

Colormarking #1

It was in the clove of seasons, summer was dead but autumn had not yet been born, that the ibis lit in the bleeding tree.

The flower garden was stained with rotting brown magnolia petals and ironweeds grew rank amid the purple phlox. The five o'clocks by the chimney still marked time, but the oriole nest in the elm was untenanted and rocked back and forth like an empty cradle. The last graveyard flowers were blooming, and their smell drifted across the cotton field and through every room of our house, speaking softly the names of our dead.

Make a color-coded key clarifying your five thematic word categories below:

Color-Marking Prose and Poetry Passages

First, we should establish one simple fact: **literature, either prosaic or poetic, does not happen by accident.** In all cases, the author or poet is expressing something of his or her own sensibility through the writing, and he or she deliberately uses specific words, images, image patterns, motifs, etc. to communicate something to the reader. We, as readers, interpret the author or poet's intentions in writing the selection by carefully examining his or her use of words and making inferences as to their meaning.

Color-marking is a way of constructing a kind of visual diagram that will allow you to begin a critical analysis of a particular passage, and it will serve as a map, of sorts, as you continue to develop your ideas.

For the color-marking assignments, you will need to purchase a packet of highlighters of various colors. Four or five different colors should be sufficient. You will also need to be familiar with the following terms and their definitions:

diction- the writer's choice of words

image- a word or group of words that appeals to at least one of the five senses; an **image**, then, deals with a reader's response. Of our five senses, the visual is the strongest.

image pattern- the repetition of three images, not necessarily in uninterrupted succession.

motif- a repeated pattern of any type within a work. Note that an **image pattern** IS a **motif**, but a **motif** is not always an **image pattern**.

REMEMBER: Make your color-marking specific, focusing on individual words or groups of words rather than entire passages (sentences or groups of sentences).

Now we can begin to take a closer look at each assigned passage to better understand the writer's techniques, whether they are narrative or poetic. This process applies to all passages, whether prose or poetry.

1. Mark with a different color each type of image, image pattern, or motif that is predominant in the passage. Carefully examine what is occurring within, prior to, and following the passage.
2. Based on your color-marking, ask questions, such as:

Is one color predominant? Why?

Is there a logical progression of images, image patterns, and/or motifs from one type to another? Is the progression illogical? Why?

How do the images, image patterns, and motifs reinforce and/or illustrate the content of the passage? In other words, what is the relationship of the scene to the images, image patterns, and motifs used to describe it? Imagery reinforces content by giving it emphasis, by making it fresh (an unusual or creative use of imagery), and/or by adding **irony** (the imagery seems to contradict the content or describe it in terms of opposite qualities).

Is a specific tone or mood created by the color-marked material?

3. Based on your answers to these questions, and any others you think appropriate, **code** each color-marked item with **inferences** you draw about the use of that particular image, image pattern, and/or motif.
4. **For poetry:** color-mark the poem, making note of both appealing and confusing aspects. Read the poem aloud at least once to get a feeling for the poet's diction. Then read it again many times because poetry is a multi-dimensional language and we deal with different layers: intelligence, senses, emotions, and imagination.
Your color-markings will include diction (both denotation and connotation), repetition, allusion, word positions, symbols, images (for all 5 senses), metaphor, simile, alliteration, assonance, rhyme scheme, meter, hyperbole, irony, paradox, structure, **and many other aspects.**
- When dealing with poetry, be sure to consider tone.** Tone can change through the course of the poem. What is the speaker's attitude toward the subject of the poem? Is it different from the poet's attitude?
5. Based on your color-marking, conclude the poet's central purpose and theme.
6. Based on your color-marking (again), how is the poem's central purpose and/or theme achieved? In other words, what words and/or poetic devices does the poet use to create and emphasize the poem's central purpose and express a theme?

When dealing with poetry, it may be helpful to consider these 4 aspects:

1. **SPEAKER** - who is the voice or persona speaking in the poem? It is not always the poet.
2. **SETTING** - where and/or when is the speaker speaking?
3. **STRUCTURE** - how does the poem look on the page? How is this "look" relevant to the poem's central purpose and theme?
4. **STYLE** - what poetic techniques does the poet employ?

Remember: you are color-marking individual words and phrases that are significant aspects of the author's techniques, such as his or her development of metaphor or of a motif. **DO NOT COLOR-MARK ENTIRE SENTENCES OR GROUPS OF SENTENCES.**

THE BEST COLOR-MARKINGS SHOW YOUR CONSIDERATION OF EVERY POSSIBLE ASPECT OF THE AUTHOR'S TECHNIQUES. THE MORE COLORS AND THE MORE CATEGORIES YOU HAVE, THE BETTER.