



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

Elements of the Short Story

Curriculum Unit 83.03.09

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For several years the City of New Haven has been using the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills as a criteria for evaluating its students. Each year on the Reading Section of the test, students show a deficiency in the areas of generalizations and inference.

This deficiency shows an inability on the part of students to comprehend the “whole” of what they are reading. Their understanding is limited to the literal and the simple recollection of factual details.

One way to improve students’ ability in the areas of forming generalizations and inferences is by exposing students to the elements of the short story.

This unit is designed to be used by English and Reading teachers in the seventh and eighth grades.

We have selected classic short stories which are available at a lower reading level as well as their original form. Each story can be used with high achieving students in its original form and is available in a form with a readability level of third, fourth or fifth grade for use with lower achieving students.

All stories mentioned in this unit are available in books which are currently being used in the New Haven School System.

By providing classic stories available on varying reading levels, we can give all students equal exposure to works of merit and hopefully bridge the gap which exists between high and low achievers. Too often our low achieving students are provided with reading material which was written for an eight year old. This material is not of interest to a seventh or eighth grader even though his ability to read may well be that of an eight year old.

We intend to expose students to the elements of the short story. For each element we will provide both reading and writing activities which revolve around that element. These activities can be used as a means of evaluating the students’ understanding of that element.

As previously mentioned the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills has been a major focus of the New Haven School System as one means of measuring students’ levels of competency particularly in the areas of math, reading, vocabulary, language arts and visual materials. The school system has also implemented a city-wide base three and base six test in the last two years to assess students’ level of competency in the areas of math,

reading and language arts. The sixth grade proficiency test also includes a sample of writing from each student that is holistically scored as does the state-wide proficiency test for ninth grade. The latter is soon to be administered to eighth grade students instead. It is imperative that students read and write more effectively. We believe our unit will afford teachers and students another means of combining both goals effectively and using one to complement the other.

The reading and writing of the short story is similar to the development of a fine athlete. The reading of the short story is knowing the rules of the sport and the writing allows the student to actively participate in the game. The refinement of students' skills like that of an athlete will improve with consistent, meaningful practice. We believe as teachers we must provide the *field* (selective short stories), make clear the *rules* (understanding the elements of the short story), and allow for consistent *practice sessions* (student writing that focuses on character development—setting—plot—theme and point of view). The students will then be better prepared to win the game. If the *field* is well maintained, the *rules* clearly understood, and the *practice sessions* meaningful with feedback, everyone wins in this game especially the *players* (students).

We believe students should write for themselves and others. It is critical that students at the middle and high school level, specifically grades seven through twelve, edit their papers and those of other students. We are opposed to students focusing on the teacher as the sole audience. The teacher is only one source of feedback for students. We need to encourage students to use others as viable and valuable resources and audiences.

The New Haven Board of Education has clearly focused on the importance of writing as an integral part of the educational curriculum and specifically addresses this issue by establishing a policy on student writing. Following are excerpts from the final policy on writing as adopted by the New Haven Board of Education:

In grades 7-12 the goal shall be to develop in all students functional writing skills in accordance with their ability.

At the intermediate level, the skills taught in the primary grades shall be maintained and expanded. Emphasis should be placed on paragraph structure and the effective organization of written materials. It is expected, at this level, that children will be able to write at least a one-page story or composition, each week using the skills developed in the writing program.

At the middle and high school levels, students shall make written records of what is read, discussed, and observed. Students with sufficient mastery of writing skills will work on essays, source of themes and reports. All students will be involved in creative writing.

The culminating activity of this unit is the students' original short story. This story will be read by another student who will fill out an activity sheet to determine whether or not the story contains all of the elements.

A General Overview

- I. Character prose statement
 - A. Short story and sources
 - B. Focus on Reading Lessons (2)
 - 1. Inference

- 2. Sequence
- C. Focus on Writing Lessons (2)
 - 1. Quotations dialogue
 - 2. Nouns Concrete and abstract
- D. Related Activities
- E. Vocabulary
- II. Setting prose statement
 - A. Short story and sources
 - B. Focus on Reading Lessons (2)
 - 1. Inference
 - 2. Sequence
 - C. Focus on Writing Lessons (2)
 - 1. Personification
 - 2. Metaphors and Similes
 - D. Related Activities
 - E. Vocabulary
- III. Plot prose statement
 - A. Short story and sources
 - B. Focus on Reading Lessons (2)
 - 1. Inference
 - 2. Fact and Opinion
 - C. Focus on Writing Lessons (3)
 - 1. Chronological Order transitional words
 - 2. Verbs time of action
 - 3. Writing a narrative sequential order
 - D. Related Activities
 - E. Vocabulary
- IV. Point of View prose statement
 - A. Short story and sources
 - B. Focus on Reading Lessons (2)
 - 1. Inference
 - 2. Drawing conclusions
 - C. Focus on writing from different viewpoints Lesson (1)
 - D. Related Activities
 - E. Vocabulary
- V. Theme prose statement
 - A. Short story and sources
 - B. Focus on Reading Lessons (2)
 - 1. Inference
 - 2. Drawing conclusions
 - C. Focus on Writing Lessons (2)
 - 1. Allusions
 - 2. Proverbs
 - D. Related Activities
 - E. Vocabulary
- VI. Original Short Story

VII. Concluding Statement

VIII. Bibliography

Section One Character

Character development in life is a continual evolutionary and vital process in which we are all participants; some more actively, directly and dynamically than others. Because we bring to the reading of short stories our own intrinsic character development, we have a very read basis with which to explore the character development in the short story. Wilson Thornley writes in his book, *Short Story Writing*, "the reader intensely participates through identification and such identification and participation are imperative."

