



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

In Search of Self: Adolescent Themes in the Twentieth Century Short Story

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The principal value of teaching literature is the pleasure and enrichment it brings to the individual student. His world will be enlarged and hopefully, he will gain a greater appreciation of the beauty and power of literature; however, developing aesthetic appreciation may not be the prime factor to be considered for the adolescent reader. Adolescence is defined as the transitional period from childhood to adulthood. The major task of the adolescent during this period of transition is to find a sense of self identity. He is searching to find who he is or who he should be. It is time of questioning, doubting, fearing, wondering, and setting lifelong values. Finding answers or alternative choices is of great importance at this particular stage of a young person's development.

Literature is an excellent source to help students in this stage of development. It offers innumerable opportunities for the student to meet himself, encounter situations similar to his own experience and discover his own emotions. For it is through discovering himself that he will be able to improve his life and understand the lives of the people around him. Real life is not without problems and solutions are not always easy to find. One of the great values of literature is its power to reflect life in a realistic manner. By reading, the adolescent can find solace in discovering that he is not alone in his thoughts and feelings and that someone understands his problems. Through understanding and guidance, he will emerge from this stage of development with a better understanding of himself.

This unit will provide the adolescent with an opportunity to read and discuss issues that are relevant to his particular needs. The intent of the unit is not to indoctrinate the student with a predetermined set of values right and wrong, but merely to expose the student to the complexities, both good and evil, of life through literature. The exposure of both elements will give the adolescent a basis for comparison later in life. For in time, he will learn that he as an individual must make the final distinction between right and wrong. Hopefully, through exploration and discussion, he will gain the perspective needed to find a positive self-image.

Reading about himself in literature; however, does not necessarily mean that the student will increase his understanding of human nature. Unless the student reads with deeper understanding, it is doubtful whether any beneficial result can be realized from a unit of this nature regardless of the number of stories he reads about himself or his problems. In order to bring about deeper comprehension, the student must move from a level of literal comprehension, understanding what is given directly, to a more interpretative level. For example, a student might read "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D. H. Lawrence and simply think that it is a

story about a young boy who rides a rocking horse and never recognize the symbolic meaning of the horse. Many students have had very little exposure to literature and have only a vague notion as to what it is and how to read it; therefore, my second purpose in writing this unit is to help students make the transition from the literal to a more interpretative level of comprehension. The student must be guided to this level if he is to truly gain any insight about himself and the world around him through literature.

The student should be on or near an eighth grade reading level with a demonstrated mastery of literal comprehension. It is doubtful that a student with reading problems will be able to effectively interpret a given piece of literature. A program of this nature would simply add to a poor reader's frustration. The unit is designed for an eight to ten week period but the actual length of time will be determined by the amount of student interest generated, Classes will meet five times a week. It is primarily intended for students placed in the regular reading classes but who are academically able to handle more challenging work.

Objectives

There are five basic objectives of this unit. The first objective is to teach the skills necessary to read and interpret a short story as a reflection of life. This objective will be realized through the teaching of story elements.

The second objective is to help the student identify the theme of adolescent development in a given selection and relate it to present day problems.

The third objective is to have students do independent reading of short stories. Students will be able to read stories of their choice.

The fourth objective is to give students an opportunity to write a short story. A writing component is not included in this unit; therefore, this is not designed to teach students how to write a short story. It will provide a creative outlet for students interested in writing.

The fifth objective is to evaluate the student's knowledge in vocabulary development, the elements of the short story, interpretation of a short story, and academic skills.

Strategies

The unit will be introduced by showing the film "Literature in America: The Short Story". The film explains how short stories originated, how they developed and sketches the steps in short story development from Poe to present day. The film will be followed by a brief discussion on the characteristics of the short story as compared to the novel and poetry.

The elements of theme, plot, setting, character, and point of view will be introduced through lectures given by the teacher. Each student will keep a notebook on information covered in class lectures.

After each lecture on the elements of the short story, selections emphasizing that particular element will be

assigned to be read and discussed in class. Student will identify given element in assigned reading. (The availability of material will determine the final selections that will be used in this portion of the unit. Substitutions can be easily made.)

Vocabulary words will be assigned for study with each story. In the beginning stages of the unit, the stories will be read beforehand by the teacher for the purpose of identifying all unfamiliar words. Words will be assigned for study. Meanings will be written down and discussed prior to the reading of the selection. The meanings will be reviewed throughout the week in various oral in written activities. Gradually the students will be taught to determine the meaning by using the context. Students will keep all assigned words in a notebook for easy reference.

