



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1983 Volume III: Reading the Twentieth Century Short Story

An Introduction to Literature for the Learning-disabled High School Student

Curriculum Unit 83.03.01
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Reading, and in most cases, school in general, is a very frustrating experience for most learning-disabled high school students. What makes learning particularly frustrating for these individuals is not the lack of intellectual ability, but the lack of ability to perceive, process or express information in an organized manner. Unfortunately, the learning-disabled student by the time he reaches high school has had few classroom experiences which developed his ability to think on levels consistent with his peers. This generally results because of continued time spent in remedial classrooms developing basic skills which at best will still leave him several years below his peers in various areas.

In my role as a high school resource teacher, I service two general groups of learning-disabled students, those who can participate in regular academic classes, and those who can not. I have observed that when those two groups of students come to high school, they experience two major problems in addition to their basic handicaps. Those problems are these: The students who are able to participate in regular academic classes not only are behind in basic skills, but also are at a disadvantage because of a lack of exposure to awarenesses and general frameworks of information which the subject area teacher assumes the student has already learned; the second problem involves those students whose skills are so deficient that they will never be able to participate in regular high school academic classes. Although my primary responsibility is to improve these students' basic skills, it seems obvious that something "new" has to be tried if after years of specific remediation techniques these students are still functionally illiterate. Not only can't these students read, but they are convinced they'll never be able to read.

This unit will focus on one small solution to the problems blocking the learning of the high school learning-disabled (LD) student. In general since most LD students experience reading problems, the goals of the unit will concern not only improving the reading skills of the LD student, but also will concern improving the LD student's performance in the regular high school English class. In addition, for both groups my general goals will be to introduce literature in a non-threatening small group situation, to teach some basic elements of fiction, to study the structure of five short stories, and to hopefully have the students enjoy the stories.

To accomplish these goals very specific objectives are needed. In this unit I will develop a plan to meet the following objectives; 1) to motivate the students to read 2) to provide some general information concerning the development of literature 3) to introduce and define plot, character, setting, theme, and point of view as elements of fiction 4) to expose students to the short story as a distinct form of literature, 5) to have the

students read and analyze five short stories according to plot, character, setting, theme, and point of view, 6) to have the students recognize that literature relates to their own lives, 7) to allow each student to be exposed to and evaluated on the material presented in the texts according to his individual abilities.

The unit will cover an eight week period and will be divided into two separate sections. Since motivating the students to read is a key objective the first three-week section will focus on it. In this section the lessons will be teacher-centered (lectures, teacher-led discussions) in the beginning with a gradual shift to student-centered lessons involving student deductions, student-centered discussions and related activities created by the students.

The strategies in section one are purposely geared towards discussion with a de-emphasis on reading and writing by the student. This approach relies on the LD student's strengths while avoiding his weaknesses. The learning atmosphere created, hopefully, will be non-threatening, non-frustrating, and without failure. Another reason for this particular type of strategy relates to the very nature of special education itself. Many times special education in its zeal to remediate all of the student's deficits in many ways individualizes the student "to death". Because of the dynamics of individualized techniques, group interaction in the learning situation becomes secondary. This is unfortunate since many times the LD student's greatest strength is his ability to gather information by listening, asking questions and discussing. This is not to say that individualization does not have an important part in the overall strategy of educating the learning-disabled student, but it should not be the total program and must be balanced with small group and large group activities.

The second section of the unit, weeks 4-8, will involve reading and studying five short stories. In this section the first week will center around "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allan Poe, the second week "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant, the third week "To Build a Fire" by Jack London, the fourth week a short selection from *Black Boy* by Richard Wright and the fifth week a selection to be chosen by the students themselves.

The strategies for section two involve individualized, as well as, group activities. This approach is necessary for several reasons. Since within any class of students with learning disabilities there is a wide range of reading and writing abilities, and since reading is primarily an individual, silent experience, it is particularly important that the texts be chosen with each student's reading level in mind. For example, it is not unusual for me to have within a group of six or seven LD students three sixteen year olds of average, and often above-average, intelligence one reading on a first grade level, a second on a third grade level and the third on a fifth grade level. Thus, although as a whole the group will be reading the same story each week, several students may have different texts suited to their individual readings levels. If one looks hard enough it is possible to find various stories in texts of different reading levels, I have used several in this unit. The same strategy also applies to written expression. The varieties of writing skills within a class of LD students sometimes requires a separate worksheet format for each student depending on the characteristics of his disability. For this reason I have included in the unit a general chart outlining skills and strategies for developing worksheets and evaluation materials according to each student's individual written expression abilities. Also within section two a large part of each week will be designated for group discussion and communications among the students concerning the stories they will have read. This will be the most important activity of each week.

STRATEGIES

Section One : “The Communication of Ideas from the Past to the Present”

Week One

The lessons for these five days will involve a very general presentation of the historical development of the communication of ideas, principally as this evolved into the written word, and much later into fiction. Perhaps the lack of appreciation of language, i.e., reading and writing, experienced by many students, not just learning-disabled, results not only from an inability to use it effectively, but also because of a very basic lack of understanding, concerning the purposes of language. It seems important, then, to spend some time explaining and discussing some background of language with the students.

