



# NATIONAL MATH + SCIENCE INITIATIVE

**NMSI ENGLISH**

AP Literature

## Prose Analysis - 2014 Deconstruction Lesson

*The Known World*, Edward P. Jones

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## Prose Analysis - 2014 Deconstruction Lesson

**Directions:** This lesson is meant to review and revisit the prose free response question that was used for the mock exam. Please reread and annotate the prompt and passage. Then, review the essay you wrote in response to this prompt for the 2014-2015 mock exam.

### Prose Prompt and Passage Reminders

- Read and annotate the prompt.
  - Remember that prose analysis questions are often excerpts of larger works.
  - Pay attention to the task sentence in the prompt. Paraphrasing the task can help provide clarity as you annotate the passage.
- Read and annotate the passage.
  - Mark small sections of the text you will cite directly in your response.
  - Construct annotations that identify technique and make connections to characterization.

### Deconstructing the Prompt

Examine the prompt below. Then, re-familiarize yourself with the prompt by considering the task and how an author reveals character.

The following passage is from the novel *The Known World* by Edward P. Jones. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how the author reveals the character of Moses. In your analysis, you may wish to consider such literary elements as point of view, selection of detail, and imagery.

1. Paraphrase the task sentence reprinted below.

**Task:** *Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how the author reveals the character of Moses.*

**Paraphrase:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. In a prose excerpt, how can a character's personality be revealed to the reader? Identify the ways that an author might choose to develop a character's personality in a piece of fiction.

## Passage Deconstruction

**Directions:** *Reread the passage below. Mark any language that suggests Moses's character.*

The evening his master died he worked again well after he ended the day for the other adults, his own wife among them, and sent them back with hunger and tiredness to their cabins. The young ones, his son among them, had been sent out of the fields an hour or so before the adults, to prepare the late supper and, if there was time enough, to play in the few minutes of sun that were left. When he, Moses, finally freed himself of the ancient and brittle harness that connected him to the oldest mule his master owned, all that was left of the sun was a five-inch-long memory of red orange laid out in still waves across the horizon between two mountains on the left and one on the right. He had been in the fields for all of fourteen hours. He paused before leaving the fields as the evening quiet wrapped itself about him. The mule quivered, wanting home and rest. Moses closed his eyes and bent down and took a pinch of the soil and ate it with no more thought than if it were a spot of cornbread. He worked the dirt around in his mouth and swallowed, leaning his head back and opening his eyes in time to see the strip of sun fade to dark blue and then to nothing. He was the only man in the realm, slave or free, who ate dirt, but while the bondage women, particularly *the* pregnant ones, ate it for some incomprehensible need, for that something that ash cakes and apples and fatback did not give their bodies, he ate it not only to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the field, but because the eating of it tied him to the only thing in his small world that meant almost as much as his own life.

This was July, and July dirt tasted even more like sweetened metal than the dirt of June or May. Something in the growing crops unleashed a metallic life that only began to dissipate in mid-August, and by harvest time that life would be gone altogether, replaced by a sour moldiness he associated with the coming of fall and winter, the end of a relationship he had begun with the first taste of dirt back in March, before the first hard spring rain. Now, with the sun gone and no moon and the darkness having taken a nice hold of him, he walked to the end of the row, holding the mule by the tail. In the clearing he dropped the tail and moved around the mule toward the barn.

The mule followed him, and after he had prepared the animal for the night and came out, Moses smelled the coming of rain. He breathed deeply, feeling it surge through him. Believing he was alone, he smiled. He knelt down to be closer to the earth and breathed deeply some more. Finally, when the effect began to dwindle, he stood and turned away, for the third time that week, from the path that led to the narrow lane of the quarters with its people and his own cabin, his woman and his boy. His wife knew enough now not to wait for him to come and eat with them. On a night with the moon he could see some of the smoke rising from the world that was the lane--home and food and rest and what passed in many cabins for the life of family. He turned his head slightly to the right and made out what he thought was the sound of playing children, but when he turned his head back, he could hear far more clearly the last bird of the day as it evening-chirped in the small forest far off to the left.

