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LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION OF A FICTIONAL TEXT THROUGH ARCHETYPES AND SYMBOLS USAGE



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The article is devoted to the linguistic interpretation of a fictional text through archetypes and symbols usage. It gives a review of different approaches to the problem of interaction of folklore and literature, definition of basic terms, such as ‘archetype’, ‘symbol’, ‘mythologem’. Fairy-tale archetypes and symbols are decoded and interpreted in Byatt’s short stories taken from the story collection *Sugar and Other Stories*. The archetype fairy-tale images of Cinderella, evil stepmother and witch have been analyzed in the stories *Racine and Tablecloth* and *The Dried Witch*. The paper focuses on the possibility of applying folklore approach to the interpretation of the above-mentioned archetype images in A.S. Byatt’s stories. Special attention is paid to the role of symbols and stylistic devices and expressive means in decoding the fairy-tale images. The analysis of the extracts from fiction reveals individual peculiarities of folklore borrowings usage by different writers and allows to decode their intentions and to see the depth of the content in fictional texts. The relevance of the research comes out of insufficiency of researches devoted to peculiarities of folklore borrowings in modern English and American literature. To achieve the goal and objectives of the research the following methods were used: the method of reviewing and analysis of theoretical literature on the subject; contextual and intercontextual analyses to identify the relationship between the texts; folklore method, the method of interpretation analysis, stylistic analysis. The practical value of the research: the results of the paper may be used by students in the course of *Stylistics of the English Language*, *Lexicology* and during practical classes of *Analytical Reading*.

FOLKLORE; MYTH; ARCHETYPE; SYMBOL; FICTIONAL TEXT; SHORT STORY; IMAGE; FAIRY-TALE; STYLISTIC DEVICES; LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION

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Introduction. The article is concerned with the study of fairy-tale archetypes and symbols in fictional texts. The study was based on the stories from the collection *Sugar and Other Stories* by an outstanding English writer A.S. Baytt.

The theoretical basis of the research is the works of Russian and foreign researchers in the field of interaction of literature and folklore, the study of the structure of the artistic symbol, dissertations and thesis abstracts on the works of A.S. Baytt (S.S.

Averintsev, M.N. Kon'kova, Yu.M. Lotman, C.G. Jung, L.S. Vygotsky, M.Ch. Larionova, V.S. Darenenkova etc.). Among foreign researchers we distinguish the works of V. Alford [1], C. Franken [2], N. Tredell [3].

The work of Antonia Susan Byatt is a large field for literary research. Remaining in the background for a long time after receiving the Booker Prize in 1990 for the novel *Possession*, which is now included in many university programs, A.S. Byatt has gained popularity and has become more actively studied by foreign and domestic researchers. One of the most interesting phenomena of A.S. Byatt's works is an unusual creative preference, the move from a large genre form to a small one. The writer turns to the genre of the story only in the late 1980s, while the genre of the novel is represented in the works of A.S. Byatt since the 1960s. *Sugar and Other Stories* is the writer's first collection, and it is interesting to research due to the topical subject-matter and folklore images.

In the first four stories, *Racine and the Tablecloth*, *Rose-Coloured Teacups*, *The July Ghost*, *The Next Room*, the theme of intergenerational relationships is highlighted. The scenes of the next two stories are laid in Asia, and vividly demonstrate the differences in cultures. In the stories *On the Day That E.M. Forster Died* and *The Changeling*, the philosophy of creativity comes to the fore. The story *In the Air* echoes *The Red Witch*, telling about the fate of a lonely, unhappy woman. In the last two stories, the author reveals the relationship between the ideal and the real. In general, motifs and leitmotifs are intertwined in the collection. *Sugar and Other Stories* is the most socially-oriented collection, it reflects the life, periods of creativity and the personality of A.S. Byatt. It is noteworthy that many storylines repeat some moments from the author's biography.

Literary scholars consider A.S. Byatt a folklore author, and the above-mentioned

collection of stories is of the folkloristic nature. In later stories, A.S. Byatt explicitly refers to the biblical and mythological images and marked folklore borrowings [4].

