

Writing Literary Interpretations in English

Presented by Lindsay Williams



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Anticipatory Set

- Read 'The Sink Hole' (page 1 & 2).
- In small groups, make an inference:
 - What will happen when the boys return?
 - How do you know?
 - Whose fault will it be? Why?

Learning Goals

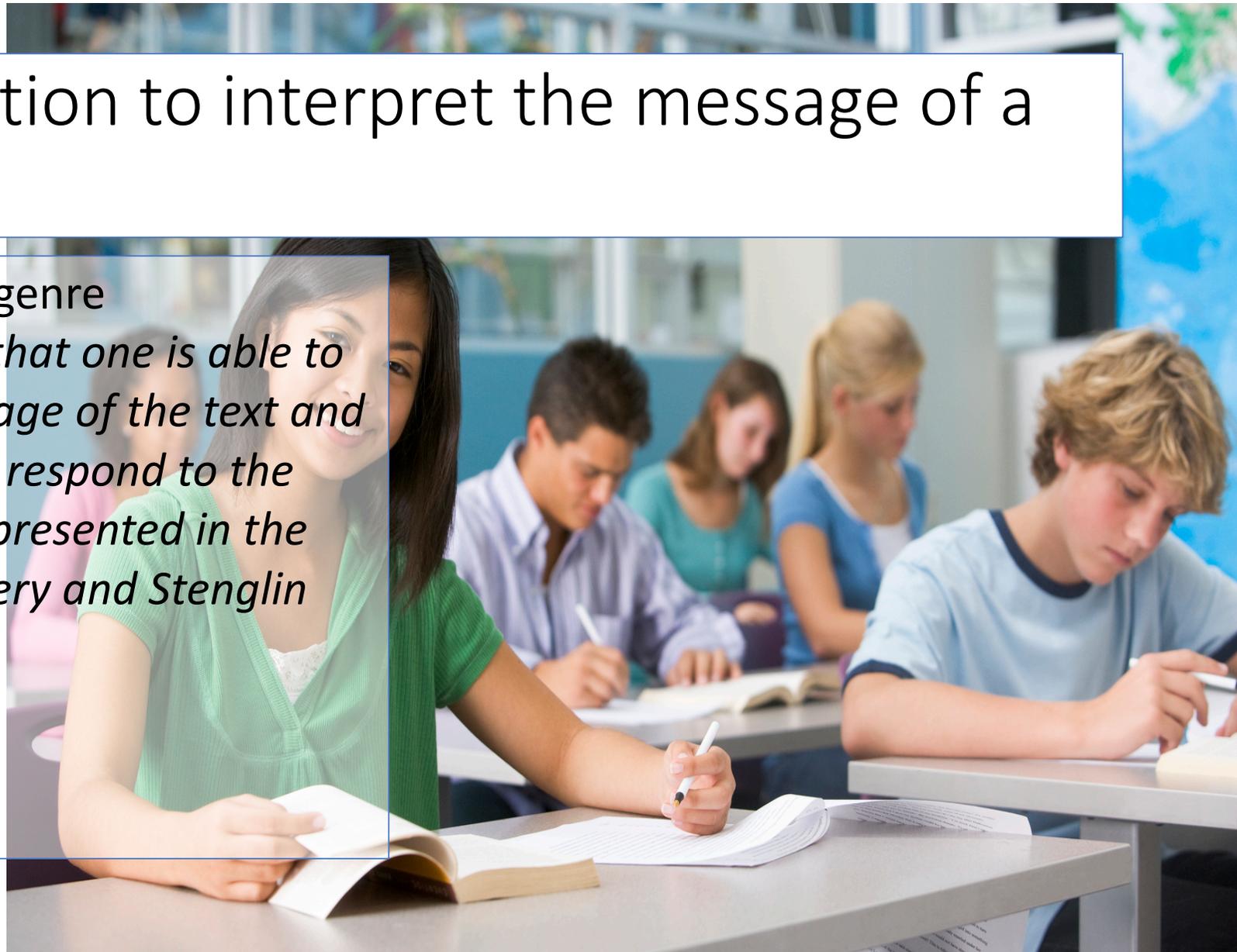
During this workshop, you will:

- explore implications of the new external assessment (exam) regime for the current Year 9 cohort
- compare and contrast the structure and some key language features of Interpretations (and Expositions)
- discuss how these features allow students to show they belong to the 'Literacy Criticism Club'.

