

.Analysis Worksheet 1 Sarah's Letter to the Author

Analyze Sarah's letter to the author in detail and fill in the chart.

In groups of three, read and analyze the letter you have been given. First: work alone: Highlight **linguistic devices** in the text (Which functional language does the writer use; chunks and phrases that can generally be used to write a LAL), and fill in the columns **content**, **purpose**, and **personal response**. Then: Share your results with the other team members. Discuss your findings.

Part of the text	Content What is the paragraph about?	Purpose How does the passage contribute to developing the thesis?	Personal response/critical evaluation To what extent do you (dis)like what you are reading? Why?
<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>National Winner, Level 3: Sarah Lurie</p> <p>Dear Dorothy Parker,</p> <p>The other night I sat with my family around the dinner table reminiscing and telling old stories. My grandma told one about a time when my mom was eight years old and wanted to play the flute. The story goes, my grandma went down to the music store to rent a flute, but the salesman told her she needed a man to sign the contract. Being a single mother she asked her father to go to the music store and sign the papers verifying the \$2.50 bill would indeed be paid each month. I was shocked that such a relatively short time ago women were not trusted to make a simple (small!) payment.</p> <p>In my life there are some pretty amazing people, but my grandma stands out as the most extraordinary. When my mom and her siblings were young children their dad left them, leaving their protection and</p>			

<p>care in the hands of my grandma. She managed to raise four kids, maintain a stable job, a house, and all that one needs to be happy. She was successful on her own with no male figure by her side. Not to say there weren't hard days, even hard years, but in the end my grandma was a hero and still is. Even now, at 77 years old she is the director of a life-long learning institute for elders. She is such a unique and incredible human being because of her ability to be a strong, empowered woman in the face of hardship. When I read your poem, "Penelope," not only did my grandma come to mind, the potential and power of all women did. This extraordinary poem altered my perception of the role of women figures in the traditional male hero stories, and in my own life.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>As I grow older it has become apparent that the world around me struggles with gender equality. Job opportunities. Wages. Raises. Access. Women fight harder and longer every day to achieve equality. That is why we need constant, clear reminders and guidance to continue the shift away from how things have been and still are today. Your poem offers such guidance.</p> <p>As seen in Homer's poem, "The Odyssey," Odysseus sets sail on a heroic, eventful journey, while Penelope tends to the baby and deals with domestic affairs in Ithaca. Penelope's hope and determination remains constant throughout his absence, making Penelope the true hero, much like my grandma. A key to understanding your poem is the title itself. "The Odyssey" is titled after Odysseus, the male hero. By titling your poem "Penelope" you push readers to question the belief that only men are heroes. Although Odysseus led the long and eventful journey, his story could not exist without Penelope. She serves as the rock that holds the fort down so when Odysseus returns he has the people of Ithaca to deem him the hero. While Penelope is an almost</p>			

<p>invisible character in the epic story, the entire journey could not exist without her steady presence. We have a concrete image in our minds of the roles and obligations the male and female figure hold. But why? Because it takes two to tango. In other words Penelope's presence in Ithaca is essential to everyday life, yet it is barely acknowledged in the story. I like how your poem concludes, "They will call him brave," emphasizing the fact that readers are led to view the story in light of Odysseus' journey during which he becomes a hero. Penelope serves as proof that although a heroic adventure seems to focus on male actions, both male and female contribute to a successful outcome.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>I experience gender inequality first hand every day; Boys get called on twice as often as girls in classrooms, and when stating the answer don't qualify it with, "I think," or "Maybe..." Even something as small as when the PE teacher yells "girls against boys," reflects entrenched bias. As I went about my sophomore year you brought to my attention that most clubs, teams, and even some classes are defined solely by gender. When I was young I had the opportunity to join a boys' soccer team because there weren't enough girls to complete our own. After reading your poem I finally understood that the coach's open-mindedness gave me an opportunity to prove my strength and resilience. This allowed me to take a small first step into the women empowerment movement alongside my grandma.</p> <p>Ever since I read your poem women empowerment shows up everywhere I go, in places I previously overlooked. The examples continue to pop in my head; my middle school principal, a pilot on the plane on a recent trip, high profile TV role models like Ellen Degeneres and Oprah, the girls who joined the wrestling team, and</p>			

<p>wins matches! I could go on. My point is you have made it possible for me to acknowledge amazing women right before my eyes, women who take an active role in the movement towards gender equality. I used to not think twice about occurrences such as these but your poem has opened my eyes, and I now realize these women are worth stopping to think about, yet are not often seen. And now, I truly appreciate strong empowered women and want to become one myself.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>Since freshmen year I have been on the poms dance team at my high school. We perform for football, soccer games, rallies, competitions, camps and other sport events. We work extremely hard every day to get better and stronger. Yet our team continues to be diminished; we don't receive the funding or status other teams enjoy. We are constantly brushed aside when it comes to athletic programming support. As may be predictable, we are an all-girls team. Cheering for the boys' athletic teams isn't the problem, but not being treated as equals is. Maybe the funded boys' teams see themselves as "cutting the glittering wave," while we "brew tea and snip thread." Our participation is a key part of the high school sports equation, and we should be supported as such. We perform, train, and do everything required of the boys' teams yet don't get nearly the wide range of support they do. Reading your poem gave me insight into my personal experience and made it clear to me that I needed to stand up for my team and amazing young women on it. As the new freshmen join us I encourage them to view our team as powerful and equal to all the others. We're rising above the outdated approach and lack of support and empowering ourselves to fight for equality in the eyes of the school's athletic program.</p> <p>This is one poms team, one school, one athletic program. We may only be a small piece to a larger puzzle; but every piece counts. Boulder</p>			

<p>Valley School District alone has 56 schools. Within these 56 schools the fight for equal treatment within the athletic department must be a priority. Female sports must be treated with the same support as male sports, in effort to set a precedent for the bigger picture. The one-sidedness and lack of equality in an educational system full of young women at such an essential time in life is the last thing our schools need to promote, and will lead to more drastic gender inequality issues. If school districts can maintain gender equality in something as simple as sports it will start a ripple effect, eventually allowing the young adults within the school to carry gender equality into everyday adult lives.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>Your poem has inspired me to look more deeply into feminist ideas. Maya Angelou once said, "How important it is for us to recognize and celebrate our heroes and she-roes!" My point is, Maya Angelou, you, and now myself, are taking the steps to extinguish the "weak female" stereotype and instead encourage women empowerment. We can live in a world where all genders should live as equals. You have helped me recognize that beginning with old Greek mythology to present day, gender bias has existed. Yet, there is no real reason for bias to exist other than the fact society has not had the critical mass to drive the change. That is why I will continue to work to break down the wall that allows gender stereotypes to impact schools and sports. Thank you, Dorothy Parker, for opening my eyes to this ability to enlighten others to the concept and reality of women empowerment that will shape our world to gender equality.</p> <p>Sarah Lurie</p>			