Academic skills will be taught after each story. Skills will relate to story when possible. For example, a lesson on sequence can be taught by using the sequence of complications given in the plot of a story. The setting of a story could be the center of a lesson on recognizing adjectives.

Students will be given a survey to ascertain the problems of adolescent development for discussion. The teacher will select stories that deal with those issues. Each selection will be read at least two times to ascertain both the literal and interpretative meanings. Students will identify and relate the adolescent theme to present day situations.

Students will be given a test at the end of the story. Test will include identification of story elements, meanings of vocabulary words and academic skills.

Each week of the unit, students will be asked to read and write a summary of a selection of their choice. The summaries will be shared in class discussion. Students are not limited to adolescent themes in this activity.

Each student will be asked to record information on the selection read on a 3x5 card. These cards will be used to set up a reference section in the classroom. These cards will contain just enough to stimulate a desire to read.

At the end of the unit, students will be asked to prepare a special project using some aspect of the work covered in the unit. Suggestions:

Write a short story to be presented to the class orally or in written form.

Write a play based on a short story and perform it for the class.

Make up a board game using vocabulary words or academic skills.

Make up a crossword puzzle to be solved by the class using literary terms discussed in class.

Encourage students to use their own creative genius for a project.

Course Content

Identifying Story Elements

Before the student can read and interpret the human values discussed in the short story, he must first understand the functions of the various elements which go to make up the work and their relationship to each other in the total story. There are five basic elements that will be discussed. Although each will be discussed

separately, emphasis should be placed on the relationship of the elements to each other. These elements do not represent rules that have to be adhered to in each story but rather a means of helping the student understand and evaluate a selection.

1. Theme

The theme of a story is the central idea that the author wishes to set forth in his writing. It is the view of life which underlies all the action of the story. The other elements of plot, setting, and character which will be discussed later, are used as Part of the structure and a means by which the author develops his theme. The theme is not necessarily the subject of a story but rather a comment on human nature or conduct. It is sometimes difficult to figure out because it is not usually expressed directly. Put the following paragraph on the board to explain the concept:

He saw the pocketbook on the ground. What Luck! Its owner was still just a few feet away. Hoping for a reward, he rushed to the person who had dropped the purse. He handed it to her with a smile. "Keep it", she said. "I just threw it away."

Discuss the paragraph and help students find the theme. Ask the following questions:

What is the story about?

What is the central idea?

What observation did it make about human nature?

There can be more than one theme developed in a story; however, there is usually one that will be dominant. The reader does not have to agree with the particular view of life once it is recognized in order to appreciate or understand the story. The theme might be one that is unacceptable on a personal basis. For example, the theme of the above paragraph for study might be that honesty does not pay. Disagreement with this view of life should not cause a rejection of the story. If it is a well-written story, it will give the reader an opportunity to try to understand the rationale behind such a view. There are people that adhere to that notion in real life. Theme is a reflection of life; therefore, the reader should not expect to be given positive statements upon which he will always agree. There will always be differences of opinion on any given subject. An honest effort to understand these differences reflects an effort to understand human nature.

Selections

For further study on recognizing theme, assign the following selections to be read and discussed in class. Students are to identify the theme in each selection.

Rudyard Kipling, "The White Seal".

Summary : This is a story about Kotick, a white seal, and his quest for a secluded island which would provide permanent safety from the hunters. After finding such an island, he must convince the skeptical elders who have accepted the killing by the hunters as a part of life to follow him to the island. It is only through violent confrontation that he is able to lead them to safety.

Theme : Kipling seems to be saying that most people are too ready to follow tradition without actually thinking about why they follow certain things in life. People in general desire a better life and dream of a savior who will lead them to it, but when the savior appears, they will not follow. Most are simply too passive and do not

recognize something better when it is pointed out to them. Generally, people are reluctant to change even if it for something better.

Sherwood Anderson, “I Want to Know Why”.

Summary : This is a story about a young boy’s initiation into manhood. He discovers something about the nature of man that he does not understand. The horse symbolizes everything that is good to the young boy. He meets a man, Jerry Tillford, who he places on the same level as the horse until he sees him in a world outside the stable.

Theme : Anderson has developed several themes in this story. The young boy starts to question some of the rules of society. The major theme however is of a young boy who loses a hero he has worshipped. He discovers a different aspect of man’s nature.