A number of scientists, these include C.G. Yung, V. Alford, Yu.M. Lotman, M.Ch. Larionova, M.N. Kon'kova, Ye.A. Kostyukhin and others, distinguish in their writings the problem of folklore and literature interaction. Folklore and literature are closely related, however, they are not synonymous, according to the researchers of this issue. Literature is in the sphere of spiritual activity, in the sphere of art [5]. Folklore is a combination of artistic and non-artistic forms of a people's culture. Folklore was the progenitor of literature, and the basis for folklore was a myth. Myth, according to M.V. Savinov, is "a form of integral mass experience and interpretation of reality with the help of sensory-visual images, which are considered independent phenomena of reality" [6: 12]. We do agree, that myth is a primary form of synthetic cognition of the surrounding world and it makes it possible to explore space, the whole, which has a certain order [7: 53].

In the work of a writer, the link between folklore and literature is traced taking into account the principles developed in literary studies. First of all, the writer's attitude to folklore is revealed, then folklore sources and the ways of processing folklore material are determined, and elements of different folklore genres are interpreted. The archetypal views of a writer occupy a special place. The use of folklore in literature can be manifold, ranging from motifs to archetypes and symbols.

One of the ways writers use folklore borrowings is resorting to fairy-tale archetypes and symbols. As argued by C.G. Jung, 'archetype' (translated from Greek means 'the beginning of an image') "is a figure recurring throughout history, wherever creative imagination operates freely" [8: 53].

Symbol according to C.G. Jung is the embodiment of the original mythological image which helps express an image of the world, and all the symbols express archetypes [8: 285].

M.Ch. Larionova noted that archetype is an unconscious reproduction of mythological motifs. Mythologem according to M.Ch. Larionova represents borrowing of these motifs by the author [9: 99]. In other words, the archetype can be considered a kind of skeleton of myths, while the mythologem is a variety of manifestations, modifications of these motifs performed by one or another author.

A.A. Iudin defines archetype as "a primary image, a certain original, some combination of the most ancient universal human symbols, prototypes underlying myths, folklore and cultures in general, and passing from generation to generation" [10: 4]. Taking into account the above-mentioned definitions, we understand archetypes as often repeated images, plots and motifs in folklore and literary works.

To implement their creative ideas, authors may introduce into their works various archetypal images explicitly or implicitly. Archetypal images are universals; they have a certain content that is understandable for a group of people united by one culture, and therefore these images generate certain emotions and associations in readers with related cultural roots. Being a folklore author, A.S. Byatt skillfully introduces archetypal images and symbols as important plot units into her works. Studying them will help reveal the author's intention, and understand the artistic world of the work as an integral part of the artistic world of the writer.

Mention should be made of the boundaries of the genre in which A.S. Byatt worked. In her thesis research, M.N. Kon'kova notes that the problem of literary trends in the work of the writer is intensively investigated by

Russian and Western literary scholars [11]. According to M.N. Kon'kova, the work of A.S. Byatt covers different areas, such as postmodernism, realism, modernism and romanticism. Literary scholars more often refer the collection *Sugar and Other Stories* to realism and consider it as a revelation of the author exploring complex life challenges. A.S. Byatt endows her stories with bright symbols and fairy-tale archetypal images, she offers the reader a new perspective and approach to familiar images, relevant and timely ideas which give rise to memorable stories and vivid images.

While interpreting the stories by A.S. Byatt, we took into account the works of professor V.E. Cherniavskaia on text linguistics [12; 13]. **The main goals of our research paper are as follows:** the study of the potential of archetype images and symbols in a fictional text; the interpretation of fairy-tale archetypes of Cinderella, evil stepmother and witch in A.S. Byatt's stories; to apply the folklore approach to the interpretation of archetype images for revealing the inner world of the characters and defining the intention of the author. To achieve the goal and objectives of the research **the following methods** were used: the method of reviewing and analysis of theoretical literature on the subject; contextual and intercontextual analyses to identify the relationship between the texts; folklore method, the method of interpretation analysis, method of stylistic analysis.

The analyses of fairy-tale archetypes and symbols. Let us consider the fairy-tale archetypes of Cinderella, and the evil stepmother in the story *Racine and the Tablecloth*.

The story *Racine and the Tablecloth* is the first in the collection *Sugar and Other Stories* and it delves into the theme of morality and justice as well as the theme of generation gap.

