



Teacher Guide

“Eeyore Finds the Wolery and Owl Moves Into It”
from The House at Pooh Corner
by A. A. Milne

Questions for Socratic Discussion by Melanie Huff

© 2013, The Center for Literary Education
3350 Beck Road Rice, WA 99167
(509) 738-2837 adam@centerforlit.com
www.centerforlit.com

Contents

Introduction	1
Questions about Structure: Setting	4
Questions about Structure: Characters	5
Questions about Structure: Conflict and Plot	8
Questions about Structure: Theme	9
Questions about Style	11
Questions about Context	13
Suggestions for Writing Assignments	15
Unit Test and Study Guide	16
Story Charts	18

Introduction

This teacher guide is intended to assist the teacher or parent in conducting meaningful discussions of literature in the classroom or home school. Questions and answers follow the pattern presented in *Teaching the Classics*, the Center for Literary Education's two day literature seminar. Though the concepts underlying this approach to literary analysis are explained in detail in that seminar, the following brief summary presents the basic principles upon which this guide is based.

The *Teaching the Classics* approach to literary analysis and interpretation is built around **three unique ideas** which, when combined, produce a powerful instrument for understanding and teaching literature:

First: All works of fiction share the same basic elements — Context, Structure, and Style. A literature lesson that helps the student identify these elements in a story prepares him for meaningful discussion of the story's themes.

Context encompasses all of the details of time and place surrounding the writing of a story, including the personal life of the author as well as historical events that shaped the author's world.

Structure includes the essential building blocks that make up a story, and that all stories have in common: Conflict, Plot (which includes *exposition, rising action, climax, denouement, and conclusion*), Setting, Characters and Theme.

Style refers to the literary devices used by authors to create the mood and atmosphere of their stories. Recognition of some basic literary devices (alliteration, simile, personification, metaphor, etc) enables a reader not only to understand the author's themes more readily, but also to appreciate his craftsmanship more fully.

Second: Because it is approachable and engaging, Children's Literature is the best genre to employ in teaching the foundational principles of literary analysis. Children's books present these building blocks in clear, memorable language, and are thus treasure mines of opportunities for the astute teacher — allowing him to present Context, Structure and Style with ease to children and adults alike. Having learned to recognize these basic elements in the simple text of a classic children's story, a student is well prepared to analyze complex works suitable for his own age and level of intellectual development.

Third: The best classroom technique for teaching literary analysis and interpretation is the Socratic Method. Named after the ancient gadfly who first popularized this style of teaching, the Socratic method employs the art of questioning, rather than lecturing, to accomplish education. Based upon the conviction that the process of discovery constitutes the better part of learning, our program uses well placed questions to teach students how to think, rather than dictating to them what to think.

The *Teaching the Classics* seminar syllabus supplies a thorough list of Socratic questions for teachers to use in class discussion. The questions are general enough to be used with any book, but focused enough to lead the student into meaningful contemplation of the themes of even the most difficult stories. Questions on the list are arranged in order of difficulty: from grammar level questions which ask for the mere fact of a story, to rhetoric level questions which

require discussion of ideologies and transcendent themes. Properly employed, this list can help teachers engage their classes in important discussions of ideas, and can also provide a rich resource for essay and other writing assignments! Used in conjunction with a good writing program, *Teaching the Classics* produces **deep thinkers** at any age.

The questions used in this guide have been taken directly from the Socratic list, and will therefore be familiar to the seminar alumnus.

More information about *Teaching the Classics* may be found at www.centerforlit.com.

The Center for Literary Education
Adam Andrews, Director
3350 Beck Road
Rice, WA 99167
(509) 738-2837
adam@centerforlit.com

Note About Reference and Page Numbers

Question numbers and reference numbers in parentheses refer to the complete Socratic List, which is included in the course syllabus of the Center for Literary Education's flagship seminar, *Teaching the Classics: A Socratic Method for Literary Education*.

Page numbers from this story refer to the 1985 Dutton Juvenile Edition, ISBN # 0-525-3202-3.

