

LITERARY ANALYSIS BASED ON I.A. RICHARDS' FOUR LAYERS OF MEANING

In order to approach the analysis of a work of literature, one has to acknowledge that it possesses two layers: a literal, surface layer that presents the **facts of the narrative**, and a **figurative, deeper message of the piece**. A story is very seldom only about the literal details it presents, as the author typically is using them to convey a deeper point, often about human society/culture or human nature.

Directions: We are going to use chapters 17 and 18 (Sean's perspective) to analyze each layer of meaning in this section of the novel THE SCORPIO RACES.

LAYER ONE

Paraphrasable Content = Literal Surface Meaning

The physical events of the story...

- ★ Think plot diagram
- ★ The "five W's and the H" of the work (Who did What, When, Where, Why + How)
- ★ A reader must understand this layer before being able to move beyond and into deeper, figurative meaning.

LAYER TWO

Mood = Emotional Content

The overall feeling(s) of the work of literature as expressed through imagery, language and style.

- ★ How does the author use setting to create mood?
- ★ How does the author use conflict to create mood?
- ★ How does the author use events to create mood?
- ★ How does the author use language to create mood?

LAYER THREE

Tone = Author's Attitudes

The author's general attitude toward the audience, characters, settings, subject matter, and so. This is shown through **diction**, **phrasing** (the way something is expressed by the writer), and **selection of details**.

Diction is defined as the style of writing as determined by the choice of words a writer chooses. Diction can be formal (like a speech or press conference) or informal (like a conversation between friends), or it can include colloquialisms, or speech patterns associated with particular times, cultures or geographic regions. Finally, it can include slang, which like colloquialisms, is bound by time and place, but also may include rude or insulting expressions of speech.

LAYER FOUR

Interpretation of the Author's Intent

The reader's interpretation of the overall, underlying point or **theme** of the work as intended by the author. This meaning must be supported by all of the information uncovered in the first three layers.