Guidance on completing a narratological analysis (Assignment 1)

N.b. The following is a guidance document to support you as you undertake the first assignment. You are not, of course, obliged to follow this structure, nor does it cover everything you might include in your essay.

**Preparatory work**

* Reread the primary text to ensure that you have a good understanding of where the passage is situated and its function within the narrative as a whole
* Identify relevant secondary material that will inform your analysis
* Read the extract *several times* until you are very familiar with it; you should know it almost by heart by the time you come to write on it
* Take notes on the extract’s important narrative features; these might include:
* Events (what happens in the passage? What is the wider significance of these events? what causes things to happen and what are the consequences?)
* Character and characterization (explore aspects such as direct definition, indirect presentation etc.)
* Textual time (keep in mind the aspects highlighted by Genette and Rimmon-Kenan: order, duration, frequency)
* Focalization (internal and external)
* Narration (levels, perceptibility…)
* Speech and thought representation

As well as identifying these features, **it is crucial that you analyse their effects** and link them to the text’s wider themes and ideas; think, too, about how they are related to the text’s genre and context

**Sample structure**

Introduction

* Situate the passage within the primary text as a whole; summarise its key event(s) (keeping in mind the subjective and partial nature of any paraphrase of a story’s events)
* Briefly outline the overall focus of the essay, explaining why you will focus on particular narrative aspects

Body of the essay

* Avoid a line-by-line analysis of the extract. Instead, synthesise your notes into a clear and cumulative argument that outlines the key narrative features of the extract, the effects of these narrative features, and their relation to the wider features and themes of the primary text
* Ensure that each paragraph clearly presents one idea and begins with a ‘topic sentence’ announcing the focus of that paragraph
* Ensure that you are using line references and (short) quotation to evidence your points (in general, ensure that you are following the guidance on presentation set out in the *SLLF Undergraduate Handbook*.)
* Demonstrate understanding of the wider subject area:
* Situate your analysis of the extract in relation to relevant critical and theoretical material
* Demonstrate an awareness of the text’s specific genre and context in as far as this is relevant to the discussion of the extract’s narrative features

Conclusion

* Draw together your points to summarise the extract’s importance and specificity within the wider narrative
* Where appropriate, comment upon how a close reading of the passage confirms or contradicts existing critical interpretations of the primary text, and/or narratological categories such as those outlined by Rimmon-Kenan

RM