“But things are different. It’s because a man like Jerry Tillford, who knows what he does, could see a horse like Sunstreak run, and kiss a woman like that the same day. I can’t make it out.”

Point out to students the use of the scene in the farmhouse as a comparison to the scene in the stable. The stable symbolizes good while the farmhouse symbolizes what the young boy perceives to be evil. In this scene, he discovers that good and evil can exist within the nature of man. This is an important lesson for all young people.

Strategy : If students have difficulty identifying the theme, ask students to give all possible themes developed in the story. List them on the board and through discussion, lead them to the dominant theme. Accept any reasonable observation that can be supported by evidence from the story.

2. Setting:

Setting is the stage upon which the action of the story is to take place. Every story must occur in a place and time. Setting is to a story what background is to a painting. The author must select items of description that are important not merely to the visual presentation but also in terms of what it plays in the total story. The author uses a combination of place, time, atmosphere, and tone to create the proper setting. *Tone* is the author’s attitude toward his material. The tone is usually indicated in the opening sentences of the story, *Atmosphere* is the general feeling or mood set by the author. He can create an atmosphere of mystery, suspense, gloom, or happiness; it depends on the total story. Setting can also help to develop character. It can also increase the believability of the character and action. If the setting is one that the reader can relate to, he is more apt to accept the character and their action more readily.

Selections:

For further study of recognizing setting, assign the following selections to be read and discussed in class. Students are to identify the setting in each selection.

Edgar Allen Poe, “ The Tell-Tale Heart”.

Summary :This is a horror story about the planning and execution of a murder as seen through the mind of a person who is insane. Poe’s main purpose is to give the reader insight about insanity and the torments of the insane.

Setting : Tone and atmosphere

The opening sentence of the story establishes the tone of the story.

“True! Nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses not destroyed not dulled them.”

The narrator is speaking trying to convince the reader that he is not insane but the reader is very much aware of his insanity. The author’s voice has been established as one of an insane person. The opening paragraph also establishes the atmosphere or mood of fear which Poe intensifies as the story progresses. The time and place of the action in the story helps to create the mood of fear.

“And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch door and opened it—”

O. Henry, The Furnished Room

Summary : This is a story about a young man’s search for his sweetheart in a large city. and his subsequent suicide after not being able to find her. He dies without ever knowing that his sweetheart had also committed suicide in the same room only a week earlier.

Setting : Tone

The tone of the story is established in the opening of the paragraph. “Restless, shifting, fugacious as time itself.” sets the tone of one that is full of anxiety. O. Henry also uses the setting of the story to create a feeling of isolation and loneliness of an individual in a big city.

“The furnished room received its latest guest with a glow of pseudo-hospitality, a hectic, haggard, perfunctory welcome like the specious smile of a demirep. ”

The selections above show how the author can use setting to create a mood but also how setting can be used to develop theme and the plot of a story. Point out that elements are interwoven.

Strategy Ask the following questions to lead students to the setting of the story.

What is the tone of the story?

Where does the story take place?

When does it take place?

Describe the place of action.

How does the setting relate to other elements of the story?

3. Plot

The plot is the outline of events that the writer uses to develop the theme of the story. Plot constitutes the action of the story. It is a series of episodes that move through three stages of development, beginning, middle, and end. The beginning stage is called the *exposition* . The reader is given the setting of the story, an introduction to the principal characters and their relationship to each other, and information on the events that existed before the story actually begins. The reader is also given an initial incident of some kind of conflict in the story. The conflict may be a struggle between characters, between a character and nature or one between the character and himself. The exposition will set the groundwork for the story. The next element

of plot is the *complication* . Here the initial incident which was introduced in the exposition will be developed into a major problem through series of complicating incidents or episodes. Each episode must be more intense than the other until the most dramatic episode occurs. This episode will hint to either the success or failure of the principal character to win his struggle or simply to solve his problem. It is the highest point of the story or *climax* . The final section called the *denouement* will give the outcome of the conflict or the resolution of the problem. This section will reveal the success or failure of the principal character to solve his problem. The outcome of the resolution will express the general theme of the story. The sequence or the order in which they are presented in the story will depend on the author's purpose.

Selection

For further study of recognizing plot, assign the following selection to be read and discussed in class.

O. Henry, "The Whirligig of Life".

Summary : This is a very simple story about a couple who first decide to get a divorce but later change their minds and return home together.