The first lesson will focus on the oral tradition, communication by word-of-mouth, and pictography, communication by means of pictures. Examples of each will be presented to the students and discussed. Ancient folk tales, early cave drawings, American Indian pictographs, hieroglyphics, cuneiform, the pyramids and the Rosetta Stone will be discussed in terms of the purposes for which they were drawn or written.

The second lesson will discuss the transition of communication from the oral tradition and pictography to some ancient languages such as, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and Latin. A brief discussion of various stories from this time could be introduced. Excerpts from *The Odyssey* could be read to the students, as well as, parables from *The Old Testament*. The students are aware of these stories from television and cinema. They will be surprised to find out when and where they were created, and in what languages! In discussing these stories with the students, it must be emphasized that the stories had their beginnings as oral narrations when written language was unknown. Even at the time of Homer (800 B.C.) these stories were communicated orally. They were not written down until approximately 400 B.C. As a follow-up lesson a poster could be made showing examples of letter configurations from each language. A related activity to this lesson could be to show each student how to write his name in each of the languages. This poster could be kept in the room for display.

The third lesson will center around the development of some modern languages. The students may be very surprised to learn that English is considered a modern language. A brief discussion concerning the evolution from Latin of the Romance languages: French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese will be presented. Examples of words common in form and meaning will be presented in several of these languages. This will be very interesting to the Hispanic student who will be able to compare his language to the others. To aid in an explanation of the development of the Germanic languages, and its relationship to English, a map could be shown detailing the migrations of the Germanic tribes down through Europe and into England. A brief discussion of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 by William of Orange (France) will help to explain the influence of the Latin language on the English language as we know it today. For an activity examples of early ballads, epics and *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer can be read aloud to the students and discussed. Again, it will be important to emphasize why these stories were created and that they were at first narrations to be read aloud. A follow-up activity for this lesson could be the construction of a time line. Given the approximate dates of the existence of the ancient languages, the Romance languages, the Germanic languages and English itself, each student could construct his own. It will be a good idea for them to color code the types of languages as they place them on the line.

The fourth lesson will discuss the invention of Gutenberg’s printing press, and the first printing of a text, *The*

Bible . The students will be amazed to learn that before this time books had been copied by hand word-by-word. The fact that religious monks spent lifetimes cloistered away copying texts will be a totally unbelievable to them. A few parables from The Bible could be chosen for the students to read by themselves or for those students with reading problems to be read along with a tape. The following discussion could be used as a simple introduction to the concepts of some basic elements of fiction. Asking questions such as; what was this man like? Describe where this man lived? What happened in the story? What was the moral of the story? Can all be used to begin the student thinking in terms of what parts, or elements exist within a story.

The fifth lesson will be a field trip to various Yale facilities; museums and libraries. The purpose of the trip will be to allow the students to see first-hand some examples of what we will have been discussing all week. The trip will include visits to the Peabody Museum to view the American indian exhibit (pictographs), the Yale Art Museum, and the Yale Beinecke Rare Book Library (the Gutenberg Bible, rare manuscripts and texts).

Week Two

This week will begin with a very general overview and discussion of the development of the *written* communication of ideas and the development of the practice of *reading* to oneself in the centuries following the invention of the printing press (1450). The spread of knowledge, the many technological advances, the discovery of and travel to the new parts of the world, the economic and political changes which restructured the societies all contributed to the development of new ideas by man. Communicating these complex ideas to others was important. As a result of this two general types of written communication became more developed and refined, non-fiction and fiction. For the purposes of defining these to the student the following explanations can be given to them. *Non-fiction* is written ideas dealing with real persons and events which includes scientific and technical texts, historical works, as well as religious and political works. The second type of writing, *fiction* , can be defined as the written communication of ideas which are usually general truths or themes about human existence. These themes were and still are expressed through the literary forms of plays, poems, novels, and in more recent times, the short story.

With the students a discussion limited to plot and theme of some early plays and novels, and perhaps some poetry could be structured as follows; 1) *Romeo and Juliet* , William Shakespeare app. 1594-96, 2) *Robinson Crusoe* , Daniel Defoe 1719, 3) *Frankenstein* Mary Shelley 1818. The purpose for choosing these works is that the students, again, are aware of them. I am sure, however, that they have no idea of when, why and how they were first written. The students should be very interested in some general background concerning these works. During the discussion several points should be emphasized. The first is that Shakespeare in many ways wrote within the framework of the oral tradition. His plays were meant to be watched and listened to in a theater, not to be read to oneself. This also was true of poetry. It was meant to be listened to as ideas presented in rhythmical patterns. It was the longer story, the novel, which was written for another to read silently to himself. This specific type of fiction began to develop in the early 1700's, examples of this are works by Daniel Defoe (*Robinson Crusoe*) and Henry Fielding (*Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*). Another point to be emphasized in the discussion is perhaps a feminist one, why would a woman in 1818 write a novel about a man creating a monster?! At this time, 1818, the audience for novels was well-to-do women, because they had more leisure time at home.

As the development of written communication, specifically fiction, progressed man worked at refining it. He did this by searching for ways to communicate his ideas more clearly and effectively. Thus, techniques and structures for writing fiction were developed, reworked, and polished continually as man tried to communicate all he knew and felt in a world quickly becoming more and more complex.

