

Why Read Literature?

Whenever you read, you have a purpose, or reason. Your purpose will vary, depending on the genre, content, and style of the work you plan to read. Preview the three purposes you might set before reading the works in this unit.

1

Read for the love of literature.

Leo Tolstoy is considered one of the great masters of Russian fiction. See what a powerful story he can tell in five paragraphs when you read the folk tale **"The Old Grandfather and His Little Grandson,"** page 72.



Maya Angelou read one of her poems at the inauguration of a president, but there was a time when she would not even read out loud in class. Share a moment in the early life of this shy child who grew up to be a best-selling author in the excerpt from ***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings***, page 32.

2

Read to appreciate an author's style.

Poems about love are not always sweet and sentimental. Laugh at the sarcastic sting of Dorothy Parker's love poem **"The Choice,"** page 48.

The poems of Robert Frost are known for their use of simple, everyday language. Discover what else makes his style memorable when you read **"The Road Not Taken,"** page 44.

3

Read for information.

Can a computer giant like Bill Gates be reached through e-mail? Find out when you read the excerpt from John Seabrook's article, **"E-Mail from Bill Gates,"** page 54.

Like other forms of communication, e-mail has its own rules of politeness. Learn what they are when you read Virginia Shea's article, **"How to Be Polite Online,"** page 62.



Take It to the Net

Visit the Web site for online instruction and activities related to each selection in this unit.

www.phschool.com

How to Read Literature

Use Literal Comprehension Strategies

The first step in understanding any communication is to achieve literal comprehension—the actual meaning of words and sentences. In this unit, you will learn and practice the following literal comprehension strategies.

1. Use context to determine meaning.

The context, or situation in which an unfamiliar word is used, can provide clues to a word's meaning. In the following example, the writer uses two words that are related in meaning.

... forty thousand men ... lay *crazily askew* in their uniforms.
—from "The Drummer Boy of Shiloh"

The word *askew* may be unfamiliar, but the word *crazily* suggests something "out of order." Men lying *askew* must therefore be lying in some crazy, disordered way.

2. Identify word origins.

By learning the origins of words and different influences on the English language, you will understand how groups of words are related. In this unit, you will learn to identify words with

- Latin Roots
- Latin Prefixes
- Latin Suffixes

In later units, you will learn about other influences on the English Language.

3. Distinguish between literal and figurative meaning.

In this unit, you will learn to distinguish between words and sentences that are meant literally and words and sentences that are not. Recognizing the difference will help you avoid confusion.

4. Paraphrase.

Pause occasionally in your reading to restate a sentence or passage in your own words. This paraphrasing will help you make sense of figurative language and difficult passages. The example shows one reader's paraphrase of the first lines of "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost.

