

Interpretation

Traina summarizes interpretation as “Recapturing the attitudes, motives, thoughts, and emotions of the Biblical writers.” (p. 94)

- What was the writer thinking?
- What was the flow of his argument?
- What was his main point?
- What were his supporting ideas or arguments?
- How did the supporting ideas relate to each other and to the main point?
- How did the original readers or hearers understand the message?
- What would have been most important to the original hearers?
- What would have been the hardest for the original hearers to understand?
- What do we know that they did not that would affect our understanding?

Traina’s Phases of interpretation:

- Definitions – Discovering the basic meaning of the details of a passage.
- Reasons – Discovering the underlying reasons or purposes of Biblical statements. “It penetrates into the very recesses of the author’s mind.” (Traina, p. 104)
- Implications – Discovering the outgrowth of presuppositions and the interrelatedness of ideas in a passage. The “bridge between interpretation and application” (Traina, p. 108)

Interpretation questions arise from and are based on the observations of terms, structure, literary form, and atmosphere whose answers will result in the discovery of their full meaning. (Traina, p. 97)

- How does repetition or logical connections from observation help organize the ideas in the passage?
- How does the literary form or atmosphere of the passage affect our understanding?

Interpretation is the natural and necessary outgrowth of observation. For example, “merely to observe that there are logical contrasts and comparisons in these verses is not synonymous with fathoming the depths of the author’s mind.” (Traina, p. 101, on Isaiah 55:8-9, “my ways are not your ways”)

Typical Interpretation Questions

	Terms	Structure	Form	Atmosphere
Definition	<p>What is meant by an unusual or non-routine term?</p> <p>Does a common term have an unusual meaning?</p>	<p>Comparison and contrast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is meant by a comparison or contrast in the passage? • How are ideas or events similar or different? <p>Cause and effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the effect grow out of the cause? • How does the cause lead to the effect? <p>How does the flow of the passage indicate the author's thought process?</p>	<p>What are the characteristics of this literary form?</p> <p>What distinguishes this form from others?</p> <p>Why did the author use this form?</p>	<p>What elements make up the author's frame of mind?</p> <p>What would this frame of mind communicate to the original hearers?</p> <p>How does this mood relate to the content of the passage?</p>
Reason	<p>Why did the writer use this word?</p> <p>Why did the writer use these synonyms?</p>	<p>How does one part of the passage explain or modify or clarify another part?</p> <p>Why did the writer include this information?</p> <p>Why does most of the passage deal with this issue?</p> <p>Why does the author present the material in this order?</p> <p>Why is this verb tense used?</p>	<p>Why is this literary form used?</p> <p>Why does the writer change forms?</p>	<p>Why does this mood dominate this passage?</p>
Implication	<p>How does the writer's choice of words affect our understanding of the passage?</p>	<p>How should the emphasis and logical flow of the passage affect our understanding of the passage?</p>	<p>How does the literary form help communicate the writer's point?</p>	<p>Does the writer's mood affect how this passage relates to me?</p>