The purpose of the second lesson will be to introduce and define for the students some of these basic elements which writers used, and still do, to help them tell/write their story. In this activity the students will be shown a set of photographs and through the sequencing of shots a story will be presented. Using the visual cues in the pictures the students will be asked to discuss the story in terms of *plot* —What is happening here? Make a list of the events. Prove it; *character*- Describe the people. What kind of person do you think he/she is?; *setting* -Describe the time and place. How do you know? Prove it; *theme* —What’s the point of this sequence of pictures? Give it a title. Is there a moral to this story?; *point of view* ; From whose perspective is the story being told? Hopefully, through this very concrete exercise a clear comprehension of the five elements, how they are used and for what purposes should be understood by the students.

The third lesson will be a film presentation of the short story “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson. After viewing the film the students will be asked to briefly and generally discuss (analyze) the story in relation to the five elements. They should do this in the same way in which they approached the photograph-sequence story. Perhaps it will be necessary to give the students a worksheet listing the five elements along with variations of the questions used in the photo lesson.

The last lesson of this week will be totally student-centered. It should take two to three days to complete depending on the types of students in the group. Each student will be assigned a task, preferably decided by the students themselves, and as a group they will develop their own fictional story. The story will be in the photo-sequence format, and the students must use the five elements to help tell/structure the story. For convenience, an instant photo camera should be used.

Week Three

The last week of section one has two purposes. First, to briefly present an overview of the various developments in the communication of ideas by man within the last century, and also, to discuss and define the short story and its evolution within the same time period.

The first lesson will discuss the invention of photography, film, radio, and television. The discussion will include the invention of roll film by Eastman in 1889 and the invention of Thomas Edison’s Kinetoscope (1894) and Vitascope (1896). Their modification and development into the first one-reel silent film narration *The Great Train Robbery* directed by Edwin S. Porter in 1903 will also be discussed. The students should be told that it wasn’t until 1927 that *The Jazz Singer* was made, the first motion picture with sound. The relationship of this to the invention of radio in 1920 should also be discussed. A particularly interesting part of the discussion for the students will be the development of television. Its first public broadcast was not in the U.S. but in London in 1936. Not until 1941 was television publicly broadcast in America, and color television was not available until 1954—only thirty years ago! There are many texts available containing photographs and detailed discussions of the development of photography, radio, movies and television. I have included some of them in my bibliography and suggest that on the day of this lesson they be brought in for the students to read and discuss. A supplemental activity, yet a very important one, would be another trip to the Yale Art Museum. At the museum there is a very interesting exhibit discussing the development of photography and film, including photographs and actual examples of early equipment.

The second lesson will discuss, in general, the development of forms of written communication which occurred concurrently with the new technically-based communication forms. This rapidly developing industrial society needed additional ways of communicating its complex information quickly and continually. Expanding industry and the sciences needed journals to spread their knowledge to others. Eastern businesses and the homesteaders traveling and settling in the West needed a means of determining the supplies and demands

available across great distances which resulted in the development of the catalogue. The increasing growth of the cities, the growth of the American population, the development of public education all helped to influence the huge newspaper industry which was to develop in America. In a society where information and events were changing daily this increasingly aware public needed and wanted a means of keeping up with what was new and important. Although none of these communication forms were totally new, the sophistication, numbers, and availability of each type were tremendously increased. This was also true of the magazine. This rapidly developing society not only wanted information, but also wanted some of it in depth. They had interests in certain topics and looked for formats to communicate discussions and explanations. The magazine served to not only help educate, but also to entertain. It was in the magazine that many later-to-be famous writers created stories to help them gain exposure, money and experience. The magazine allowed the writers to communicate ideas about life and the human condition, but they had to do it in a new way, more efficiently and effectively. A related activity to this lesson would be a trip to the New Haven Public Library. A tour by the librarian of old newspapers and magazine publications can be very easily arranged by calling the library ahead of time for an appointment, as well as, explaining what it is the group would like to see.

The third lesson will discuss the development of the short story as a unique form of fiction. Essentially, the short story was a continuation of the oral tradition, much like early folktales and parables which were meant to be enjoyed and to present a theme. The short story, however, presented this story in a new and very different manner. Quite simply, it had as its basis the written word rather than oral. It was the manipulation of these words within a tight framework which created its effectiveness. The discussion can include one of the earliest short story collections, Washington Irving's *Sketchbook* (1820). These stories were sketches of people in Irving's native New York. Many relied on old German folk tales he had heard growing up. Some of these were the basis for the characters of Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe should also be discussed. Poe wrote a critique of Hawthorne's short story collection *Twice Told Tales* (1837). This statement of what constitutes a well-written short story was used as a guideline for many short story writers even into the twentieth century. Many of Poe's ideas concerning the structure of the short story have come to serve as a definition of it. He believed that a short story should be brief and unified strive towards a single effect. To accomplish this the story needed to be structured in this way: 1) ability to be read at one sitting, 2) a single or limited number of characters, incidents, style and tone, 3) efficient use of words. The student should be told that although the basic form of the short story does exist today, yet in a refined state, it is the style and themes of the short story which have undergone the greatest change within the last century. Irving, Hawthorne and Poe all wrote about romantic situations which were not real. With time the short story began to reflect more and more the world as it truly existed. Eventually the stories began to examine and question every aspect of human existence. The short stories of today explore the multitude of realities of contemporary life. A related activity to this discussion could include having the students skim through various types of magazines to locate short stories. A compilation of the types of topics and themes found in the stories could be written on the board. From this a discussion with the students could lead to some conclusions on their part concerning which issues are of concern to society today.