We come to know the characters in the short story through the indirect method of 1) physical description, 2) the character's thoughts, feelings and words, 3) the comments and reactions of others and 4) the actions of the character and the direct method of the author's stated opinion about the character.

We believe the adolescent age of uncertainty to be an optimum time for students to utilize this stage in their development to understand the elements of the short story and use the insights gained from the analysis of such character development in the short story to better understand their own character and its development. The reading of selected short stories will engage the students' active participation in an understanding of self; their life's central character, and the others that touch their lives.

To illustrate the element of character we have chosen the story "All the Years of Her Life" by Morley Callaghan. The poignant story of a boy, always in trouble who at last realizes the effects of his poor behavior on his mother.

This story can be found in the following books:

Adventures in Reading Heritage Ed. Reading Level 9-10

Spotlight on Literature Random House III Reading Level 4

Scope English Program *Level II Scholastic Book Service* Reading Level 4-5

Reading Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To determine whether or not students have an understanding of "All the Years of Her Life".

Procedure: The following questions can be used to lead an oral discussion of the story. The questions can be used either by the teacher to lead the entire group or may be used by students in smaller groups.

1. What kind of a boy is Alfred? What are some of the things Alfred did in the story to show this?
2. Had Alfred ever been in trouble before? What are some of the things Mrs. Higgins did and said in the story that show this?
3. Does Alfred love his mother? Give reason why you think as you do.
4. Why do you think Alfred decided to go to the kitchen to see his mother?
5. What did the author mean in the last paragraph when he said, "this was the first time he had ever really seen his mother"?

Evaluation: Students' understanding of the story can be determined by their participation in oral discussion.

Reading Lesson Plan #2

Objective: To check students' understanding of sequence.

Procedure: Students are to rewrite the following statements in the order that they happened to Alfred.

1. Alfred took the toothpaste, powder and lipstick.
2. Alfred decided to go to the kitchen to see his mother.
3. Alfred began getting into trouble.
4. Alfred knew by Mr. Carr's voice that something was wrong.
5. Alfred understood his mother.
6. Alfred quit school.
7. Alfred emptied his pocket.
8. Mr. Carr fires Alfred.

Answers: 1) 6, 2) 3, 3) 1, 4) 4, 5) 7, 6) 8, 7) 2, 8) 5.

Evaluation: Students correct responses to this activity.

Writing Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To have students write a dialogue between characters to teach proper use of quotation marks with direct address and a quote within a quote.

- Procedure:
1. While reading the short story, "All the Years of Her Life", have students take note of the dialogue between characters and the proper use of quotation marks.
 2. After reading the story and discussing it, ask the students *what* they think Alfred would say to his mother if he walked into the kitchen as she drank her cup of tea and *how* he might say it.
 3. Write responses on the board using proper quotation format.
 4. Have students write in their journal a brief dialogue between Alfred and his mother.

- Evaluation:
1. Ask students to read their dialogue to the class (students can select another student to read one of the character's lines).
 2. Check students' journals for proper use of quotation marks and commas and proper indentation each time a different character speaks.

Writing Lesson Plan #2

Objective: To distinguish between *concrete* and *abstract* images by identifying nouns that are *concrete* and those that are *abstract*.

- Procedure:
1. List one of the characters from "All the Years of Her Life" on the board.
 2. Under the character's name write two columns; one labeled *concrete* and the other labeled *abstract*.
 3. Ask the students to suggest words that would describe this character and write their responses in the appropriate columns on the board.
 4. Have students copy the list from the board and add five more *concrete* descriptions and five *abstract* in their journal.
 5. Ask for volunteers to read their responses aloud.
 6. Using their journals, ask students to choose one of the other characters from the story, "All the Years of Her Life", and follow the same procedure.
 7. Using the list they generated on their own, ask students to write a paragraph about this character including both concrete and abstract words from their list.
 8. Underline the concrete words in their description with one line and the abstract words with two lines.

Evaluation: Read each students' journal checking for appropriate concrete and abstract responses.

Related Activities

Picture Play

1. Show close-up pictures of people's faces to class.
2. Ask students to choose one face and physically describe what they see.
wearing glasses moustache
bushy eyebrows frown
3. Ask the students to write words to describe *how* they think the person in the picture feels.

Drama Role Playing

1. Act out the dialogue written in your journal between Alfred and his mother.
2. Alfred's father returns home from work, his mother relates what has happened at the drugstore. Have a group of three to four students write a dialogue between Alfred's mother and his father. Have group act out dialogue for the class.
3. Same situation as number 2 only another group of three to four students will write a dialogue between Alfred and his father. Ask this group to act out the dialogue they have written.
4. Alfred is applying for a job as a . At the interview Alfred is asked where he worked previously and why he left. Have a group of three to four students write a dialogue between Alfred and the person conducting the interview. Ask this group to be prepared to act out dialogue.