Plot

Exposition

Setting—Tennessee Mountains

Characters—Ransie and Ariela Bilbro, Justice Widdup

Tone—Humorous

Initial conflict—Request for a divorce

Complication

Divorce granted

Five dollar fee paid

Request for alimony

Robbery of the justice's office

Return to office for final papers

Climax Decide to go home together

Remarried

Denouement Set out for home together

Strategy : Assign " The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson and "The Piece of String" by Guy de Maupassant to be read. Students will outline the plot of each story. Use the outline given above.

4. Character

The action of the story is centered around the characters in the story. There is usually one central character who dominates the story; however, all characters should be credible. In other words, the characters must have recognizable human traits. The author may present the traits of his characters either directly or indirectly. In the direct manner, the author uses simple description to reveal character. Direct presentation works best with flat characters who are secondary in the total structure of the story. The indirect manner uses dialogue and action to reveal character. This manner is usually used to reveal change in a principal character from the beginning to the end of the story. Sometimes the author will use a combination of both techniques but regardless of the manner used to develop characters, the action in the story must always be consistent with their traits. If characters do something that is out of the character established the credibility of the story is sacrificed. After the author has decided on the manner of presentation, he will select the ways of showing what the character is like. One of the most important ways for a character to reveal himself is by the way he talks. His mode of speech can reveal if he is shy, educated, boastful, arrogant or any other trait the author may want to reveal. Another means of developing the character is by the way the character looks or the way he dresses. If a character is described as having on well tailored hand made suit, we can safely assume he is a person of some means. The author may also use a physical defect such as a limp, a tic, or a scar to reveal aspects of the character. The means employed by the author will depend on the total story.

Selections

For further study of character development, assign the following selections to be read and discussed in class. Students are to identify manner of presentation character.

Guy de Maupassant, "The Necklace".

This story is an example of direct presentation as a means of revealing character. Here we have a description of Mme. Loisel.

"She was one of those pretty and charming girls who are sometimes, as if by mistake of destiny, born in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being understood, loved, wedded by rich and distinguished man; and she let herself be married to a little clerk at the ministry of Public Instruction."

In this example, the author has chosen to give all this information in the opening paragraph of the story. This description is necessary to explain her later actions.

Willa Cather, "Paul's Case".

This story uses dialogue and action to reveal the character. Here is a description on Paul's character as revealed by one of his teachers.

"His teachers were in despair, and his drawing master voiced the feeling of them all when he declared there was something about the boy which none of them understood. He added: "I don't believe that smile comes from insolence; there's something haunted about it. The boy is not strong, there is something wrong with that fellow."

Strategy

Students will use the following guide to identify character in a given story.

Make a list of the characters.

How does the author describe the characters?

Whose story is it?

Are the characters true to life?

Describe the physical appearance.

What are the strongest and weakest points?

How is the character seen by others?

How does the character see himself?

What is the character's ambition or desire?

What is the character's present problem?

How do the characters relate to other elements?

5. Point of View

The point of view is quite simply the author's choice of the teller of the story. It is important to the total structure and meaning of the short story. There are four distinct points-of-view of which the author may choose to reveal or tell the story.

The first person narrator is the main character who tells his own story. It is told by an "I" speaking in his own language.

Sherwood Anderson, "I Want to Know Why" is an example of the story being told by a first person narrator.

"I always wanting to be a trainer or owner, and at the risk of being seen and caught, I went to the paddocks before every race. The other boys didn't but I did."

The first person observer is using the first person to tell a story which he has observed; The character is usually of secondary importance in the story. He looks on and simply reports what the more important characters do or say. Joseph Conrad, "The Heart of Darkness".

Although this story may be too difficult for students at this time, passages can be used to illustrate the first person observer point of view.

"Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere the bond of the sea."

The word "I" establishes the use of the first person and the fact that he is also an observer telling a story is established in the story.

"He paused.

"Mind", he began again, lifting on arm from the elbow, the palm of the hand outwards, so that his legs folded before him."

The use of the words, "he paused", and "he began again" remind the reader that the narrator is relating a

story.

Author-Observer point of view allows the author to tell the story using the third person. He remains outside the minds of the characters. He records only what any observer in the same situation might also see. Information is presented in exactly the same fashion in which information is obtained in real life. The author gathers information by listening, looking and drawing conclusions from things that are seen and heard.

Ernest Hemingway, "The Killers" uses author-observer through dialogue.