He went straight ahead, to the farthest edge of the cornfields to a patch of woods that had yielded nothing of value since the day his master bought it from a white man who had gone broke and returned to Ireland. "I did well over there," that man lied to his people back in Ireland, his dying wife standing hunched over beside him, "but I longed for all of you and for the wealth of my homeland." The patch of woods of no more than three acres did yield some soft, blue grass that no animal would touch and many trees that no one could identify. Just before Moses stepped into the woods, the rain began, and as he walked on the rain became heavier. Well into the forest the rain came in torrents through the trees and the mighty summer leaves and after a bit Moses stopped and held out his hands and collected water that he washed over his face. Then he undressed down to his nakedness and lay down. To keep the rain out of his nose, he rolled up his shirt and placed it under his head so that it tilted just enough for the rain to flow down about his face. When he was an old man and rheumatism chained up his body, he would look back and blame the chains on evenings such as these, and on nights when he lost himself completely and fell asleep and didn't come to until morning, covered with dew.

## Examining the Passage Paragraph by Paragraph

Examine the each paragraph in the passage. Create a series of close reading observations. Use the provided templates if necessary. For each paragraph, you will make one observation. These annotations should be implemented in the commentary revision portion of this lesson.

### Paragraph #1

The evening his master died he worked again well after he ended the day for the other adults, his own wife among them, and sent them back with hunger and tiredness to their cabins. The young ones, his son among them, had been sent out of the fields an hour or so before the adults, to prepare the late supper and, if there was time enough, to play in the few minutes of sun that were left. When he, Moses, finally freed himself of the ancient and brittle harness that connected him to the oldest mule his master owned, all that was left of the sun was a five-inch-long memory of red orange laid out in still waves across the horizon between two mountains on the left and one on the right. He had been in the fields for all of fourteen hours. He paused before leaving the fields as the evening quiet wrapped itself about him. The mule quivered, wanting home and rest. Moses closed his eyes and bent down and took a pinch of the soil and ate it with no more thought than if it were a spot of cornbread. He worked the dirt around in his mouth and swallowed, leaning his head back and opening his eyes in time to see the strip of sun fade to dark blue and then to nothing. He was the only man in the realm, slave or free, who ate dirt, but while the bondage women, particularly the pregnant ones, ate it for some incomprehensible need, for that something that ash cakes and apples and fatback did not give their bodies, he ate it not only to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the field, but because the eating of it tied him to the only thing in his small world that meant almost as much as his own life.

### Close Reading Observation #1

**Language**—Choose a description of Moses from the first paragraph.

**Template:** Jones first describes Moses as, “\_\_\_\_\_”  
(choose a short section of text that describes Moses and cite it here).

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Technique**—Identify the technique (imagery, selection of detail, point of view, etc.) Jones employs in this description. Then, explain how the example cited above embodies the technique.

**Template:** This description relies upon \_\_\_\_\_ (writing technique) since it makes use of \_\_\_\_\_ (describe how the example you’ve chosen showcases this device).  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Character**—Explain *how* the language and the technique, identified above, reveal Moses’s character. This response will be longer since it consists of commentary.

**Template:** Jones discloses that Moses is \_\_\_\_\_  
*(discuss how this example reveals an aspect of Moses’s character)* \_\_\_\_\_.

This aspect of his character suggests \_\_\_\_\_  
*(describe what this example implies about Moses)* \_\_\_\_\_

As a result, *(discuss the importance of understanding this aspect of Moses’s character)* \_\_\_\_\_.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Paragraph #2

This was July, and July dirt tasted even more like sweetened metal than the dirt of June or May. Something in the growing crops unleashed a metallic life that only began to dissipate in mid-August, and by harvest time that life would be gone altogether, replaced by a sour moldiness he associated with the coming of fall and winter, the end of a relationship he had begun with the first taste of dirt back in March, before the first hard spring rain. Now, with the sun gone and no moon and the darkness having taken a nice hold of him, he walked to the end of the row, holding the mule by the tail. In the clearing he dropped the tail and moved around the mule toward the barn.