Sequences

1. Have one student enter the room and perform five activities or tasks previously agreed on. (Student may open a window, write a name on the board, go to a specific locker, pull a shade, etc. The student will then take a seat. Ask the class to write what the student did in the order in which they were done.
2. One student is to give another directions on how to perform a specific task. Class will observe if the student performs the tasks according to directions given in the order in which they were given.

Growing-up

Write the phrase Growing-up Is . . . on the board. Ask the class to complete the phrase. Write students responses on the board. Responses may be serious or humorous in nature. Ask students to generate their own list in their journal.

Character Analysis

1. Ask students to write a description of someone in the building. Include in their description a physical description, what the person says and actions the person does. Ask students to read their description to class without mentioning names. The class should try to identify individual being described.
2. Ask students to think of someone special in their lives. Describe this individual physically and tell different things this person does that makes them special. Have students tell how they believe this special person thinks and feels.

Vocabulary

The following terms should be familiar to the students after focusing on the element of *character* in the short story:

Character Dynamic—Round
Protagonist Static—Flat
Antagonist Characterization
Motive Concrete Words
Dialect Abstract Words
Dialogue Character Development
Motive Action

Vocabulary Worksheet

A person in a short story is called a *Character* . The person around whom the conflict revolves is called the *Main Character* . *Character Development* is the change in the person from the beginning to the ending of a story. The way of showing what a character is like: The way that person looks, talks, acts or thinks is termed *Characterization* . We say the person who changes in personality or attitude is *Dynamic* or *Round* , those that remain the same are referred to as *Static* or *Flat* .

The hero of the story who is faced with a conflict is the *Protagonist* while the villain of the story, the person who causes the conflict is the *Antagonist* .

A *Motive* is the reason behind an individual's action(s). A conversation between two or more people in the story is called a *Dialogue* . The way these individuals speak in the story if they are from different parts of the country is known as *Dialect* .

In writing about people in a short story we use *Nouns* , the part of speech that names a person, place, thing or idea. If the word names a person, place, thing or idea that can be seen, smelled, touched, tasted or heard, it is *Concrete* . If the word names an idea that cannot be seen, smelled, touched, tasted or heard, it is *Abstract* .

Section Two Setting

Setting or the time and place of the action in a short story has a definite impact on the character development and plot. The setting is often found in the exposition of the plot and readily establishes time and place. Frequently it plays an important role in the conflict giving credence to the rising action as a climax or turning point is approached. Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game", is a story that focuses on the external conflict of individual versus individual (Zaroff and Rainsford) and an individual's struggle with nature (Rainsford's struggle with the setting namely, Ship Trap Island).

The element of setting in a short story quite readily lends itself to writing activities that focus on figurative language and effective use of adjectives to create vivid, exact sense images and impressions.

We believe that the study of setting in the short story not only enables the students to analyze the importance of this element to the whole but will allow them to reflect upon the importance of time and place in their own life and understand how it contributes to their own character development and conflicts.

To illustrate the element of setting we have chosen the story "To Build a Fire" by Jack London The gripping story of a man's battle for his life in the frozen North.

This story can be found in the following books:

Counterpoint in Literature Scott, Foresman and Co., Reading Level 8-9

Spotlight on Literature Random House 3, Reading Level 4

Reading Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To determine whether or not students have an understanding of "To Build a Fire."

Procedure: The following questions can be used to lead an oral discussion of the story. The questions can be used either by the teacher to lead the entire group or may be used by students in smaller groups.

1. Where did this story take place?
2. When did this story take place?
3. Would the story have been as interesting if it had taken place in Florida? Why do you think as you do?
4. Who had better instincts about traveling in the cold; the man or the dog? Why do you think as you do?
5. Once the man's feet were wet, what was his most serious mistake? Why?
6. Why wasn't the man in the story at the camp with the other men?

Evaluation: Students' understanding of the story can be determined by their participation in the oral discussion.

Reading Lesson Plan #2

Objective: To check students' understanding of sequence.

Procedure: Students are to rewrite the following statements in the order they happened.

1. The man fell through the ice.
2. The man burned himself.
3. The man decided he would eat his lunch when he got to the fork at 12:30.

4. The man thawed the ice from his face so that he could eat his lunch.
5. The snow put his fire out.
6. The man used the dog to test the ice and its feet got wet.
7. The man used the entire pack of matches.
8. The man started a fire under the trees.

Answers: 1) 4, 2) 8, 3) 1, 4) 3, 5) 6, 6) 2, 7) 7, 8) 5.

Evaluation: Students' correct responses to exercise.

Writing Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To introduce or reinforce the concept of figurative language using Personification in writing.

Procedure: When reading the story, "To Build a Fire," make students aware of the figurative language in the story.

1. Finally the fire was growing strong. His toes and face had already been touched by the frost.
2. The main thing was the fire. The flames were dancing high.
3. He struggled to his feet. He could feel the frost creeping into his body from every side.
4. Suddenly, the dog caught the smell of death.