The purpose of the fourth lesson is to present the short story to the students as a unique form of literature. At the beginning of the week the students should be assigned a movie to watch on television for homework. In this lesson during class the students will see a film of a short story (one can be chosen from the catalogue listed in the bibliography). After they have watched the short story both films will be compared in terms of the five elements they have been studying, as well as, the definition of the short story as presented by Poe.

The purpose of the fifth and last lesson of section one will be to summarize the overall points from our discussions of the development of different forms of human communication from its beginnings until the

present day. The last half of the lesson will concern possibilities for forms of communication in the future. The computer, its languages and future types and uses will be discussed. A follow-up activity should include a visit to the school's computer lab.

In conclusion, it remains important for the student to understand that although the communication forms available to us today are many and complex, not all serve the purpose of helping us explore ourselves and the world around us, hopefully, helping us to understand both better. Through history human beings have used the written word plus their imagination to communicate these ideas through literature. Whether this will ever change in the future we don't know, but for today the importance of reading literature for an individual's, as well as, a society's development is invaluable.

Section Two —“Reading Five Short Stories”

This section is the reading section of the unit. This section will be, for the most part, student-centered. Hopefully, the independent format of the lessons will stimulate the thinking of each student. Further group discussions should allow the students to not only stimulate each others thinking, but also to develop critical thinking skills by reacting positively and negatively to each others ideas.

The overall teaching plan for section two will be centered around five short stories concentrating on one per week. The first two days of each week will be assigned for the reading of the story. On the third day the students will be given a reaction sheet. The sheet will be organized to include ideas relating to the five elements of fiction, as well as, the specific elements of the short story. The students will use these guidelines as prompters or stimulators in formulating their own reactions and analyses of the story. The fourth day will be for group discussion by the students. Using their reaction sheets the students will share their analyses of the story and react to them. At the end of the discussion the students, as a group, will fill in one summary sheet. Listed on the sheet will be the five elements and other questions related to the particular story. As a group, the students will fill in the information. Day five, hopefully Friday, will be the summation day. At the beginning of the period each student will receive a grading sheet. On the sheet will be listed the names of each member of the group. Each student will fill in a grade for himself and each of the other members. These will be averaged by the teacher along with a teacher-grade counting for a certain percent of the total grade. The criteria for deciding what constitutes an A, B, C, D, or F and what percentage the student evaluation and teacher evaluation count for should all be decided in a class meeting before the beginning of the lessons in section two. When the evaluation activity has been completed the teacher can go over the group summary sheet with the students, as well as, the individual sheets. Particularly interesting ideas by individual students should be pointed out to the group. This time also should be used for the teacher to modify any ideas on which the students may have been confused or even incorrect. The last section of the period can be used by the students in a variety of ways. Additional short stories by the author or encyclopedias containing information on the author's life could be made available for the students to read. For those students who are artistically talented materials can be made available if they would like to react to the story in this manner. Recordings of the author's work could also be used. If none are available they can be recorded by the teacher.

The following discussion will concern the five short stories to be read by the students.

“The Black Cat” Edgar Allan Poe

Plot	<p>A psychologically-troubled man driven to drink recalls events leading to his downfall. He sees his drinking as the reason why he turns against his beloved cat and kills it. He gets another cat only to turn against it too. Unfortunately, he kills his wife instead of the cat during one of his rages. He, then, buries his wife behind the wall in his cellar. Several days later the police arrive and search the house for his wife. They find nothing. Quite pleased with himself, the man strikes up a conversation with the police concerning his well-built house. As he strikes the cellar wall to prove it, a cry and then a scream are heard. The police break down the wall to find the dead corpse of his wife with the cat sitting on her head. He had buried the cat also.</p>
Characters	<p>The <i>husband</i> has no name. Obviously his problems are psychologically based rather than in alcohol as he believes. His problem is in his perception of himself. This results in his inability to relate to the world around him. He sees the world (people and pets) as not understanding him and plotting against him. He sees alcohol as creating his increasingly negative actions against others rather than its freeing those impulses which are within him. <i>The wife</i> also has no name. We know that she doesn't fit into the world either because the husband states, "she felt as I did" about other people and animals. The only other time she is mentioned is when she is killed. It is significant that she jumps in front of her husband to protect the cat from being killed. While she may have had socialization problems, she doesn't seem to be deranged as does her husband. <i>The cat</i>, number two, has a very complex personality. It seems human-like, aware of the reactions it is having upon its master. The question is however, was this the deranged, paranoid man's perception or the reality?</p>
Setting	<p>The man is talking from a jail or hospital, but which setting is never mentioned. The only setting which is detailed is the cellar of the home and this is done in great detail.</p>
Theme	<p>We are often unaware of the evil and destructive forces which are locked within us. Even when they suddenly rage from within we are unaware of their significance as basic elements of our being. (Other themes are possible here, too.)</p>
Point of View	<p>First person. The husband is the narrator of the story. This serves two purposes; To allow the character to reveal himself to the reader, therefore, chillingly exposing his deranged perceptions; and also to develop a relationship between the narrator and the reader so that we can "objectively" see him for what he is.</p>