**Close Reading Observation #2**—Construct an observation from the second paragraph about how Jones reveals the character of Moses. Refer to the templates above if needed.

**Language**—Choose a description of Moses from the second paragraph.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Technique**—First identify the technique (imagery, selection of detail, point of view, etc.) Jones employs in this description. Then, explain how the example cited above embodies the technique.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Character**—Explain *how* the language and the technique reveals Moses’s character.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Paragraph #3

The mule followed him, and after he had prepared the animal for the night and came out, Moses smelled the coming of rain. He breathed deeply, feeling it surge through him. Believing he was alone, he smiled. He knelt down to be closer to the earth and breathed deeply some more. Finally, when the effect began to dwindle, he stood and turned away, for the third time that week, from the path that led to the narrow lane of the quarters with its people and his own cabin, his woman and his boy. His wife knew enough now not to wait for him to come and eat with them. On a night with the moon he could see some of the smoke rising from the world that was the lane--home and food and rest and what passed in many cabins for the life of family. He turned his head slightly to the right and made out what he thought was the sound of playing children, but when he turned his head back, he could hear far more clearly the last bird of the day as it eveningchirped in the small forest far off to the left.

**Close Reading Observation #3**—Construct an observation from the third paragraph about how Jones reveals the character of Moses. Refer to the templates above if needed.

**Language**—Choose a description of Moses from the beginning of the first paragraph.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Technique**—First identify the technique (imagery, selection of detail, point of view, etc.) Jones employs in this description. Then, explain how the example cited above embodies the technique.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Character**—Explain *how* the language and the technique reveals Moses’s character.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Paragraph #4**

He went straight ahead, to the farthest edge of the cornfields to a patch of woods that had yielded nothing of value since the day his master bought it from a white man who had gone broke and returned to Ireland. "I did well over there," that man lied to his people back in Ireland, his dying wife standing hunched over beside him, "but I longed for all of you and for the wealth of my homeland." The patch of woods of no more than three acres did yield some soft, blue grass that no animal would touch and many trees that no one could identify. Just before Moses stepped into the woods, the rain began, and as he walked on the rain became heavier. Well into the forest the rain came in torrents through the trees and the mighty summer leaves and after a bit Moses stopped and held out his hands and collected water that he washed over his face. Then he undressed down to his nakedness and lay down. To keep the rain out of his nose, he rolled up his shirt and placed it under his head so that it tilted just enough for the rain to flow down about his face. When he was an old man and rheumatism chained up his body, he would look back and blame the chains on evenings such as these, and on nights when he lost himself completely and fell asleep and didn't come to until morning, covered with dew.

**Close Reading Observation #3**—Construct an observation from the fourth paragraph about how Jones reveals the character of Moses. Refer to the templates above if needed.

**Language**—Choose a description of Moses from the beginning of the first paragraph.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Technique**—First identify the technique (imagery, selection of detail, point of view, etc.) Jones employs in this description. Then, explain how the example cited above embodies the technique.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Character**—Explain *how* the language and the technique reveals Moses's character.

**Student Response:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



### Original Essay Review

Now that you have written some “fresh” evidence and commentary sentences for this prose free response question, examine your original essay. For each category listed below, choose a different colored highlighter. Then, highlight each section of your essay accordingly. Color code the list below by highlighting each of the categories or by writing the color next to each bullet.

- Thesis
- Claim/Topic Sentences
- Evidence Sentences/Summary Sentences
- Commentary/Analysis Sentences

**Note:** *Be sure that you do not confuse your evidence sentences with meaningful analysis/commentary. If you are simply retelling the evidence, you are not constructing analysis. Highlight appropriately.*

### Thesis Wringer

Examine the thesis statement you have highlighted from your original essay. Complete the tasks below. If you have not written the essay, examine the tasks and then construct a thesis.

**Write your original thesis here:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Tasks

- Draw a dotted line under the portion of your thesis statement that describes Moses’s character.
  - This should be a specific description with meaningful adjectives that makes an argument about Moses based on his actions, behavior, thoughts, etc.
- Draw a wavy line underneath the portion of your thesis statement that discusses how the author reveals the character of Moses.