Be certain students have a workable definition of personification. Personification is giving human traits to non-human things. For example:

1. The leaves danced proudly.
2. The island felt lonely.
3. The wind sang a tune.
4. The surf swallowed the rocks.
5. The engine sneezed and coughed.

Have students choose five non-human objects and give the objects a human characteristic or trait.

or

Have students choose one object and write five human traits for the object.

Evaluation: Check students' writing for correct responses or have them read the responses aloud to the class.

Writing Lesson Plan #2

Objective: To identify comparisons in figurative language, distinguishing between metaphors and similes and utilizing such in writing.

Procedure: Make certain students have an understanding of metaphors and similes.

1. If the comparison uses the words "like", "as", "such as", the comparison is a *simile*.
2. If the comparison says one thing is the other and does not use the words "like", "as", "such as", the comparison is a *metaphor*.

Ask the students to read carefully the following comparisons from the story, "The Most Dangerous Game."

1. . . . but even you can't see four miles or so through a moonless night." "Nor four yards," admitted Rainsford. Ugh? "It's like moist black velvet."

Comparison: *night velvet*

(Simile)

2. "It's so dark," he thought, "that I could sleep without closing my eyes; the night would be my eyelids."

Comparison: *night* eyelids

(Metaphor)

3. He struggles up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face.

(Personification)

4. Ten minutes of determined effort brought another sound to his ears—the most welcome he had ever heard—the muttering and growling of the sea.

(Personification)

5. The revolver pointed rigidly as if the giant was a statue.

Comparison: *giant* statue

(Simile)

6. Rainsford's impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther.

Comparison: *Rainsford* panther

(Simile)

7. Zaroff was the cat; he was the mouse.

Comparison: *Zaroff* cat

(Metaphor)

Comparison: *Rainsford* mouse

(metaphor)

Evaluation: Correct students' responses accordingly. The number of correct responses will indicate students' understanding of figurative language: Metaphors, Similes, and Personification.

Related Activities

Tape Recordings

Play a tape recording of different everyday sounds:

1. doorbell ringing
2. running water in a sink
3. window fan
4. pouring soda in a glass

5. door closing

Ask students to identify the sound on a sheet of notebook paper.

When they have finished, write the actual sounds on the board.

Ask students to compare their list to that on the board.

Ask for volunteers to make their own recordings and play for the class. Students can work individually or in groups of two or three students.

Sense Images

Show students pictures of:

1. Festive occasion (Thanksgiving, anniversary party, wedding, etc.)
2. Ask students to look carefully at the picture and identify those things that appeal to the senses.
3. On a sheet of notebook paper label five columns:
Sight Taste Touch Smell Hearing
4. Write under the appropriate column those things in the picture that appeal to a particular sense. Two or more responses may be acceptable. Emphasize dominant sense.

Creative Writing

Ask students to choose one subject from the following list:

1. A special pet
2. A unique object
3. A tranquil place to go
4. An important person in my life
5. Themselves
6. Anything they choose
7. A favorite food

Write a descriptive paragraph on the topic chosen. Be certain to use descriptive language that appeals to the senses. Utilize figurative language (similes, metaphors and personification) in their description.

Pair students and have each read the other's descriptive paragraph making suggestions for improvement on an index card.

Return paper and index card with comments for possible rewriting.

Teacher should also give positive feedback before final writing is completed in journal.

Vocabulary

The following terms should be familiar to the students after focusing on the element of *setting* .

Setting	Figurative Language
time	metaphor
place	simile
Imagery	personification
Symbol	Senses
Connotation	auditory (hearing)
Denotation	gustatory (taste)
	olfactory (smell)
	tactile (touch)
	visual (sight)

Vocabulary Worksheet

The setting of the short story tells the *Time* and *Place* of the action. To make a setting or background for the main character to come alive, we often use descriptive language which is not meant to be taken in its literal sense called *Figurative Language* .

Some examples of such descriptive language are:

1. *Simile* : A comparison between two unlike things that uses the words like or as; for example, This bread is as hard as a rock.
2. *Metaphor* : A comparison between two dissimilar things that does not use the words like or as; for example, Life is a short story of conflicts and compromise.
3. *Personification* : That which give human traits to non-human things; for example, The waves danced on the jagged rocks.

Using language that appeals to any sense or any combination of senses is called *Imagery*. These senses are *Sight* , *Hearing* , *Taste* , *Touch* or *Smell* . Sometimes using an object, person, place, or action that has a meaning in itself and stands for something larger than itself; an idea, belief, or value called *Symbol* helps to improve our writing of a short story. It is important that we can differentiate between the literal meaning of a word *Denotation* and the emotion or association that a word may arouse *Connotation*.

Section Three Plot

The term plot refers to the systematic chain of events which make up the short story. Each link in this chain helps to build suspense and to solve a problem. The main character is presented with a situation which presents a problem or conflict which he must resolve. The largest part of the story will deal with the main character's struggle to resolve this problem or conflict.

The conflict can exist within the main character himself (internal conflict) or it may exist between the main character and outside forces (external conflict). The point in the story in which the conflict is resolved is the high point or climax of the story.

