

You'll be reading *Songs of Willow Frost* by Jamie Ford. You'll produce two pieces of work based on the book: a reading journal and a stylistic analysis. It is imperative that you come to class with this work prepared; our classwork for the first few weeks will relate to this book, and we will take a comprehension test on this reading within the first few days of class.

Reading Journals:

Write a reading journal *as* you read your book. Write an entry on what you're reading every couple of chapters, or roughly every twenty to thirty pages of your book (if your novel has an atypical chapter structure). On average, you should probably end up with around ten to twelve entries, but what really matters is that you reflect on your reading in a thorough, thoughtful way. Anything that meets that standard will be great. Your journal entries should describe some combination of the following:

- Major characters and/or events
- Elements of conflict in the story
- Information about the setting
- Thematic elements in the writing
- Eye catching pieces of stylistic prose
- Literally anything else you want that's related to the reading

When you finish the book and your reading entries, write one final entry that focuses on the themes the book explores its themes (the underlying ideas and feelings the book explores - the things the book feels are true about the world), and what the experience of reading the book was like.

Stylistic Analysis:

Use the following list of elements an author uses to establish their writing style. Read and respond to the prompt questions for each category. Look up any terms for which you are uncertain. Provide textual examples to support your analysis.

Checklist: Elements of Literary Style

Structure

Time Sequencing / Chronology

How has the author organized the chronology of events? To what effect? What is the work's structural "rhythm"?

Paragraph / Chapter Structure

Are paragraphs very short, or are they enormous blocks running across many pages? Are the chapters short or long? How many are there, how are they organized, and why is this important?

Pace

Is the writing heavily descriptive, with emphasis on setting and atmosphere, or does it focus on action and plot movement?

Character

Point of View

Possibilities: first, second, third, omniscient, limited omniscient, multiple, inanimate, free indirect discourse.

Character development

How does the author introduce characters, and how do we see their evolution in the story? What is their function and motivation? What kinds of characters are they? Full/round? Stock characters? Stereotypes? Caricatures?

Tone

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What is the author's attitude? What is the mood of the story?
Does the author seem sarcastic? Aggressive? Wistful? Pessimistic? In love?
Philosophically detached? Hopeful? Ironic? Bitter? (And so on...)
Whatever the tone, where is it visible in the narrative?

Syntax and Diction

Sentence Structure

Are the sentences long or short? Why do they change?
Do they contain many subordinate clauses, or are they often fragments?
Are there any digressions or interruptions?
Is the word-order straightforward or unconventionally crafted?

Expansive/ Economical Diction/ Vocabulary

Is the writing tight and efficient, or elaborate and long-winded?
When does the author use one or the other mode, and why?
Are the words simple or fancy? Are they technical, flowery, colloquial, cerebral,
punning, obscure (and so on...)?

Literary Devices

Use of Dialogue

How often does dialogue tell the story?
Do we see whole conversations or just fragments?
Does the conversation use slang or is it formal? Does it appear natural or contrived?
Does the dialogue give a sense of pacing, of pauses, of the unsaid?
How much does it substitute for narration?

Figures of speech

Are there any metaphors, similes, or symbols?
Are there any other uses of figurative language (personification, metonymy, and so on)?

Allusions

How and how often does the author refer to other texts, myths, symbols, famous figures, historical events, quotations, and so on?

Word Color, Word Sound

How much does the language call attention to or depend on the quality of its sound, e.r. through alliteration, assonance, consonance, dissonance, rhythm, unusual word choice, and so on?

Experimental (may or may not apply)

Experimentation in Language

Are there any unusual techniques, such as stream-of-consciousness, mixing styles and genres, unusual layout on the page, breaking rules of grammar and form, odd or unstable narrative perspectives, onomatopoeia, aporia, and so on?

Metafictional techniques

Does the author call attention to his or her own process of narration?
Are the narrator's position, role, and thoughts as a storyteller mentioned explicitly in the text? What function does this serve?