Reviewing Structure of Interpretation

Interpretation to interpret the message of a text

Mastery of the genre demonstrates: *that one is able to 'read' the message of the text and hence is able to respond to the cultural values presented in the narrative (Rothery and Stenglin 1997: 156).*



Interpretation to interpret the message of a text

Structure: Martin & Rose (2008)

- Evaluation
- Synopsis of text
- Reaffirmation

Structure: Derewianka & Jones (2016)

- Theme identification and preview of elements
- Element evaluation
- Theme reiteration



Read the Interpretation (p3)

- Read the exemplar for an Interpretation based on the short story (both are aimed at Year 9, the first external exam group).
- As you read, can you identify the Stages?

You say toma(r)to, I say toma(y)to...

Interpretation
vs
Analytical Exposition

Three reasons for making the distinction:

- makes the difference between NAPLAN style Expositions and Interpretations much clearer (to simplify, one is based in general knowledge the other in text knowledge)
- their social purposes are different, even though they are both making an argument of sorts. In the example, students are not (presumably) being asked to draw on their **general knowledge** to argue about their contention; presumably they would be required to draw on evidence to support their interpretations of the **text**.
- different social purposes mean that the introduction, body, conclusion serve different functions within the two genres
→ different choices from system of language.

Key Language Features

Elaborating Clause

One clause expands another by elaborating on it (or some portion of it):

- **restating in other words**, e.g. The pandas ate the bamboo; they devoured every single stalk of that grass-like plant in the backyard.
- **specifying in greater detail**, e.g. Emily would be more restrained, gently tugging at the sticky tape, careful not to tear the paper.
- **commenting**, e.g. The lights flickered on; it was an incredible sight after the hours of darkness.
- **or exemplifying**, e.g. All the lights went off together: Christmas lights went out, the neon lights of the billboards went out, and even the emergency street lights went out.

Elaboration in Interpretation

Firstly, in Ben and Isaac, the author constructs two contrasting characters. Isaac is the sensible one. This is exemplified when he knows that the 'gaping hole' they come across is a sinkhole and warns Ben that he'd 'better move back' because 'the edge looks a bit crumbly'. He is also the one who is initially reluctant to go down into the darkness. On the other hand, Ben is impetuous and adventurous, not really worried about the dangers. He is the one who, without thought, drops his bike and goes to 'the very edge of the hole'. Moreover, he is the one who comes up with the plan for the boys to use ropes to lower themselves into the hole and pressures Isaac with promises of excitement and taunts about lack of courage: 'Chicken?' he says to Isaac. Ultimately, Ben's personality wins through, sealing the boys' fate.

Elaboration in Interpretation

Isaac is the sensible one. (*elaboration: example 1*) This is exemplified when he knows that the 'gaping hole' they come across is a sinkhole and warns Ben that he'd 'better move back' because 'the edge looks a bit crumbly'. (*elaboration: example 2*) He is also the one who is initially reluctant to go down into the darkness. On the other hand, Ben is impetuous and adventurous, not really worried about the dangers. He is the one who, without thought, drops his bike and goes to 'the very edge of the hole'. Moreover, he is the one who comes up with the plan for the boys to use ropes to lower themselves into the hole and pressures Isaac with promises of excitement and taunts about lack of courage: 'Chicken?' he says to Isaac. Ultimately, Ben's personality wins through, sealing the boys' fate.

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Elaboration in Interpretation

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No Elaboration

Firstly, in Ben and Isaac, the author constructs two contrasting characters. Isaac is the sensible one. On the other hand, Ben is impetuous and adventurous, not really worried about the dangers.

Elaboration in Interpretation

Through a skillfully planned plot, the folly of the decision to enter the sinkhole becomes apparent. In the Orientation, readers are introduced to Ben and Isaac who appear to be simply two boys on an innocent biking adventure to relieve the boredom of the school holidays. However, the danger confronting them is followed in the description (through the menacing 'long tentacles of deep sea creatures' which lead to believe that the sinkhole contains an unexpected creature). The question is whether Ben and Isaac should have believed that the sinkhole contains an unexpected creature. The danger is implied in the early description of the sinkhole, the menace is emphasised in the unconventional description of the creature waiting 'Patiently, waiting for prey'. It is clear that the boys will be eaten alive; the cautious Isaac should have trusted his own, sensible advice and resisted Ben's impetuous behaviour.

