

Read _____ by _____ and write a short essay stating the central theme and analyzing the literary elements and author's use of literary devices according to the following outline:

- Introduction that states the form (poem, novel, other), title, author and central theme
- Analysis of literary element or device #1 (What element or device? How does it function? What is its effect?)
- Analysis of literary element or device #2 (What element or device? How does it function? What is its effect?)
- Analysis of literary element or device #3 (What element or device? How does it function? What is its effect?)
- Conclusion, which restates key claims, including the central theme

SAMPLE ESSAY

The Use of Us

The poem "To Be of Use" by Marge Piercy begins: "The people I love the best jump into work head first..." and ends: "The pitcher cries for water to carry and a person for work that is real." These few lines along with the title suggest the author's message, which is that we should each find our unique purpose and we should all strive to be of use.

In order to get her message across, the author uses figurative language. In particular, she uses personification: "A pitcher cries for water to carry" (line 25). By having a pitcher cry out for meaningful work, we can easily imagine ourselves doing the same. Also, we can see how ridiculous it is that we strive to use objects appropriately and fully yet we do not always expect the same of ourselves. The author's use of personification – this comparison between things and people – also suggests that our purposes are distinct. Like pitchers are made to carry water and Greek amphoras are intended to convey oil and Hopi vases are designed to hold corn, people are destined to perform all kinds of various and particular tasks. Everything and everyone are meant to do something different.

In addition to figurative language, the author's point of view helps us to see things her way. She writes in the first person and says things like "I love people who" (8) and "I want to be with people who" (12). She shares with us her admiration for people who know their purpose and who work hard. By telling us whom she admires we feel almost obliged, each one of us, to become someone she admires. Her personal words urge us, the readers, to become people of use.

To clarify her point even more, the author's diction, or choice of words, is very thoughtful. Her words are sensory and physical. Words like "muck," "mud," "dust" and "ox" emphasize physical labor, and they make us feel like we are in the fields "pass[ing] the bags along" (14). These words smack of hard, necessary work. But these words are not meant to implore us to perform only physical labor. Because the author herself is a poet, we come to understand that such words are tools meant to be taken figuratively, not literally. While some people might enjoy wielding sickles in the grass, others might enjoy wielding pens. The fact that the author uses such sensory language yet in contrast makes her living as a writer reinforces the point that we all have different inclinations and purposes. However, no matter our separate and individual inclinations and purposes we should all strive to be of common use.

In conclusion, in the poem "To Be of Use" the author Marge Piercy conveys the message that we should each find our distinct purpose and we should all be of use. Through the author's use of figurative language, especially personification; by way of the first-person point of view; and with sensory words like "muck" and "mud," the author's message is driven home like a nail.