



The Faerie Queene – The problem/allure of Allegory Group Work

First, make sure that everyone knows what the term *Allegory* means. There are definitions in both your handout and in the introduction from your textbook (*Elements of Literature*). Now, read the inset box (I hope you've read the entire book) taken from the introduction to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain.

PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.
BY ORDER OF THE
AUTHOR,
Per G.G., Chief of
Ordnance.
from Huckleberry Finn

1. How, specifically, does Mark Twain try to circumvent (look it up) what Edmund Spenser tries to purposefully accomplish? What does your group believe is the danger of an allegory (dramatically)? How many of you listen to music primarily for its message or deep symbolism? What is the advantage? If you don't have a strong allegorical component to a text what must you have (hint: the answer is "story")? By trying (notice I said trying, is ever possible to succeed in what I'm about to ask) to remove everything but the "story" from his text, what is Twain hoping to accomplish? Conversely by relying on allegory what do you believe may be diminished?
2. What does the monster eat in this tale (*The Faerie Queene*)? How can this act be interpreted allegorically¹? What does the serpent represent²? What about her offspring? What may the act of devouring her own offspring represent? Be very specific here, and if you can't relate these acts to Elizabethan (or Renaissance) history (yes, go look at your intros to this section), try to relate them to a modern equivalent. Also explain, allegorically, the events that take place at the serpent's death (verses 24-25).
3. Look at lines 20-28. In an allegory, everything stands for something else. Look at your answer to #2. Why does the monster hate light? Why is she coiled (hint: think of icebergs here)? What about her relationship to visibility and sight. Use specific quotes (at least one for each different part of the question) from the text in illustrating your answer.
4. Verses 19 & 24: Make a specific connection between these verses to a specific part of the Beowulf story.
5. Why, allegorically speaking, do you think the serpent's vomit contains books & papers? Try to be specific and use your knowledge of Elizabethan history.
6. The problem with using Allegories (or even extended metaphors for that matter) is that you've got to keep them perfectly consistent and logical throughout the entire work. First of all, why? Ok, now: You've answered what the serpent thinks about light – and you've talked about why she devours books & papers. But my question is what the contradiction here is? Think about what you eat – do you consume what you hate (or do you destroy it). Be specific in your answer. *Does Twain's preface to his book make more sense now?*
7. Annotate the attached (back of this sheet) verse from *The Fairie Queen*, indicating: (turn in only one) attached to your answers to rest of questions.
 - metrical feet /stressed & unstressed syllables – (check out the 2nd line – in order to keep the meter right notice how Spenser combines "the E" into one syllables).
 - rhyme scheme (put a letter next to each line) ie. ABC ABC AB
 - general meter (ie iambic pentameter next to each line) /anything else that defines this a Spensarian stanza (see texts)
8. How does an allegory make the idea of the "author as shaper" more obvious? Put this together with question 6 and answer the following: Why do we look for symbols, allegories, "hidden meanings" even when they are not presented (as they are in *The Fairie Queen*) that way – think back to the dragon's cobwebs, our own conspiracy theories and anything else that helps you answer this question. Do you believe that the intentional, obvious, (hit us over the head) nature of allegories then, detracts from our own desire to find these "relationships" ourselves? Look at the end of the intro to Spenser on page 217 – do you think his lack of enduring appeal may be linked to these ideas (the preceding part of this question)? Explain with specifics.

¹ Make sure that you know exactly what that means

² Unlike the rest of the class for the rest of the year – in this story symbols are obviously intended. Now, do they add or detract from the story – that is up to you to determine.

As when old father Nilus 'gins to swell
With timely pride above the Egyptian vale,
His fatty waves do fertile slime outwell,
And overflow each plain and lowly dale:
But when his later spring 'gins to avals,
Huge heaps of mud he leaves, wherein there breed
Ten thousand kinds of creatures, partly male
And partly female of his fruitful seed;
Such ugly monstrous shapes elsewhere may no man reed.