Clue

elaboration: specify
elaboration: comment

Elaboration in Interpretation

Through a skillfully planned plot, the folly of the decision to enter the sinkhole becomes apparent. In the Orientation, readers are introduced to Ben and Isaac who appear to be simply two boys on an innocent biking adventure to relieve the boredom of the school holidays. However, the danger confronting the boys is foreshadowed in the description (through the use of a metaphor) of the sun casting 'long tentacles of deep shadow across the forest floor'. The reader is then lead to believe that the central Complication to be resolved is whether Ben and Isaac should explore the sinkhole. However, the Coda contains an unexpected twist: *(elaboration: specify)* readers make the surprise discovery that at the bottom of the hole a ravenous creature awaits. Suddenly, the menace implied in the earlier metaphor becomes apparent and is emphasised in the unconventional punctuation of the final two words with the creature waiting 'Patiently. Hungrily.' It is clear that the boys will be eaten alive; *(elaboration: comment)* the cautious Isaac should have trusted his own, sensible advice and resisted Ben's impetuous behaviour.

Implication Sequence

a → b → c

Dance: **(identification: element)** 'Fix You' movingly portrays the support a son gives to his ill mother through many movements. **(description of example)** One action that demonstrates this occurs when the mother (i.e. portrayed by the female dancer) spins clockwise and then falls to the right where the son (i.e. portrayed by the male dancer) catches her. The male dancer lifts/pulls the female dancer back to her feet in a superbly executed suspended move. This action expresses the mother's weakness as a result of her illness in contrast to the strength of the son who was there to guide and support his mother when she was in need. **(link to summary of intent)** Therefore, it is clear that the dance element of action plays a pivotal role in communicating the choreographer's intent.

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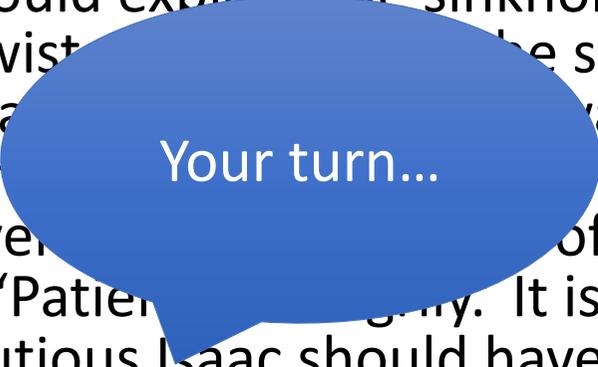
Therefore, it is clear that the dance element of action plays a pivotal role in communicating the choreographer's intent.

Implication Sequence in Interpretation

Through a skillfully planned plot, the folly of the decision to enter the sinkhole becomes apparent. In the Orientation, readers are introduced to Ben and Isaac who appear to be simply two boys on an innocent biking adventure to relieve the boredom of the school holidays. However, the danger confronting the boys is foreshadowed in the description (through the use of a metaphor) of the sun casting 'long tentacles of deep shadow across the forest floor'. The reader is then lead to believe that the central Complication to be resolved is whether Ben and Isaac should explore the sinkhole. However, the Coda contains an unexpected twist: readers make the surprise discovery that at the bottom of the hole a ravenous creature awaits. Suddenly, the menace implied in the earlier metaphor becomes apparent and is emphasised in the unconventional punctuation of the final two words with the creature waiting 'Patiently. Hungrily.' It is clear that the boys will be eaten alive; the cautious Isaac should have trusted his own, sensible advice and resisted Ben's impetuous behaviour.

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Your turn...

Implication Sequence in Interpretation

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‘the folly of the decision to enter the sinkhole becomes apparent’

In the Orientation...

The reader is then
lead to believe...