**Note:** If either of the categories above are missing from your thesis, add them to your revision. If your original thesis contains both categories, construct a more thoughtful version.

**Revised Thesis:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Revising Body Paragraph Assertions, Evidence Sentences, and Commentary

Choose the **weakest body paragraph** from your original essay. Then, using that body paragraph, review and revise your original writing.

**Topic Sentences**—Write the topic sentence from your weakest body paragraph below.

**Original Topic Sentence:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic Sentence Pitfalls**—Check each box that applies to your topic sentence.

- ☐ Limited Vocabulary
  - **Example:** Jones uses great language to describe Moses.
- ☐ Limited/No Argument
  - **Example:** Jones says that Moses is a hard worker.
- ☐ Struggled to Understand Moses's Character
  - **Example:** In the first part of the passage, Moses's character is interesting and shows who he is by his actions.
- ☐ Employed Sweeping Generalizations
  - **Example:** Jones uses details to create an image in the reader's mind about who Moses is as a person.
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Considerations

- Topic sentences should examine a section of the text, discuss the technique prevalent in that section, and then discuss the primary aspect of character that is revealed.
- Topic sentences should make a strong and reasonable argument that describes an implicit issue, something that is suggested but not directly stated, about the character.

**Revised Topic Sentence**—Revise your topic sentence based on the issues identified above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Revising Evidence Sentences and Commentary

Examine the commentary in the body paragraph that you have chosen. Complete the commentary revision chart below. The annotations from the beginning of this deconstruction lesson should be used in the revised evidence and commentary sections. Identify the best close reading observation for this revision activity. Complete the left-hand column first.

### Evidence

<b>Original Evidence Sentence</b> <i>Write the first evidence sentence from your weakest body paragraph below.</i>	<b>Revised Evidence Sentence</b> <i>After you have completed the left hand column, construct a new evidence sentence.</i>
<p><b>Observations</b></p> <p><i>Identify the areas in which this evidence is weak. Then, explain how you plan to improve.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Citation Length too Long</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Usefulness of Citation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Citation Embedded Incorrectly</li> </ul> <p><b>Improvement Plan:</b></p>	
	<p><b>Observations</b></p> <p><i>Explain how your revised evidence sentence is a better attempt.</i></p>

Commentary	
Original Analysis	Revised Evidence Sentence
<i>Write the analysis sentences from your weakest body paragraph.</i>	<i>After you have completed the left hand column, construct new/ improved analysis sentences.</i>
<div></div>	<div></div>
<div><div><b>Observations</b></div><div><i>Identify the areas in which this analysis is weak. Then, explain how you plan to improve.</i></div></div>	<div><div><b>Observations</b></div><div><i>Explain how your revised analysis sentences offer deeper commentary.</i></div></div>
<div><div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Summary instead of Analysis</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Repetitive Thoughts/Arguments</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Limited Discussion of Characterization</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Limited Discussion of Significance</div></div><div><b>Improvement Plan:</b></div></div>	<div></div>

## Student Samples

Examine the student samples below and discuss the attributes of each.

Student Sample Score: 4	Student Sample Score: 6
<p><b>Introductory Paragraph</b></p> <p>Slavery has always had a big impact on the world as this passage reiterates the feelings and attitudes of a slave. Edward P. Jones portrays Moses through his use of imagery and detail so we as readers can better understand Moses' point of view.</p>	<p><b>Introductory Paragraph</b></p> <p>Moses is seen as a quiet outsider in his own world. The passage narrates the events around him describing the pain and poor conditions around him. Yet despite his strange habits the audience cannot help but feel compassion and unknowing respect for Moses. Moses and those around him add depth and reality to the passage. Without them there could be no contrast to Moses. Through point of view, selection of detail, and imagery the audience can see the daily life of Moses and see through his actions the reflection of his character.</p>
<p><b>Observations</b></p> <p><i>Identify the characteristics of this introductory paragraph. Create a list of improvements the author could make.</i></p>	<p><b>Observations</b></p> <p><i>Identify the characteristics of this introductory paragraph. Create a list of improvements the author could make.</i></p>