The adolescent years are characterized by conflict both internal and external. The transient years from childhood to young adult are laden with a multitude of contradictions. Very often physiological changes bring the adolescent through this period of transformation without complementing sociological changes. This leaves the adolescent perplexed by his inability to comprehend his situation. The result is very often one of confusion and conflict.

The adolescent finds himself at odds with parents, teachers and other authority figures. His resulting alienation from the adult world often leads him to his contemporaries for solace and as a result he often becomes the victim of peer pressure, another external conflict.

We believe that these conflicts which constantly plague the adolescent, present us as teachers with a foundation on which to present this element of the short story. By recognizing the conflicts of characters in short stories and their struggles to resolve them, students may be better able to recognize their own problems and seek solutions.

The story we have chosen to illustrate the element of plot is "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell; An adventure story in which a hunter falls overboard and swims to the safety of shore only to become the hunted.

This story can be found in the following books:

Adventures in Reading Heritage Ed. Reading Level 9-10

Spotlight on Literature Random House 5 Reading Level 5-6

Scope English Program Level Two Scholastic Book Service Reading Level 3

Reading Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To determine whether or not students have an understanding of "The Most Dangerous Game".

Procedure: The following questions can be used to lead an oral discussion of the story. The questions can be used either by the teacher to lead the entire group or may be used by students in smaller groups.

1. At the beginning of the story did Rainsford have any feeling for the animals he hunted? How did his experience change his feelings?
2. What problem did Rainsford face once he reached General Zaroff's home? How was this problem solved?
3. When Rainsford fell off the yacht he swam in the direction of the gun shots, Why?

4. What is the most dangerous game? Why did General Zaroff decide to hunt it? Why was the game more dangerous than other game?

5. General Zaroff thought of himself as being very civilized. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Evaluation: Students' understanding of the story can be determined by their participation in the oral discussion.

Reading Lesson Plan #2

Objective: To check students' understanding of fact and opinion.

Procedure: Students are to read the following statements for the purpose of determining whether they are fact or opinion.

1. Whitney thinks that the animals they hunt understand fear.
2. Rainsford knew there was something strange about General Zaroff the moment he met him.
3. Ivan did not answer Rainsford when he introduced himself because he was not able to speak.
4. Rainsford will not hunt again since he now knows what it feels like to be hunted.
5. General Zaroff saw Rainsford in the tree after the first night of the hunt but decided to save him for another day's game.
6. Rainsford enjoyed the idea of the hunt once he had won.
7. Rainsford's trap killed Ivan.
8. General Zaroff planned to release Rainsford when the hunt was over.

Answers: 1) F, 2) 0, 3) F, 4) 0, 5) 0, 6) 0, 7) F, 8) 0.

Evaluation: Students' correct responses to this activity.

Writing Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To identify and use transitional words to determine time sequence or chronological order.

Procedure: 1. Have students read a list of activities:

- a. learning to ski (any sport)
- b. baking a cake or favorite recipe
- c. cleaning a fish
- d. planting a garden
- e. washing the car
- f. any activity the student chooses

2. Choose one activity from the list. List five or six things you would do to complete the task.

3. Circle all transitional words that you have used such as; first, next, then, while, finally.

Evaluation: Have students read their lists aloud and write transitional words they have used on the board. Students should have five or six transitional words.

Writing Lesson Plan #2

Objective: To use verb tenses to show time of action and events.

Procedure: 1. Choose the verb from each of the following pairs that gives you a more definite, vivid picture.

- a. throw-toss e. think-ponder
- b. cuts-slashes f. drank-guzzled
- c. shake-quiver g. walked-strutted
- d. eat-gobble h. soars-flew

2. Using the verb chosen from each pair, write a sentence.

3. Ask students to write sentences and under each identify present or past tense of action.

Evaluation: Check students' responses to determine their ability to identify the more vivid action and time of action.

Writing Lesson Plan #3

Objective: To write a good narrative paragraph focusing on conflict evaluating students' ability to use vivid actions in sequential order.

Procedure: 1. Look carefully at the following list and each element of *character* , *setting* and *conflict* .

Character	Setting	Conflict
1. young child	park bench	returning home late
2. elderly woman	crowded beach	missing/stolen object
3. several teenage boys/girls	apartment house	pushing ahead in cafe
4. a parent	grocery store	blizzard
5. an animal	angry sea	capsized boat
6. you	dark, desolate road	being offered drugs

2. Ask students to choose one from each element (character setting-plot) and write a paragraph focusing on the conflict and how it is resolved.

3. Ask students to share their writings with another student. This student will list on their neighbor's paper vivid and transitional words the writer used.

4. Students will then rewrite their paragraph using constructive comments from their paper.

Evaluation: Reading of students' narrative paragraph will indicate their ability to use exact vivid verbs and transitional words in writing a narrative.

Related Activities

T.V. Conflicts

Have students watch their favorite T.V. program. While they are watching it ask them to write down:

- 1. The major character
- 2. The conflict
- 3. The solution

Picture Conflicts

Show students various pictures depicting conflict. Have students identify the conflict in each picture.

Internal and External Conflicts

1. Ask each student to create a character with an internal conflict.
2. Ask students to write a paragraph describing this character's conflict.
3. Have students exchange papers. Each student must find a solution to the conflict they have been given and write a paragraph describing that solution.