The reader's focus is on the hard life of Emily Bray, an intelligent, talented and purposeful girl who loves literature and strives for knowledge and self-expression. Emily is alien to the base interests of other students. She is lonely, and it is difficult for her to confront the picky teacher Miss Crichton-Walker whose constant pressure and unfair criticism Emily endures painfully.

The object of the writer's attention is both the conflict of Miss Crichton-Walker and Emily, and the intrapersonal conflict of the main character.

The archetypal image of the Cinderella and the evil stepmother appear in the story implicitly, however, the analysis of the images and relationships between the characters allows the reader drawing parallels between the characters of the story and the fairy-tale archetypes embodied in them.

The worldview of the main character is indicated by the author in the first sentence of the story with the question, "When was it clear that Martha Crichton-Walker was the antagonist?" [14: 1]. At the beginning of the story, Miss Crichton-Walker is presented as a pleasant and pedantic woman. The way she looks is described in detail: golden curls, almost like a wig of a lawyer, a sweet face with soft skin remained invariably calm; big blue eyes, absolutely straight lip line. The appearance of Miss Crichton-Walker is complemented by important details: a nunnish straight-cut woolen dress with long sleeves, and a coat which had two rows of buttons, their excess symbolizes in this case the rigidity of principles and unwillingness to abandon her intentions. In general, the appearance of Miss Crichton-Walker speaks of deliberate correctness and reflects the conservative view of the past. The author made an ample use of **epithets** while describing Miss Crichton-Walker.

The conflict between Miss Crichton and Emily begins with an essay scribbled by the

student, although the content of the essay was excellent. Emily's fault was that she did not take into account the main requirement of her teacher to perform the essay in a neat handwriting.

Miss Crichton-Walker, who was not inclined to appreciate the academic achievements of the pupils, did not pay attention to the content of the essay and publicly criticized the student for her "messy" handwriting. The personality of the heroine is revealed with a touch of **irony** in the following remark of the author, "Miss Crichton-Walker was expert in morals, not in Hamlet or Emma" [14: 7]. The fairy-tale archetypal image of an evil stepmother is revealed through a superficial perception of the surrounding reality and the desire to judge unfairly. Instead of rewarding for the work and a good essay, the teacher finds reasons to disapprove the student. The disapproval was the most severe punishment for Miss Crichton-Walker students. Any deviation from the standard of behavior Miss Crichton-Walker perceives as rebellion and depravity. Emily was punished for arrogance, unsociability, dissimilarity.

A distinctive feature of the archetypal image of an evil stepmother is pretense and the ability to misrepresent evil intentions as good ones. In fairy-tales, a child usually becomes hostage of a situation, tends to treat the stepmother as a mother, but the wicked stepmother pursues her goals and punishes the child for any fault, for being different. In the story *Racine and the Tablecloth*, Miss Crichton-Walker accounted for her actions as good purposes. In fact, she serves the principles of the patriarchal model of the world, and the pupils are only "pawns" in her thoughtful plan for educating limited, obedient, people without ambitions.

The symbolic meaning of this archetype in the story is the retreating past, an inevitable difficulty in the way of Emily Bray, the evil

that hinders the main character of the story from developing and improving. The archetype is also a symbol of replacing the true with the false, for Miss Crichton-Walker actually replaced mother for the girl.

In the story, Emily is represented as a naive, gullible, timid girl. The prologue becomes a clue for the reader in understanding the psychology of the relationship of the main characters, “How can a child, undersized and fearful, have enough of a self to recognize an antagonist? She might imagine the malice of a cruel stepmother or a jealous sister, but not the clash of principle, the essential denial of an antagonist. She was too young to have thought-out beliefs. It was Miss Crichton-Walker’s task, after all, to form and guide the unformed personality of Emily Bray. Emily Bray’s ideas might have been thought to have been imparted by Martha Crichton-Walker, and this was in part the case, which made the recognition of an antagonism peculiarly difficult, certainly for Emily, possibly for both of them” [14: 1]. At the very beginning of the story, the author notes that Emily can imagine the anger of a disgruntled stepmother or the envy of her sister, but not a conflict of principles – an integral part of the antagonist.

