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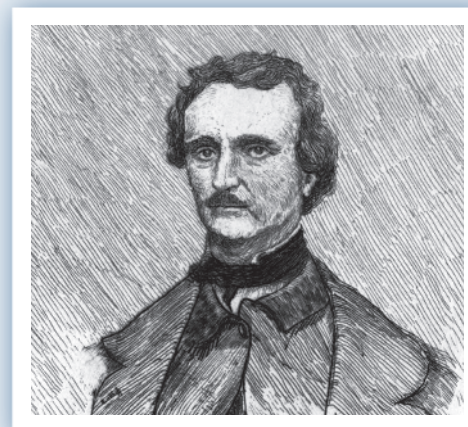
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Grade 9 ► Unit 1

Literary Elements and the Short Story

This unit, the first of six, uses the short story as the vehicle for reviewing common literary elements, as well as for appreciating the art of great storytelling.



ESSENTIAL QUESTION



Why do we tell stories?

OVERVIEW

This unit enables students to confirm and hone a common understanding of important literary elements, as well as a shared vocabulary for discussing them. Each story may be used to focus especially on a particular element, such as point of view in “The Cask of Amontillado” by Edgar Allan Poe or symbolism in “The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst. Teachers should choose stories that exemplify great storytelling and that they think are best for their students. The range of suggested works provides exposure to literature from a variety of cultures.

FOCUS STANDARDS

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

RL.9–10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.9–10.5: Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

W.9–10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

SL.9–10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

L.9–10.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L.9–10.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

SUGGESTED STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify and explain plot structure (i.e., exposition, rising action, crisis/climax, falling action, resolution/denouement) in short stories.
- Understand and explain why plots in short stories usually focus on a single event.
- Analyze how authors create the setting in a short story.
- Define the concept of theme and identify the theme(s) in stories read.
- Identify and explain characterization techniques in short stories.
- Identify and explain the use of figurative language in short stories.
- Analyze how authors create tone in short stories.
- Identify the point of view in a short story and analyze how point of view affects the reader’s interpretation of the story.
- Write a coherent essay of literary analysis with a clear thesis statement, at least three pieces of evidence from texts, and a strong introduction and conclusion.
- Define and refine research questions; cite sources accurately, distinguishing between paraphrasing and quoting.

SUGGESTED WORKS

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

LITERARY TEXTS

Short Stories

- “The Gift of the Magi” (O. Henry) (E)
- “The Overcoat” (Nikolai Gogol) (EA)
- “The Most Dangerous Game” (Richard Connell)
- “The Kitchen Boy” (Alaa Al Aswany)
- “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” (James Thurber) (EA)
- “The Cask of Amontillado” (Edgar Allan Poe) (EA)
- “The Black Cat” (Edgar Allan Poe) (EA)
- “The Tell-Tale Heart” (Edgar Allan Poe) (EA)
- “The Scarlet Ibis” (James Hurst)
- “Everyday Use” (Alice Walker) (EA)
- “The Minister’s Black Veil” (Nathaniel Hawthorne) (EA)
- “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” (Leo Tolstoy)
- *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories* (James Moffett and Kenneth L. McElheny, eds.) (1968 edition)
- *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere: Stories* (ZZ Packer)

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

None for this unit

ART, MUSIC, AND MEDIA

Art

- Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*, Sistine Chapel (c. 1511)
- Sultan Muhammad, *From a Khamsa of Nizamia* (1539–1543)
- Jacob Lawrence, *On The Way* (1990)
- Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851)
- Pablo Picasso, *Young Acrobat on a Ball* (1905)
- Tina Barney, *Marina’s Room* (1987)
- Roy DeCarava, *Untitled* (1950)

Music and Lyrics

- “Clothesline Saga” (Bob Dylan)
- “Me and Bobby McGee” (Kris Kristofferson and Fred Foster)
- “Peter and The Wolf” (Sergei Prokofiev)
- “The Bonnie Lass o’ Fyvie” (“Peggy-O”)
- “Variations on an Original Theme (‘Enigma’)” (Edward Elgar)

Film

- Ken Burns, dir., *Brooklyn Bridge* (1981)
- Ang Lee, dir., “Chosen” (2001) (and other BMW short films)
- Martin Scorsese, dir., *No Direction Home* (2005)

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

For a full Scoring Rubric, see the Appendix.

