner or later, you will sink lower than the grave, into a place that burns with fire and brimstone. Be content, good neighbours, and go along with me.

What, said Obstinate, and leave our friends and our comforts behind us?[10]

Yes, said Christian, for that was his name, because that all "which you shall forsake" (2 Cor. 4:18), is not worthy to be compared with a little of that which I am seeking to enjoy; and if you will go along with me, and hold it, you shall fare as I myself, for there, where I go, is enough and to spare (Luke 15:17). Come away, and prove my words.

Reading 4: The Emperor's New Clothes by Hans Christian Andersen

(source: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1597/1597-h/1597-h.htm#link2H_4_0001)

Many years ago, there was an Emperor, who was so excessively fond of new clothes, that he spent all his money in dress. He did not trouble himself in the least about his soldiers; nor did he care to go either to the theatre or the chase, except for the opportunities then afforded him for displaying his new clothes. He had a different suit for each hour of the day; and as of any other king or emperor, one is accustomed to say, "he is sitting in council," it was always said of him, "The Emperor is sitting in his wardrobe."

Time passed merrily in the large town which was his capital; strangers arrived every day at the court. One day, two rogues, calling themselves weavers, made their appearance. They gave out that they knew how to weave stuffs of the most beautiful colors and elaborate patterns, the clothes manufactured from which should have the wonderful property of remaining invisible to everyone who was unfit for the office he held, or who was extraordinarily simple in character.

"These must, indeed, be splendid clothes!" thought the Emperor. "Had I such a suit, I might at once find out what men in my realms are unfit for their office, and also be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish! This stuff must be woven for me immediately." And he caused large sums of money to be given to both the weavers in order that they might begin their work directly.

So the two pretended weavers set up two looms, and affected to work very busily, though in reality they did nothing at all. They asked for the most delicate silk and the purest gold thread; put both into their own knapsacks; and then continued their pretended work at the empty looms until late at night.

“I should like to know how the weavers are getting on with my cloth,” said the Emperor to himself, after some little time had elapsed; he was, however, rather embarrassed, when he remembered that a simpleton, or one unfit for his office, would be unable to see the manufacture. To be sure, he thought he had nothing to risk in his own person; but yet, he would prefer sending somebody else, to bring him intelligence about the weavers, and their work, before he troubled himself in the affair. All the people throughout the city had heard of the wonderful property the cloth was to possess; and all were anxious to learn how wise, or how ignorant, their neighbors might prove to be.

“I will send my faithful old minister to the weavers,” said the Emperor at last, after some deliberation, “he will be best able to see how the cloth looks; for he is a man of sense, and no one can be more suitable for his office than he is.”

So the faithful old minister went into the hall, where the knaves were working with all their might, at their empty looms. “What can be the meaning of this?” thought the old man, opening his eyes very wide. “I cannot discover the least bit of thread on the looms.” However, he did not express his thoughts aloud.

The impostors requested him very courteously to be so good as to come nearer their looms; and then asked him whether the design pleased him, and whether the colors were not very beautiful; at the same time pointing to the empty frames. The poor old minister looked and looked, he could not discover anything on the looms, for a very good reason, viz: there was nothing there. “What!” thought he again. “Is it possible that I am a simpleton? I have never thought so myself; and no one must know it now if I am so. Can it be, that I am unfit for my office? No, that must not be said either. I will never confess that I could not see the stuff.”

“Well, Sir Minister!” said one of the knaves, still pretending to work. “You do not say whether the stuff pleases you.”

“Oh, it is excellent!” replied the old minister, looking at the loom through his spectacles. “This pattern, and the colors, yes, I will tell the Emperor without delay, how very beautiful I think them.”

“We shall be much obliged to you,” said the impostors, and then they named the different colors and described the pattern of the pretended stuff. The old minister listened attentively to their words, in order that he might repeat them to the Emperor; and then the knaves asked for more silk and gold, saying that it was necessary to complete what they had begun. However, they put all that was given them into their knapsacks; and continued to work with as much apparent diligence as before at their empty looms.

The Emperor now sent another officer of his court to see how the men were getting on, and to ascertain whether the cloth would soon be ready. It was just the same with this gentleman as with the minister; he surveyed the looms on all sides, but could see nothing at all but the empty frames.

“Does not the stuff appear as beautiful to you, as it did to my lord the minister?” asked the impostors of the Emperor’s second ambassador; at the same time making the same gestures as before, and talking of the design and colors which were not there.

“I certainly am not stupid!” thought the messenger. “It must be, that I am not fit for my good, profitable office! That is very odd; however, no one shall know anything about it.” And accordingly

he praised the stuff he could not see, and declared that he was delighted with both colors and patterns. "Indeed, please your Imperial Majesty," said he to his sovereign when he returned, "the cloth which the weavers are preparing is extraordinarily magnificent."

The whole city was talking of the splendid cloth which the Emperor had ordered to be woven at his own expense.

And now the Emperor himself wished to see the costly manufacture, while it was still in the loom. Accompanied by a select number of officers of the court, among whom were the two honest men who had already admired the cloth, he went to the crafty impostors, who, as soon as they were aware of the Emperor's approach, went on working more diligently than ever; although they still did not pass a single thread through the looms.

"Is not the work absolutely magnificent?" said the two officers of the crown, already mentioned. "If your Majesty will only be pleased to look at it! What a splendid design! What glorious colors!" and at the same time they pointed to the empty frames; for they imagined that everyone else could see this exquisite piece of workmanship.