However, the Coda
contains an
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Suddenly, the
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Evaluation Resources in Interpretation

Language for Interaction: Evaluative Language Expanded

Evaluative Language		Positive	Negative
Affect/feelings			
Judgements about behaviour	Normality: How special?		
	Capacity: How capable?		
	Tenacity: How dependable?		
	Veracity: How honest?		
	Propriety: How far beyond reproach?		
Appreciation			

Evaluative Language

1. Highlight words which express feelings/emotions (**PINK**); make judgements about behaviour (**BLUE**); appreciate objects, artworks, literature, physical performances, landscape etc (**GREEN**).
2. Classify these words.
3. Draw conclusions, e.g. types of evaluation most evident in this analytical exposition, patterns that come to light (e.g. distribution across the stages of the exposition).

Extract from 'The Sink Hole' Interpretation: Theme Identification Stage

'The Sink Hole' by Lindsay Williams is an **entertaining short story** that reveals the **dangers** of **succumbing** to peer pressure. This message is communicated through the **clever use** of contrasting characters and a **carefully** planned **story** that ends with a **surprising twist**.

Extract from NAPLAN Exposition: Thesis Stage

My name is Roxanne Webster, a **consistent buyer** of The Morning Herald. I am usually filled with **praise** for our city's morning paper, however, when I sat down with my steaming mug of coffee yesterday morning, I was **astounded** to read your article on toys and games. The **article** was, in my opinion, **ridiculous**; as you said that "too much money is being spent on toys and games"? **This statement** is **completely false**, and as a **proud mother** of three children, I have **correct reasons** for believing this.

Extract from 'The Sink Hole' Interpretation: Element Evaluation Stage

Firstly, in Ben and Isaac, the author constructs two contrasting characters. Isaac is the sensible one. This is exemplified when he knows that the 'gaping hole' they come across is a sinkhole and warns Ben that he'd 'better move back' because 'the edge looks a bit crumbly'. He is also the one who is initially reluctant to go down into the darkness. On the other hand, Ben is impetuous and adventurous, not really worried about the dangers. He is the one who, without thought, drops his bike and goes to 'the very edge of the hole'. Moreover, he is the one who comes up with the plan for the boys to use ropes to lower themselves into the hole and pressures Isaac with promises of excitement and taunts about lack of courage: 'Chicken?' he says to Isaac. Ultimately, Ben's personality wins through, sealing the boys' fate.

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Extract from 'The Sink Hole' Interpretation: Element Evaluation Stage

Through a **skilfully** planned plot, the **folly** of the decision to enter the sinkhole becomes apparent. In the Orientation, readers are introduced to Ben and Isaac who appear to be simply two boys on an **innocent** biking adventure to relieve the **boredom** of the school holidays. However, the danger confronting the boys is foreshadowed in the description (using a metaphor) of the sun casting 'long tentacles of deep shadow across the forest floor'. The reader is then led to believe that the central Complication to be resolved is whether Ben and Isaac should explore the sinkhole. However, the Coda contains an **unexpected** twist: readers make the **surprise** discovery that at the bottom of the hole a **ravenous** creature awaits. Suddenly, the menace implied in the earlier metaphor becomes apparent and is emphasised in the **unconventional** punctuation of the final two words with the creature waiting 'Patiently. Hungrily.' It is clear that the boys will be eaten alive; the **cautious** Isaac should have trusted his own, **sensible** advice and resisted Ben's **impetuous** behaviour.

Extract from NAPLAN Exposition: Argument Stage

Active games, such as sports, are just that – **active**. They keep our children **fit and healthy**, all the while teaching them lessons **that will stay with them throughout the course of their life**. Teamwork, sportsmanship, sharing, co-operation – all **beneficial skills that are important to be learnt by our kids**. Toys like skipping ropes, skateboards, balls and Hula-Hoops are all toys that get our children outside and being **active**. As childhood **obesity** is such a **problem** in Australia, encouraging our kids to be active whilst having **fun** should be promoted not discouraged. Therefore, there is not ‘too much money spent on toys and games’.

Extract from 'The Sink Hole' Interpretation: Theme Reiteration Stage

In conclusion, the author uses shrewd plotting and cannily crafted characters to communicate his important message about the dangers of succumbing to peer pressure.

