“The Trout”: constituents from reading study, January 10th 2012, Engl 209

Sorted by paragraph number:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Reader | Para. | Constituent |
| 2 | 1 | Plot; expectations of the reader and anticipation of the unfolding mystery |
| 4 | 1 | Reader emotion: reader intrigued by story's introduction |
| 4 | 1 | Character: reader comments on the trout as a symbol of change paralleling Julia's development |
| 1 | 2 | Reader emotion; the reaction is to the author's words instead of any individual plot elements, making special note of character description |
| 2 | 2 | Reader emotion; contrasts the different tones in the writing between the first and second paragraphs; also expressed interest in the imagery unique to this paragraph. |
| 4 | 2 | Reader response: reader identifies with Julia's visceral experience running through the tunnel |
| 5 | 2 | style choice: use of personification |
| 6 | 2 | Reader emotion; notes the sexual metaphors embedded in the writing of the scene; perhaps meant to unconsciously relate the reader's own experience to that implied by the imagery, whether the event in the story passage itself is sexual or not. |
| 11 | 2 | Character Personality: Childish |
| 11 | 2 | Paragraph structure: supports childish behavior of the character |
| 13 | 2 | Reader emotion: she empathizes with character |
| 18 | 2 | Reader emotion: surprise/confusion |
| 10 | 10 | Character: reader identifies Julia's desire to grow up and be mature |
| 11 | 10 | Character: Change in behavior and attitude |
| 12 | 10 | Character: Julia’s shift in perspective  |
| 14 | 10 | Character: development |
| 15 | 10 | Plot: reader conclusion/analysis |
| 3 | 11 | character change: loss of innocence |
| 7 | 11 | Character: reader perceives Stephen and Julia as displaying skepticism, pride, and curiosity |
| 9 | 11 | style choice: symbolic |
| 17 | 11 | Character: Attitude, unnatural behavior of the fish, taken out of element  |
| 19 | 12 | Plot: reader interpretation |
| 8 | 16 | Reader response: reader compares Julia and Stephen's different responses to the story |
| 20 | 17 | Character: reader interested in empathy |
| 6 | 18 | Character; the passage is interpreted directly as describing the sexual maturation of the girl |
| 3 | 19 | plot: reader recognizes the paragraph represents the story as a whole |
| 5 | 19 | reader emotion: surprise |
| 7 | 19 | Character emotion: Julia's disdain for her mother's story |
| 9 | 19 | plot: reader anticipates (climax) |
| 12 | 19 | Character: Julia’s shift in awareness  |
| 14 | 19 | Character: development |
| 16 | 19 | Character: Displays compassion for Trout |
| 1 | 22 | Reader emotion; focuses on the writing mechanics and specifically on the description of the setting. |
| 13 | 22 | Plot: reader notes violent imagery  |
| 16 | 22 | Plot: Character enacts fairy godmother role |
| 19 | 22 | Reader interpretation: climax |
| 20 | 22 | Reader emotion: reader feels fear |
| 20 | 22 | Character emotion: Julia feels no fear  |
| 8 | 24 | Plot: reader identifies the moment when Julia rejects fantasy for herself but maintains it for her brother |
| 10 | 24 | Character: reader identifies Julia's progression from childhood to adolescence |
| 15 | 24 | Character: enlightenment |
| 17 | 24 | Character: Feelings of betrayal displayed by unwillingness to answer truthfully  |
| 18 | 24 | Reader emotion: character development |

Readers were asked to identify the two passages that they found the most “striking or evocative” and to provide a written commentary on each passage. These were analysed as constituents, i.e., type: instance. In the Table above Constituents are ordered by story paragraphs (1 through 24).

Note frequency of paragraph choices reflect plot and possibly stylistic aspects.

Empirical studies of literary reading:

1. Qualitative. If little yet known, begin with exploratory study like this – invite open responses of readers as they read, or in retrospect; then classify, look for systematic features of responses of a group of readers.