"The Necklace" Guy de Maupassant

Plot	<p>A pretentious young woman, unhappy in her middle class existence, longs for the finer things in life. Her sensitive, but unfortunately weak, husband tries to make her happy by bringing home tickets to a municipal ball. Rather than being excited the wife is upset because she has nothing elegant enough to wear. The husband suggests that she borrow a diamond necklace from her friend. She does and has a marvelous time at the ball, dancing all night while her husband waits in the cloakroom. When they arrive home they discover the necklace is lost! Too cowardly to face the woman and explain the situation, they use the husband's only savings along with a bank loan to replace the necklace with no one knowing. To pay back the loan the once-pretentious wife now has to clean offices and take in wash. One day, ten years later, she meets her friend in the park. The woman hardly recognizes her. This changed wife now has the courage to tell about the necklace. To everyone's surprise the woman replies that the necklace was not diamond but glass.</p>
Characters	<p>Madam Loisel as the name suggests, mademoiselle, is a woman with child-like perceptions. This is her central problem. It is not until she is forced to experience the harsh realities of life that she finally matures. Then she has the courage to tell her friend the truth. <i>Monsieur Loisel</i> also reacts to relationships and events in immature ways. He gives in to his wife's self-centered needs. He, like his wife, is too cowardly to face the owner of the necklace. Instead he gives up his savings and watches his wife clean houses. <i>Madam Forestier</i> is an old school friend of Madam Loisel who luckily married well.</p>

Setting	The setting is not very detailed. The scenes take place at their homes, at the ball, at the park, but none are described. Most of the words in the story are used in dialogue between characters. Perhaps this was more important to the author as a means of the characters revealing themselves and thus the theme.
Theme	What appears to be of value in life we may find to be worthless. We have to examine and define the true meanings of life. (Other themes are possible.)

“To Build a Fire” Jack London

Plot	A miner sets out for his isolated camp in the Yukon. He is alone accompanied only by his dog. He has been told by an old-timer that the rule is never to travel alone when it is more than fifty degrees below zero. The man thinks this is foolish. “All a man <i>has to do is use his head</i> .” <i>Unfortunately this isn’t true. Too many uncontrollable and unpredictable events occur and the man perishes frozen and alone, deserted by his dog.</i>
Characters	The man has no name. He is too self-assured, too cocky. He has an unrealistic view of the insignificance of the details of his journey. He sees himself as all-knowing and controlling. He laughs at the experienced old-timer’s warnings. His problem is in his misunderstanding of the powers of nature upon him. He sees himself, man, as in total control of himself and the world. Thus he is not prepared for the consequences. <i>The dog</i> survives. He follows his basic instincts, believing in them, and respecting the forces of nature around him. He sees the man as a fool.
Theme	Nature is a very powerful force in the world around us. It is uncontrollable and unpredictable. Man is foolish to overlook nature’s significance and effect on his life. (Others?)
Point of View	Omniscient. We are able to read the man’s and the dog’s minds. In this way we see the truth in the dog’s reactions leading to his ultimate survival, and the folly of man’s leading to his death.
Setting	The setting is the cold, isolated and desolate Yukon. The setting is described in great detail. This is to emphasize the importance of nature and its power and forces upon us.

A selection from Black Boy Richard Wright

Plot	A young city boy is forced to grow up because of circumstances beyond his control. His father deserts the family, and he now in many ways has to assume that role. One evening the boy is sent shopping for food. He feels grown-up and responsible, however a gang assaults him and steals his money. He returns home crying and scared. His mother gives him more money and sends him out again. Petrified he sets out a second time, and again the gang assaults and robs him. When he returns home his mother refuses to let him in, but sends him back a third time with a heavy stick telling him not to come home without the groceries. Without a choice he sets out again. The gang approaches, but this time, almost instinctively, the boy lashes out with the stick crashing skulls and bodies. The gang runs away in disbelief. The parents of the boys come out and threaten the boy. He yells back. Then he leaves, buys his groceries and returns home.
Characters	The young boy is a timid child who is forced by circumstances beyond his control to become hardened and violent. The conflict is between the boy as a child (individual) and the forces which affect and in many ways take that identity away from him. <i>The mother</i> is forced like her son to change. She, too, is affected by circumstances in which she has had no decision, however, does she have some control over her life as an adult? Should she have protected him more, not forced him into the violent, hard world? or was it inevitable? <i>The gang’s</i> identity is ambivalent. They attack repeatedly the innocent child, yet when the attack is turned on them they run home for protection. They are neither children nor men, but the worst of both.
Setting	A city with violence and unhappiness. The author does not spend much time detailing any specifics of the setting. He uses the action of the story to emphasize his point.
Point of View	First person. This relates us to the character closely. We feel with him. We intimately observe his actions, feelings and perceptions. We watch him change and understand why.