The main character is opposed to other girls just like Cinderella to the daughters of an evil stepmother. Both Emily and Cinderella are sincere, fragile girls, with a subtle and rich inner world, both characterized by introversion, “She was physically undeveloped, no good at sport, no one to chatter about sex [...] delicious shoes or pony club confrontations” [14: 4]. Other students of the class, like the daughters of the stepmother, have low, superficial interests.

It is symbolic that Emily comes to the class instead of the dead girl Hodge by name, who is described as a cheerful child, full of life, and organically fitting into the class. However, Emily cannot serve as her

substitute. She has nothing in common with her classmates, and sees her main goal in education and self-expression. Emily quickly becomes the first in almost all school sciences. Like Cinderella, Emily compares favorably with the rest of the students in her class, which causes discontent. The main character is represented by the author as the girl of the future.

In the story of A.S. Byatt, Emily is described as a simple, and a complex person at the same time. The heroine is depicted as a gentle, and intelligent person. Emily’s uneven handwriting makes her notes look sloppy. It is possible to draw a parallel with the archetypal image of Cinderella who was daubed with ashes because of the large amount of work. Emily handed in her sloppy essay and fondly believed that the teacher would appreciate her performance and her subtle understanding of the literary work, but instead she faced disapproval. “Of course the paper was dirty: schools thought dirt mattered; she believed it did not” [14: 5]. For a long time, Emily endures humiliation and disapproval for everything: arrogance, unsociability, dissimilarity, and especially the appearance that disgusts Miss Crichton-Walker.

The archetype of Cinderella is implicit in the text of the story. A.S. Byatt offers a fresh approach to a well-known plot, embodying fairy-tale archetypal images in the characters of modern life. Instead of Prince Charming, Emily’s resilience, integrity and ability to work come to her aid. Through the use of fairy-tale archetypes, the author highlights the priorities of contemporary reality. A modern woman should be able to help herself, to cultivate an integral and self-sufficient personality. Miss Crichton-Walker’s education strongly influenced Emily and put her on her mettle. In spite of the fate, Emily managed to escape from the influence of a cruel teacher, to successfully pass the final exams at school, to enter university, and to settle her life.

The symbols in the story play a key role in understanding the author's intention. The title of the story *Racine and the Tablecloth* has metaphoric meaning and is symbolic. Jean Racine, a French playwright, being Emily's favourite writer, becomes a symbol of knowledge and education, to which the main character aspires. The author notes that for Miss Crichton-Walker, writing a book and sewing a tablecloth are equivalent things. In the story, the tablecloth becomes a symbol of narrow-mindedness and ignorance, a symbol of a woman who does not strive for personal self-fulfillment. Emily chooses for herself a different life path, filled with the joy of knowledge and self-expression.

It is no coincidence that flowers often appear next to Miss Crichton Walker. "In front of her was a plain silver bowl of flowers – pink roses, blue irises, something white and lacy and delicate surrounding them" [14: 21]. The rose appears as a symbol of chastity, grace, and also prudence. The iris flower is a symbol of purity and protection. Despite the positive meaning of symbols, the environment in which they appear allows us to consider the symbolic meaning of flowers rather in a negative context of deliberate ambitious grace. The epithet "plain" about the vase in which there are flowers, symbolically indicates that Miss Crichton-Walker pushes even flowers (her student's flowers) into the frame, without allowing them to show the true beauty.

The colours also have metaphoric meaning and are symbolic. Gray, pale green, etc. appear next to or on Miss Crichton-Walker herself and become attributes of the teacher's mediocrity.

A.S. Byatt, resorting to symbols in the story, subtly reveals their meanings. Symbols, being manifestations of archetypes, give the reader additional information about the characters of the story and allow more fully and accurately disclose their images. Such stylistic devices as epithets, metaphors and

irony, used by the author, also help the reader to interpret and decode the fictional text.

Now we proceed to consider the archetypal image of the witch in the story *The Dried Witch*.

Since the beginning of time, there has been an image of a witch or a sorceress in the folklore of various countries. The mentioned fairy-tale archetype attracts particular attention of modern authors of folk and fantasy literature. There is the following definition of a witch: "A woman who is believed to have magic power, especially to do evil things. In stories she usually wears a black pointed hat and flies on a broomstick" [15: 1753]. Traditionally, we imagine a witch as a lonely, ugly and evil woman, as well as attributes that are uniquely associated with witchcraft – a broom, a magic ball, a cauldron for making potions, etc. However, this popular archetypal image is very complicated because of its ambiguity. Witches can be evil and good, can help the heroes of folk tales and interfere with them.