Questions about Structure: Setting

1/2. Where and when does this story happen?

The action of the story takes place in and around the Hundred Acre Wood, an imaginary forest where Winnie-the-Pooh, Piglet, Christopher Robin, and the rest of their friends live. (1.a. 1.b. 1.g.) The story begins in the aftermath of a storm, which has knocked down the tree where Owl's house was. (1.e.)

The stories collected in *Winnie the Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner* are described as happening "a very long time ago now, about last Friday." The story happens over the course of one day, during which the characters search for a new house for Owl and Pooh makes up a rhyme honoring the bravery of Piglet, who squeezed through Owl's letterbox to find help when the tree fell. (2.a. 2.b.)

NOTES:

Questions about Structure: Characters

3. Who is the story about? (Protagonist and other characters)

Winnie-the-Pooh (or "Pooh" for short) is first introduced in the beginning of *Winnie the Pooh* as a stuffed bear belonging to Christopher Robin. (*Winnie the Pooh*, p. 3-4)(3.a. 3.c.) Regularly described as a "bear of very little brain," Pooh is contented with his simple life in the forest and enjoys eating honey and making up rhymes, or "hums" as he often calls them. (3.h.) At the beginning of this particular story, he is employed in making up a "hum" in Piglet's honor, when he is interrupted by Rabbit, who is looking for a new house for Owl and encouraging everyone else (rather forcefully) to join in the search. (p. 146)

Throughout all the story, Pooh is a very sympathetic character. He is a loyal and helpful friend. Easily puzzled, he feels that he is not very clever. In spite of his reputation (with himself and others) for being a "bear of very little brain," he often provides a voice of reason for the others, and they turn to him often for his simple wisdom. (3. j. 3.k. 3.q.)

Here is a list of adjectives that describe Pooh:

Humble

Kind

Sensible

Loyal

Simple

Cheerful

Content

Generous

Piglet can reasonably be described as Pooh's best friend in the forest, with the possible exception of Christopher Robin. Being a "very small animal," Piglet lives in a constant state of insecurity. He would love to be seen as bold and courageous, but is regularly overwhelmed by his fears. However, at the story's outset, he has just done a very brave thing. He has squeezed out of Owl's house by way of the letterbox to get help after the storm knocked Owl's tree down. He wants the world to know how brave he's been, but doesn't want to tell them himself. Consequently, he is very grateful to Pooh for composing a rhyme about his daring venture.

'Do the Others know yet?' asked Piglet, stopping for a moment to pick up a stick and throw it away.

'No,' said Pooh. 'and I wondered which you would like best. For me to hum it now, or to wait till we find the others, and then hum it to all of you.'

Piglet thought for a little.

'I think what I'd like best, Pooh, is I'd like you to hum it to me now--and--and then to hum it to all of us. Because then Everybody would hear it, but I could say, "Oh, yes, Pooh's told me," and pretend not to be listening.' (p. 152-153)

Christopher Robin, though a young boy, is the father-figure in the stories. In the beginning of *Winnie-The-Pooh* we realize that the Hundred Acre Wood is the product of his imagination, populated by his most beloved toys. Looked up to by the other characters as the fount of all knowledge, he is the one they come to for advice and guidance.

Owl is considered (by himself and the others) to be a very wise bird. As such, he commands the respect of everyone in the forest. For example, when everyone gathers to help him move his things out of the wreck of his old house, and Roo begins to make remarks about the state of his sponge, Kanga silences him immediately because "that's not the way to talk to anybody who can spell TUESDAY" (p. 156).

To the reader, it often appears that Owl's wisdom is overrated. After his tree is knocked down, he must look for a new home, and everyone shows up to help. He has already made a signboard for his new house. It seems he meant to call it "*The Owlery*," but, in spite of his ability to spell TUESDAY, the sign reads, "*The Wolery*" instead.

Eeyore, distinguished by selfishness and melancholy, is convinced that nobody cares for him or his comfort. He cares for them even less, rarely acknowledging anyone except Christopher Robin, but occasionally noticing Pooh and Piglet.