Theme In this complex changing world there are many forces affecting us beyond our control. Many of these problems are within the very nature of our society. To survive we've got to face those realities. Unfortunately what is lost in the struggle may not be worth the outcome. (Others?)

Because the reading and writing levels of my groups are usually quite diverse, it is always difficult to find material which we can use together as a group. As a solution to this I purposely chose five stories which are available within the New Haven School System in texts of multiple reading levels. It is essential for each student to have a text which is matched appropriately to his reading level. In some cases when the level is severely deficient a read-along tape will have to be used. This alone can promote reading development. As important as matching the level of the text to the level of the student is matching the level of evaluation materials to not only the student's reading level, but also his writing level. Thus before beginning these lessons specific preparations and several evaluation procedures will have to be completed. For reading there are three steps. 1) Each student's reading level will have to be evaluated. This may be done with a standardized achievement test, an informal teacher-made test, or an oral reading inventory. The best evaluation would be to use all three. 2) The texts will have to be chosen according to their readability levels. There are several popular formulas which may be used to evaluate a text. The simplest and perhaps most reliable is the Fry Readability Formula. A chart is included in this unit which explains how to use the formula. 3) If after all these procedures there are still students for whom no text is available on their approximate level then a read-along tape must be recorded. Using this formula I evaluated the texts in this unit and developed this chart.

Story	Text	Reading Level
"The Black Cat" Edgar Allan Poe	1) Spotlight on Literature Collection 3 Random House Publishers	1.5-2.0
	2) An Edgar Allan Poe Reader Adapted Classics Globe Publishers	
	3) Original Text	
"The Necklace" Guy de Maupassant	1) Spotlight on Literature Collection 3	3.5-4.0
	2) Original Text	
"To Build a Fire" Jack London	1) Spotlight on Literature Collection 1	1.5-2.0
	2) Original Text	
from <i>Black Boy</i> Richard Wright	1) Spotlight on Literature Collection 3	5.0
	2) Original Text	

Determining the written expression levels of the students is more difficult. This evaluation must be accomplished with teacher-made inventories. Through these informal tests the teacher can evaluate the spelling, sentence structure, paragraph structure, grammar, vocabulary development and overall ability of each student to communicate through writing. A sequential checklist can be developed using these skills. Each student can then be plotted according his written expression abilities. Thus if a student can barely spell the words in a four word sentence, it is unrealistic to expect him to communicate his ideas about the short stories in complete sentences, paragraphs or essays. Those skill developments should be left for another unit. Some students may have adequate spelling skills but very poor concepts concerning sentence and paragraph structure. This may be particularly true of the Hispanic student just developing English skills. These students

will put down one or two sentences and leave the rest in their heads. Again, to expect these students to react to the stories in essay form would be unproductive. The goal, therefore, is to evaluate the written expression level of the student, plot it on the checklist, and use all the skills from the checklist and above to develop materials. Following is a general chart developed to help prepare appropriate evaluation materials.

Skill Level Method

Spelling

- 1) oral testing
- 2) multiple choice
- 3) matching
- 4) unscrambling
- 5) charts, drawings, art work

Sentences

- 1) oral testing *
- 2) those methods from the spelling section
- 3) single sentence completions
- 4) sentences within paragraph completions
- 5) short answer
- 6) fill in of short outline

Single Paragraph

- 1) all from spelling and sentence sections
- 2) short outline
- 3) short paragraph

Short Essay

- 1) all from spelling, sentences and paragraph sections
- 2) essay
- 3) supplemental written reports

Lesson Plan I—Field Trip to Yale Facilities

Objective

At the end of week one the students will have learned about pictography, ancient languages, modern languages and the first printing press. To see some actual examples of these is a perfect reinforcement activity.

The trip should begin at the Yale Art Museum on the corner of Chapel Street and York Street. Admission is free, however a donation is voluntary. On the basement level is an exhibit titled, “Dura-Europos.” This was an ancient Roman border—town which was excavated twenty years ago. Included in the exhibit are many examples of artifacts decorated or carved with pictographic figures. A check list and catalogue are available which explain the exhibit in detail.

From the Yale Art Museum it is a short walk to the Beinecke Yale Rare Book Library at 121 Wall Street. The library stores many old texts and manuscripts, but the highlight is the Gutenberg Bible which is on permanent exhibition. Other texts and manuscripts are on exhibition on a changing basis.

The third location for the field trip is the Peabody Museum. The museum is free on Tuesday’s so this would be a good day to plan the trip. The museum is located on the corner of Whitney Avenue and Sachem Street. Once inside the museum turn right, and you will enter the Plains Indians exhibit. It will be necessary to obtain the museum’s “Plains Indians: Guide to the Exhibit” pamphlet before the trip. In this way the information can be discussed with the students before the trip and they will know what to look for. Pay special attention to the indian clothing, tepee and totem pole reproductions for examples of pictography.

Lesson Plan II—Using Photography to Tell a Story

The students have already been exposed to the elements of plot, setting, character, point of view, and theme through lectures, discussion, film and a teacher-made photo-story.

Objective

To have students as a group create a story incorporating the elements of setting, character, point of view, theme and plot.