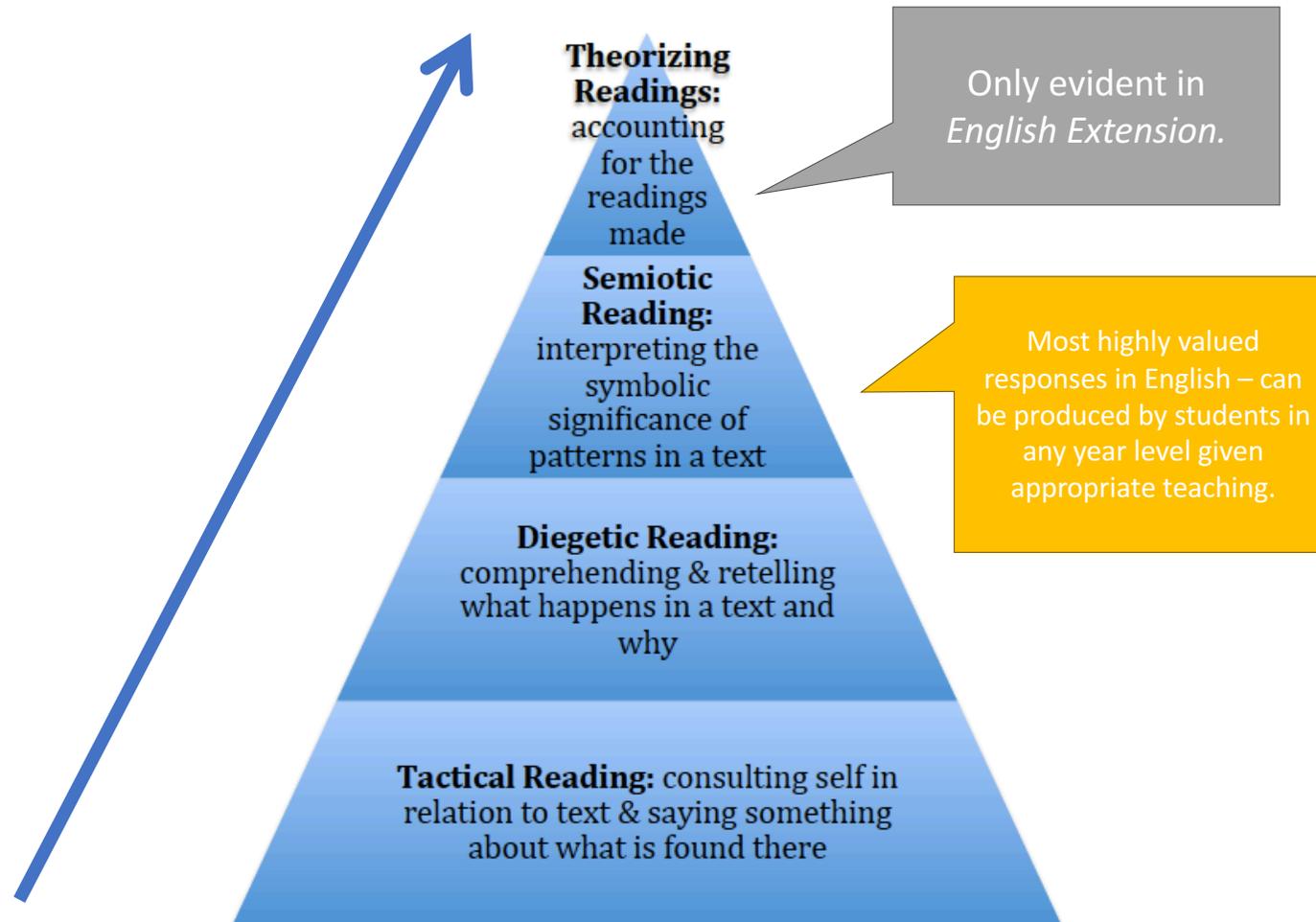
Extract from 'The Sink Hole' Interpretation: Theme Reiteration Stage

In conclusion, the author uses **shrewd** plotting and **cannily** crafted characters to communicate his **important** message about the dangers of succumbing to peer pressure.