'Hallo, Eeyore!' said Rabbit. '*There* you are! Where have you been?' Eeyore took no notice of them.

'Good morning, Christopher Robin,' he said, brushing away Roo and Piglet, and sitting down on *The Wolery*. 'Are we alone?'

'Yes,' said Christopher Robin, smiling to himself. (p. 158)

It is Eeyore who, after sitting on Owl's sign for *The Wolery* and smearing it, announces that he has found a new house for Owl, completely oblivious of the fact that the house he means already belongs to Piglet. In this way, he also becomes something of an antagonist. He puts the others in an awkward position, and Pooh is compelled to invite Piglet to live with him in order to solve the issue. (4.a. 4.b. 4.c. 4.f.)

Rabbit is the busybody of the group. Although he is convinced that he knows what is best for all the characters, his efforts often seem pointless and exaggerated. At the beginning of the story, for example, he leaves a note for Pooh about looking for a new house for Owl, and then comes in to explain it to him.

'I'm leaving one for all the others,' said Rabbit, 'and telling them what it means, and they'll all search too. I'm in a hurry, good-bye.' (p. 146)

Again, when they are moving the things out of Owl's old house, Rabbit is busy.

Questions about Structure: Conflict and Plot

5/6. *What does the protagonist want, and why can't he have it?*

This story is about Pooh trying to make Piglet happy and to find a house for Owl. (5.a.) In the beginning he thinks only of pleasing Piglet with his rhyme. By the end, when Eeyore mistakenly presents Piglet's house as the perfect new house for Owl, Pooh must find a solution to satisfy everyone. (5.f.) Several conflicts drive the story. A natural disaster has necessitated a search for a new home for Owl (Man vs. Nature). Eeyore's heedless choice of Piglet's home for this relocation offers new conflict (Man vs. Man). As Piglet responds to this inadvertent slight, he faces his own selfishness (Man vs. Self). Will he relinquish his rights to his home in order to take care of his friend, Owl, or will he demand his rights and preserve his property? Who will take care of Piglet? (6.k.)

7. *What other problems are there in the story?*

At the beginning of the story, Pooh sings a song about Piglet's heroism. He is distracted by Rabbit's note. (7.a.) Though Eeyore finds a house for Owl, his discovery turns out to be Piglet's house. This leaves Piglet homeless, creating another problem, which Pooh solves by offering Piglet a home with him. (7.b.)

8/9. *What happens in the story, and how is the main problem solved?*

The practical action of the story involves finding a new house for Owl, as his old one was blown down in a storm. The other characters are helping Owl move his things from his old house when Eeyore shows up claiming to have found the perfect place. Although he ignores everyone except Christopher Robin, they all follow him. In a twist at the story's end, the house Eeyore has found turns out to be Piglet's house, confusing matters more and adding tension to the situation. (8.a. 8.b.) This dilemma is solved when Piglet proves himself heroic once again by giving up his own home for Owl. Pooh punctuates this heroism by a heroic deed of his own, inviting Piglet to live with him. Thus, everything ends happily. Pooh writes his song about Piglet's bravery, which has been proven even more genuine through the recent events. Owl gets a new house. Eeyore, an underdog in his own estimation, validates himself by having found it. Finally, Piglet's heroism is underscored by his selflessness in sacrificing his home for Owl. In addition, his importance is also validated by Pooh, who demonstrates his affection by offering Piglet a home with him. (9.a. 9.b.)

NOTES:

Questions about Structure: Theme

11/12. What do the characters learn?

Though Pooh is not fundamentally changed by the events of the story, he does sacrifice himself in a small way by inviting Piglet to live with him. In this way, he solves both the problem of where Owl will live *and* where Piglet will live now that his house has been presented to Owl as *his* new residence. (11.d.) Piglet changes more than any of the characters during the course of the story. As a "very small animal," Piglet has always lacked self-confidence. However, when Pooh writes a song celebrating his bravery, he begins to gain confidence.

'Did I really do all that?' he said at last.

'Well,' said Pooh, 'in poetry -- in a piece of poetry -- well, you did it, Piglet, because the poetry says you did. And that's how people know.'