"Ever hear of it?" Al asked his friend.

"No", said the friend.

"What do you here nights?" Al asked.

"They eat the dinner", his friend said.

The narrator is simply telling verbatim what he heard. Here we have the feeling of eavesdropping on a conversation.

Omniscient Author may tell what happens with the power to go into the minds of characters and also give his own comments. From this third person point of view, the author may tell everything that happens everywhere, even what the characters are thinking, the motives in back of their thoughts and the philosophy of life which accounts for the motives. The writer is an all knowing creator free to move and comment at will. Since this is the least restrictive point of view, it is perhaps the most commonly used.

Anton Chekhov, "The Lament" uses the omniscient author.

"He puts on his coat, and goes to the stables to his horse; he thinks of the corn, the hay, the weather. When he is alone, he dares not think of his son; he can speak about him to anyone but to think of and picture him to himself, is unbearably painful."

Here we see the narrator entering the mind of the character. He describes what he is thinking and why.

Strategy

Students can use the following question to identify the point of view,

When the narrator is a character in the story ask: Does the main character tell his own story?

(First person narrator)

Does a minor character tell the main character's story

(First person observer)

When the narrator is not a character in the story ask: Does the author tell what people think and explain feelings and motives?

(Omniscient author)

Does the author simply tell the story without giving the thoughts and feelings of the characters?

(Author observer)

Adolescent Themes in the Short Story

Sexual Development

The physical landmarks of adolescence begin with a growth in stature and weight. There is also the emergence of primary and secondary sexual characteristics and the capacity for adult sexual and reproductive functions. Dealing with increased sexual drives in a society that has strong prohibitions against adolescent sex causes a great deal of sexual anxiety. How does the adolescent deal with this problem? There is no easy solution to this problem but it is important that adolescents realize that sexuality is a normal part of growing up.

Selection: Dorothy Canfield, "Sex Education".

This is an old woman's account of an incident with sexual overtones that she experienced when she was a young girl. She blames her reactions of guilt and shame on her lack of knowledge. She is retelling the incident to help other young girls in their sex education.

Strategy

Although the story is centered around a very troubling incident, it offers an opportunity to discuss many issues on adolescent sexuality and attitudes on sexuality in our society. Passages from the story will be used as a spring board for discussion.

Passages will be selected from the story that relate to issues relevant to present day situations. Each passage will be discussed within the context of the story and the adolescent theme.

1. The reluctance to discuss sexual development openly by adults.

"Her voice had a special quality which perhaps, young people of today would not recognize. But we did. We knew from experience that it was the voice grown ups used when they were going to say something about sex."

Use the following questions to stimulate discussion:

Why are parents reluctant to discuss sexuality?

What is the best source of information?

Can you or have you discussed sexuality with your parents?

2. Teaching fear not understanding of sexual development, especially for adolescent girls. Studies show that girls have a higher degree of sexual anxiety than boys.

“You children keep out of it, she use to tell us almost everyday especially you girls. It is no place for a decent girl. There are plenty of men in this town that wouldn’t like anything better than ___”

Minnie’s reaction:

“I didn’t know, not really, what she meant. But I knew she meant something horrible.”

Use the following questions for discussion:

What is your greatest fear concerning sexuality?

What is meant by the term decent girl?

What information have you been given by adults?

3. Reluctance of women to report incidents of sexual abuse because of feelings of guilt and shame.

“Aunt Millie, Did you tell on him?”

“No, I was ashamed to,” she said briefly

“Nobody ever said a word to me about it.”

Use the following questions:

Why are women reluctant to report sexual abuse?

What are the laws governing sexual abuse?

What should you do in the case of sexual abuse?

What constitutes sexual abuse?

4. Sexual Abuse

The incident between Aunt Minnie and Cousin Malcolm deals with the issue of sexual abuse against children. In most cases, the act is committed by someone the child knows.

“And what do you think that saint, that holy minister of the gospel, did to an innocent child who clung to him for safety.” The most terrible look came into his eyes.”

What are some ways that situations can be avoided?

What are some danger signs?

5. Lack of useful information.

“That was the way they brought up young in those days, scaring them out of their wits about awfulness of getting lost, but not telling how not to get lost, Or how to act if they did.”

How is the teaching of sexuality today different from what is described in the story?

What is meant by getting lost?

6. The Young Man’s Role

“Teaching girls-and boys, too, for the Lord’s sake don’t forget they need it as much as the girls-”

What kind of information does the boy need?

Why is his education just as important?

Why are the needs for boys and girls education treated differently by society?

7. Sexual development is a normal part of growing into adulthood.

“Boys and girls going together is a path across one corner of growing up. And when they go together, they’re likely to get off the path some. It would do girls to know that they are just like everybody else human nature and sex, all mixed up together.”

8. Choice and responsibility

“I know. I know, most of it can’t be put into words. There just aren’t any words to say something that is so both-ways at once all the time as this man-woman business.”

What are your choices concerning sexuality?

Are you prepared to accept the consequences of your choice?

Family Relationships

Strong parent relationships and a stable home environment are of great importance during adolescent development; however these relationships often suffer a tremendous amount of strain during this time. Because the adolescent is in the process of trying to define his own set of values, usually without the benefit of personal experience and knowledge, the family must offer a system of moral, social, and emotional support when needed. Reluctance to accept the parent's guidance and moral standards will usually lead to parent-child confrontations. On the other hand, the failure of the family unit to provide support when needed can also be a painful experience for the adolescent as well as the parent. Decisions and attitudes formed during adolescence will directly affect later life; therefore, it is extremely important to establish some mutual understanding. The adolescent must recognize his inability to solve all problems without some parental guidance due to his basic lack of experience; while, the parent must recognize and accept the a adolescents search for autonomy as a normal part of adolescent development.

Selections

For the purpose of understanding family relationships, the following selections will be read and discussed in class.

C. D. Byran, "So Much Unfairness of Things"

Summary: This story is about a young man attending a preparatory school which his father and grandfather also attended. Parental pressure to succeed academically causes him to break the schools honor code by cheating on a Latin exam. He is turned in by a friend and expelled immediately. Instead of showing strong disapproval for his son's actions, the incident actually brings the father and son closer together.

Jean Wheeler Smith, "Frankie Mae"

Summary: This is a story of a young girl growing up in the South as the daughter of a sharecropper. Her awareness of the injustices of such a system prompted her to keep records of all family earnings and expenditures for the entire year. She eventually challenged the white owner's records when they did not coincide with her account. After being verbally abused by the white owner, she called on her father who was at her side for moral support. His failure to come to her aid changed her whole life.

Strategy

Students will develop a skit around the climax of each story.

After the presentation of the skit, students will discuss the complication and climax from two perspectives: that of the young man and woman in the story and that of the parents. Use the following questions to stimulate discussion.

Why did Phillip feel the need to cheat on the exam?

Why did his father want him to attend this school?

How did this incident affect his life?

How did he expect his father to react?

Why did Frankie's father fail to support her even though he knew she was right?

How did this incident affect her life?

What is the theme of the story?

Students will relate themes to present day situations.

Questions

When should young people have the right to make their own decisions?

When should a parent offer support?

what should you do if you do not have a supportive family?

Peer Relationships

Outside the family, perhaps the most powerful influence in the adolescents life is that of his peers. Group association is an attempt to establish a social identity outside the family unit. This is a normal part of adolescent's search for his own identity. Matters that deal with dress, interests, taste, and rules of behavior are dictated by peer influence. The influence can bring about very positive relationships or it can exert very destructive influence. The ability to withstand peer pressure is a vital part of his early development. The fact that he has a need to be accepted in a social group or has a need to belong causes problems that do not have easy solutions.

Selections

For the purpose of understanding the influence of peer relationships, the following selections will be read and discussed in class.

Lila Perl, "Don't Ask Miranda".

Summary: Her unstable homelife causes Miranda to change schools frequently and she is never in one place long enough to develop relationships with her peers. When she is finally asked to join a group, she learns that she must cheat and steal for acceptance.

Patricia Lee Gauch, "Fridays".

Summary: This is a story about a young girl and her involvement with a group that is moving in the wrong direction. Despite warnings from her parents, teachers, and friends, she does not see her mistake until she is in serious trouble.

Strategy

Use role playing as a means of impressing upon students the power of peer pressure.

Relate themes to use of drugs and sexual involvement.

Discuss possible ways of handling situations where pressure is applied.

What would you do if someone that you really care for ask you to do something that you think is wrong?

Point out to students that when actually faced with a situation the solution does not always come very easily. It takes a great deal of courage and conviction to withstand peer pressure.

Sample Lesson Plan

Vocabulary Development

tangible precarious repast placid
indolently agility specimen opiate
staccato pungent solicitous
opaque quarry affable
palatial sloop bough
gargoyle debacle grotesque

Fill in the appropriate words for the following definitions.

- ___ 1. waterspout carved in the form of a creature.
- ___ 2. a sudden disaster.
- ___ 3. made up of abrupt elements of sound.
- ___ 4. uncertain; risky.
- ___ 5. easy to approach and talk to; pleasant.
- ___ 6. main branch of a tree.
- ___ 7. quick and easy movement.
- ___ 8. a small boat with a single mast.
- ___ 9. food and drink; a meal.
- ___ 10. sharply penetrating; poignant.
- ___ 11. an animal that is being hunted down.
- ___ 12. calm; quiet; undisturbed.
- ___ 13. a part of a whole, or one individual of a group.
- ___ 14. full of anxiety or apprehension.

- ___ 15. that can be touched or felt by touch; having actual form and substance.
- ___ 16. large; ornate; magnificent.
- ___ 17. bringing sleep, quiet.
- ___ 18. not transparent.
- ___ 19. characterized by distortions or incongruities in appearance, shape.
- ___ 20. disliking or avoiding work; idle; lazy.

Sample Lesson Plan

Objective: Identify elements of the short story.

Lesson : Students will read "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell.

Identify the elements of the story by following the guide below.

1. Write a brief summary of the story.
2. What observation did it make about life?
3. Do you agree or disagree with the theme? Explain.
4. Identify the setting of the story.

Place

Time

Tone

Atmosphere

5. Is the setting of the story important in the development of the story or just background?

6. Outline the plot of the story.

Initial incident

Incidents of complication

Climax

Denouement

7. Was the resolution believable? Explain.

8. List characters.

Primary

Secondary

Background

9. Method used to develop character

Direct presentation

Indirect presentation

Combination of both

10. Is the action of the story consistent with traits? Explain.

11. What is the author's point of view?

12. Would you consider this story mainly about character, plot, or setting?

13. List and give examples of technique author used to develop the story.
14. What do you consider the strongest part of the story?
15. What do you consider the weakest aspect of the story?

Sample Lesson Plan

Objective: To have students write a short story based on a character sketch.

Strategy Assign *"Sir Tatton Sykes"* by Christopher Sykes to be read and discussed in class.

Students should recognize that the selection is not short story but a character sketch.

Explain to students that some writers use the technique of writing elaborate character sketches before writing a story.

Students will select an aspect of Sir Tatton's character and develop a short story. The development of the story must be consistent with the traits given.

Review the elements of plot, point of view, theme, and setting.

Suggestions for stories

Conflict between Sir Tatton and his son

Sir Tatton's love of his horses

Sir Tatton being forced to sell one of his horses
Story about his love for fox hunting

Story about his relationship with his wife

Story about his love for racing

Stories will be shared with the class. Each story will be discussed in terms of the development of the various elements discussed in class.

Teacher's Bibliography

Bates, H. E. *The Modern Short Story*. Boston: The Writers Inc., 1941. A good source of information on the evolution of the short story as a literary type. Includes information on writers and their influence on the development of the genre.

Brooks, Cleanth. *Understanding Fiction*. New York: Appleton-century-Crofts, Inc., 1959. Excellent source of information on the elements of the short story. Also includes interpretations of selected stories.

Cross, E. A. *Book of the Short Story*. New York: American Book Company, 1934. A comprehensive study of the short story. Includes the history, discussion of plot, character and theme with over sixty stories by most of the major writers.

Farnham, Marynia. *The Adolescent*. New York: Harper, Brothers Publishers, 1950. Discusses the stages and psychology of adolescent behavior.

Ferguson, Lucy Rau. *Personality Development*. California: Brooks Cole Publishing Company, 1956. An abbreviated discussion on the highlights of personality development in the adolescent.

Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1954. A study of narrative technique which can also be applied to the short story.

Gesell, Arnold. *Youth: The Years from Ten to Sixteen*. New York:

Harper and Row Publishing Company, 1956. An indepth study of adolescent development. It traces the development of behavior in

the setting of the home, school, and the community.

Mirrielees, Edith. *Writing the Short Story* New York: Doubleday Doran and Company, Inc., 1929. Excellent source for teaching students how to write a short story but information can also be used for greater understanding of the various elements of the short story.

Tway, Eileen, ed., *Reading Ladders for Human Relations* . New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1978. A specialized annotated booklist and teaching aid for parents or teachers who want to promote better human relation through literature. Most helpful in correlating reading with individual student needs.

Films

Edgar Allen Poe: *Background for His Work* . (14 min., color, Cornet Films, 1958). Portrays major events of Poe's life and his works. Discusses elements which contribute to his recognition as a literary genius and as a short story writer.

Literature in America: The Short Story . (20 min., color, Grover-Jennings, 1962). The film explains how short stories originated, how they developed and sketches the big steps in short story development from Poe to present day.

Tell-Tale Heart , The . (20 min., black and white, EBE, 1941). An excerpt from the feature film of the same title. A dramatization of the short story.

Student Reading List

Anderson Sherwood. *Short Stories*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1962. Stories about growing up in small towns through out the United States.

Axline, Virginia. *Dibbs , In Search of Self* .

Cerf, Bennet. *Great Modern Short Stories* . New York: Vintage Books, 1942. An anthology of twelve famous English and American short stories. Many deal with adolescent themes.

Chopin, Kate. "Desiree's Baby". New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970. This is a story about a young man who falls in love and marries the beautiful Desiree. They have a son but as the child grows, it is evident that he has black blood. Since Desiree was an orphan, her husband believed that she was part black and no longer wanted her or her baby. Only after Desiree leaves does he discover that he is the child of a slave.

Cormier, Robert, *Eight Plus One* . New York: Bantam Books, 1970. A collection of stories written for and about adolescents. Easy reading but do not offer much in the way of literary quality. Good for leisure reading.

Day, A. Grove, editor. *The Greatest American Short Stories* . New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953.. A collection of some very popular stories which students will enjoy reading.

Gold, Robert S., Editor, *Point of Departure* . New York: Dell Publishers, 1979. Surprisingly good stories by contemporary writers that deal with the pain, confusion and excitement of growing up.

Keyes, Daniel. "Flowers For Algernon". New York: Bantam, 1970. This is a story of a mentally retarded man who becomes brilliant through experimental surgery. He finds love and self respect but loses all as he regresses to his former state. Very touching story that students will enjoy.

King, Woodie, editor. *Black Short Story Anthology* . New York: Columbia University Press, 1972. A collection of short stories about various aspects of the Black culture and being Black in the sixties . Some stories may not be suitable for classroom use.

Lawrence, D. H. *The Complete Short Stories* , Vol. 1 . New York: Penguin Books, 1981. A collection of short stories on a wide range of subjects. Some stories seem to drag and may not hold the interest of all students; however, some are very delightful reading that the students will enjoy.

Mansfield, Katherine. "Mary". New York: Vintage Press, 1956. A story about a sisters feeling of love, hate, and jealousy for her sister. Although her feelings are very strong, she manages to conceal them from her family. A good story on sibling rivalry.

Olsen, Tillie. "I Stand Here Ironing". New York: Delta Book, 1960. A mother's recollection of the struggles she had in bringing up her oldest daughter. An excellent story to show how early homelife can affect later behavior.

Schneiderman, Beth Kline. *By and About Women: An Anthology of Short Fiction* . New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973. A collection of stories written by women and about women. Many stories are written about growing up and are easily related to present day situations.

Sohn, David A., editor *Ten Top Stories* . New York: Bantam, 1979. A collection of excellent stories written for young people. Stories are easy to read and for the most part are well written. Stories deal with a wide spectrum of themes that students will be able to relate to.

Steinbeck, John. "The Red Pony". New York: Viking Press, 1959. Story of a boy who encounters birth, death, love, and hate in the process of becoming a man.

Wright, Richard. "The Man Who Was Almost a Man". New York: World Publishing Company, 1961. Good story about a young boy trying to become a man in a world of racial prejudice.

Extended Activities

Set up a library of short stories in the classroom for student use. School libraries will usually loan books for an extended period of time for special class projects.

Encourage students to keep a record of their personal thoughts and problems in a journal. Expressing emotions in written form can often help in finding solutions to problems.

Students can write a short story based on a personal experience or problem taken from the journal. Sometimes students must admit that they have a problem before they go about finding a solution. This activity will allow students to confront the problem and try to find a solution. Stories will be discussed with the student's permission.

Students may also use art as a means of working our frustrations or concerns. A short story can be created in the form of a picture. Pictures will be shared with class.

Start a literary club for those students interested. Discussions could be held on the short story and other forms of literature.

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