Procedure

- 1) tell the students they will have to create their own photostory
- 2) Review teacher-made photo story
- 3) Review definitions of plot, setting, characters, point of view and theme.
- 4) Brainstorm with students possibilities for stories and ways of showing plot, setting, character, point of view, and theme in these stories.
- 5) Set aside as may class periods as necessary for students to work on project.
- 6) Tell the students you will act as a consultant, but that the story must be their own.

- 7) Assign the most capable student to be the “secretary” of the group to write down the information.
- 8) Have the students as a group orally develop a rough outline of the story according to plot, setting, character, point of view and theme.
- 9) Next, have the students develop a rough outline for each frame detailing plot, setting, character, point of view and theme.
- 10) Have students recruit cast and find props for setting and costumes.
- 11) Using rough outline have students photograph first set of pictures.
- 12) Students will critique developed picture-story and refine rough outline.
- 13) Using final outline students will photograph final story.

There are many follow-up activities which may accompany this lesson, suggestions are:

- 1) Have students develop worksheets detailing the elements of their story.
- 2) Have students make a bulletin board using the photos plus explanations of the five elements.
- 3) Have students write a dialogue for the story.
- 4) Have each student create a photo-story individually.
- 5) Use a video-tape and have the students create a short video of a story.

Materials

Paper

Pen

Film

Costumes as needed

Props as needed

Video-tape Machine

(See John McAdams,

Besty Ross Middle School)

Instant Camera

Lesson III—Individual Reaction Sheets to the Story from Black Boy by Richard Wright

Objective

To develop a reaction sheet for a student whose written expression skill level is at the spelling level. (See Written Expression chart)

Activities :

Worksheet #1 : Plot

Directions :

Put the events of the story in order

- 1) Boy walks proudly to store.
- 2) Mom sends boy out a third time with stick.
- 3) Gang robs boy the first time.
- 4) Father leaves family.
- 5) Boy returns home without food a second time.
- 6) Boy is hungry and asks mom for food.
- 7) Mom sends boy to store the first time.
- 8) Mom sends boy to store the second time.
- 9) Gang tries to rob boy a third time.
- 10) Parents of boys yell at him.
- 11) Boy returns home without food the first time.

- 12) Boy attacks gang with stick
- 13) Gang robs boy a second time.
- 14) Boy returns home with food.
- 15) Boy yells back at parents of gang.

Worksheet #2 Setting

Directions:

Circle five words which describe the setting of the story.

country america
peaceful roomy
rich poor
city dangerous
Mexico crowded

Can you give some words of your own?

Worksheet #3 Characters

A. Directions:

In column A put the words which describe the boy at the beginning of the story. In column B put the words which describe the boy at the end of the story.

Words

hungry brave
violent quiet
respectful not hungry
shy hardened
out-spoken child-like
disrespectful frightened

A (Beginning) B (end)

Can you give words of your own for columns A and B

B Directions:

Complete the sentences with the correct word or words to describe the boy's mother.

1) The mother was ____.

- a) caring and understanding
- b) strong and selfish
- c) weak and uncaring

2) The boy's mother sent him to the store three times because she ____.

- a) was too tired to go herself.
- b) wanted the boy to take responsibility for himself
- c) wanted the boy to learn how to fight

3) If you were his mother would you have? ____

- a) sent the boy out the third time.
- b) gone to the store yourself
- c) called the police

C) Directions:

Choose the correct answer for these questions about the gang.

1) How old do you think the members of the gang were?

- a) 12
- b) 15
- c) 18

2) Why did the gang rob the boy?

- a) they needed the money
- b) they needed to show their power
- c) they did not like the boy.

3) Why did the gag run finally?

- a) their parents were calling them
- b) they were afraid to fight
- c) They were surprised the boy fought back.

Worksheet #4 Point of View

Directions :

3 Answer the questions below.

1) who is telling the story?

- a) the mother
- b) the narrator
- c) the boy

2) Circle the feelings we know the boy has when he goes to the store the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd times.

FIRST—scared proud angry

SECOND—scared proud angry

THIRD—scared proud angry

Worksheet #5 Theme

Directions : Pick the best title for the story

- 1) a) Life in the City
b) A trip to the store
c) Boyhood to manhood
- 2) Write a title of your own for the story.

Teacher Bibliography

A. Language and Literature

Allen, Walter. *The Short Story in English* . New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

General introduction to the development of the short story. Detailed discussions of authors and their stories.

Boynton, Robert W. and Maynard Mack. *Introduction to the Short Story* . New York: Hayden Book Company, 1965.

A discussion of plot, character, setting theme, point of view and tone. Specific short stories are studied according to these elements.

Brooks, Cleanth and Robert Penn Warren. *The Scope of Fiction* . Englewood Cliffs; New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1960.

A discussion of many short stories in relation to plot, character and theme.

Gelb I. J. *A study of Writing* . Chicago; Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1952.

Detailed study of the development of writing from man's earliest drawings to present languages.

Hoffman, Daniel. *Form and Fable in American Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Discussion of the fable. Specific sections on Irving, Hawthorne, Melville, and Twain.

Kazin, Alfred. *On Native Grounds: Interpretations of Modern Prose Literature* . New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1942. Overview of historical development of short story. Particular emphasis given to events happening within each period.