'Oh!' said Piglet. 'Because I -- I thought I did blinch a little. Just at first. And it says, "Did he blinch no no." That's why.'

'You only blinched inside,' said Pooh, 'and that's the bravest way for a Very Small Animal not to blinch that there is.'

Piglet sighed with happiness, and began to think about himself. He was BRAVE... (p. 153)

At the end of the story, when Eeyore presents Piglet's house as the perfect establishment for Owl, Piglet thinks of the song Pooh wrote for him, and realizes that he wants to be as brave as his friend believes him to be.

And then Piglet did a Noble Thing, and he did it in a sort of dream, while he was thinking of all the wonderful words Pooh had hummed about him.

'Yes, it's just the house for Owl,' he said grandly. 'And I hope he'll be very happy in it.' And then he gulped twice, because he had been very happy in it himself. (p. 160) (12.a.12.b.12.e.)

Piglet's struggle and deeds underscore the story's thematic idea: what is bravery?

13. What is the main idea of the story?

This story deals beautifully with the themes of friendship, courage, and selflessness. (13.a.) It underscores the idea that courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the resolve to face it. A good life is presented as one where friendship is placed before personal comfort. The Self is denied in order to care for the Other. Pooh and Piglet are happy in the end, not only because they have achieved their object or goal, but most importantly because they have each other. (13.d.)

Questions about Style: Literary Devices

14. Does the author use the sounds of our language to create interest in his story?

Throughout the story, Milne employs sound words, or Onomatopoeia, to enhance his story. (14.a.)

"...When something Oo occurred."

"...While Pooh and Owl said, 'Oh!' and 'Hum!'" (p. 148)

"...Did Piglet tremble? Did he blinch?" (p. 149)

"...You said, 'Hallo,' and Flashed past." (p. 150)

The song (or "hum") that Pooh writes for Piglet (p. 148-149) is a perfect example of **rhyme**, and, aside from simply providing an entertaining bit of poetry and cementing the bond between Pooh and Piglet, it also provides exposition by reminding readers of events which took place in the previous story. Additionally, it sets the stage for the thematic content that follows. (14.f.)

16. Does the author use descriptions and comparisons to create pictures in the reader's mind?

Milne uses carefully chosen words and occasionally simile to create images in the reader's mind. (16.a.16.b.)

"It didn't look at all like a house now; it looked like a tree which had been blown down; and as soon as a house looks like that, it is time you tried to find another one." (p. 146)

Sometimes Milne uses dialogue and action to help the reader visualize a scene, as when the other characters are helping Owl clean out his old house.

"Kanga was down below tying the things on, and calling out to Owl, 'You won't want this dirty old dish-cloth any more, will you, and what about this carpet, it's all in holes,' and Owl was calling back indignantly, 'Of course I do! It's just a question of arranging the furniture properly, and it isn't a dish-cloth, it's my shawl.' Every now and then Roo fell in and came back on the rope with the next article, which flustered Kanga a little because she never knew where to look for him. So she got cross with Owl and said that his house was a Disgrace, all damp and dirty, and it was quite time it did tumble down. Look at that horrid bunch of toadstools growing out of the floor there! So Owl looked down, a little surprised because he didn't know about this, and then gave a short sarcastic laugh, and explained that that was his sponge, and that if people didn't know a perfectly ordinary bath-sponge when they saw it, things were coming to a pretty pass." (p. 155-156)

The above passage gives us not only a somewhat disturbing glimpse at Owl's living conditions, but also reveals a great deal about the personalities of the characters involved.

The *Winnie-The-Pooh* stories depend on the use of personification, as all the characters except for Christopher Robin are stuffed animals. Milne imbues them with life and personality in the same way a child does his favorite toys. (16.e. 16.f.)

NOTES:

Questions about Context: The Author's Life and Times

18. Who is the author?

Alan Alexander Milne was born in England on January 18, 1882, the third son and youngest child of Sarah Maria and John Vine Milne.(18.a.18.b.) He had very close relationships with his father and his brother Ken, but his mother seemed aloof to him. His relationship with his brother Barry, never very affectionate, only grew worse as they grew older. (18.e.)