2. Quantitative. See next table. Envisage study based on comparing frequencies of text features and readers’ responses.

Frequency of citation of paragraphs

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Para. | Cited | Opening |
| 1 | \*\*\* | One of the first places |
| 2 | \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | She raced right into it |
| 3 |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |
| 10 | \*\*\*\*\* | Tears were threatening |
| 11 | \*\*\*\* | But she went back |
| 12 | \* |  |
| 13 |  |  |
| 14 |  |  |
| 15 |  |  |
| 16 | \* | Her mother suggested |
| 17 | \* | It troubled her that |
| 18 | \* | It was late June |
| 19 | \*\*\*\*\*\*\* | ‘And so, in the end  |
| 20 | \*\*\*\*\*\* | She sat up. Stephen |
| 21 |  | She raced in |
| 22 | \*\*\*\*\*\* | All the time she could |
| 23 |  | She scuttled up the  |
| 24 | \*\*\*\*\* | In the morning Stephen |

Note: choice of paragraphs tends to coincide with higher foregrounding, according to our previous studies (most recent: Kuijpers, 2010, who inquired about bodily responses); but story division here into paragraphs rather coarse for studying this.

For example foregrounding analysis, see Miall & Kuiken (1994), p. 397

-- <http://www.ualberta.ca/~dmiall/MiallPub/Miall_Kuiken_Foregrounding_1994.pdf>

(note: quantitative findings from this study include: high correlations between reading times per segment and ratings per segment for feeling, uncertainty.)

David S. Miall and Don Kuiken.  “Foregrounding, Defamiliarization, and Affect: Response to Literary Stories.”  *Poetics* 22 (1994): 389-407.

Constituents sorted by type:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Reader | Para. | Constituent |
| 3 | 11 | Character change: loss of innocence |
| 20 | 22 | Character emotion: Julia feels no fear  |
| 7 | 19 | Character emotion: Julia's disdain for her mother's story |
| 11 | 2 | Character Personality: Childish |
| 17 | 11 | Character: Attitude, unnatural behavior of the fish, taken out of element  |
| 11 | 10 | Character: Change in behavior and attitude |
| 14 | 10 | Character: development |
| 14 | 19 | Character: development |
| 16 | 19 | Character: Displays compassion for Trout |
| 15 | 24 | Character: enlightenment |
| 17 | 24 | Character: Feelings of betrayal displayed by unwillingness to answer truthfully  |
| 12 | 19 | Character: Julia’s shift in awareness  |
| 12 | 10 | Character: Julia’s shift in perspective  |
| 4 | 1 | Character: reader comments on the trout as a symbol of change paralleling Julia's development |
| 10 | 10 | Character: reader identifies Julia's desire to grow up and be mature |
| 10 | 24 | Character: reader identifies Julia's progression from childhood to adolescence |
| 20 | 17 | Character: reader interested in empathy |
| 7 | 11 | Character: reader perceives Stephen and Julia as displaying skepticism, pride, and curiosity |
| 6 | 18 | Character; the passage is interpreted directly as describing the sexual maturation of the girl |
| 11 | 2 | Paragraph structure: supports childish behavior of the character |
| 16 | 22 | Plot: Character enacts fairy godmother role |
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| 19 | 22 | Reader interpretation: climax |
| 8 | 16 | Reader response: reader compares Julia and Stephen's different responses to the story |
| 4 | 2 | Reader response: reader identifies with Julia's visceral experience running through the tunnel |
| 9 | 11 | style choice: symbolic |
| 5 | 2 | style choice: use of personification |

Frequency of constituents

19 Character

10 Reader emotion

8 Plot

2 Reader response

2 Style

1 Paragraph structure

42 total

Other significant components:

**Emotion**

Note occurrences of Emotion (character and reader); also: 6 other constituents mention or allude to emotion; plus 1 Reader response; added to Reader emotion = 17

**Thematic** (probably others in commentaries):

3, 11, Character change: loss of innocence

4, 1, Character: reader comments on the trout as a symbol of change paralleling Julia's development

10, 10, Character: reader identifies Julia's progression from childhood to adolescence

15, 24, Character: enlightenment

Analyse occurrence and relationships of constituents in individual commentaries (especially across two or more comments).

One contention: that response often originates with emotion. Why feeling? What might it lead to?

