



## The Short Story: A Slice of Life

Guide for Curriculum Unit 83.03.03

by Jane K. Marshall

Ever assigned short story reading for homework and expected it would be done? You sat up late thinking of interesting and fun questions to ask your students—picturing their cherubic selves reading in easy chairs. But the next day you found out that they couldn't find their books, much less the story. You were annoyed, weren't you? If so, maybe this is the unit for you.

Ever assigned short story reading for homework with the glib announcement, "There will be a quiz on this tomorrow"? You sat up late exacting your vengeance with glee—trying not to think of words such as coercion, black-mail, tyrant. And the next day you found out that the students "read" the story, but could only get 50s on the quiz. You were annoyed, weren't you? Then, quite possibly, this is the unit for you.

Ever toss, turn, and dream about leading thirsty horses to a pristine lake where they refuse to drink? This is the unit for you.

Ever contact Radio Shack about computer courses (and the job market for former teachers)? Give this unit a whirl.

As for me, I hope to God this works...

The unit is concerned with two themes, issues of the family, and issues of identity. It's main objective—to provide a focal point which will allow students to remember the stories read, and the experience of thinking about their own lives. All twelve stories considered, thanks to Karl Marsh, Sandy Reynolds, and the Reading for the Blind Program of the Branford Public Library, are on tape. This will provide students with a "good" first reading of each story. Teachers are provided with plot summaries as well as criticisms which stress key elements (theme, characterization, tone, irony, symbolism, etc.) for (or as they pertain to) specific stories. Ideas for introducing each of the two main themes are provided as well. Finally, specific lesson plans are included which cover the first reading of stories (plot recollection), the second reading (elements of the short story), and ideas for encouraging (reaction or) short story writing among students.

(Recommended for English I, II, III, IV)

### **Key Words**

*Twentieth Century American Short Story Adolescence Literature Elements Reading Instruction Hurston Zora*

*Neale*

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