Whoever heard...of two frogs assuming a friendliness which they did not feel, simply because they had been eggs in the same spawn. Ridiculous... (Thwaite, *A.A. Milne*)

John Vine Milne ran a boy's school, Henley House, where Allen spent his early school years. One teacher who remained a constant influence and close friend throughout his life was a man named H.G. Wells, who would later become a famous author. Milne would later become close friends with J.M. Barrie as well, the author of *Peter Pan*.(18.e.) After Henley House, Allen went to Westminster School, then attended Cambridge University on a mathematics scholarship. There, he contributed light verse (first in collaboration with his brother Ken, then alone) to a humorist publication called *The Granta*, of which he eventually became editor.

After Cambridge, Alan moved to London to begin a career as an author. After an initial struggle, he began to have articles published regularly in a variety of publications, and he wrote a book, *Lovers in London*, which was published in 1905. He would later look back at this first attempt as a failure, writing in 1915, in response to an inquiry about the book:

It is out of print fortunately; I haven't even a copy myself. But I read my brother's copy the other day with mixed feelings; gladness that it was out of print, shame that I once thought it so good, pride that I had advanced so much since then. I hope you will never come across it. (Thwaite, *A.A. Milne*)

He would later buy back the copyright to prevent a reprint of the book.

In 1906 Milne was hired as an assistant editor of *Punch* and began to write for them regularly. In 1913 he married his editor's god-daughter, Daphne. The birth of their son, Christopher Robin (called "Billy" within the family), in 1920, would prove to be the best thing for his career, as it led to the writing and publication of two storybooks, *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*, which were written about Billy's nursery toys. A collection of children's verse, *When We Were Very Young*, followed. All three books were illustrated by *Punch* illustrator Ernest Shepard and were great successes, in their own time and to this day.

Alan became quite a prolific writer, publishing many plays and several novels, though nothing matched the success of his *Pooh* books. His play, *Toad of Toad Hall*, based on Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, is still performed today.

19/20. *Where and when did the author live?*

A.A. Milne lived in London for most of his life, though he and his family often went to the country for holidays and to visit family. In 1931, Alan and Daphne visited America, and Daphne fell in love with New York.(19.a. 19.b.) Alan's success as a writer gave him financial freedom, and he would often take vacation trips with his brother Ken's family, during which he would insist on paying for everything. (19.c.)

A.A. Milne was born in 1882 and died in 1956.(20.a.) He lived through two world wars, and suffered many family troubles, from his brother Ken's death to the estrangement of his son Christopher, who came to resent his father and the books which made his own name famous. (Christopher did eventually forgive his father, and became an author himself.) (20.b.) In his writing, however, Milne focuses on the happy moments, and portrays childhood as a simpler time, a time of innocence.(20.c.) This ability to return to childhood was apparently not only a feature of his writing. Christopher would later write, concerning a vacation taken with his father and cousins on the Dorset coast:

And then, quite naturally, quite unself-consciously, we slipped back through the years to our schooldays. I would put our age at around twelve. Five twelve-year-olds playing happily together. I don't for a moment think that this was done deliberately in order to level out our assorted ages. Nor do I think that it was my father who led us back. I think it just happened because we were all Milnes and this is a thing that Milnes can do. For us, to whom our childhood has meant so much, the journey back is short, the coming and going easy. (*The Enchanted Place*)

21. *What did the author believe?*

Milne was an ardent pacifist, but when the first world war broke out he felt it was his duty to help in some way, and volunteered as a signaling officer in 1915. His experiences in the war only cemented his views.

I should like to put asterisks here, and then write: 'It was in 1919 that I found myself once again a civilian.' For it makes me almost physically sick to think of that nightmare of mental and moral degradation, the war. (*Autobiography*)

In 1934, with Hitler rising to power, Milne wrote a book called *Peace With Honour*, backing his pacifist views. He could not think of anything that could legitimize repeating the horrors of the first world war, but later he would change his mind and publish a pamphlet called *War With Honour*, explaining:

If anyone reads *Peace With Honour* now, he must read it with that one word HITLER scrawled across every page. One man's fanaticism has cancelled rational argument. (Thwaite) (21.b. 21.f.)