Note: Textual evidence should be used to support all arguments advanced in seminars and in all essays. Page and word counts for essays are not provided, but attention should be paid to the requirements regarding the use of evidence, for example, to determine the likely length of good essays.

1. INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

Select a short story and write an essay that analyzes how a particular literary element plays a part in the essence and workings of one of the chosen stories. State your thesis clearly and include at least three pieces of evidence to support it. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to write your first draft on a shared online document and receive feedback from classmates before publication. (RL.9–10.1, W.9–10.2)

2. ART/CLASS DISCUSSION

How do artists create narratives? Select two works of art to view as a class. Compare the two works, focusing the discussion on the relationship between character and setting, and on how the artists combined these to suggest a narrative. (SL.9–10.1, SL.9–10.2)

3. ART AND INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

Select a short story and an artwork and write an essay in which you discuss the use of symbolism in each. State your thesis clearly and include at least three pieces of evidence to support it. An optional extension

is to create a digital slide presentation in which you set up a visual comparison between the two works. (RL.9–10.4, W.9–10.2, SL.9–10.6)

4. INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

Discuss the “slow motion” depiction of the murder in Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” and consider how Poe’s craft affects the relationship between the narrator and his victim. State your thesis clearly and include at least three pieces of evidence to support it. (RL.9–10.4, W.9–10.2)

5. SPEECH

Select a one-minute passage from one of the short stories and recite it from memory. Include an introduction that states:

- What the excerpt is from
- Who wrote it
- Which literary element it exemplifies and why (RL.9–10.2, SL.9–10.6)

Record your recitation using a video camera so you can evaluate your performance for accuracy.

6. SEMINAR QUESTION AND WRITING (ARGUMENT)

Is Montresor (from Poe’s “The Cask of Amontillado”) a reliable narrator? Cite at least three reasons to support your argument. The seminar question may also be used as an essay topic. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (RL.9–10.2, RL.9–10.3, SL.9–10.1, SL.9–10.3, SL.9–10.4, SL.9–10.6)

7. RESEARCH AND INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

Select one of the authors from the short story unit and conduct an author study. Begin by defining a research question and refine it as necessary. The research should include an autobiographical or biographical text, another story by the same author, and/or a critical essay that addresses a specific aspect of the author’s style. Include at least three references to the author’s work and to other sources. Cite sources carefully and distinguish clearly between paraphrasing and quoting. (RL.9–10.1, RI.9–10.1, W.9–10.2, W.9–10.7, W.9–10.8)

8. GRAMMAR AND USAGE

Parts of Speech Review

Verbs: principal parts of verbs, especially irregular past and past participles; simple, perfect, and progressive tenses; agreement of subject and verb, especially with collective nouns

Nouns: common, proper, concrete, abstract, countable, collective, compound, possessive, gerunds

Select a paragraph from the novel and identify all the verbs. Name the tense of each verb you find. (L.9–10.3)

Look at a photograph, painting, or magazine advertisement for at least three minutes. On a piece of paper, draw two intersecting lines to make four squares (one for each category: people, places, things, and ideas). In each square, list the nouns by category that you see in the image. Note whether they are abstract or concrete nouns. (L.9–10.3)

9. MECHANICS

Capitalization of Common and Proper Nouns

Identify the nouns in Activity 8 and determine whether they are common or proper nouns; capitalize them if necessary. (L.9–10.2)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Analyzing Irony and Symbolism in a Short Story* (Louisiana Department of Education) (RL.9–10.4, RL.9–10.5)
- Lesson Plans for “The Scarlet Ibis” (WebEnglishTeacher) (RL.9–10.2)
- “The Minister’s Black Veil” Study Questions (Mr. Burnett’s Classroom) (RL.9–10.1, RL.9–10.2, RL.9–10.3)

TERMINOLOGY

Character, characterization

Figurative language

Irony (e.g., dramatic, situational, verbal)

Narrator

Parable

Plot (i.e., exposition, rising action, crisis/climax, falling action, resolution/denouement)

