

Why Read Literature?

The literature in this unit explores the theme of meeting challenges—the exciting, dangerous, or unfamiliar opportunities that people face. Depending on the content, genre, and style of the works you plan to read, you will set various purposes for reading. Preview three of the purposes you might set before reading the works in this unit.

1

Read for the love of literature.

A person who weighs 120 pounds on Earth would weigh only 20 pounds on the moon! The reason for this is that gravity on the moon is only one-sixth as strong as it is on Earth. Imagine living on such a world when you read **"The Secret,"** page 118.

The state name *Texas* comes from the way Spanish adventurers pronounced the Native American word *Tejas*, meaning "friends" or "allies." Explore the early days of the American West by reading the poems **"Western Wagons"** and **"The Other Pioneers,"** page 146.



3

Read for information.

During the 1800s, rewards offered for the capture of Harriet Tubman, the African American woman who led many enslaved Africans to freedom, were as high as \$40,000. That amount is eight times as much as the \$5,000 reward offered by the Governor of Missouri for the capture of outlaw Jesse James. Find out why slave owners were willing to pay such a high sum to stop this daring rescuer. Read **"Harriet Tubman: Guide to Freedom"** on page 130.

Learn the ins and outs of reading and understanding contracts by reading the **Employment Contract** on page 113.



2

Read to be entertained.

The average winter temperature in the Yukon is twenty degrees below zero. Frostbite can damage unprotected skin in moments. Experience the danger and suspense of a Yukon adventure when you read about a character who battles the Yukon winter in **"Up the Slide,"** page 156.



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

Reading is like any challenging process: When you know the basics, it becomes easier. In reading, knowing the basics means understanding the literal meaning of the text. Once you know that you understand the meanings of the words and phrases, you can begin interpreting and analyzing. Preview the literal comprehension strategies that you will use in this unit to understand what you are reading.

1. Interpret idioms.

An **idiom** is a word or phrase whose literal meaning is different from its intended meaning. The idiom in the following example is italicized.

Now came this shriek: "Here! You going to set there all day?"

I *lit in the middle of the floor*, shot there by the electric suddenness of surprise.

You can figure out from the surrounding text that Twain does not mean he did something to brighten the floor. After reading the whole passage, you interpret "lit" to mean that he "moved in a hurry" or that he fell back on the floor. Recognizing when writers are using figures of speech will help you understand what writers mean.

2. Paraphrase.

Restating unfamiliar phrases and sentences in your own words can help you understand them. To paraphrase, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the main point?
- What additional details are provided?
- Which words would I use to express the main point and details?

Organize details of a passage in your mind by paraphrasing.

3. Recognize word roots.

A word root is the most basic part of a word. For example, the word *microbe*, meaning "small form of life," contains the Greek word roots *micro*, meaning "small," and *bio* (*be*), meaning "life."

micro + be = microbe

small + life = small form of life

In this unit, you will learn to use word roots and origins to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words.

As you read the selections in this unit, review the reading strategies and look at the notes in the side column. Use the suggestions to apply the strategies and comprehend the text.