Extract from NAPLAN Exposition: Reiteration Stage

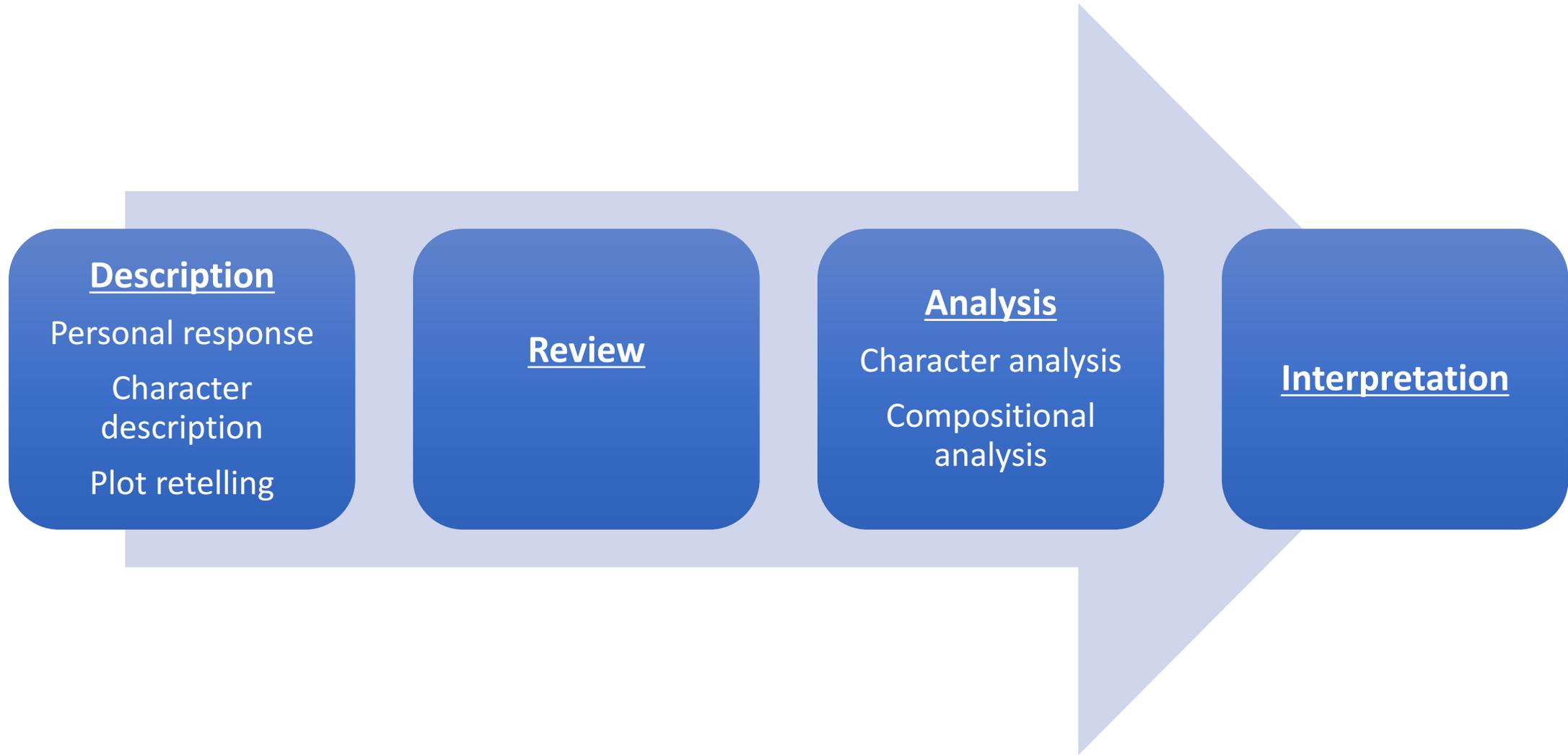
In conclusion, your article was **simply fictitious**. Toys and games are **important** for our children's development. Games keep our kids healthy, whilst learning **important** lessons. Games are also **educational**, and are **beneficial** for our children's brain development. Therefore games and toys are an **extremely important** learning aid to our children, and the money spent on the games and toys is **well deserved**.

Interpretation Genre: Types of Readings (Macken-Horarik 2016)



Conclusion

Sequencing Learning (Humphrey 2017, p133)



A young man with dark hair and a friendly smile is the central focus, wearing a dark blue t-shirt. He is sitting at a desk in a classroom. In the background, other students are visible, some working at their desks. A map of the United States is on the wall behind them. The overall atmosphere is bright and positive.

Want More?

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Acknowledgements

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