The archetypal image of the witch in the story *The Dried Witch* is revealed by A.S. Byatt as a deep philosophical character with her rich inner world.

In the story under study, the main character A-Oa lives in a small village where she is despised. The woman's husband was taken to the army a long time ago, and her four children died in infancy. From the very beginning of the story, the image of a woman is associated with grief, a lack of desire to live, as evidenced by an important detail: A-Oa has lost all "moisture": "She was dry. It was dry season, but this was her own dryness. Her inside-mouth felt like cloth dried into creased folds in the sun; her tongue scrubbed the silky-dry palate with its sand-ripples of flesh" [14: 85]. The only way for A-Oa to gain respect or fear in the community is to become a witch or "the evil eye" who she is considered to be: "My husband is gone and I have no one to live for [...] I have no respect

in the village. I have no sons to care for me when I am old and weak. Every year will be a little worse. To know your knowledge, Mother, that would be some help against what took my sons, against my state" [14: 85]. The shaman gives her instructions on how to become the "evil eye".

Having earned a reputation as a healer, A-Oa gradually becomes respected by the villagers. However, soon A-Oa is accused of an evil act of helping a young man win a culpable love. The community make the decision to kill the witch ritually by drying her under the scorching sun: "We sun the jinx. We put the jinx to dry in the sun. [...] The sun will dry out the evil" [14: 107].

The story touches upon a number of social and psychological themes. Particularly, the theme of inferiority of human society, the theme of betrayal and hatred of narrow-minded people, the theme of the domination of prejudices in a patriarchal society. The archetypal image of the witch in the story is revealed gradually. Originally, A-Oa was a lonely unhappy older woman, and the villagers were wary of her. She becomes a victim. The prejudices of a narrow-minded community cause her making the decision to become a witch. It is noteworthy that A.S. Byatt characterizes her heroine neither positively nor negatively. A-Oa is simply a woman who tries to survive in a patriarchal society. She thinks that the only way of being respected in the community is to find bewitching powers.

The archetypal image of the witch in the story is formed through the use of a large number of symbolic details. A-Oa allows Cha-Hun to enter her house, despite the taboos of a patriarchal society forbidding a man to enter a woman's house. There is the author's remark hinting at an otherworldly nature of the heroine: "...she was no woman, she was something else" [14: 98]. A.S. Byatt gives her heroine the ability to think wider, to

see more (for example, her thoughts about the injustice to An-At), gives her healing abilities. Helping the young man, Cha-Hun and using a love potion, A-Oa violates all the moral principles of the community, and thus puts herself above the people, even above her fear of being punished according to the rules of the community for what she did.

In the story, the image of the witch differs from the usual interpretation of a fairy-tale image. Traditionally, a witch is associated with meanness, cunning, evil and deceit. A-Oa is undoubtedly angry with the world that condemns her. However, A.S. Byatt calls the reader to compassion and understanding because the main character of the story faces a problem that is relevant at all times – the society disapproves what they do not understand. The fairy-tale archetype of the witch is clearly manifested if you look at the heroine through the eyes of the villagers in the story. She is lonely, ugly, unfriendly toward children, guilty of all illnesses and troubles but can cure and help, using her spellcasting abilities. She is a real witch. However, the author reveals the inner world of the protagonist and the reader sees a desperate unhappy woman who thinks and sees all human vices, who is trying to fight alone with the evil and prejudices of the patriarchal society. This interpretation of the image of the witch is not found in fairy-tales. The author offers the reader a new look at this archetypal image.

Water in the story has a symbolic meaning. In many cultures, in India, for example, water is the guardian of life. It circulates throughout nature in the form of rain, plant juice, milk and blood [16]. The symbolic meaning of water, common to all cultures, is purity, fertility and the source of life. Man cannot exist without water, and the fact that A-Oa has "lost all moisture" says of the imminent end of the heroine's life. Death does not frighten A-Oa. She lost all her relatives and there will be no one to grieve.

That is why the woman agrees to accept the help of the shaman, and to learn witchcraft, dividing her life into “before” and “after.”