Suggestions for Writing Assignments

1. In the beginning of this story, Pooh writes a song about Piglet's heroism. How does this affect Piglet and his view of himself? How does it affect his actions?
2. Rabbit and Eeyore, at different times in the story, become inadvertently antagonistic. (In other words, though they are not actual "villains" in the story; they create conflict by getting in the way of the goals of the other characters.) How does this advance the story's plot?
3. At the end of the story, Piglet does a Noble Thing. How does Milne define nobility?

The House at Pooh Corner: In Which Eeyore Finds The Wolery and Owl Moves Into It: Unit Test

Matching:

- | | | |
|---|-------|--------------------------|
| 1. Protagonist of the story | _____ | a. The Hundred Acre Wood |
| 2. Author of <i>The House at Pooh Corner</i> | _____ | b. Rabbit |
| 3. Very small animal, friend of Pooh | _____ | c. Winnie-the-Pooh |
| 4. Character who finds the perfect house for Owl | _____ | d. A.A. Milne |
| 5. Owl's name for his new house | _____ | e. Piglet |
| 6. Author's son, a character in the story | _____ | f. The Wolery |
| 7. Character who gathers everyone to find Owl's new house | _____ | g. Owl's sponge |
| 8. Location of the story | _____ | h. Christopher Robin |
| 9. Item mistaken for toadstools by Kanga | _____ | i. Eeyore |

Short Answer:

1. What is the setting of the story? (2 points)
2. What events have led up to the action of the story? (12 points)
3. What effect do those events have on the characters at the beginning of the story? (12 points)
4. Do Pooh's goals change over the course of the story? How? (10 points)
5. What are the main conflicts in this story? (6 points)
6. What does each character want? How do they set about obtaining their goals? (12 points)
7. Define personification and give examples from the story. (2 points)
8. Place the major events of the story on a plot chart. (12 points)

***The House at Pooh Corner: In Which Eeyore Finds The Wolery and Owl Moves
Into It: Unit Test
Student Study Guide***

Be prepared to answer the following questions:

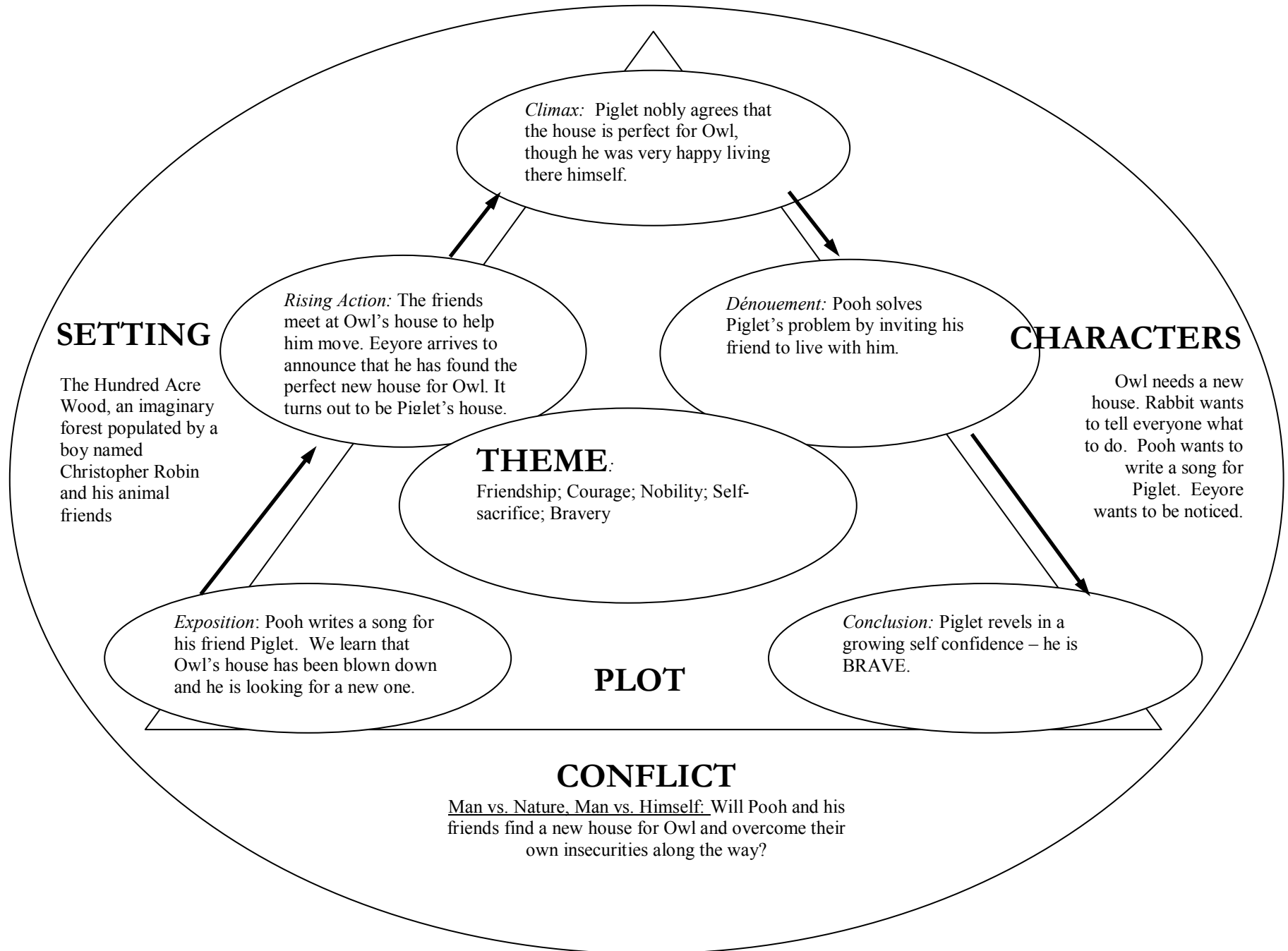
1. Who is the author of the story? (spelling counts!)
2. What is the setting of the story?
3. Who are the characters in the story?
4. Who is the main character (protagonist)? What is he like? What are his goals?
5. Who are the other characters in the story, and of what significance are they to the plot?
6. How does the main character accomplish his goals? What happens in the story? Be prepared to chart the events of the story on a plot chart.
7. What is the major conflict in the story? What kind of a conflict does it represent (Man vs. Man, Man vs. Nature, Man vs. God, Man vs. Self)? At what point in the story's action does the main conflict in the story get resolved? (In other words, what is the climax or turning point in the story?)
8. What is the underlying message of the story? In other words, what is the story's theme? When you strip away the specific plot and the characters, what is the idea that the story exists to illustrate?
9. Define the literary device **personification**. How does the author employ personification in this story?

Story Charts

The following pages contain story charts of the type presented in the live seminar *Teaching the Classics*. As is made clear in that seminar, a separate story chart may be constructed for each of the conflicts present in a work of fiction. In particular, the reader's decision as to the *climax* and central *themes* of the plot structure will depend upon his understanding of the story's central *conflict*. As a result, though the details of setting, characters, exposition, and conclusion may be identical from analysis to analysis, significant variation may be found in those components which appear down the center of the story chart: Conflict, Climax, and Theme. This of course results from the fact that literary interpretation is the work of active minds, and differences of opinion are to be expected – even encouraged!

For the teacher's information, one story chart has been filled in on the next page. In addition, a blank chart is included to allow the teacher to examine different conflicts in the same format.

***The House at Pooh Corner: In Which Eeyore Finds the Wolery
and Owl Moves Into It by A.A. Milne***



*The House at Pooh Corner: In Which Eeyore Finds the Wolery
and Owl Moves Into It* by A.A. Milne