The same exercise can be repeated for external conflict.

Vocabulary

The following terms should be familiar to the students after focusing on the element of plot in the short story.

Conflict Irony

Solution Flashback

Internal Foreshadowing

External Suspense

Vocabulary Worksheet

The main character is presented with a *Conflict* , a situation or problem which he will be called upon to resolve. Sometimes the problem lies within the main character and is said to be *Internal* , while other times outside forces act upon the main character, which is said to be *External* .

There is a constant, ongoing struggle in which the main character attempts to resolve his problem; hence he seeks a *Solution* .

Throughout this struggle a growing excitement or *Suspense* is felt as the *Climax* is approached.

The author often uses certain techniques to creatively unfold the plot:

Irony: An unexpected twist of events, the opposite of what was expected.

Flashback : A move back in time to an earlier incident.

Foreshadowing : A hint or allusion to events which will occur in the future.

Section Four Point of View

A critical part of the maturation process involves the ability to see things from the perspective of another. The adolescent is very often so involved with his own concerns that he does not even recognize the points of view of others. The adolescent point of view is very often limited to self.

We believe that the understanding of others points of view is a crucial part of life and that the short story can serve as a vehicle in which to help students to understand the positions of others.

The action in a short story can be seen through 1) omniscient point of view the narrator knows all, the thoughts, motives and feelings of each character 2) detached observer the narrator can describe the characters and what they do and say but not their thoughts and feelings 3) first person the main character tells his own story and refers to himself as "I".

Hopefully by learning to recognize the point of view in a short story students will be able to transfer this knowledge to their own world.

We have chosen "The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe to illustrate the element of point of view A story in which a man, insulted in public by a friend, seeks and gets revenge.

This story can be found in the following books:

Adventures in Reading Heritage Ed. Reading Level 9-10

Scope English Program Level 1 Scholastic Book Service Reading Level 3

Reading Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To determine whether or not students have an understanding of "The Cask of Amontillado".

Procedure: The following questions can be used to lead an oral discussion of the story. The questions can be used either by the teacher to lead the entire group or may be used by students in smaller groups.

1. Who is telling "The Cask of Amontillado"? How would the story be different if someone else were telling it?
2. Do you think Fortunato insulted Montresor on purpose? Why or why not?
3. What type of person does Montresor reveal himself to be?
4. Was the revenge that Montresor got fair? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think Fortunado went to Montresor's cellar? Do you think he suspected at any point that Montresor was seeking revenge?

Evaluation: Students' understanding of the story can be determined by their participation in oral discussion.

Reading Lesson Plan #2

Objective: To have students support their conclusions with factual details from the story.

Procedure: Identify each of the following statements as being either true or false. Find evidence in the story to support each answer.

1. Fortunado was a happy person with many friends.
2. Montresor's ancestors probably sought revenge for insults also.
3. Both men were very rich.

4. Montresor did not plan to seal Fortunado inside the cell he only wanted to teach him a lesson.
5. Fortunado knew that Montresor was angry with him.
6. Someone will probably find Fortunado's body and call the police.
7. Montresor is always alone in his mansion.
8. Montresor pretended to be concerned with Fortunado's health.

Answers:

1. True, Montresor tells him that he is loved and happy.
2. True, the family motto said "No one can attack me without being punished".
3. True, the story states that both men liked good wines and were able to afford them.
4. False, he had the tools ready to seal the cell.
5. False, the story states that he did not suspect his feelings and that Montresor continued to "smile in his face".
6. False, at the end of the story Montresor stacked the old bones against the wall and said that they had not been disturbed for fifty years.
7. False, his servants were out.
8. True, he kept telling Fortunado to turn back because his cough was getting worse.

Evaluation: Students' correct responses to this activity.

Writing Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To give students practice in identifying and writing from different points of view (first person, third person observer and third person omniscient).

Procedure: Ask students to read the following fictional situation and try to visualize the character.

Case Conference

Teddy is twelve years of age. He is constantly having conflicts in school, this behavior is quite different from that of a year ago. He flatly refuses to participate in class activities and intentionally disrupts such activities by humming aloud, repeatedly tapping his pencil on the desk and outwardly criticizing others: students and teacher. Last year he had a good rapport with his teachers especially in math and English. This year he has the same teachers for math and English, but is verbally abusive to one and simply ignores the other.

His parents are understandably concerned. His father believes the situation should be handled firmly; taking away privileges and time spent with friends. His mother feels a soft, sensitive approach is in order.

Ted's best friend, Sam feels a need to help Ted because he too, has seen a drastic change in Ted's behavior.

1. Identify the main character in this case conference.
2. Identify supporting characters.
3. With another student write a dialogue between two of the characters. Write from your

characters point of view.

Ted and his father

Ted and his mother

Ted and one of his teachers

Ted and Sam

Ted's mother and father

4. Allow sufficient time for this activity.

5. Ask students to act out their dialogue and accompanying point of view in class.

Note: A possible play could evolve from this activity.