The fairy-tale archetype of a witch is revealed also through A-Oa’s omniscience. The reader understands that this knowledge is limited by common sense and prudence, but for the villagers, with their primitive outlook, the heroine is an “all-seeing eye”.

The image of A-Oa symbolizes something new and unknown for the villagers whose worldview is limited by the traditions of their culture and strict morals. The phenomenon of fear of the unknown, the attitude of society towards new knowledge when something new goes beyond what is generally accepted for them, becomes a topical subject of the story *The Dried Witch*.

Conclusion. Thus, turning to the archetypal images of Cinderella, the evil stepmother and the witch, A.S. Byatt invites the reader to look at the familiar fairy-tale images in a new way, from the perspective of modern reality, to move away from traditional interpretation.

Archetypal images in the stories *Racine and the Tablecloth* and *The Dried Witch* appear in the text of the stories implicitly, however, a deep analysis of the personalities of the main characters, their relationships, environment reveals the characteristic features of fairy-tale images.

Symbols, being a manifestation of archetypes, play an important role in the disclosure of the author's intention, and make it possible to deeper interpret the images of the characters in the texts of the stories. Thus, in the story *Racine and the Tablecloth* the flowers “stuck in frames”, the colours of Miss Crichton-Walker's clothes and the colours surrounding her are symbolic, and the name of the story is also symbolic. These symbols complement the image of “an evil stepmother”, which allows us to come to the conclusion that for the full development of a creative personality there must be relative freedom, and the pressure, especially brought to an extreme, inhibits development. The author also made an ample use of such stylistic devices as epithets, metaphors, irony for better understanding and decoding her intentions.

The symbolic meaning of water as a source of life in the story *The Dried Witch* helps understand and reveal the image of A-Oa, an unhappy woman forced to find a way out of her situation in witchcraft – the only way to survive in a primitive patriarchal society with its prejudices.

The interpretation of A.S. Byatt’s stories from the perspective of archetypal images and symbols reveals to the reader the rich artistic world of the great writer and gives the opportunity to discover the deep structures of the work of art.

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Варламова Вера Николаевна. Лингвистическая интерпретация архетипов и символов в художественном тексте. Статья посвящена лингвистической интерпретации архетипов и символов в художественном тексте. Освещается проблема взаимосвязи фольклора и литературы, рассматриваются базовые термины, такие как «архетип», «символ», «мифологема» и их трактовка в лингвистической литературе. Изучаются сказочные архетипы и символы в текстах рассказов сборника А.С. Байетт «Сахар и другие рассказы». Анализируются сказочные архетипы мачехи, золушки и ведьмы в рассказах «Racine and the Tablecloth» («Расин и скатерть») и «The Dried Witch» («Высушенная ведьма»). В работе используется фольклорный подход для более точной интерпретации вышеупомянутых сказочных образов. Особое внимание уделяется в рассказах А.С. Байетт символам и стилистическим приёмам, помогающим глубже раскрыть героев произведений. Анализ отрывков художественных произведений позволяет выявить индивидуальные особенности использования архетипических образов и символов у конкретных авторов, увидеть глубинные содержательные стороны художественного произведения, а также понять и декодировать авторский замысел. Актуальность исследования заключается в необходимости дальнейшего изучения фольклорных заимствований разными авторами на материале современной английской художественной литературы. Новизна проведённого исследования определяется фольклорно-мифологическим подходом, применяемым в современном литературоведении и позволяющим раскрыть литературные образы и литературные произведения глубже с использованием культурологической составляющей. В процессе работы использовались следующие методы исследования: методы реферирования и анализа теоретической литературы по проблематике, метод семантического анализа для определения значения фактического материала, контекстуальных метод, фольклорный метод, метод интерпретационного анализа, метод стилистического анализа. Практическая ценность настоящего исследования определяется возможностью использования результатов студентами в курсе изучения *Стилистики современного английского языка, Лексикологии*, а также на практических занятиях по *Аналитическому чтению*.

ФОЛЬКЛОР; МИФ; АРХЕТИП; СИМВОЛ; ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫЙ ТЕКСТ; РАССКАЗ; ОБРАЗ; СКАЗКА; СТИЛИСТИЧЕСКИЙ ПРИЁМ; ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКАЯ ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЯ

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