Point of view

Sensory imagery

Setting

Style

Symbol, symbolism

Theme

Tone

Grade Nine, Unit One Sample Lesson Plan

“The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry

In this series of three lessons, students read “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry, and they:

Perform a close reading of “The Gift of the Magi” (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, L.9-10.5)

Examine the elements of the short story (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, SL.9-10.1)

Explore the themes of “The Gift of the Magi” (RL.9-10.2, W.9-10.1, SL.9-10.1)

Summary

Lesson I: “The Gift of the Magi”: A Close Reading

Annotate “The Gift of the Magi” for literary style (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5)

Note:

Narrator’s voice

Use of humor

Presence and purpose of alliterations

Repetitions

Colors (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, L.9-10.5)

Review annotations (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3)

Lesson II: The Elements of the Short Story

Incorporate annotations while revisiting the plot of “The Gift of the Magi” (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3)

Note the setting of the story (RL.9-10.1)

Explore the development of the conflict in the story (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.5, SL.9-10.1)

Examine O. Henry’s depiction of the relationship between Della and Jim (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3, SL.9-10.1)

Lesson III: Themes in “The Gift of the Magi”

Identify the source of the title of the story (RL.9-10.9)

Probe the nature of the couple’s gifts (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, SL.9-10.1)

Explore the purpose of the final paragraph of the story (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.9, SL.9-10.1)

Examine the claim by William Saroyan that O. Henry “cleverly . . . told his story, concealing behind laughing language a profound love for the great masses of people who are frequently called the little people” (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, W.9-10.1, SL.9-10.1)

Lesson I: “The Gift of the Magi”: A Close Reading

Objectives

Annotate “The Gift of the Magi” for literary style (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5)

Note:

- Narrator’s voice
- Use of humor
- Presence and purpose of alliterations
- Repetitions
- Colors (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, L.9-10.5)

Review annotations (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3)

Required Materials

- Class set of “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry

Procedures

1. Lead-In:

Students examine annotation guidelines (teachers can use interactive whiteboards, overhead projectors, etc.).

“There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So
humor alliteration

Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles,
and smiles, with sniffles predominating.” [What is the narrator’s attitude here?]

“Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the
[Investigate the use of gray – set up to paragraph?]
window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard.”

[metaphor interesting view]

“Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She
was ransacking the stores for Jim’s present.” [Narrator is critical of his own metaphor – what does that do?]

2. Step by Step:

a. Students, individually or in pairs, annotate “The Gift of the Magi” for:

- Narrator’s voice
- Use of humor
- Presence and purpose of alliterations
- Repetitions
- Colors

b. The class discussion that follows closely reflects the students’ annotations.

c. During the class discussion, the students continue to take notes and annotate the story.

3. Closure:

Remind the students to reread “The Gift of the Magi” in preparation for further discussion.

Differentiation

Advanced

- Select student volunteers to practice reading sections aloud prior to this lesson, or while other students are still working on annotations. The students should practice reading dramatically, recorded with a video camera, so they can evaluate and improve their performances.
- Encourage students to research O. Henry and prepare a biography of his life for classmates. Students should also research what inspired O. Henry to write “The Gift of the Magi” and present this information as a podcast or an online poster.
- Allow students to choose another short story by O. Henry to annotate, and compare and contrast it with “The Gift of the Magi.”
- Encourage students to create a modern-day interpretation of the short story. They must be able to justify how the modern version stays true to the original intent of the story, while also changing its style. Perhaps challenge them to create a movie presentation of their modern-day interpretation.

Struggling

- Read/reread the short story to students, and allow them to listen to a pre-recorded version on an MP3 player.
- Be prepared with a list of guiding questions to support students in their annotations (e.g., How do we distinguish the narrator's voice? Where do you think he is using humor or other literary devices?). Students can mark their story with sticky notes prior to class discussion. Alternatively, have the elements you want annotated underlined on the story and have students explain the underlining.
- Give students a worksheet of the story to write on during class discussion, possibly even with sketches (or other nonlinguistic representations) to help aid memory and understanding. Alternatively, allow them to annotate in a text document.

Homework/Assessment

Reread "The Gift of the Magi."