Sequence: emotion, evaluation, argument. Noted in one study, as follows:

Andringa, E. (1990). Verbal data on literary understanding: A proposal for protocol analysis on two levels. *Poetics*, *19*, 231-257.

-- See pp. 246-7, of emotion: “It initiates, selects, and steers the way of arguing”

**Literariness?** In what ways might this be at issue? What is a *literary* response? Is it distinctive? (Cf. Literariness web page)

=====================================================================

Iser, Wolfgang. “Interaction between text and reader.” BHR 391

First reading! – basic notes

Actual text + actions of reader in responding to it, 391

Reader creates virtual work, 391

Reader composes work while receiving it, 391

Reading vs. face to face compared, 392

Regulative context of face to face communication; absent in reading, 392

Gaps in experience create inducement to communicate, 392

Gaps a form of indeterminacy, incentive to reader, 392

Austen only apparently trivial, hence reader fills the blanks, 392

Reader realizes the significance of what is not said, 392

As interaction between explicit and implicit, reveals gaps that reader must bridge, 393

Negations also control process of communication, 393

Plot breaks, unexpected directions, invitation to reader to find missing link, 393

Perspectives (may conflict): narrator, characters, plot, fictitious reader, 393

Referential field formed from two positions, 394

Filling of gap, creates a theme; serves as background to next theme, 394

As reader relates and transforms positions in text, aesthetic object emerges, 395

Relate to your reading of “The Trout”: what features of Iser’s account seem relevant?

Supplementary: application of his principles to “The Trout”

Gap: the “basic inducement to communication”; the “indeterminate, constitutive blank, which underlies all processes of interaction”; “it is this very indeterminacy that increases the variety of communication possible” (392)

-- e.g., why the Dark Walk; how to interpret it (pastoral, Gothic, etc.?), uncertainty

-- e.g., individual perspective of main character vs. norms of other characters

Iser: “The gaps function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves” (393) – Julia figuring out how to remain faithful to her own intuitions:

-- Julia and family on the well: she “held up her long lovely neck suspiciously”

-- Julia and Old Martin: “She stared at him suspiciously”

-- Julia and mother (“'Mummy, don't make it a horrible old moral story!”)

Iser’s negations: raises possible meanings to negate them, e.g., Julia’s rejection of mother’s fairy tale about the trout; if not x, then y (if not Martin, not the rain, etc., then ?)

Iser: four perspectives, narrator, characters, plot, fictitious reader; relating of two creates a “referential field” (394)

-- e.g., Julia’s thoughtfulness plus plot of endangered trout (para. 19); that she gets up at night (20); referential field: Julia’s moral nature, bravery shown in rescue, creating wider set of implications than immediate story (towards the “aesthetic object”)

-- “the hero’s perspective may be set against that of the minor characters . . . the reader’s wandering viewpoint travels between all these segments, its constant switching during the time flow of reading intertwines them” (393)

-- note, a succession of encounters in which Julia challenges or violates other’s norms; these (says Iser) create a receding series of themes (theme and replacement; each para. 19-22?)

Iser: “The segment on which the viewpoint focuses in each particular moment becomes the theme, The theme of one moment becomes the background against which the next segment takes on its actuality, and so on. Whenever a segment becomes a theme, the previous one must lose its thematic relevance and be turned into a marginal, thematically vacant position” (394)

-- theme: trace development of theme of adult duplicity vs. childhood independence (note how balance shifts increasingly away from adults as drivers of plot)

Hence focus increasingly on what perspectives Julia’s norms come to exclude, her norms increasingly supplied by the reader; the “aesthetic object” arises in opposition to the rejected norms

Iser: the reader “ultimately transforms the textual perspectives, through a whole range of alternating themes and background relationships, into the aesthetic object of the text” (394-5)

-- i.e., Julia’s emergent concern for the real suffering of the trout, her effort to rescue it; represents a shift from childishness to responsibility, maturation; aided by emergence from womb-like structure of The Dark Walk.

-- question whether we accept the norms of the main character, or see them situated elsewhere as a critique of the character; consider this contrast in relation to Julia