Related Activities:

Journal

Have students keep a journal every day for a week. At the end of the week have them put it away for a week and not look at it at all. The following week have students rewrite the events of the week in which they kept the journal without looking at their original. Have students compare the two journals to see if their viewpoint has changed.

Change Places

Have students write a paragraph about something that has happened to them in which an adult was worried about them. Have students rewrite the same paragraph from the point of view of the adult who was worried.

Inanimate Object

Have students write a paragraph in which they are an inanimate object (a couch, chair, bicycle, etc.). The paragraph is to be written in the first person point of view.

Vocabulary

The following terms should be familiar to the students after focusing on the element of point of view in the short story.

Narrator First Person
Omniscient Point of View Internal Story Teller

Vocabulary Worksheet

The person telling the story is called the *Narrator*. When the person telling the story knows all the thoughts, motives and feelings of each character, the story is being told from the *Omniscient* point of view. When the main character tells his own story and refers to himself as “I” the story is being told from the *First Person* point of view. An *Internal* story teller is one that takes part in the action of the story. An *External* story teller is one that can remove himself from the action of the story.

Section Five Theme

Theme is that controlling idea or belief as to what is important and unimportant in life. It gives a basic meaning to a literary work. Generally, theme is inferred from the other elements in the short story and often evolves through conflict(s) experienced by the main character.

Adolescence finds itself vacillating between childhood securities and a young adult’s search to know oneself. In an effort to respond positively to students’ confusion and self-doubts, their preoccupation with peer status, their desire to achieve personal autonomy as well as help them to accomplish academic success, we believe a focus on the conflicts characteristic of the adolescent period and their emerging themes will help students to better understand themselves and those who touch their lives.

If we provide opportunities for this self awareness through selected short stories most students will more readily and willingly see self in their readings and more confidently share that self with others through their writings.

We have selected as the selection for theme 0. Henry’s story, “The Gift of the Magi”. The theme in this story expresses the universal belief that the best gifts are the gifts that are given from the heart.

This story can be found in the following books:

Adventures in Reading Heritage Ed. Reading Level 9-10

Spotlight on Literature Random House 3 Reading Level 4

Scope English Program Level II Scholastic Book Services Reading Level 4-5

Reading Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To determine students’ understanding of inference.

Procedure: The following questions can be used to lead an oral discussion of the story. The questions can be used either by the teacher to lead the entire group or may be used by students in smaller groups.

1. Is “The Gift of the Magi” a good title for this story? Why or why not?
2. If you had to give this story another title, what would it be and why?
3. What kind of person does Della reveal herself to be?
4. What is the most important idea (theme) you get from reading this story?

5. What is the conflict in this story and how is it resolved?
6. What point of view did O. Henry use to write this story?
7. What is the setting for this story?

Evaluation: Students' understanding of the story can be determined by their participation in oral discussion.

Reading Lesson Plan #2

Objective: Drawing conclusions.

Procedure: Read each of the following statements carefully. Each statement expresses an idea that may or may not be supported by the story. For each statement tell whether or not it can be supported from the story and list the details from the story that support your conclusion.

1. A penny saved is a penny earned.
2. Christmas is a difficult time of the year for many people.
3. If you don't have money, you should not try to buy gifts.
4. Gifts are the most important part of Christmas.
5. All poor people are miserable at Christmas.
6. Doing things on the spur of the moment is always a bad idea; people should always think before doing something.
7. Only rich people are really happy at Christmas.
8. The way a person looks is an important part of a relationship.

Evaluation: Accept all reasonable responses from students. Answers may vary.

Writing Lesson Plan #1

Objective: To have students make use of allusions: to make reference to a person, place or event in art, history or the like to enhance their writing.

Procedure: An allusion is a reference to some person, place or event that a reader is likely to recognize. The author intends to give a more enriched meaning to his/her literary work.

1. While reading the story, "The Gift of the Magi", make students aware of the allusions to the biblical stories of Solomon and Sheba and the Magi.
2. Give students some well-known sayings:

- a. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.
- b. It's always darkest just before the dawn.
- c. Don't change horses in midstream.

3. Have students choose one familiar saying and write a situation where alluding to the saying would enhance their writing.

Evaluation: Have students read their writings aloud to class. Have the class assess whether the student has used allusions with a show of hands.

Writing Lesson Plan #2

Objective: To familiarize students with proverbs—wise sayings—having them write their interpretation of each proverb as a theme about life.

Procedure: Many basic controlling ideas about life can be expressed as a wise saying.

Using some wise sayings from Salada tea bags, read aloud in class or write them on the board.

Salada Tea Bag Specials

1. Material Possessions— the more you own the more they own you.
2. Sometimes silence makes the best company.
3. Worry is the interest paid on trouble before it comes due.
4. Age doesn't matter unless you're cheese.
5. The accents on youth but the stress is on parents. Have students choose three of the five sayings and write what they think they mean in their journals.

Have students write five original sayings or proverbs on their own.

Evaluation: Check students' journals for responses to each of the above assignments.

Related Activities

Maxims

1. Orally with the entire group make a list of maxims: Better late than never, a penny saved is a penny earned, a stitch in time saves nine, etc.
2. Copy the list on chart paper and leave it on display in the classroom. Leave space for additional maxims as they are thought of by students.
3. When students have finished reading a story in class, have them look at the chart and determine if one of the maxims can sum up the controlling idea of the story.