West, Ray. *The Short Story in America 1900-1950* . Chicago, Illinois: Henry Regnery Company, 1952.

Survey of development of short story. With concentration on twentieth century writers.

B. Photography and Film

Barnes, John. *The Beginnings of Cinema in England*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976.

History of cinema from Edison's kinoscope to present day film production. Mostly discussion few pictures.

Cheshire, David. *The Book of Movie Photography* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979.

A complete guide to movie making. Discussion with many pictures. Light reading, understandable for high school students.

Gernsheim, Helmut. *The History of Photography* . New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969.

Overview discussing the pre-history of photography, early years of photography, types of modern photography, including artistic and utilitarian. Three hundred ninety photos and engravings.

Goldsmith Arthur. *The Camera and its Image* . Ridge Press, Newsweek, 1979. History of photography with an emphasis on the development of the camera itself. Many photos of equipment.

Newhall, Beaumont. *The History of Photography* . New York: The museum of Modern Art, 1964.

Detailed discussion of history and development of photography. Many photographs, black and white.

Pollack, Peter. *The Picture History of Photography* . New York: Harry B. Abrams, Inc., 1969.

Detailed historical overview of equipment philosophies, masters. Abundance of pictures, color and black and white. Excellent.

Zette, Herbert. *Sight, Sound, Motion* . Belmont, California; Wadsworth Publishing, 1973.

Discusses basic elements of principles of sight, motion and sound in film and television. Emphasizes use of these to gain optimum level of communication. Many photographs.

C. Computers

Richman, Ellen. *Spotlight on Computer Literacy* . New York: Random House, 1982. Excellent introduction to the world of computers. Workbook format. Divided into three sections; How Computers Work, Computers in Our Lives, Basic Programming. Can be used with adults as well as children.

D. Film Catalogue

“Educational films and video 1983: A Rental Catalog”

Michigan Media

University of Michigan

Media Resources Center

400 Fourth Street

Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

Tel.: (313) 764-5360

Student Bibliography

A. Short Story Anthologies

Goodman, Burton (ed.). *Spotlight on Literature* . New York: Random House, 1980.

Six adapted anthology collections of well-known short stories. These stories progress from 1.5 reading level in collection 1 to 6.0 in Collection 6. Excellent series for junior high and high school students with reading deficits. Mature presentation.

De Pew, Ollie and Robinson, Herbert (ed.). *An Edgar Allan Poe Reader* . New York: Globe Book Company, 1979.

An adapted anthology of Poe's short stories and poems written on a 5.0-6.0 reading level.

B. Pictography (all are available at Peabody Museum Store.)

Broder, Patricia Janis. *Hopi Painting: The World of the Hopi* . New York: Brandywine Press Book, 1978.

Interesting discussion of meanings, myths and symbols in Hopi indian culture. More mature reading but the pictures will appeal to all age groups.

Haberland, Wolfgang. *The Art of North America* . New York: Crown Publishers, 1964.

Discussion of the Art of indian tribes in Mexico Peru and Alaska. Many pictures.

Hunt, Ben W. *Indian Crafts and Lore* , New York: Golden Books, 1954.

Excellent for all ages written on approximately 6.0 grade level. Detailed color pictures and explanations. Surprisingly comprehensive discussions of written and oral languages, customs and artifacts.

Hofsinde, Robert. *Indian Arts* . New York: William Morrow Company, 1971. Discussion of early indian art and that of today. Not as detailed as Hunt book but for same readers.

C. Computers

Richman, Ellen. *Spotlight on Computer Literacy* . New York: Random House, 1982.

Same Random House, Division as *Spotlight on Literature* series. Excellent introduction to the world of computers for all ages. Workbook format. Discusses how computers work, computers in our lives and basic programming.

Classroom Materials

General

Black board

Chalk

Paper

Pens

Pencils

Week One

Poster board— 1 large piece for teacher
1 small piece for each student

Multi-colored markers—enough for all students to share

Pamphlet— *Plains Indians : A Guide to the Exhibit* . Available at Peabody Museum for exhibit.

Map of Europe—Any map from a western civilization history text will do. The map should show early Europe and the spread of populations and languages throughout. Particular attention to Germanic tribes and Norman Invasion of England 1066.

Small drawing paper—one per student

Week Two

Student Notebooks

Film “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson. This can be borrowed from the New Haven Public School’s Audio-Visual Department.

See Mr. J. McAdams at Betsey Ross Middle School.

Photo-Sequence Story—This may be borrowed from me at Wilbur Cross High School or made by the individual teacher.

Instant Camera

Film for camera

Week Three

Photography and film texts

(See teacher bibliography)

Student Notebooks

A short story on film

(See teacher bibliography for catalogue information)

Week 4-8

Teacher-made worksheets

(See sample)

Spotlight on Literature texts

(See student bibliography)

An Edgar Allan Poe Reader

(See student bibliography)

Tape Recorder	Construction paper
Blank cassette tapes	Tracing paper
Record player	Drawing paper
Encyclopedias	Paint
Crayons	Paint Brushes
Markers	

Fry Readability Chart—a copy is included in this unit.

Any standardized reading test

Teacher-made reading inventory

Teacher-made writing inventory

Average number of syllables per 100 words

(figure available in print form)

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