Body Paragraphs	Body Paragraphs
<p>Jones opens this passage with details and an image of Moses who “had been in the fields for all of fifteen hours” (lines 14-15). Through the image of the sun only “a five-inch-long memory of red orange laid out in still waves,” (lines 11-12) we can tell Moses is a loyal and hard-worker. Not only is he a hard-worker, but we can see he takes pride and joy in what he does for “He was the only man in the realm, slave or free, who ate dirt” (lines 23-24). This image enables us to see his passion for the earth and allows us to see the world through his point of view. “He ate it not only to discover.... as his own life,” (lines 28-31) allows the reader to see that he is owned, but he finds joy in the simple things of life such as the dirt and rain. “Moses smelled the coming of rain,” (lines 47-48) so that he could “be closer to the earth” (line 50), allows us to see that Moses finds passion in good things.</p>	<p>Point of view is essential to this narration as it provides insight to not only Moses’ actions but how different he is from his surroundings. The quote “He was the only man to eat dirt but while the bondage of woman...” His actions prove Moses to not be preoccupied with bodily needs like nutrition. Instead the author uses a third person point of view to allow the audience to be an observer and recount Moses’ daily life without him knowing to show a side of innocence while also loneliness. Moses does not taste dirt out of childish desire of hunger he instead does it as a spiritual desire to remind him about life. The point of view stays third person even when describing the Irish man, “I did well over there, that man lied”. This insight into the view of the Irish man is used to contrast with Moses. He never tries to seem better off than he really is, he is a simple, honest man. The two points of views allow the audience to see how much different Moses is from his surroundings. While others are focused on themselves Moses eats dirt to connect himself to the land, an extension of himself.</p> <p>The selection of detail throughout the passage reveals the inner character of Moses. The little quirks he does shows how Moses truly is when looking past his strange dirt eating habits. Moses is a hard worker as “he had been in the field for all fifteen hours” and “didn’t come to until morning covered in dew”. These details show the work ethic of Moses and how he works himself past the point of exhaustion. These details show how he has no sense of time and is simply working on the land and symbolically himself. The attention to detail in the taste of the dirt shows how Moses is actually seeing the changes around him, as “this was July and July dirt tasted even more like sweetened metal than did the dirt of June or May”. Again Moses appears to have no sense of time and relies on the dirt to put him back into the material world. As Moses falls back to the dirt as a crutch it reveals how he is simply floating through or just existing through this life.</p>

<p>Imagery in the passage shows the harsh environment of Moses yet enhances his soft nature. Through the description of the sun it shows how draining the work load is “...Moses freed himself of the ancient and brittle harness that connected him...memory of the red-orange laid out in waves”. This shows how Moses is simply a worker and observer. He appears to lack any depth as he is only connected to the field through his work and mule. The simple nature of Moses is then seen in the imagery of the rain “then he undressed down to his nakedness and lay down. To keep the rain out of his nose, he rolled up his shirt.” Although at first Moses is seen to be very simple, he does not run inside and claim shelter. He is very naturalistic as he embraces nature and it shows how although he is disconnected from people that he is very connected to the land.</p>	<p><b>Observations</b></p> <p><i>Identify the characteristics of these body paragraphs. Create a list of improvements the author could make.</i></p>	
	<p><b>Observations</b></p> <p><i>Identify the characteristics of this body paragraph. Create a list of improvements the author could make.</i></p>	

Concluding Paragraph	
Moses' character is shown when "he lost himself completely," (line 88) in his escape from a hard day of work. His identity is seen in a new perspective through these images of harsh field days to the transition of the earth, where he can escape and be closer to what he loves. Moses' character is loyal, hard working, and down to earth. He is able to be happy in the simplest of realms.	
Observations	
<i>Identify the characteristics of this concluding paragraph. Create a list of improvements the author could make.</i>	<i>Identify the characteristics of this concluding paragraph. Create a list of improvements the author could make.</i>