Theme Songs

Many movies and television shows have theme songs (Happy Days) and the popularity of these shows has made many theme songs popular.

1. Have students make a list of their favorite movies and television shows and next to them write their theme song.
2. Have students tell why each particular song is a good one for the show.

Vocabulary

Theme Allusion
Proverb Idea

Maxim

Vocabulary Worksheet

The main idea or basic meaning of a literary work (short story) is called the *Theme* . Frequently a short story may have more than one controlling idea. Very often we can associate a wise saying or *Proverb* with the basic meaning of the story. Another way to express a fundamental rule of principle or conduct is using *Maxim* .

Sometimes a reference in one work of literature to a person, place or event in another work of literature or in history, art or music is known as an *Allusion* and quite effectively reinforces the meaning of a story.

Section Six Student's Original Short Story

After studying the five major elements of the short story, we believe students are ready to utilize what they have learned to write their own short story.

Following is an activity sheet to be used by the individual student writer and/or others to assist in evaluating their writing.

Student's Short Story Activity Sheet

Character:

Name the main character _____

Which of the following did the author include:

dialogue -----

dialect _____

Concrete/abstract images _____

Quotation _____

Setting:

Identify time _____

I identify place _____

Figurative Language: Which of the following did the author include:

Personification _____

Metaphors _____

Similes _____

Vivid Sense Images: Which of the following did the author include:

Sight _____
Hearing _____
Touch _____
Taste _____
Smell _____

Plot:

What is the conflict in this story? _____

Conflict is between:

Individual vs. individual

Individual vs. society

Individual vs. nature

Individual vs. self.

How is the conflict resolved? _____

What is the climax/turning point of conflict? _____

Does the story follow a logical sequence of events:

Use of transitional words _____

Chronological order _____

Point of View:

From whose point of view is the story written:

First person _____

Third person observer _____

Third person omniscient _____

Is this point of view consistent throughout the story?

Theme:

What is the controlling or main idea in the study? _____

Can the main idea in this story be expressed as a proverb or maxim?

What would be the proverb or maxim? _____

Section Seven Concluding Statements

As mentioned previously the intent of our unit is to give teachers an opportunity to teach the elements of the short story to an audience of middle school students reading on grade level, above grade level and below grade level.

We believe that focusing on the short story through reading and writing about the different elements of the short story will better reinforce specific objectives of both reading and writing.

Specifically, students' inability to read and write with purpose and clarity has been criticized by many areas of society; educators, businessmen and health services to name a few. Their criticism is not without some justification. It is imperative that all areas of the curriculum encourage students to read and write. Too often reading and writing are seen as subjects to be taught in Reading and English classes exclusively when in reality they are skills to be utilized in all areas. Writing will improve through practice. We believe that writing and reading across the curriculum needs to be emphasized at all levels of education: elementary, middle and high school.

The short story is one way of bringing reading and writing to other subject areas. There are many stories which would be suitable for reading in Social Studies and Science class. Original short stories in which the student places himself in the time and place of a historical figure or a famous scientist are but two examples of this.

Although this unit was designed for Reading and English teachers, we hope that it may prove useful in other curriculum areas. There is not one scientist, mathematician, musician, artist, etc. that isn't the main character in his or her own short story.

Student Bibliography

Following is a list of short stories that are written on a lower reading level as well as in their original format. All are readily available in anthologies currently being used in the New Haven School system.

Character Setting Point of View

Callaghan, Morley. "All the Years of Her Life".

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. "The Red-Headed League".

Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery".

Kipling, Rudyard. "Rikki-tikki-tavi".

London, Jack. "To Build a Fire".

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Cask of Amontillado".

Saki. "The Open Window".

Thurber, James. "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty".

Plot Theme

Bierce, Ambrose. "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge".

Connell, Richard. "The Most Dangerous Game".

deMaupassant, Guy. "The Necklace".

O. Henry. "The Gift of the Magi".

Stockton, Frank R. "The Lady, or the Tiger".

Twain, Mark. "The Californian's Tale".

Bibliography for Teachers

Boynton, Robert. *Introduction to the Short Story*. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., 1978. Works analyzed according to story elements.

Brooks, Cleanth, Warren, Robert Penn. *The Scope of Fiction*. New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1960. Works analyzed according to story elements.

Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*. New York: 1927, Harcourt Brace, 1927. Lectures given by the author at Trinity College, Cambridge. "The Plot" is a very good section.

-217-

Hersey, John. *The Writers Craft*. New York: Knopf, 1974. Collection of essays, interviews and lectures by writers on style, theme, the process of writing and the aim of fiction.

May, Charles E. *Short Story Theories*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976. Selection of essays on the principles of the short story.

Visual Aids

The following films are available for rental from:

Michigan Media

University of Michigan

Media Resources Center

400 Fourth Street

Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Telephone: (313) 764-5360

Bierce, Ambrose. "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge".

Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery".

Lawrence, D.H. "The Rocking Horse Winner".

London, Jack. "To Build a Fire".

Saki. "The Open Window".

Stockton, Frank. "The Lady or the Tiger".

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