"How is this?" said the Emperor to himself. "I can see nothing! This is indeed a terrible affair! Am I a simpleton, or am I unfit to be an Emperor? That would be the worst thing that could happen—Oh! the cloth is charming," said he, aloud. "It has my complete approbation." And he smiled most graciously, and looked closely at the empty looms; for on no account would he say that he could not see what two of the officers of his court had praised so much. All his retinue now strained their eyes, hoping to discover something on the looms, but they could see no more than the others; nevertheless, they all exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful!" and advised his majesty to have some new clothes made from this splendid material, for the approaching procession. "Magnificent! Charming! Excellent!" resounded on all sides; and everyone was uncommonly gay. The Emperor shared in the general satisfaction; and presented the impostors with the riband of an order of knighthood, to be worn in their button-holes, and the title of "Gentlemen Weavers."

The rogues sat up the whole of the night before the day on which the procession was to take place, and had sixteen lights burning, so that everyone might see how anxious they were to finish the Emperor's new suit. They pretended to roll the cloth off the looms; cut the air with their scissors; and sewed with needles without any thread in them. "See!" cried they, at last. "The Emperor's new clothes are ready!"

And now the Emperor, with all the grandees of his court, came to the weavers; and the rogues raised their arms, as if in the act of holding something up, saying, "Here are your Majesty's trousers! Here is the scarf! Here is the mantle! The whole suit is as light as a cobweb; one might fancy one has nothing at all on, when dressed in it; that, however, is the great virtue of this delicate cloth."

"Yes indeed!" said all the courtiers, although not one of them could see anything of this exquisite manufacture.

"If your Imperial Majesty will be graciously pleased to take off your clothes, we will fit on the new suit, in front of the looking glass."

The Emperor was accordingly undressed, and the rogues pretended to array him in his new suit; the Emperor turning round, from side to side, before the looking glass.

“How splendid his Majesty looks in his new clothes, and how well they fit!” everyone cried out. “What a design! What colors! These are indeed royal robes!”

“The canopy which is to be borne over your Majesty, in the procession, is waiting,” announced the chief master of the ceremonies.

“I am quite ready,” answered the Emperor. “Do my new clothes fit well?” asked he, turning himself round again before the looking glass, in order that he might appear to be examining his handsome suit.

The lords of the bedchamber, who were to carry his Majesty’s train felt about on the ground, as if they were lifting up the ends of the mantle; and pretended to be carrying something; for they would by no means betray anything like simplicity, or unfitness for their office.

So now the Emperor walked under his high canopy in the midst of the procession, through the streets of his capital; and all the people standing by, and those at the windows, cried out, “Oh! How beautiful are our Emperor’s new clothes! What a magnificent train there is to the mantle; and how gracefully the scarf hangs!” in short, no one would allow that he could not see these much-admired clothes; because, in doing so, he would have declared himself either a simpleton or unfit for his office. Certainly, none of the Emperor’s various suits, had ever made so great an impression, as these invisible ones.

“But the Emperor has nothing at all on!” said a little child.

“Listen to the voice of innocence!” exclaimed his father; and what the child had said was whispered from one to another.

“But he has nothing at all on!” at last cried out all the people. The Emperor was vexed, for he knew that the people were right; but he thought the procession must go on now! And the lords of the bedchamber took greater pains than ever, to appear holding up a train, although, in reality, there was no train to hold.

Reading 5: Selections from Aesop’s Fables

The Lion and the Mouse

Once when a Lion was asleep a little Mouse began running up and down upon him; this soon wakened the Lion, who placed his huge paw upon him, and opened his big jaws to swallow him. “Pardon, O King,” cried the little Mouse: “forgive me this time, I shall never forget it: who knows but what I may be able to do you a turn some of these days?” The Lion was so tickled at the idea of the Mouse being able to help him, that he lifted up his paw and let him go. Some time after the Lion was caught in a trap, and the hunters who desired to carry him alive to the King, tied him to a tree while they went in search of a waggon to carry him on. Just then the little Mouse happened to

pass by, and seeing the sad plight in which the Lion was, went up to him and soon gnawed away the ropes that bound the King of the Beasts. "Was I not right?" said the little Mouse. Little friends may prove great friends.

The Crow and the Pitcher

A crow perishing with thirst saw a pitcher, and hoping to find water, flew to it with delight. When he reached it, he discovered to his grief that it contained so little water that he could not possibly get at it. He tried everything he could think of to reach the water, but all his efforts were in vain. At last he collected as many stones as he could carry and dropped them one by one with his beak into the pitcher, until he brought the water within his reach and thus saved his life.

Necessity is the mother of invention.

The Fox and the Grapes

One hot summer's day a Fox was strolling through an orchard till he came to a bunch of Grapes just ripening on a vine which had been trained over a lofty branch. "Just the thing to quench my thirst," quoth he. Drawing back a few paces, he took a run and a jump, and just missed the bunch. Turning round again with a One, Two, Three, he jumped up, but with no greater success. Again and again he tried after the tempting morsel, but at last had to give it up, and walked away with his nose in the air, saying: "I am sure they are sour."

It is easy to despise what you cannot get.

Assignment:

- Write a story of 900-1400 words that is either an allegory, fable or parable.
- You may write a collection of short stories, or one long story.
- You may choose to rewrite an old story to make it ENTIRELY new and original.

Invention:

Will you write a fable, allegory or parable?

What is the hidden moral, message or meaning of your story?

Does your story have a clear beginning, middle and end?

Do the actions directly lead to the moral/message?

Setting of story:

Protagonist and Other Characters:

Conflict:

Beginning:

Middle:

End:
