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# An Experiment with a Technical Unit for Teaching Fiction in the High School

Allen R. Goodell

*Central Washington University*

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AN EXPERIMENT WITH A TECHNICAL UNIT  
FOR TEACHING FICTION IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington College of Education

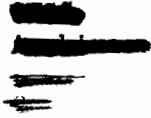
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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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by  
Alan R. Goodell  
August 1961

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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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H. L. Anshutz, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

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Edward A. Hungerford

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William D. Floyd

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## PREFACE

A primary function of this unit was to introduce the short story as a source of enjoyment and learning. The ability to read, understand, and appreciate many types of short stories is one means of arriving at a better understanding of self and other people; by analyzing stories written at various times throughout history, high school students can arrive at a fuller awareness of their own time and other times. The student must know that he shares many concepts, actions, and characteristics with people of all times; he must know that there are many ways to interpret life according to an individual's background; he must know that the present is built upon the past--that in order to know his own time and fellow men, he must study people and times gone by.

The short story provides a vehicle for gaining insights into human thought and behavior. Through the short story the student gains an appreciation of beauty by becoming aware of form, by developing a discriminating sense of values, and by cultivating his imagination.

It may be assumed that the abstract and the abstruse are not fully comprehended without special training and instruction. This training can be effected through a careful study of the elements of fiction generally and of the short story specifically. An understanding of the interrelationships of

fictional elements can provide the student with the tools whereby he can master the vague, the ambiguous, the mundane, and the ethereal.

The elements of fiction contain ideas and concepts transferable to life. Students can be made to see the relationships of the components to the whole; comparatively, each element of fiction has its counterpart in human relations: one can see how each stimulus in life contributes significantly to the whole--the educated adult.

In addition to these somewhat pragmatic concepts, the short story is a work of art--precise, complete, and beautiful. Appreciation of fiction, as of music, sculpture, painting, ballet, and other art forms increases with knowledge and understanding. Thus, the structural approach to fiction outlined in this unit would seem to be a most practical one. It is hoped that this unit will provide both the novice and the experienced teacher with a fresh, vivid approach to the short story and to the teaching of fiction.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM AND EXPERIMENTAL	
METHOD USED . . . . .	1
The Problem . . . . .	1
The Experimental Method Used . . . . .	2
The initial assignment . . . . .	4
The second assignment . . . . .	5
The third assignment . . . . .	6
The fourth assignment . . . . .	9
The fifth assignment . . . . .	10
The final test . . . . .	10
II. APPROACH TO FICTION USED . . . . .	12
Definitions of Terms Used . . . . .	12
Fiction . . . . .	12
Theme . . . . .	13
Plot . . . . .	13
Setting . . . . .	20
Character . . . . .	22
Exposition . . . . .	24
Initial incident . . . . .	24
Plot questions . . . . .	25
Climax . . . . .	26
Crisis . . . . .	26
Point of view . . . . .	26



CHAPTER	PAGE
III. DOCUMENTATION: ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PAPERS . . .	30
The Initial Assignment . . . . .	31
Purposes . . . . .	31
Comments . . . . .	31
The Second Assignment . . . . .	44
Purposes . . . . .	44
Comments . . . . .	44
The Third Assignment . . . . .	44
Purposes . . . . .	71
Comments . . . . .	71
The Fourth Assignment . . . . .	90
Purposes . . . . .	90
Comments . . . . .	90
The Fifth Assignment . . . . .	107
Purposes . . . . .	107
Comments . . . . .	108
The Final Assignment . . . . .	126
Purposes . . . . .	126
Comments . . . . .	126
IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	138
Problems Encountered . . . . .	138
Findings . . . . .	139
Conclusions . . . . .	140
Suggestions for Further Use of the Unit . . .	141

CHAPTER	PAGE
Preparation . . . . .	141
Assignments . . . . .	142
Evaluation . . . . .	142
Summary . . . . .	143
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	145

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Simple plot pattern . . . . .	15
2. Illustrated simple plot pattern . . . . .	16
3. Figure showing form for complete plot chart . . .	18
4. Pattern of the action in Twain's <u>Huckleberry</u> <u>Finn</u> . . . . .	21

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM AND EXPERIMENTAL METHOD USED

In order to develop a functional method of reading a given piece of fiction, a method whereby the reader can arrive at the author's intended meaning, it is necessary to begin with a careful fictional analysis of a few stories. That is, several stories should be examined for their emphasis on plot, setting, character, theme, point of view, symbolism, etc.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

This unit will attempt to provide both new and experienced teachers with a practical, easily administered guide for the effective teaching of short stories. No assumption about other methods of teaching fiction has been made; no adverse criticism is implied. It is simply the contention of this writer that a study of fiction based upon a careful examination of story elements is one desirable and effective means of arriving at the complete, the entire, the genuine meaning and significance of the author. This method provides a plan by which the high school student may gain increased understanding of the author's meaning and purpose. Proof of this contention lies in the written assignments from a class of high school sophomores; their responses serve as a large and

valuable portion of this thesis. Since no questionnaire was used and no comparison of this teaching method and any other method was made, the validity of the study remains in these student papers. They are actual photographs of student compositions; no corrections or alterations have been made. During the course of the unit of instruction, however, errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage were pointed out and used to determine grades.

## II. THE EXPERIMENTAL METHOD USED

In beginning the study of a story, one should if possible learn something of the context out of which it was written. With or without this context, we should analyze the internal evidence to see who is "most on stage," identify the point of view from which it was written, evaluate the nature of the built-in evidence, and perceive the author's underlying ideas. Several major questions may be posed and answered during the reading and discussion of fiction:

1. What is the major problem faced by the protagonist?
2. What kind of person has the author created to become involved in this conflict?
3. What is the result of this conflict in the lives of the people involved?
4. What are the implications of the outcome?
5. How has the author illustrated his theme? Has he

used action, setting, character, mood, symbolism, or other devices to embody his theme?

6. How does each element contribute to the total effect of the story?
7. How artistically are the parts interwoven to provide a unified whole?
8. How can the reader best draw conclusions about himself and others from the experience of reading the story?

These and other questions may serve as a set of objectives for a unit of instruction in the short story. They include most of the questions a discerning reader will wish to have answered in order to derive satisfaction from the reading experience.

The problem facing the teacher is how to make the full meaning and implications of fiction clear to the high school reader. In order to do this the teacher must first understand and explain the various elements with which he will be working. (These elements and other terms will be fully explained and illustrated in Chapter II).

It is felt that the methods used in this experiment were direct, succinct, and concrete. The individual elements of fiction were presented, defined, explained, and illustrated. A follow-up assignment was given to determine the extent to which these things were understood. After discussing the

more important facets of the technical construction of the short story, problem-solving assignments were made. These give some evidence of the degree to which comprehension was gained.

The initial assignment. In order to determine how much instruction was necessary and how great the students' understanding of what they read was before any instruction was given, the teacher assigned the reading of Chekhov's "A Slander." In this story the author shows a man who thinks that his friend is betraying him by spreading malicious gossip. In an attempt to counteract the gossip, the protagonist sets about explaining what really happened. By so doing, he plants seeds of doubt and suspicion in the minds of his associates. In the end he has destroyed his own reputation, but he is at a loss to understand who is responsible for this slander upon his character. The students were asked to indicate in a short paper why the author wrote the story and what devices or techniques he employed to achieve this purpose. Since the theme (the author's purpose) is an illustration of some basic truth of human life, an understanding of it seems one of the most important things to be gained from reading a story. It was felt that this written assignment would serve as motivation for a discussion of theme, the author's primary purpose in writing a story. Student answers are included in Chapter III along with a discussion or analysis of their merits.

After this initial assignment was made, the teacher read to the class O. Henry's short story "Whirligig of Life." Out of this story grew a discussion of theme (defined and illustrated in Chapter II). The teacher had prepared beforehand a brief synopsis of the story so that the class could see the order of events. After having been given a definition of theme and several illustrations of it through the use of popular cliches and adages, the class was able to arrive at a statement of what they believed to be the author's purpose. It was stated as follows: "The theme of 'Whirligig of Life' is that if married couples would negate or overlook their trivial differences and petty disagreements and realize how much affection and love they have for each other, there would be fewer divorces and better lives for all."

The second assignment. After explaining and clarifying the concept of theme, the next step was to show how an author presents this theme by embodying it in some concrete portion of the story. The class was assigned the Maurice Walsh story "The Quiet Man." This story utilizes character traits and characteristics to illustrate theme. The students were asked to determine the kind of man Shawn Kelvin was and what devices and techniques the author used to delineate Shawn's character. As a means of clarifying the assignment, the teacher used the already familiar Chekhov story as an explanatory vehicle. This story shows that a doubting nature (a cynical attitude



toward other people) may cause a man to destroy himself in his futile efforts to counteract the imagined vice and evil prevalent in his fellows. In addition to the delineation methods to be defined in Chapter II, the teacher pointed out such things as the title of the story as a clue to the theme and to the protagonist's character.

Galsworthy's story "Quality" was then read and discussed in class as a story depending almost entirely on character traits to illustrate theme. One of the most difficult jobs of the literature teacher is to train students to make judgments on the basis of evidence in the story and not on their own private backgrounds. Too often the student is unable or unwilling to evaluate a character's actions by what he says and does. It seems easier to say, "I never knew a person like that." The presentation of fictional character, therefore, is to be approached with assiduity.

After these explanations and illustrations, the students were asked to write a paper showing the characteristics of Shawn Kelvin and the methods and devices the author used to present this character. These papers may be found in Chapter III.

The third assignment. Once a person has learned to analyze fiction for its objective pattern, once he can chart the order of events, description, and exposition that go to illustrate a theme or truth, he has better prepared himself

to understand not only the short story but also the novelette, novel, drama, and narrative and dramatic poetry (1:4). The next step in the analysis of stories should be an understanding of the plot. Plots of stories may be clearly illustrated by first giving a definition and then showing graphically how a plot is organized. The simplest plot patterns follow a natural upward trend, becoming more intensified and concentrated as the action progresses. (See Figure 1).

To illustrate the organization of plot the teacher used again the now familiar "Whirligig of Life." The plot of this story consists of a couple from the mountains of Tennessee coming down to a small settlement to seek a divorce from the local Justice of the Peace. When, consulting his statute books, the Justice discovers that there is no provision for divorce in them, he manufactures a decree of divorce which is a multiplicity of a last will and testament, the Lord's Prayer, and the wedding vows in reverse. The wife unexpectedly demands alimony, or "alimony" as she calls it. Since the husband has paid his last five dollars for the divorce, he is forced to steal the five dollars back from the Justice later that evening. The next day as the couple appears for the final decree, the husband gives the money to the wife in the Justice's presence. As they are preparing to leave, they realize what they have done and decide that they don't want the divorce after all. So for the oft-exchanged five dollar

bill, the Justice remarries the couple and they set out for their mountain home, happier and wiser than before.

The class was able to see the order of events, the "what happens" in the story, as a vehicle illustrating the theme.

The short story writer often begins with an idea--his theme. If so, he then chooses character and a setting and gives the reader a preliminary situation--the relation of the characters to each other and to their surroundings. Next he begins the ascent up the plot ladder to the climax and conclusion. This ascension is not a smooth movement but a series of steps or incidents, each dependent upon the one preceding and preparing the way for the one to follow. In this manner the writer leads the reader to the concluding incident, the point from which the reader is able to deduce the outcome and the satisfactory settlement of any question which might have occurred to him during his reading. Hence plot is the plan or outline the author uses to develop and exhibit his theme.

The third project, then, was to read the O. Henry story "Gift of the Magi" and chart the progress of the action in a manner similar to that shown in Figure 1. In addition to showing the incidents in the order of their happening, the students were to list the expository sections of the story, state what they considered to be the author's theme, and write down any questions that occurred to them during the reading. In this way they were able to see that the author

plans and plants various ideas, concepts, and elements in the story. They were further asked to indicate the climax or high point in the story--that point at which all major questions were answered to their satisfaction. These papers appear in Chapter III.

The fourth assignment. After illustrating the importance of the action in a story, the next logical step is to examine the setting, or the physical and/or spiritual backdrop against which the story is set. Again turning to a familiar story, the class examined "The Gift of the Magi" to see how an author uses setting to illustrate his theme. In this story a young couple, newly married and romantically happy, is concerned about purchasing a suitable gift for each other at Christmas time. Della, the young wife, sells her beautiful long hair in order to buy an expensive watch fob for Jim's highly prized watch. Ironically, Jim sells his watch to buy jewelled hair combs for Della's lovely hair. In conjunction with this situation, the author presents a rather ironical setting to contrast with and to accentuate the action. This happy couple and their circumstances are set in the bleak, dull grey atmosphere of a large city. Even the drab apartment is contrasted with their youthful jubilation and happiness. The class discussed how the setting affects atmosphere, tone, and mood of the story. Then the types of setting were discussed and illustrated. As an outgrowth of this discussion,

the class was assigned Stephen Vincent Bennet's story "By the Waters of Babylon" and asked to discuss the uses of setting in the story. These papers, along with a discussion of their value, appear in Chapter III.

The fifth assignment. The various elements not covered by written assignments (such things as the point of view from which a story is told) were discussed in class and illustrated through lecture and demonstrations. The final assignment was to examine all the techniques for reading a story and to discuss what makes a story "good." After being assigned several stories from various sources--magazines, anthologies, etc.,--the class was asked to discuss the characteristics of a "great" story. These, too, appear in Chapter III.

The final test. Because of criticism leveled at this approach to fiction, the final test was so constructed as to reflect the students' feelings. In such an assignment one must consider a possible bias, a tendency for students to say what they expect the teacher will want them to say. The class was told that these papers would not be considered in the final grade evaluation; nevertheless, the author is aware that the papers will reflect some things perhaps not the student's real opinions. Still, there is a positive and genuine reflection in many of the papers.

This question was given to the class: "This structural

approach to fiction has been criticized as 'mental gymnastics' and is considered destructive rather than instructive. The person making this criticism has said, 'Can't a person simply tell a story without having someone tear it apart by analysis?'" This question gave the students an opportunity to show what they felt about the teaching methods and the type of analysis used. These papers are included in this thesis along with the regular assignments. (See Chapter III).

## CHAPTER II

### APPROACH TO FICTION USED

One means of arriving at the true meaning of a short story is a structural or technical approach. This method employs analysis of fiction through a developmental study of its primary elements. An understanding of how a story is put together structurally is especially rewarding in that it allows the reader to see the interrelationships of each component and element. These elements have a definite and exact role in the final result. Often this result is an embodiment of some truth or value which has an emotional and/or intellectual effect upon the reader.

Although the terms commonly employed in fiction have a rather universal meaning, to avoid any misunderstanding or misinterpretation these terms must here be defined in the precise senses in which they are used in this study.

### DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Fiction. Fiction has been variously defined, yet with each definition it is necessary to allow exceptions. Some stories certainly deserving of the name "short story" do not fit exactly all prescribed definitions. For the purposes of this study the short story shall be defined as a narrative account of some character somewhere engaged in physical and/or

psychological action.

Theme. By theme is meant that truth of human life illustrated by the story. It is the main idea or underlying truth the author attempts to prove or illustrate by the total narrative pattern. Theme has been called the meaning of a piece of literature. Edgar Allan Poe imagined the possibility of a will strong enough to overcome even death. This becomes the theme of his story "Ligeia." However, a recent critic has shown this traditional interpretation of the story to be unsatisfactory. But the typical high school student would not be apt to understand the psychological interpretation set forth in Basler's more profound study of "Ligeia." (2:289-294) Robert Louis Stevenson had apparently heard it said that though certain things might be forgiven, not even God would forgive the hanger-back. In his "Will O' The Mill" he tried to make out the best case he could for the person who remained inactive, while refusing to involve himself in activity even to clear his own guilt. Then take Jack London's story "Samuel." E. A. Cross states the author's primary purpose as follows:

"This story was written to delineate the character of a woman, with a liking for a name, without a touch of superstition, and with a will so indomitable as to make it impossible for her to compromise with her convictions, no matter how strongly urged to do so by the calamities which befell her or how often her simple and superstitious neighbors suggested compromise to her (5:20).

Plot. Plot is a "planned series of interrelated events



progressing, . . ., through a struggle of opposing forces to a climax and a denouement" (11:315). It is the framework, the plan, the outline the author uses to develop and exhibit his theme. Plot includes the narrative arrangement of exposition, description, and action achieved by continuous arousing and satisfying of questions in the mind of the reader as he reads. Plots of various stories take on various shapes and characteristics; a chart or graph can illustrate the intensification and building up of the action to an emotionally critical point. Some of the more commonly used plot patterns may be seen in Figures 1 to 4.

Figure 1 shows the various patterns of action, discussion, and exposition in fiction. This represents the broad pattern of all narrative, although many authors may alter the pattern, disguising some bit of exposition by presenting it in the narrative framework as pseudo-action or pseudo-narrative. Pseudo-narrative refers to those non-narrative elements such as description and explanation that nevertheless do answer a narrative curiosity, do keep the reader interested by supplying him with precisely the information he wishes.

Falling action does not mean a falling off of reader interest; the author frequently makes use of falling action as a means of introducing another question or suspenseful situation.

Figure 2 illustrates the interplay of incidents and

Narrative pattern rises in interest, suspense, and intensity.

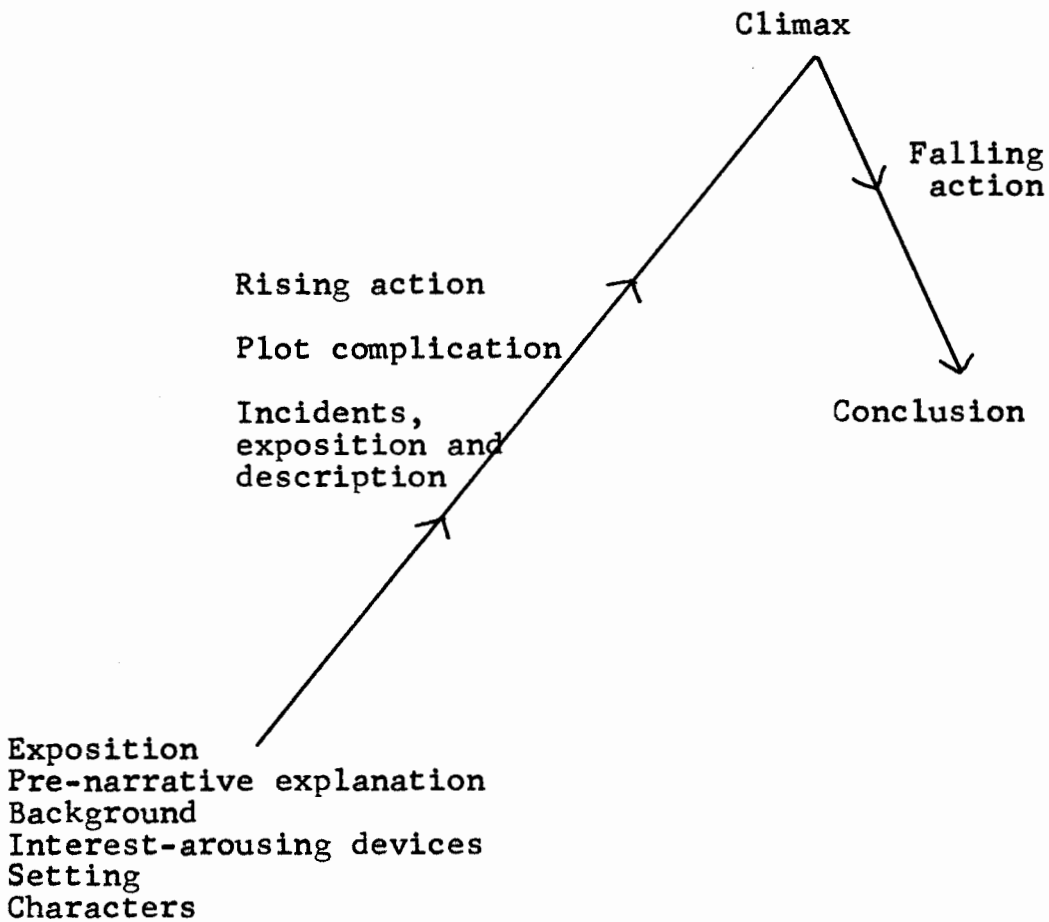


FIGURE 1 (1:5).  
SIMPLE PLOT PATTERN

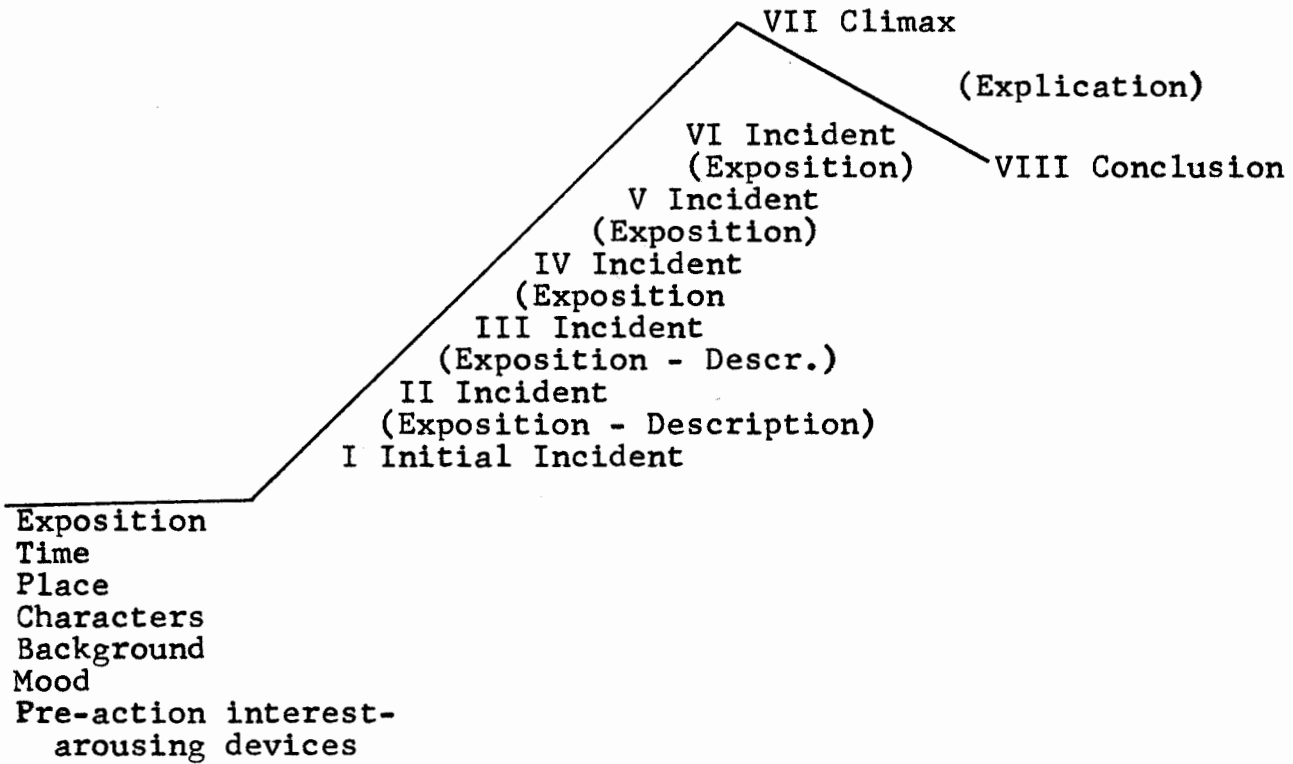


FIGURE 2 (1:6).

ILLUSTRATED SIMPLE PLOT PATTERN

exposition. The story does not, of course, always follow the exact pattern shown in the figure. That is, each incident need not be followed by exposition. This figure shows that frequently an author will begin his story with background information and then proceed to the action, interspersing bits of information (not narrative) as the story unfolds. Since many times this expository material is given in the form of dialogue, the action is not stopped.

Incidents II through VI keep the reader in suspense; they may at the same time raise other questions in the reader's mind. Any incident may answer a question; if it does, it raises another question so as to sustain reader interest. The Climax answers all major questions; Explication may create further questions, but they usually are subordinate to those aroused by plot (action) and are answered by the conclusion.

To illustrate further how the interaction and inter-relation of incidents create and maintain suspense and interest, Figure III shows (by arrows and braces) the step by step pattern which may be established. The arrows indicate either a positive answer to the plot question (shown by an upward arrow) or a negative answer (shown by a downward arrow). If an incident is neutral, i.e., answers the question neither "yes" nor "no," the arrow is drawn horizontally.

The braces indicate the point at which a question occurs to the reader and at what point that question is

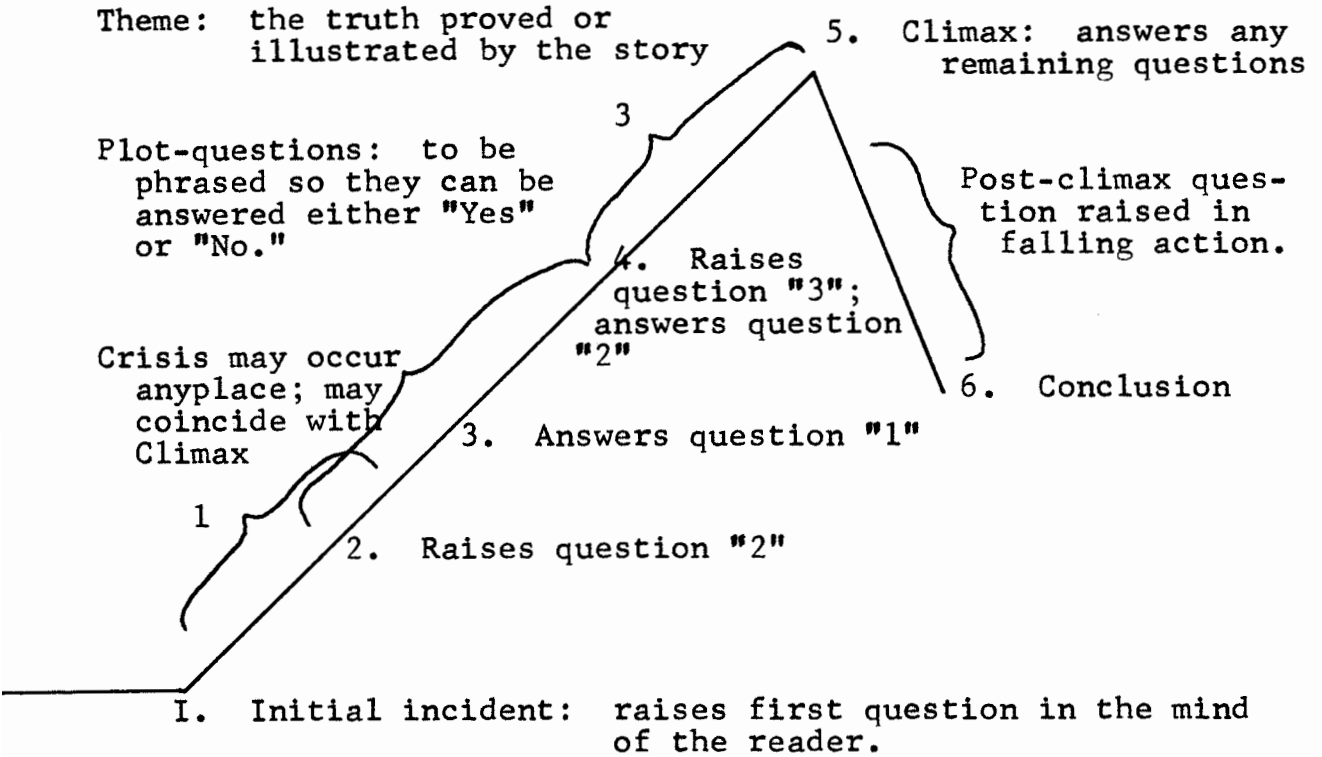


FIGURE 3 (1:7)

FIGURE SHOWING FORM FOR COMPLETE PLOT CHART

answered. The numbers of the braces refer to the number of the questions. In making this chart, the student might use different colored inks to make the braces.

Figure III also shows the form for preparing the plot chart. All pertinent information should be included--theme, plot questions, crisis, climax, exposition, initial incident, and all other incidents of the plot.

Obviously, not every type of story pattern can be included here. These plot charts merely show the type patterns generally followed by the short story writer. Many kinds of stories are written; not all authors begin with an incident which raises a question and proceed to answer that question. Some authors use both very general and very particular initial incidents. Some may begin at the end of the story and reveal the rest through flash-backs. (Wharton's "Ethan Frome" is an example of this technique.) Other authors use the frame-tale device: (Pirandello's "The Reserved Coffin"). Still others may offer a sub-plot which mimics, reinforces, or contrasts with the main plot (Tolstoy's Anna Karenina).

In teaching the technique of plot-charting, the individual teacher must determine which pattern most clearly fits a given story. Some stories may require a very complex chart filled with inter-related incidents, descriptions, and exposition. There may be many different lesser tales taking place at the same time. Huckleberry Finn, for example,

requires a very complex plot chart to show the overall pattern of Huck's journey and at the same time reflect the excursions ashore. Figure 4 illustrates a possible pattern for this story. The complexities of the story are not illustrated in this figure; only the physical graph of the minimal action pattern is shown. The dotted lines indicate the continuation of the story (and the river) while Huck is ashore. Each of these ashore-digressions is a minimal narrative, a complete episode in itself. Hence instead of the jutting plot shown in Figure 4, each shore incident could be shown as a separate plot pattern by itself (within the overall frame).

Setting. Setting is the physical or spiritual backdrop against which the story is told. The three basic types of setting are decorational, functional, and ironical or symbolical. Decorative setting provides just what the name implies--a place for the story to take place. It has little if anything to do with the actual goings-on in the story. In O. Henry's "Whirligig of Life" the action is set in the mountains of Tennessee, but similar characters involved in similar actions could as well work out the plot of this story in another locale without destroying the credibility of the author's ideas. Functional setting is usually deterministic, as in Harte's "Outcasts of Poker Flat." Here one can see that the elements of nature (which of course help make up physical setting) determine not only the action of the story

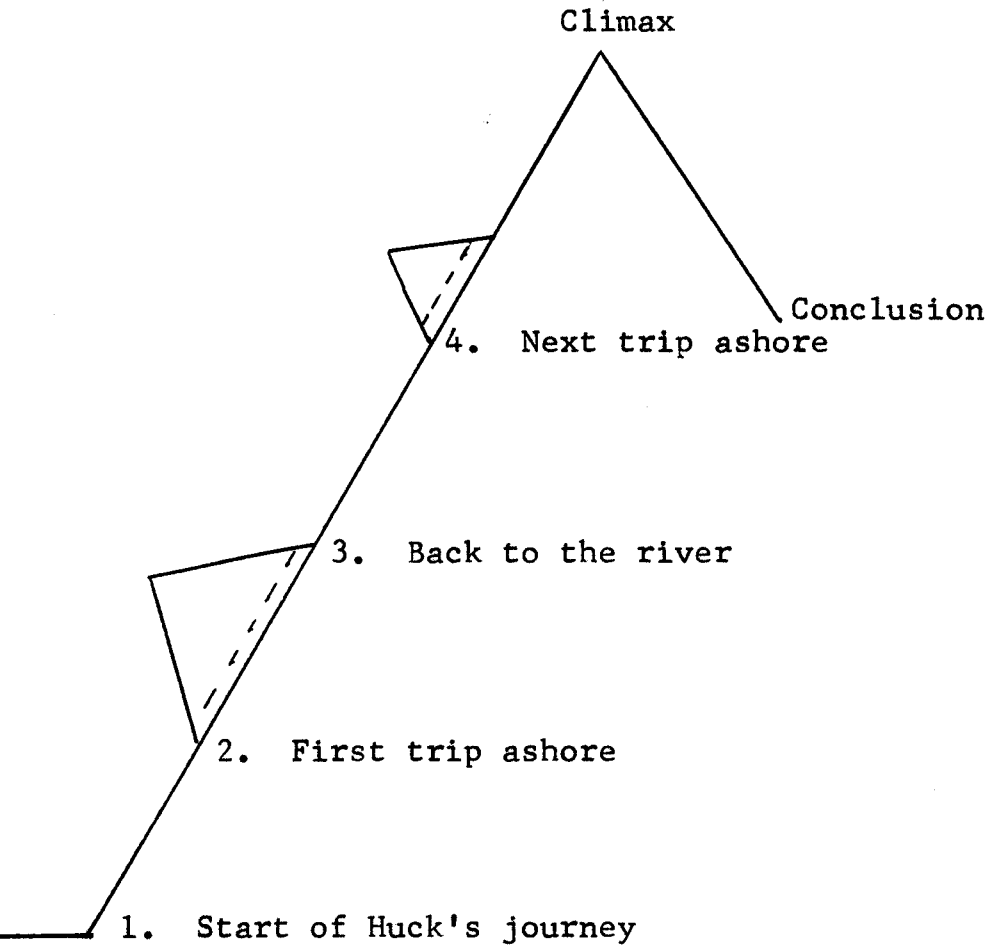


FIGURE 4 (1:9)

PATTERN OF THE ACTION IN TWAIN'S HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Not all incidents are listed, but these few indicate the type pattern established by the story.



but also have a great deal to do with the development of character in the several people involved in the story. Ironical or symbolical setting is also deterministic but in a different manner. In Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, for example, one can see not only the setting but also the characters and their actions as symbolical, or at least allegorical.

Character. The characters in a story provide the someone who is somewhere doing something (1:1). There are two major methods an author uses to delineate character-- direct and indirect. The direct method employs author comments through description, exposition, and essay. It also utilizes mental or psychological analysis of characters, and reports (dialogue) of other characters within the story. The direct method is concrete and exact, but it is not altogether satisfactory as the sole means of characterizing because it is not action: the story has to stop moving while the reader gets his information. Hence an author rarely uses a direct means of delineating character to the exclusion of the indirect means. The indirect methods all require a judgment or inference on the reader's part. The author presents the actor's speech, actions, and appearance, but the reader has to judge the worth by what happens. The reader may infer certain things about a character by the way the character affects other people in the story and by his usual or

habitual environment. Occasionally the name of a character may have symbolical significance and be a clue to character.

Who characters are, where they come from, what they do, and what and how they feel often provides clues and suggestions significant beyond themselves. Hence a thorough understanding of how the author attempts to delineate them is of great importance in determining how effectively they perform their duties. Since the short story has for its purpose the portrayal of life, it follows that the characters must be selected and used in the plot to embody the theme. First, the characters must be real people. They must seem and act like people one may meet in real life; their actions must be consistent with their traits of character as shown by the author. A character whose conduct can be predicted accurately by the reader is not really a character but a stereotype. To be real, a character must be both typical and individual, but he must be an individual. Characters must be worth knowing; they may be worthy of consideration either because of some innate qualities or by reason of ways in which they react to certain situations.

Because of the short story's length it is difficult for the author to develop a character in any great detail. It becomes necessary for him to present the character in a given situation; he must show the character as he is at the time of the culmination of the story's action, not the process by

which the actor has grown or developed throughout the course of the story. One practice is to present the character in a descriptive sentence or two and then place him in a situation whereby the reader can estimate the worth of the character by his actions. This process is continued until the reader comes to know the character well. This procedure is really rather close to the way in which we come to know people in "real" life.

Exposition. Exposition is that information the reader must have before he can begin a knowledgable reading of a story. It includes the time in which the tale is happening; it provides the place of the action; it explains any preliminary situations pertinent to the story; it may provide a brief introduction to the main characters and present a partial delineation of them. It usually provides an atmosphere redolent with mystery, intrigue, or suspense. It serves also to motivate the reader to "find out what happens next." In most stories preliminary exposition is not exhaustive; much additional information may be given throughout the course of the action.

Initial incident. This is the happening which begins the action of the story proper. It may also be called the motivating incident. It is the first action which arouses in the reader a question, usually general in nature, but as

further questions are raised each becomes somewhat more specific. An example of such a question might be, "Will this man be able to get away from this woman (trap, snare, policeman, etc.)?"

Plot questions. These are the questions which occur, consciously or unconsciously, to the reader as he progresses through the narrative. They are planted in the reader's mind through artistic narration (1:1). Many times the first question is present when a reader picks up the story. The title or the author's name may have suggested this first question. A Hemingway story, for example, may prompt the reader to ask, "Will this be another story in which the protagonist will attempt to prove his virility and manliness through facing a crucial situation or probable death and destruction?" A question is usually aroused by the initial incident. Plot questions of major importance (major plot questions) provide the backbone, as it were, of the short story. They get the reader's attention and interest so that necessary, though perhaps not narrative information can be given to the reader without causing him to lose interest. If the author is skillful he can supply other material one might skip over or become bored with if it were not for the narrative framework in which it is encased. These questions further provide an interlocking framework of curiosity and suspense, motivating the reader to keep on reading until the author can again arouse interest

and curiosity through another question.

Climax. The climax is simply the incident answering finally the major plot questions; it satisfies the reader's curiosity and gives him the feeling that he can see what the outcome will be. Also, the climax is usually the moment of highest emotional intensity.

Crisis. This term refers to the turning point in the affairs and fortunes of the main character. The crisis and climax coincide in many stories; hence some people think of them as synonymous. Yet this is not so. If everything has been looking gloomy for the protagonist, if all his plans have failed, if all his friends have deserted him, if nothing has "gone right for him," the point at which the picture begins to change for the better or the incident which suggests that the hero is going to succeed is the crisis. There may be several crises in a story; there is only one climax. (True, there may be anticlimactic events and post-climax questions raised, but the main narrative has only one main climax).

Point of view. This term concerns the various vantage points from which the author views the characters and the action of the story. The most common point of view is that of the omniscient author. By this is meant that the author writes as though he were on a high hill or cloud, assuming a god-like view of things. He knows all that is going on, both

in action and in the minds of characters. He reports what happens without being a character in the story. In some instances the author philosophizes or comments upon character, setting, or action. O. Henry gives an authorial aside or comment occasionally--especially for the sake of humor.

The limited omniscient point of view restricts the author in his telling of the story. He knows what is going on only from one character's point of view at a time. This method has a certain advantage over the fully omniscient one in that it is more lifelike and the reader is not so apt to ask, "How does the narrator get all this information?" Of course a shift of characters is possible so that the reader sees things from various points of view--but one at a time.

The rigidly restricted point of view (dramatic) is entirely external and observant. The author does not know the thoughts and feelings of the characters. He serves merely as a narrator and makes no comment about the actions or characters. He reports what happens and leaves judgments to the reader.

Telling a story from the internal protagonist's point of view (the "I" narrator), is especially valuable where action predominates; it is also the best of the devices for recounting personal experiences or emotions. It has certain disadvantages in that it necessitates more concreteness and objectivity in the delineation of other characters. It is also difficult

to portray the protagonist except through his speech. It would hardly seem effective to have the protagonist explain things about himself; it would sound as if he were a braggart or an egotist. This point of view, if used carefully and sparingly, tends to give a sense of unity to the story, however. If this device is not carefully used the reader might wonder where the protagonist got all his information. Too, a problem arises in that some people just can't tell a story well.

Told from a minor character's point of view, certain stories have many advantages over those told by other means. The Sherlock Holmes stories are examples. The reader finds himself at a loss to understand certain things Sherlock has deduced. Doyle skillfully has Holmes explain all the details to a not too bright Dr. Watson. The reader is able to get the information and at the same time laugh at Watson for being so ignorant as not to be able to figure things out for himself. Then, too, Watson can describe and eulogize Holmes.

The epistolary point of view is another means of telling a story. It is usually very awkward and is seldom done well because such a story tends to be incoherent in structure. Adam's story "Three Thousand Miles Away" is an example of a story told from this point of view that is well done.

Few stories employ only one of these points of view; for the sake of variety they are intermingled. Skillfully

told stories can seldom be told as effectively from a point of view different from that chosen by the author. Bjornson's "The Father" is a case in point. Try telling it from the priest's point of view, from that of the father, or of any single character in the story. Impossible.



## CHAPTER III

### DOCUMENTATION: ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PAPERS

Since the papers written by the students in conjunction with this unit of instruction partially measure the validity of the study, they are deserving of considerable comment. The assignment, their objectives, and their purposes will be given, and comments about the degree to which the problems were understood and solved will be made in this chapter. Although the papers are contained in Chapter III, excerpts from them will be used in certain instances to illustrate and explain the text.

The papers are arranged by number according to the number of the assignment and the individual's name. The first number of the pair indicates the number of the assignment; the second, the student's number. For example, paper 3-21 is the third assignment of the twenty-first student. Each student has the same number in each set of papers. Some students have papers for all the assignments while others may have their papers appearing in only three or four of the sets. The papers were generally chosen at random so that both "good" and "bad" ones appear. Some students had written on both sides of the page (although asked not to do so). These are not included. In some of the assignments, many of the papers

were so similar that there was no reason to include all of them.

## I. THE INITIAL ASSIGNMENT

Purposes. One of the primary reasons for the first assignment was to determine how great an understanding the students already had of fiction. Another was to see how they went about dealing with a purposely general question. The question was, "Why did Chekhov write 'A SLANDER' and what devices did he use to achieve this purpose?" A third reason for this assignment was to see if the students were aware that the author's theme is his purpose.

Comments. Some of the papers show considerable insight, some little more than a groping for something to say. Papers 1-3, 1-5, 1-6, 1-15, and 1-21 demonstrate that the students realize an author is attempting to teach or inform as well as entertain. Paper 1-3 begins as one should in attempting to state the author's theme but says nothing about the devices used to illustrate that purpose. Paper 1-5 shows a lucid conception of irony (in the second paragraph). Example 1-6 is somewhat more clear in his explanations and justifications. He shows a knowledge of cause and effect lacking in many of the others; he attempts to support his contentions. Number 1-15 does a creditable job of discussing the first part of the question but makes no effort to justify her contentions.

May 4, 1961

1-3

I believe that Anton Chekhov wrote this story to show us that it is not always good to make very quick decisions. The fact that Akhineev himself was to blame for the rumor, is proof enough that we can't always blame someone else for something that is said about us whether it is good or bad. We should always think twice before we make our final decisions no matter how small that decision may be. Because many times the result will turn out the exact opposite of what we expect. This is very true in Akhineev's situation. If he would have kept still probably nothing would have been said about him and the cook, Marfa.

[REDACTED] 5  
1-

## "A Slander"

Chekhov, in my opinion, wrote this story to point out the irony in life and that we create these ironical situations ourselves.

The general atmosphere created by Chekhov sets things up for the chain of events that point out what he is trying to show, the incident in the kitchen where Vankin was making "fun" which Ahincev misinterpreted and puts Ahincev in the frame of mind to "jump to conclusions." The irony of it all is that in trying to explain his way out of it all he creates the trouble for himself.

Literature 1-6  
Per. 3, May 5

I think Anton Chekhov wrote this story to show that sometimes our efforts to do something good do us more harm than if we hadn't even tried in the first place.

He proves this purpose in the speeches of Sergei Kapitonich who is trying desperately to clear his name from the bad rumor which, he believes, has been spreading about him. In this way he is trying to do good but it is working against him. The more times he tells his story the thicker the web becomes which he, himself is spinning. This is partly because he is so unsure of himself, his speech hesitant and uncertain, and partly because each time he tells it, he tells only fragments of the story letting the listeners fill in the rest to suit their own imaginations. Rumor can change our best intentions into evil deeds and it made the best of Sergei's misfortune.

1. Chekhov wrote this story to show that a person shouldn't always be on the defensive.
2. He showed the excitement of Ahrens when he thought Vankin would tell everybody of the episode in the kitchen. He didn't even talk sense to Vankin. The author showed how he tried to tell everybody what Vankin was going to say about him.

Anton Chekhov may have written this story for various reasons and I am not too sure about any of them. One reason that comes to my mind is the gossiping part of the story. Ahineev was worried about his reputation and saw Vankin talking to some of the guests. Ahineev thought Vankin was talking about the incident in the kitchen and so he started telling the guests one-by-one what really happened in the kitchen. ~~Also~~ Ahineev must have ~~gotten~~ been very worried over the situation because he started telling ~~up~~ about what had happened. After telling his guests about what really happened he was very relieved, but a few days later, his lies were thrown right back in his face, when the people of the town must have thought he was trying to cover up the incident by telling them so much, when he wouldn't have had to tell them anything.

## A Slander

I think Chekov wrote this story showing how one can make a mountain out of a molehill and in the process make a fool of himself. If you are accused of something you didn't do, and you know you are innocent, don't worry about it. Alibing to others makes them think you need an alibi, and are covering up a guilty conscience. Ahiner was afraid his side of the story was too preposterous, and that his friends would prefer to believe the lively scandal, and, after all, if you did absolutely nothing wrong, how can there be suspicions of foul play? In this case, Ahiner nearly ruined his whole life trying to cover up for something he didn't do.



## A Slander

Chekhov wrote "The Slander" as a way to tell people in a round-about way to keep their mouths shut. By trying to better things you usually make them worse. Ahineev only made his cause worse by telling everybody what really happened. When Vankin was by the piano playing laughing Ahineev thought he was telling everyone that Sergei Ahineev was caught in the kitchen kissing the cook. After Ahineev had told the Frenchman, the math teacher, the junior assessor of taxes, the priest, and all of the other guests, he felt that they would all know the truth when Vankin came to tell them the slander about him. When word came back to Ahineev, by way of the headmaster at the school, that he was in the kitchen romancing with the cook, Ahineev went home in a pensive mood. His wife ask him what was the matter and then said that she too had heard that he was caught redhanded in the kitchen kissing Marfa, the cook. After this he went directly to Vankin and demanded an explanation for all of the rubbish that was going around about him. When Vankin said that he knew nothing about it and had told no one about it, Ahineev only wondered who

could be the person that would be so awful as to do this to him. He was so blind that he couldn't see that all of this slander had branched off from his stories that were told to keep the people from believing this slander.

Possible lessons from this stories

1. People should keep their mouths shut
2. You can talk your way into trouble  
but it's hard to talk your way out.
3. Find the fault before you repair.

Anton Chekhov wrote this story to emphasize the power of gossip and also the power of distrust. Ahineev did not trust his friends. He thought that his friends would believe the gossip about him, and he kept building the event into a huge, terrible thing <sup>so much</sup> that he didn't know what to do. The thought never entered his mind that the whole thing might be a joke.

June 4, 1961

I believe Anton Chekhov wrote this short story to show or point out a lesson. I don't know exactly what Ahineev should have done but evidently it wasn't right what he did do. To me it seems that there are two parts to the lesson in the story. The first part is to keep your big mouth shut and the second is think before you act.

To illustrate this lesson first the author had to create a mood and a situation which would make these actions possible. After Chekhov created the situation he got everyone in a mood where it would seem to be a natural chain of events.

The second thing to do is bring about the natural chain of events which shows the lesson. After the mistake had been made and everyone thought Ahineev had kissed the cook, the chain of events had to have a reaction.

The reaction which followed is when Ahineev went to visit Vankin.

The final lesson comes out when Ahineev realized that Vankin hadn't actually told everyone. I suppose that evidently Ahineev would have found out why everybody thought he kissed the cook if the ~~book~~<sup>story</sup> had continued.

Chekhov wrote this story to challenge our thinking. Is good offense the best defense against split-second decisions? In this case, Ahineev, after making his split-second decision, took the offense and as a result, ended up in an even bigger mess. His purpose was to warn us against making split-second decisions, and if we are forced to make them, to be careful about the method with which we back them up. As is pointed out in this story, either method, offense or defense, can produce unexpected results.

Chekhov uses irony to evidence his intended purpose. Several instances in the story use this irony theme. I believe the conversation between the guests concerning spiritualism was a bit ironical for a wedding celebration. Then, the instance where Ahineev was admiring the surgeon. The smacking of his lips was ironical in that it turned a seemingly trivial incident into a big deal. The final bit of irony completes the plot "But who, then, who?" Ahineev wondered, going over all his

NAME

SUBJECT

DATE

1-21

acquaintances in his mind and beating himself on the breast. 'Who, then?' " It was Ahineev himself who caused the slander. He turned a silly joke into a very serious matter, at least as far as Ahineev was concerned.

Her saying ". . .Alibing [sic] to others makes them think you need an alibi,. . ." suggests that personal experience plays as great a part in her conclusions about the story as do those details supplied by the author. Paper 1-21's attempt at statement of theme is again an illustration that he understands the author's purpose, but the answer to the second question shows little thought except in regard to the statement about irony being the vehicle which shows Chekhov's theme. Papers 1-7, 1-13, 1-16, and 1-17 are somewhat typical of the rest of the student responses, tending to retell the incidents in the story without getting into the question at all. Paper 1-7 does this somewhat less than the others; its primary shortcoming is a lack of thought and effort, which, incidentally, is not the usual trait of this particular student.

## II. THE SECOND ASSIGNMENT

Purposes. The main purpose of this assignment was to get the students to look at the evidence for character traits contained in the story and not to make snap judgments. They were cautioned to pick out actual statements or implications of the author before deciding anything about the character of the protagonist.

Comments. A great deal of the characterizing in this story is done through essay and description, as is shown in most of the student papers. Papers 2-3, 2-6, 2-7, 2-8,

2-1  
Lit. Per. 3  
May 11, 1961

Shawn Kelvin was modest for as the book says, "For he was a quiet man, not given to talking about himself and the things he had done." He was a quiet man as the book said. This is shown by his actions to Liam O'Grady. He was smart and intelligent. This is shown by his reading the American magazines and in his conversation with people. He was brave in that he tackled Liam O'Grady who was forty pounds heavier and about a foot taller. He was a god-fearing man as he went to church every Sunday and practiced what was preached. He was easy to get along with and friendly. His friends walked up to his house on the hill to see him and to talk to him. Also, he did not have any real enemies except big Liam O'Grady.



281.3  
May 11, 1961

## "A Quiet man"

1. What type of character was Shawn Kelvin?

Shawn Kelvin hated violence. He proved this by refusing continually to fight with Big Liam for his land and his wife's dowry.

He was a quiet man. He seldom talked about himself or the things he had done. Even his best friends knew very little about his private life.

Shawn wasn't easily riled, but after he was almost nothing could stop him. He had taken many insults from Big Liam until finally he could take no more. Although Big Liam was over a half head taller and ~~fort~~ forty pounds heavier than Shawn, Shawn still out-fought him.

The title of the story very well sums up what kind of a man Shawn Kelvin was. He was simply a quiet man. Shawn didn't have much of a temper or if he did he could control it very easily, a characteristic that not too many people have. Shawn was kind and by no means was he self-centered or conceited. He always thought of himself first. Also and very important to the story, in my opinion was that Shawn was not a worshiper of money. He could very easily have kept the money but to me it would have removed some of meaning of the story. Another quality Shawn had which I believe is very important is meekness. He never went around boasting about his trip to the United States which not many of his friends got to do. Or he did not boast about his being a fighter. He kept his talents and adventures more or less to himself. All of these characteristics added together made Shawn Kelvin "The ~~Quiet~~ Quiet Man."

2 Literature Per 3  
5/11/61

## My Attitudes about the Character of Shawn Kelvin

Shawn was not a weak man, as evidenced in the description where it said that he served a summer in a boxing camp as a fighter-sparring partner most likely, and a punching bag. But the fact remains that though he was strong, he didn't become the bully he easily could have. I think Shawn had pride - pride for his wife, and pride for his unborn child, but his pride, unlike Big Liam's, did not extend over to pride in being able to bully those smaller than he. Though many people think of a bully only by his fists, I think Big Liam opened a another prospect - his land. It seemed that he could easily force small farmers out, "take" their lands, and become even more powerful.

So far I think that we have discussed Shawn's Pride and his strength, but I feel that he displayed a very important human value too. This value is Self control, Control over one's emotions, or whatever you would call it. The many times he backed down from facing up to Big Liam, that was not the sign of a coward necessarily, but that he felt that he would be better off without Big Liam's reputations and though Big Liam probably made him fighting mad, though an Irishman, he used probably every bit of his restraint to hold himself back. And lastly he did not hold by a greedy man, as evidenced by the portion of the story when Big Liam handed Shawn the greasy, dirty money (which showed what kind of a man Liam was and how he obviously,

coveted his wealth). If Shawn had walked off with this money, the reader would say that he was not what he was built up to be. When he tossed this money into the fire, he showed his reproach for men that held money almost as an idol, and it brought forth the expected reaction from Big Liam and also the ensuing fight.

Shawn was the hero and Big Liam was the villain, it is as simple as that; for in it people can see many short comings that are seen as other people see it, and Shawn helps to steer clear on the right path.

Literature  
May 11, 1961

## The Quiet Man

The title of the story states that Shawn Kelvin is a quiet man. My concept of his character is hard to prove by a few references from the story for it is a general feeling about him which was gained after reading about him and discussing him in class.

To me he seemed like a person who was very mature emotionally because of his varied experiences in America. He had seen what freedom does for people, and he knew that it could do many different things to people with so many different attitudes of life. Returning to his own country he found people who were not as advanced as their modern American neighbors. Rather, they were content to work in the day and spend their evening hours in leisure. When someone came along who was a bully and took his neighbors' land because of greed the townsfolk may not have liked it but they weren't disturbed to the point of doing something about it. Shawn saw all these things and because of his gentle

Shawn Kelvin is a hard person to fully understand. First we learn he is very strong but he doesn't seem to use his strength as a point to gain esteem with his neighbors. We find that he is very quiet and reserved. He doesn't speak of his past feats or his hopeful future gains. This leads to the point where one can say that Shawn is a humble man. It is not mentioned in the story but I think that if people would praise him for some bold act or Sir Walter Raleigh sort of affair he would blush and would draw himself into a shell as if to hide. I guess the above just plain shows that he was very shy. He wouldn't even try to strike up an acquaintance with Ellen, even though he thought for sure she was the one. He lacked confidence. The author comes right out and says this.

The one thing that doesn't seem right is this; we find Shawn is shy, lacking in self confidence, and very humble, but yet without much prodding from Ellen he agrees to undertake a real hair-standing-upper job of talking to Liam about the slavery.

On the end we have a complete change of character. He has great self confidence, he isn't shy, and he even wants to show off a bit.

Lit. II  
278  
11/6/3

To me Shawn Kelvin was a troubled man nearing middle age. He was a quiet man and did not seek trouble. I call him troubled and kind of wornout because of the statement, "And fifteen years thereafter he returned to his native Kerry, his blitheness sobered and his youth dried to the core, and whether he had made his fortune or whether he had not, no one could be knowing for certain."

He was an easy going man and no drudge toiler because of the way he knew it wore out a man's sole. His gayest times seemed to be with his war buddies, over a stone jar of whiskey, haze of smoke, and a maze of warm, friendly disagreements.

He liked the church and went consistently. It was in the church when he met his wife to be, (yet unknown to him for she was an Orady). The girl seemed to change him for he watched her instead of the celebrant.

When married Shawn himself burdened with many more burdens

than usual but fulfilled the material quotient first and then tried to understand his wife.

I don't think he would have <sup>been</sup> pushed enough to fight when he did if it weren't for the fact that he was going to be a father. This seemed to ~~still~~ stir him internally and bring out his proudness to the surface.

As he was described in the fight Shawn was no weakling and he knew what he was doing. When he walked away it was a new Shawn Kelvin.



2-9

## Shawn Kelvin

I felt Shawn was a real good guy. He wasn't so nice he was square but on the other hand he wasn't the boisterous type that everyone always knew was around. I was left with the impression that he had seen every kind of life from the very lush to poverty stricken war areas. This was why I felt, he wasn't the bully type Liam was. I feel it takes more manliness to hold up to your own and yet be able to walk away instead of fighting. It also hurts the bully more because he should eventually realize the quieter type is more mature. I really admired Shawn because he was able to take all the ridicule Liam ever put upon him. Many people would say, "Oh, he's just a sissy and he's afraid to fight because he might lose," but I think he was always on the victorious side because of his maturity to hold his own, mentally, in front of the town bully and then whip him physically.

[REDACTED]  
2-10

SHAWN KELVIN

There are three faces of Shawn Kelvin's character.

Lineage

First, he was an Irishman. "I am Shawn Kelvin, of Knockanore Hill [Kerry, Ireland]" (page 75, column II)

Physical

Secondly, he was a short man, ". . . under middle size, with strong shoulders and deep-set blue eyes below brows darker than his dark hair." (page 62, column I) He was 35 at the time he returned to Kerry. (page 62, column I)

Mental (Attitudes)

Shawn Kelvin was obviously a quiet, a peaceful man: "[He] quietly looked about him for the place and peace he wanted." (page 63, column I) The reasons behind his semi-introverted attitudes were hinted at. Early in the tale, Mr. Walsh alluded to his (Shawn's) days in 'blithe America'. I think the reader is supposed to feel that Shawn was a former optimist disillusioned by "the glare of an open-hearth furnace in . . . Pittsburgh [or the work] of spanking partner punching bag at boxing camp." (page 62, column II)

Whatever the reasons, Kelvin's philosophy of life was a clam, live-and-let-live, tolerant one.

He had other interesting qualities: He was not a naïve boy who didn't understand how Ellen came to be his wife. One passage reads; "He had no illusions about her feelings for him." (page 67, column I) But, then, he did set about to be a good husband, provider, companion: "First he turned his attention to material things. . .", "But, girl dear, I never wanted a dowry with you. / She liked him to say that . . ." (page 69, column II) And Shawn Kelvin was a religious man. This was evidenced throughout "The Quiet Man".

Finally, and it took the shame of him from his wife to do it, he made the decision which he had put off for so long.

7-10

He was a peaceful man, yes. But he would not disgrace his wife. If he had been single, my thoughts are that he would never have fought Big Liam.

10

Literature -6-  
May 11, 1961

~~Private~~  
3 Lit. 13

Shawn Kelvin was an undaunted man who showed little or no fear and had an extreme case of modesty. He would never hurt a person's feelings intentionally even if the person happened to be a brute, namely Big Liam, whom Shawn disliked for various reasons. Even though Shawn despised Big Liam he still drank a beer with him and even ended up paying for it. Shawn liked to live in peace so much that he bought himself another farm instead of trying to recover his older farm that was taken over by Big Liam. He went to church quite regularly but I don't know if he received much benefit from the sermon or not because he was constantly eying the lady in front of him, who was later to become Mrs. Shawn Kelvin. He seemed to be like a dam which has no escape hole for the excess water to flow through. He retained <sup>?</sup> d. sly remarks, harsh words and an endless number of things and the pressure just kept building up.

Finally the pressure became too much for Shawn to hold and he had a battle with Big Liam concerning the dowry which was by now the talk of the town. Shawn wasn't fighting for the money, but his wife and pride were the main wager at stake. d.

After winning the fight Shawn promptly threw the dowry money into a fire much to the chagrin of Big Liam who was thoroughly tired by the fight. Shawn

2-15

## The Quiet Man

Shawn Kelvin was a man who had seen and lived through the hardships of the American depression. He wasn't the type to blast around as Liam did. He had no need to brag. He was a short, slight man<sup>2</sup> who had been humbled often, and came to his present philosophy of "live and let live." He went about his life simply, but when confronted with a free bride<sup>3</sup>, especially one whom he had admired for a long time, he was understandably cynical. What did Ellen have to say about it? Why hadn't she told him anything? Why did Liam give her away to a man he despised? Eventually, he married her,<sup>5</sup> because there was really no substantial reason not to. His wife, although she grew to love him<sup>6</sup>, didn't understand his quiet, humble ways. She felt it was her traditional right to accept the dowry<sup>7</sup> and give it to Shawn, or have him get it. Shawn wasn't in need of it but as his wife felt it was part of ritual, and so Shawn asked Liam<sup>8</sup> for it. Liam, the bully, decided to make this "lily-livered" brother-in-law work for it. Shawn had no cause to blast in and demand it, "or else", when

Liam repeatedly bullied him; he just kept asking, half-hoping Liam would tire of his game and give him his wife down.<sup>1</sup> When finally Liam gave in, tired of his bullying Shawn threw the money on a fire<sup>2</sup> for spite. Liam was squelched. Then Shawn anticipated the rush of Liam, the angry bull, and neatly beat his donkey off.<sup>3</sup> Obviously Shawn had a high boiling point, but he could boil, and thereby proved to his wife that you can't tell a book by its cover.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> page 63; footnote #1

<sup>12</sup> page 75; col. 1+2

<sup>2</sup> page 62, col. 1

<sup>13</sup> page 76; col. 1

<sup>3</sup> page 66; col. 1

<sup>4</sup> page 66; col. 1+2

<sup>5</sup> page 66; col. 2

<sup>6</sup> page 68; col. 1

<sup>7</sup> page 68, col. 2

<sup>8</sup> page 69; col. 2 + page 70; col. 1

<sup>9</sup> pp 70-72

<sup>10</sup> page 74; col. 1

<sup>11</sup> page 74; col. 2

Kit 203 16  
May 13 1917

"He was a quiet man, not given to talking about himself and the things he had done. A quiet man, under middle size, with strong shoulders and deep-set blue eyes below brows darker than his dark hair - that was Shawn Kelvin." Here is a description of Shawn given below; the story really begins as it progresses on his character is brought out in different ways. Shawn was an easy going type of person. "He would plow a little and sow a little, and at the end of a furrow he would lean on the handle of the cultivator, wipe his brow, if it needed wiping, and lose himself for a while's minutes in the green high black portals of the Shannon mouth."

Shawn would have put up with almost anything to live in peace. He was satisfied with just he and his wife. He never went out looking for trouble; in fact he tried to avoid it as much as possible.

Patience was another of Shawn's characteristics. When Ellen kept demanding that he ask for the money again he was always willing. "And Shawn asked again a third time." This was for the money from O'Grady. After his patience and reputation left him he said, "It has been put on me and the thing I am going to do is the only thing to be done." At this he and Ellen left to see O'Grady personally.

Matt Tobin characterized Shawn

well when he said, "Give him his own time. He's slow but he's deadly as a tiger when he moves." It took quite a lot of pushing around to make Shawn angry, but when it did, he was out for blood. He showed his defiance to O'Grady and his men, when after knocking O'Grady out he turned and asked the men, "Is there an O'Grady amongst you thinks himself a better man? Come then." No one came.

When Ellen said at last, "The trouble I had to make a man of him," Matt Tobin defended Shawn by saying, "God Almighty did that for him before you were born." Yes, Shawn Kelvin had all the characteristics of a real man.



## Character of Shawn kelvin

First and foremost, Shawn kelvin was not a coward. He had been exposed to the hard and cruel ways of life for long enough that he did not want to any more of it. He wanted nothing more than to stay out of every body's way and have everybody else stay out of his way. The reason he is thought of as a coward is that he hesitated to ask Big Liam for the money he owed him. But actually Shawn didn't care enough about the money to go to a lot of trouble to get it. He apparently had enough to live and that satisfied him. Also the fact that he didn't put up a struggle to get back his land doesn't prove he was a coward. It just shows that he didn't want to argue about anything.

Another important trait of his is that he was extremely thoughtful about everything he did. When his wife told him he was a coward, Shawn thought the whole night before deciding anything definitely to do. He was not given to split-second ~~decisions~~ decisions, again a result of living in the hard years of the depression.

He was also modest. He never showed any of his skill in fighting until the time came and he was forced to. (When he was fighting with Big Liam.) It was at this time also that he showed that he could only take so much pushing around before he would fight back.

2-17

He said finally, "I am Shawn Kelvin, of Knockmore Hill. Is there an O'Grady amongst you who thinks himself a better man? Come then." No one came. That incident proved to me that those who may seem mild or meek may be hiding another self and that they have their certain amount of pride just as everyone else.

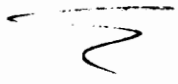
~~22~~ II, per. 3

May 10, 1961

## "The Quiet Man"

To me, I think that Shawn Kelvin was the person who is typical of the story that you can push a man only so far. Shawn was, probably by nature, a quiet type of individual. When he was in America, during the depression, he probably had to work at the jobs he did if he even wanted to eat. When he came back to Ireland, I think he was tired of fighting for every thing he got; like food, so he didn't try to get his farm back. He had enough money so he bought a small farm. When he married, I think he did so because he wanted to marry, not for the promised dowry. And he only went for the dowry after having been persuaded by Ellen, his wife. Big Liam had pushed him around so much that when he did it in front of Ellen and the whole town it was, more or less the "last straw", so Shawn had to make amends. He just wasn't going to take it anymore. I think he had a lot of guts though to fight a man so much bigger than he was. Besides this (th) I think he was pretty clever. He knew that under normal circumstances, Big Liam wouldn't pay him the dowry. So he figured that if he (th) put Ellen's brother in a position where he might lose

face, Liam would have to pay him. This he did by saying that if he wasn't given the dowry, which was Liam's end of the bargain, he wouldn't keep his end of the (~~dowry~~) bargain; which was marrying Ellen. In summarizing, I think, as I said before, that Shawn Kelvia was the typical individual in the saying that you can't push a man too far.



## The Quiet Man

Shawn Kelvin was a quiet man. He had "dried his youth to the core" and was now ready to settle down to quiet home life. "For he was a quiet man, not given to talking about himself and the things he had done." He knew his limitations and was not eager to demonstrate them for the home-folk. "He had had enough of fighting, and all he wanted now was peace." He was a shy romanticist. "And the service over, Shawn used to stay in his seat so that he might get one quick but sure look at her face as she passed out."

Shawn was a very humble man, never holding a grudge. When approached by O'Grady for a drink, he accepted. "He did not care for O'Grady, but he would hurt no man's feelings." He was not a coward by any means. He proved himself the bravest in County Kerry, when not a man came forward when Shawn uttered in an iron voice: "I am Shawn Kelvin, of Knockamore Hill. Is there an O'Grady amongst you thinks himself a better man? Come then?" He would put up with almost anything

7-21

to live in peace and quiet. Almost anything, that is, for when it came to a choice between his wife and peace, he chose his wife. He truly established himself a man when fought O'Grady, but as his friend Tobin said, "God Almighty did that for him before you were born (talking to Shawn's wife)".

Signature  
May 11, 1961

Shawn Kelvin wasn't a coward by any sense of the word. In fact he was an extremely brave man. In his life he had too much hardships and strife to go out ~~look~~ for more. He was willing to take a lot of ridicule in front of his friends and neighbors if it would enable him to live in peace. This illustrates how brave a man he was. How many of us would be able to restrain ourselves from fighting back if we were in this situation?

Shawn was a humble man, and material things weren't all that matters to him. His farm was small, "It was not a big place, but good in heart," and he didn't feel he needed a bigger one just for prestige.

He was a god-fearing man, "On Sundays Shawn used to go to church," which helped account for his attitude toward his fellow man. His philosophy was to turn the other cheek and when it got slapped it was time to fight back, which he did in most honorable fashion.

He didn't talk about himself or his past life because he felt that these things were for only he himself to know. He

2-22

knew his breaking point and he had to  
tell no one when the break would come.



The title of the story "The Quiet Man" fit Shawn Kelvin perfectly. He was the type person who would never look for trouble and would even steer away from it when it was present.

Shawn reminded me very much of my father. He would sit still to anything because he didn't want enemies and didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings. All the way through the story he was this way.

Then Ellen managed to get the point across to him. You should never go looking for trouble but you can't let people bully you and boss you around all your life either.

Shawn was the type of man who goes to church every Sunday, but has very few other activities.

2-10, 2-13, 2-15, 2-19, and 2-21 show more than the usual amount of effort to see the traits given by the author. And 2-6, 2-15, and 2-21 are especially good in that they not only pick out remarks made by the author but also show individual thought in the inferences made about the actions and speeches of the protagonist. In support of the contention that students often base their judgments on personal experience and not on what is said in the story, paper 2-23 mentions that Shawn reminds the girl of her father. This is not necessarily bad; however, students are apt to ignore the details and think of characters solely in the light of how they are like people in the students' circle of acquaintances. A good deal of thought and effort is shown in 2-8.

### III. THE THIRD ASSIGNMENT

Purposes. In this third assignment the students were to state the theme, show all preliminary exposition, state the plot questions as they arose in the story, and list the incidents in the order of their happening, showing the crisis and climax. They should have been able to see the interplay of these various elements and the interrelation of the incidents.

Comments. Papers 3-1, 3-8, 3-9, 3-17, 3-18, and 3-21 show the most understanding. There seems to be a rather good understanding of theme in almost all the papers. Some contain a more thorough listing of the incidents. Despite cautions

3 - 1

Lit. P. III

5/12/61

Theme = Things done in true love are the best, greatest, and the wisest.

Exposition: Time: Between 1864 and 1900 and in the month of December.

Place: In a large city, possibly New York

Characters: Della and Jim

Plot Questions: I only got four plot questions out of the story. They are:

Will she sell her hair? Yes

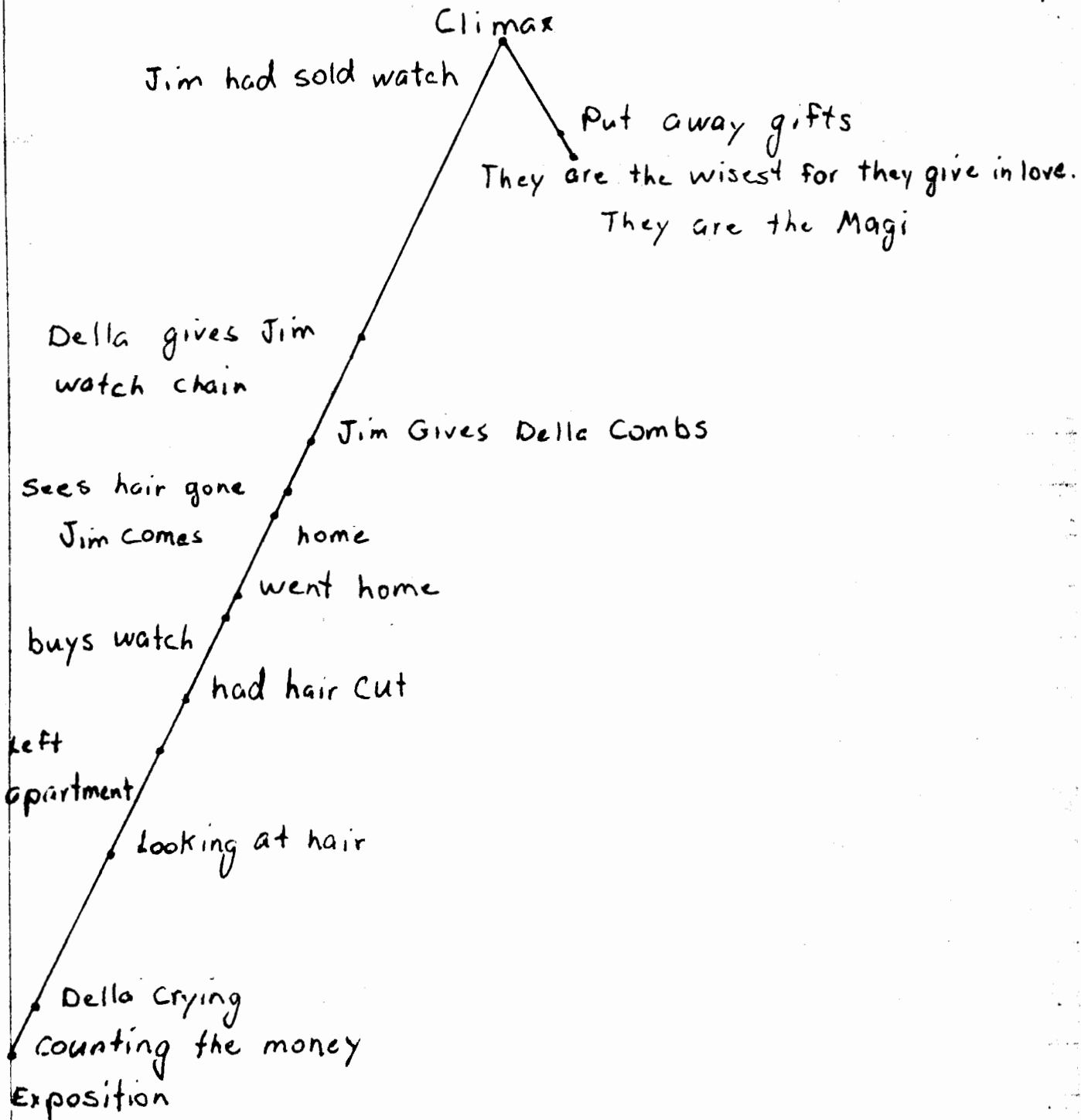
What will she get Jim? a watch chain

What did Jim get her? Combs

How did Jim get the money for the Combs? By selling his watch

How does the title fit in? The Magi were very wise. Jim and Della gave in love. They are the Magi.

3-1



Literature  
May 11, 1961

## "Gift of the Magi"

I have always found it difficult to find a theme in a story. But as far as I can see the theme of this story is "something is more cherished when you must give up something you love to please the one you love." The Exposition or dialogue may help you to decide on a theme or the theme. The time, place, and setting sometimes helps you find the theme and makes the story easier to understand. For instance, although the story didn't state exactly where it took place, I got the impression that it took place in a large city and in hard times, perhaps even during a depression. If the story would have taken place in a small town and during good times I would feel that they were poor because Jim couldn't or wouldn't find work and that he wasn't worth what Della sacrificed.

### Main Plot Questions

1. "1.97 - So, what about it?"
2. Why did Della have only that much?
3. Why were they so poor?
4. Why was Della crying?
5. What was she going to get Jim after she had her

List of Incidents On Order of Occurrence and Climax

Jim comes home and presents are exchanged.

- 
1. Bella was crying.
  2. Bella lets her hair down.
  3. Bella had her hair cut.
  4. Bella waiting for Jim.

"Gift of the Magi"

Theme

To give a gift for which you have to sacrifice a great deal is the greatest gift of all.

Time

Turn of Century

Place

Big city--centered in small run-down flat.

Initial Incident

Della is crying.

- 2 Della pulls herself together and exits.
- 3 Della sells her hair to Madame Sofronie.
- 4 Della buys Jim a watch chain.
- 5 Della curls her hair and awaits Jim's Arrival.
- 6 Jim enters and is dumbfounded by Della's appearance.

Climax

Jim produces combs; this explains his actions.

Della gives Jim the watch chain only to find that Jim has sold his watch.

Plot Questions

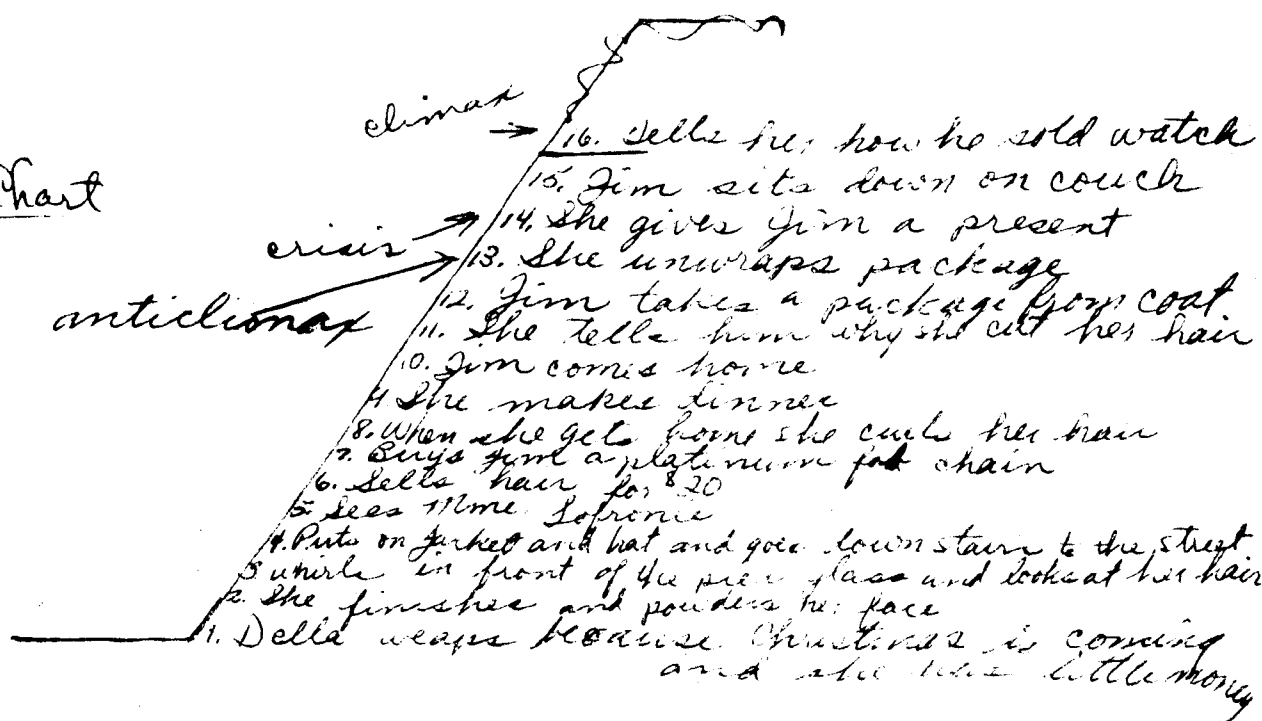
- Why is Della crying?
- Will she get the money?
- Will she actually sell her hair?
- Will Jim be angry?
- Will Jim get his watch back?
- Will they reach a higher status in life?

# Gift of the Magi

Theme: Life is a matter of sacrifice for your loved ones. Most people are willing to sacrifice something they have and cherish for someone they love and who loves them.

exposition: immediately  
time - years following WWI.  
place - a small, cheap apartment in the lowerclass section of a big city.  
main characters - Mr. and Mrs. James Dillingham Young.

## Plot Chart



Sequential questions pertinent to the plot:

1. What can you buy with \$1.87?
2. How much could Della get for her hair?
3. How would Jim act with a good watch chain?
4. What would Jim think when he sees her with her hair cut.
5. What was in the package Jim gave her?
6. Why did Jim tumble into the couch instead of receiving the gift gratefully.



Hit #1  
May 12, 1939

Theme: O. Henry was trying to show how very much one will sacrifice for the true love of another.

- 8/ They decide to put their gift away <sup>wait</sup> until they can do it then
- 7/ He still loves her
- 6/ He is stunned because he bought her a gift for her hair
- 5/ Jim comes home
- 4/ Buys Jim a present
- 3/ Cuts her hair and sells it
- 2/ She looks in the mirror
- 1/ Della was crying

Initial Incident: <sup>they only have</sup> Della ~~cuts her~~ hair \$1.87

### Plot Questions:

1. What is the gift of the magi? <sup>money</sup>
2. Will Della be able to solve her <sup>money</sup> problem?
3. Will she really have her hair cut?
4. What will Jim say?
5. Will everything turn out all right?

### Exposition:

This story took place near Christmas time. The location is on the border of a large city. The main characters were Della Dillingham Young and her husband, Jim. There home was an eight dollar

3-9

a week flat, which was very shabby and dingy in appearance. The characters fit their theme very well as their clothes were very shabby and threadbare.

Crisis of both characters:

Jim has no watch for watch chain and Della has no hair for the comb.

Initial event: trip to the hair buyer.

Events of the plot:

Exposition

1. She sells her hair
2. She bought the chain.
3. She fixed her hair
4. Jim came home.
5. They exchange presents

Climax →

6. The ironical presents and ironical prices are exposed.

Theme: Those who give ~~of themselves~~ the wisest presents give of themselves.

The plot questions carrying us through the story were:

- (1) What will Della give Jim for Christmas?
- (2) How will he react to her shorn hair?

Possibly it is the title or the author's very name which carries some through

# Gift of The Magi

During the story the plot seemed for the reader to change but when you finish it is all very ingeniously interwoven into an interesting composition.

The theme was that you should consider the thought and not the gift.

(in conclusion it didn't make any difference)

Climax → he had sold his watch

fifth incident → Della opened the package & found the combs

fourth incident

third incident → Jim came in and noticed that

second incident → she bought a platinum fob chain

critical incident → she sold her hair - and was thrilled to have the money

→ she flopped down to cry  
→ <sup>the author</sup> he went into explaining her home

time  
(1900s)

1st question - why was she crying? would she get the money?

2nd - why did she put on her coat & sun umbrella?

3rd - why did he look at her so funny?

4th - where did he get the money to buy them?

5th - what will they do?

Theme: The important thing is not what is given, but rather, the way and the reason for giving it.

Plot Questions:

- 
1. Why was Della crying?  
2. What are they going to do to get presents?  
3. What does Della's hair have to do with the story?  
4. What is she going to buy?  
5. " " Jim going to say?  
6. What is Jim going to do?  
7. What did Jim buy?  
8. What are they going to think when they find out what their presents are?  
9. Della cries.  
10. He says he sold his watch.  
11. She puts the chops on.  
12. He gets his \$20 chain.  
1. He holds her.  
2. She tells him why.  
3. He sees her hair.  
4. Jim comes in.  
5. She fixed her hair.  
6. She bought a chain.  
7. She sold her hair.  
8. She watched her hair.  
9. She counted her money.

Time: recent; before Christmas.

Place: A big city; small apartment.

Main Characters: Jim & Della Young

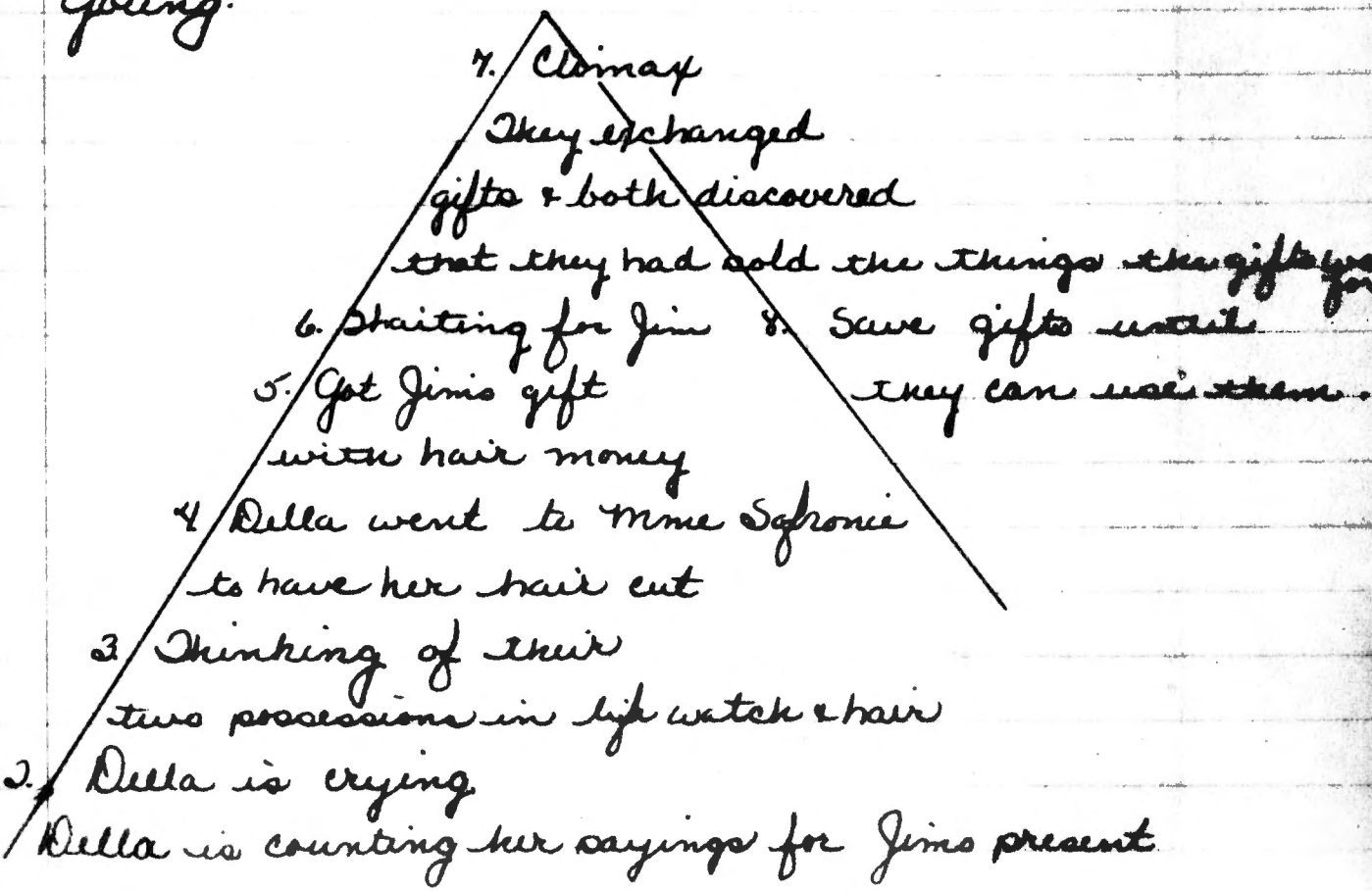
Exposition: She has \$1.87.

# The Gift of the Magi by O. Henry

The theme of The Gift of the Magi is that when you love some one dearly you will sacrifice anything that you also love for that person. In this instance Della sacrificed her hair and Jim his watch.

Time is Christmas and place in New York or some other city.

Main characters are Jim and Della Young.



## Plot questions

1. Why is Della crying?
2. How will she get enough money for Jim's present?
3. Will she sell her hair for Jim?
4. What will Jim say when he sees what Della did to her hair?
5. Will Jim accept her even with short hair?
6. What will Della do when she finds out what Jim did with his watch?
7. Is everything going to end alright?

## The Gift of the Magi

### Exposition:

I. Time - In the last fifty years or so, just before Christmas.

II. Place - A small, poorly-furnished flat in ~~New York City~~ <sup>a large city</sup>, possibly near Broadway.

III. Main Characters - A young couple, Mr. and Mrs. James Dillingham Young.

Theme: If you truly love a person, you will sacrifice your dearest possession in order to make them happy. This relates the Magi theme.

### Incidents:

1. Initial incident: Della counting her money
2. Della crying
3. Della looking at her hair
4. Della going to Mme. Sofronie
5. Della selling her hair
6. Della buying a present for Jim
7. Jim finding out that Della has cut her hair
8. The exchanging of gifts (Climax)
9. The putting away of their gifts - neither could be used



## Plot Questions:

1. What was the \$1.87 for?
2. Why was Della crying?
3. What could she buy with \$1.87?
4. Why did Della cry when looked at her hair in the mirror?
5. Why did she sell her hair?
6. Why was Jim late?
7. Why was Jim so shocked to see Della?
8. What would Della's present be?

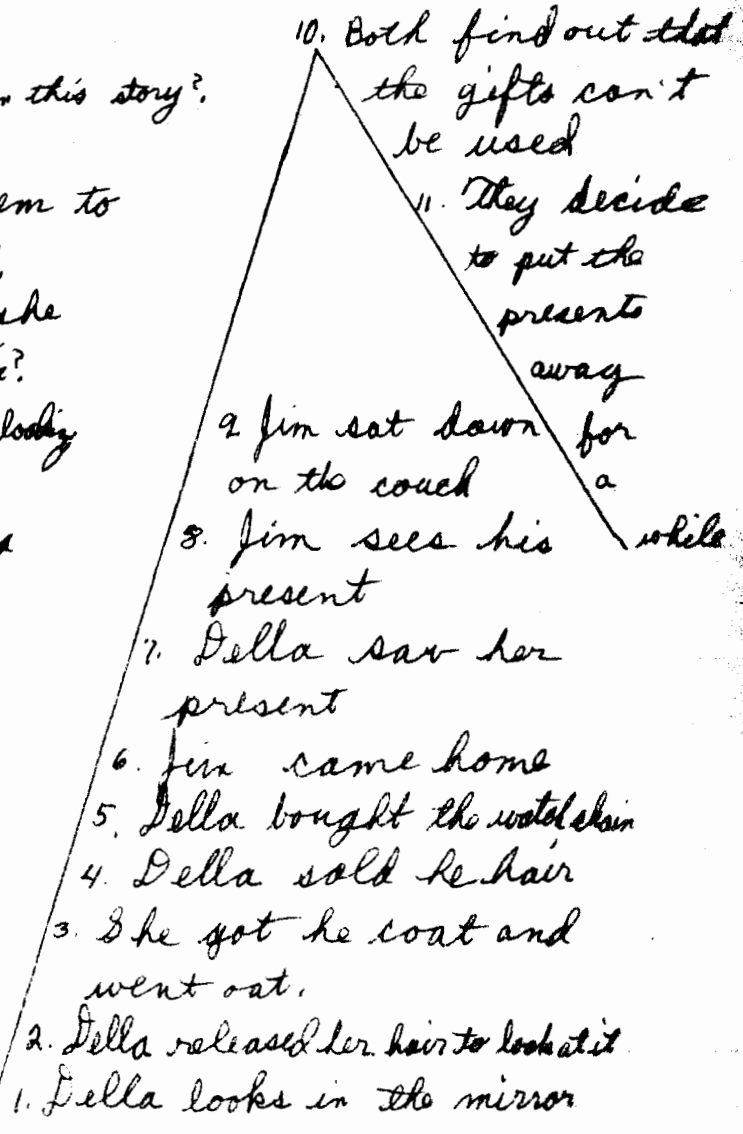
"Gift of the Magi" May 12, 1961

Theme: It is not what you give but the spirit of giving that is important.

Plot Questions:

1. Who is going to be a "magi" in this story?
2. Who had saved \$1.87?
3. What circumstances caused them to live in such a poor place?
4. What was Della going to do when she got excited about her hair?
5. Where was Della going after looking at her hair?
6. How would Jim react to Della cutting off her hair?
7. What was going to be Della's present?

Climax:



Initial incident:

Della crying

Exposition:

Time - In the last 50 years, the day before Christmas

Place - a poorly furnished flat in a city

Main Characters - Della and Jim Dillingham

Young

May 11, 1961

## "The Gift of the Magi"

I suppose the theme of the story is that no matter how hard up people are, when the occasion presents itself they will sacrifice things of their own to express their tender feelings for the ones they love.

~~Initial~~ Incidents as they happened:

- Climax Della and Jim exchanged gifts.
7. Della received it and then Jim saw his
  6. Jim wasn't mad, he took out Della's gift
  5. Jim came home & found out Della's plight
  4. Della sold her hair & bought Jim's gift
  3. Della got the idea to sell her hair.
  2. Della has a cry.
  1. Della counted their money. Christmas was the next day.

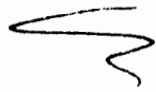
This story takes place about the turn of the century around Christmas time. It was in New York and the main characters were Jim and his wife, Della. The person to whom Della sold her hair was mentioned slightly but she wasn't a main character.

Questions:

- #1 Would she buy a present with her meager savings? No (#4)

3-19

- #2 Will Della stop crying? Yes
- #3 Will Della sell her hair? Yes (#4)
- #4 Will she give Jim his gift? Yes (#7)
- #5 ~~Will she~~ Did Jim please Della? Yes
- #6 Did Della like her gift? Yes
- #7 Did Jim like his gift? Yes



and warnings, a few students wrote on both sides of the paper. Since these would not photograph, some of the papers in this assignment (as in others) had to be omitted. Paper 3-8 gives a rather complete listing of both incidents and plot questions; 3-18 gives the questions in such a way as to show an understanding of the pertinent details of the story. One, 3-19, relates the questions to the incidents in the story by numbering the incidents which answer particular questions. Another, 3-21, lists the incidents in the order of their happening but does not include them in a chart to show the intensification of the plot. Only a few students made a connection between the characters in this story and the original three Magi. One student said in class that the connection was so obvious he didn't think it worth while to mention it.

#### IV. THE FOURTH ASSIGNMENT

Purposes. After considerable discussion of the uses of setting in a story, the students were asked to show how Benet used setting in his story "By the Waters of Babylon." They should have been able to see how setting was used to portray the time, characters, and theme of the story. Here Benet shows a primitive society as he believes it will be after a nuclear war destroys our present society.

Comments. This assignment was apparently the most difficult of the lot to understand. Perhaps the teacher

May 21, 1961

4-3

## "By the Waters of Babylon"

The setting in this story is very vivid. Although the author doesn't stress the time and place it is fairly easy to figure out. At first the story seems very weird with not much of a plot to it. But after I got farther into it I began to realize that there was more to the story than met the eye. As I read farther in the story, the more I pictured a painting with many beautiful colors, especially oranges, reds and yellows. I still do not quite understand the meaning of the boy in the story. Just exactly how uncivilized he was, was not brought out in the story. I did not clearly understand what the author meant as "uncivilized." As John came to the great river "The Cu-ah-see" I then realized that he was going to an island but as yet I didn't know where. When at the end of the story the author stated "We shall go to the Place of the Gods - the place New York" I then understood partly around what part of the country the story took place. But even at the end of the story I still didn't realize that

May 21, 1944-3

John crossed the Hudson River to get to Manhattan Island. I believe that the river played an important part in clueing us in on the location. When the mist or smoke from the weapon was mentioned suddenly made me realize that the author was speaking of the atomic bomb. The theme of the story "It is better that the truth should come little by little" and "Perhaps, in the old days, they ate knowledge too fast" and the setting is very well summed up in a sentence from the book. "By ~~the~~ now we realize that the scene is not set in the past but in the future, when our civilization has supposedly disappeared because men, unable to control their knowledge, have used it to ~~so~~ destroy one another."

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

The setting in this story is very active, both externally and internally. The background sets you up mentally for the story and explains the situation and appears to explain the time.

The background explains the people and the mental element--they are extremely superstitious(not necessarily religious). The importance of the priest was brought out and, also, the fact that the priests controlled the knowledge. The visiting of the dead places gave an index to John's mental composure and the "dead places" added a necessary element. The reason for going to the dead places, searching for metal, causes many questions, the main one being, "Who were these men?"

We now have to review what we have covered up to this point and we decide that perhaps these "Gods" could have been Romans. This fits in nicely because all we have up to this point is great buildings, metal, and writings. But the name John throws us for a loss, but we remember from our history that the Romans had conquered the the British Isle. The Britains at that time were what we could call backwards (they haven't progressed much either) and since the people of this area picked up the name John from the Romans, it fits into the scheme of things.

The external setting places secondary to the internal setting. We have his journey through the dead places, the great river, and the city of the Gods. All adding to the purpose of the story and causing a multitude of questions. As the action of the story carries on, the ruins play an extremely important roll and point out the true time element which is future, not past. The mere mention of the rats in the action add to the over all setting, "Man is gone but the rats endure."-----"Why?"

As John travels through/ this jungle of external setting, which we have seen only through Johns "narrow" eyes, we get the setting of Johns mind, which is human and therefore emotional; the internal setting. John views the entire scene with amazement and caution; He is constantly asking himself puzzling questions, which we, in turn, ask ourselves.

John, being the human element, takes us through the different human phases. The first, superstition, this leads to fear. Then we have the underlying human curiosity, which leads to mans determination and drive that over comes fear. Within John burns the desire for knowledge, a burning desire that the placing of his life in the jaws of death will not drown this desire. The climax and after climax of the story is purely internal, "They were men," "They ate knowledge too fast," and, "We must build again!"



Literature, pg. 3  
May 22, 1961

6

## "By The Waters Of Babylon"

The setting in this story is the most important part of the story. I have never read a short story or novel where it played such an important part. This may be, because the situation is so vital to the theme. I think the theme was summed up very well in the words of the main character, John, when he said, "Perhaps in the old days they ate knowledge too fast." This seems to be the key to the whole story. Personally, I was fascinated by the story for I have always been interested in what might happen after a third world war. Would there be any survivors? If so, would they be healthy? and would they be civilized as we are today? It is almost impossible to say for sure but a story of this type certainly sets us to thinking.

When I began to read I was confronted with a typical prehistoric scene. Yet as the story progressed the prehistoric period didn't seem to fit; at least not with all the bits of modern culture which were scattered throughout.

4-6

First of all the name of the main character was "John". Then, his people sometimes went to find metal which they held very precious. The "gods" ate out of jars and lived in cities with roads and bridges. John often spoke of knowledge and wisdom and vaguely made us think that there was a great civilization in that area at one time which had been destroyed by "fire falling out of the sky and a mist that poisoned." When I had read this far I knew that this young man was a member of a culture which grew up after the end of the third world war had destroyed almost everything on the earth.

This story has certainly been expertly done. I thought it was very good the way the author made the subtle hints in the first of the story that this was not just a story of the cave man era. He certainly makes us think. He wants us to wonder what will happen to us.

All three types of setting are clearly present in "By the Waters of Babylon".

(1) The individual parts of the setting are decorative. The semi-primitive state the people lived in is eye-catching, and interesting, but little more. This level is hardly enough to ~~keep~~ hold readers.

"A strong plot is needed with this tale," you say? Agreed, if the setting were not going to be the basis of all significance. As the fog lifts from the significance, so it lifts on the reason why no great plot decorates the story.

(2) The setting is functional. (That ~~that~~ statement is like saying, "most people have noses." It's quite obvious.)

The actual physical setting is transferable. This exploration into the Dead City could take place near any of Americas towns and villages, with minor relative changes. But no change in the basic "facts" would be necessary.

The setting of time could vary somewhat, as long as it remains in the future.

(3) The setting in "By the Waters of Babylon" is symbolical. Again, this is obvious.

The information of time, place, and background symbolizes to me an "if clause". As the post-narrative comments explain, "... Like Isaiah ~~and~~ Jeremiah of old, the author of this story is uttering a warning to cities of the modern world."

How can thoughts of bombs, fallout, nearly extinction of the human animal help but

4-10

enter one's mind?

To me, this setting, which is the carrier of Mr. Benét's theme, is an earnest 'voice in the wilderness.' He is certainly not alone in calling for disarmament, test bans, and other demilitarizing actions.

But he has surely said it the most effectively I've heard.

"Perhaps, in the old days, they ate knowledge too fast."

Well said, Mr. Benét! Good theme, sir! And your setting (all 3 varieties) flowed coldly, yet suavely perfect with your characters and action. (Why coldly? Because it has the bite, the frosty fear emotion to it.)

How does "By the Waters of Babylon" carry the theme?

The forest stillness in the Dead City, the ruins, the guilt and

4-10

reverence of the Hill People; each  
whispers to me as an ear  
for mankind, "You're eating to  
fast .....

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
literature - 3  
May 22, 1961

Let. 2, p. 3  
May 30, 1961

The setting for "By the Waters of Babylon" makes up the theme of the story. At the first there is no time given for the taking place of this adventure. He get the impression that it was a long time after the "gods had warred against gods" because, "The bones were light and old — sometimes they would fall to dust if you touched them."

These Hell People are very primitive and go to the dead places to find metal for tools and weapons. The son of a priest is becoming a man and fulfilling his dreams. After he has completed part of a troubled journey to the forbidden coast he comes to a great river the Cu-dis-san. This river had magic in it for the river itself was quiet and calm but when John was on his raft in it, it overturned the raft. There had once been god-roads across this great river, but now they were broken and fallen like broken vines. Everywhere on the other side of the Cu-dis-san there were god-roads, but most of them were cracked and broken. Everywhere there was the ruins of the high towers of the gods. There was a carved stone with cut letters, broken in half." One of them said subtree. There was also a shattered image of a god who wore his hair back like a woman's, and his name was ashing.

When John was hungry he found sweet fruit in jars and bottles of glass which, when he drank it, made his head swim. The washing place had no water, it said hot but was not hot, it said cold but was not cold. The cooking place had no wood or a place to put a fire in it. There were no candles or lamps. Only things which looked like lamps but they had no oil or wicks.

That night in his dream John saw how the gods lived before destruction and how they were killed. At first the night was as the day with lines and circles and blurs of light everywhere. The gods burrowed tunnels under rivers and flew in the air. Then came their destruction, fire from the sky fell with a mist that poisoned. Towers began to fall, and the roads began to crumble. Then everything was quiet and dark — all of the gods were killed.

It wasn't until the next morning when John found the dead god sitting by the window that he knew that the gods were men and that all of this before had been made and ruined by man.

The time was in the future when men became careless with their knowledge. John had to cross the Hudson River to get to the Manhattan Island. There on the stones was the lettering of part of the Sub-treasury Building and part of the statue of Washington in New York.

The city in his dream was rushing madly to end for as our cities today do. They had



all of the extras of life to make them happy but still they were too busy to stop for a while. They had built tunnels and airways. There were bridges across the rivers and lights on them and the city making it look like day. Then destruction came and all of these lights went out. The fire falling from the sky with its poisonous mist was the atomic warfare. It ended the modern world because, "they ate knowledge too fast."

5-20-61

21

4-

## "By The Waters of Babylon"

On the surface, the setting of this story would seem to be in some prehistoric landscape. But there is a much deeper meaning. The theme of this story has a fuller significance than we first realize. Stephen Vincent Benét uses setting to portray this hidden thought.

The setting of this story can only be discovered through the uses of the author's clues. Words like "Ubtreas", "Ashing", and "Ou-dis-sun" have little significance only to an American. They are parts of the names of famous landmarks of New York City and our own twentieth century. The curious omission of an actual statement of setting, leads the author to believe there is something behind all this.

This setting, involving "The Place of the Gods" and the mysterious "Dead Places", has particular significance. These "gods" represent people of our times. Unable to control their knowledge, they have used it to destroy each other. From the way Benét portrays these "gods" in their seemingly prehistoric sur-

roundings, the reader gets a feeling they represent something more than plain adventure. Although there is much opportunity for splendid action, the author considers this symbolism of setting much more important.

Toward the end of this enchanting tale, we gather the fact that this story is actually set in New York City. We do this through the use of the clues set up by Benét. New York, a seemingly indestructible city of pomp and splendor is represented by Babylon, a city of the Old Testament which was thought to be unconquerable. The author is warning the cities of the modern world, much like Jeremiah warned Babylon against possible destruction. Babylon ignored him, and thus perished. "Knowledge can be used by mankind for evil purposes as well as for good purposes." The author is pointing out through the use of excellent setting, that perhaps we are "eating our knowledge too fast."

4-22

The theme of By The Waters of Babylon, was that before man could successfully harness powers such as those of the atom, he must learn to harness himself and if he doesn't terrible things will happen.

He used setting very skillfully to convey his theme. He spoke of the Hill People and the Forest People. At first it seemed that these people were just primitive cave-man like beings. But soon we discovered that they had modern names; John, knew about metal and could read. They spoke of the "Dead Places", of the "Great Burning", the "Place of the Gods", "God Roads". What significance do these things have? at the beginning of the story it seemed that they had none but as it developed they gained importance by leaps and bounds.

Towards the end you realize that the author is using these symbols to develop his theme.

The "Dead Places" were in actuality the burned and bombed homes of people living in our age. Although primitive, the Hill People realized that at one time man had lived in these places but now only gods dwelled there.

The "Great Burning" was the colossal fire caused by the bombs which were dropped. Atomic bombs cause a huge fire and this gave

the reader a hint that an atomic war had taken place.

In the ruins of the once great city there remained no human inhabitants which the Hill People thought was a sure sign that the gods had taken over the place. Henceforth they called it the "Place of the Gods," and no one could set foot there without being struck down.

The roads and highways which remained well untraveled by humans and were also believed to be property of gods.

The conglomeration of all these symbols, although they way I've stated it it probably doesn't sound like it, is supposed to state the author's theme. I think ~~of~~ "vinci" is a pretty sneaky fella to write something that's so hard to figure out.

How come authors always have to write about one thing and then turn and say that the story is just the opposite of what the reader thought it was? Why don't they just come right out and say what they mean? I think they're downright nasty to put in a bunch of symbols and hidden and under-the-surface meanings just so the reader won't know what he's reading.

assumed too much; perhaps the explanations were not sufficiently clear; perhaps the task was "over their heads." At any rate, there was less positive result than expected. Many of the papers, while showing an earnest attempt to isolate details concerning setting, show a lack of understanding. Most deal in generalities. Papers 4-5, 4-16, and 4-21 illustrate a deeper knowledge than do the other papers. One finds a bit of confusion present in 4-5 (in addition to the grammatical and rhetorical errors). One, 4-21, delves into the concrete with skill and insight; 4-16 becomes involved in retelling the story and loses sight of the problem, yet some of her comments, especially those pertaining to the concrete examples of "god-built" things, show an awareness of symbolism and suggestion. Another, 4-22, shows an ability to equate actual objects with the things for which they stand, but the boy does not generalize about the significance of these things in the overall pattern of the story. Other papers than the ones mentioned are included to show the varying degrees of understanding. The ones omitted did little more than retell the story, mentioning objects and details in passing.

## V. THE FIFTH ASSIGNMENT

Purposes. Since this was to be the last assignment of the unit, except for the final test, the teacher hoped to see a synthesis of all the individual elements covered. The

primary purpose of the assignment was to see if the students could recognize and iterate those qualities which make up a good story. They were to discuss those things contained in a good story and what characteristics those things should have.

Comments. The teacher had hoped that the timing of this assignment would not interfere with the interest and enthusiasm shown up to this point in the unit. However, perhaps because the assignment was given during the last week of the school year, there seems to be a lack of effort and thought in these papers. Still, a few of the students showed a desire to keep on working until the last. See paper 5-5. This student has attempted to discuss each of the fictional elements and its relation to the whole story. He attempts to use concrete details from specific stories to illustrate his contentions. Another, 5-13, uses a somewhat more traditional approach, starting with a definition followed by supporting generalizations. The girl who wrote paper 5-18 has a bit of difficulty sticking to the subject. This is especially noticeable in her last paragraph. Aside from that, she does a reasonably good job of showing not what a story should be but what it should not be. Although the student who wrote 5-7 seems to stretch the meaning of the word "valid," he has the idea of the assignment and does a commendable piece of writing.

## A GREAT SHORT STORY

Outside of poetry short stories rank as the most stimulating in the field of literature.

There are very few short stories, in my opinion, that can be classified as great, or even good. My opinions are influenced by O'Henry's works, and also Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber."

To find greatness in a short story we must first understand the simplicity of design of an average short story. Basically, to me, the working parts are setting, exposition, action, plot, theme, character, and fitting in with both action and character — dialogue.

Each part in itself is insignificant but when each part is planned and written and then placed together, they show their importance. They are dependent upon one-another and must coincide.

However, this is not all. The entire story must follow a certain predetermined course, or "pattern," and must be balanced. The author cannot allow himself to become wordy, a short story should be concise, clean cut and fast moving. The author must use originality. To help, the basic short story pattern can be twisted some so that it is not "cut and dry."



Now, for a short story to be truly great, three things have to be taken care of. Actually three stories have to be written. There must be a story of setting, action, and of dialogue (If dialogue plays a major role). These alone must be worked out separately and then the ultimatum is when they are combined and the plot is unraveled.

Each short story must be well planned and follow a scheme, a scheme in themselves. In O'Henry's works a quick analysis will show the scheme of the story.

A short story, as a poem, must stimulate; it must stimulate your intelligence, your emotion, and your imagination.

The author must be careful with each of these, and if he is successful you will think about the story, it will arouse your emotions (not to a high degree however), and it will cause your imagination to wander. If the story does this to the majority who read it and analyse it, it is successful.

I personally feel that true greatness in a short story comes out of the use of character. The characters must come alive and you must hate them, love them, or have compassion upon them. The characters must be true to life in the situation

5-5

portrayed. This is why Hemingway impresses me, "The Short Happy life of Francis Macomber" is exceptionally well worked in the use of character and character conflict.

A short story that is great, then, must be a moving and living, synchronized body which has a goal, as anything has a goal.

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PER. 3, LIT.

JUNE 7, 1961

Literature, p. 3  
5 June 1961

## What Makes a Short Story Good?

There could easily be many answers to this question which are perfectly correct. The reader may have no other reasons for reading a story than relaxation and enjoyment. In this case he may not be in the least concerned as to what point of view was employed by the author. He would be interested in the plot and the setting but not to any great extent. His regard would be mostly for the type of characters and how the theme suited his fancy. To this type of individual a "good short story" would be quite different from that of a more careful reader who, actually, might be looking for nearly the same things. I am much like the character I described in that I'm not able to see some things which have been put in the story as a forewarning of something important which will follow. This may be because I don't read as much as I should. Because of this it is harder to be critical of a writer. It is also possible that this detracts from the value of the story and

5-6

this may be why I don't see all the characteristics of such story people as Ethan Frome. I have tried to read some of the books which you mention from time to time in class and if I haven't read them yet I will read them during the summer. I am sure if I carefully read to understand I will be able to more perfectly discuss the merits of a short story.

I very much like short stories which have a surprise ending, especially a twist of fate. "The Lottery" was a story which fascinated me.

The air, at first, was one of good feeling. Yet suddenly something seemed wrong. The black clouds gathered so fast I didn't understand what had happened for a moment. I felt that this story was well written.

This story points out that a good short story often has the theme hidden, to be unveiled at exactly the right moment. The characters and the setting in this case will probably be subtly used to cover up the idea. In a story of this type we have to think a little more in order to uncover the crisis.

5-7

## "A Valid Short Story"

"A short story aims to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means consistent with the greatest emphasis." This quotation from Clayton Hamilton's The Art of Fiction in my estimation most clearly depicts the worth-while short story.

Taking the above quote apart I will start with the plot. The plot is the structural pattern, or framework of the story. Upon this skeleton supporting incidents rise to a point of high emotion or thought from the reader, then descend to a conclusion which should end all questions and suspicions of the reader. A worth-while short story will have the plot, the entanglement of people in a circumstance, and the theme all clearly shown in about three to five thousand words.

The viewpoint is often changed from that of the author to that of certain characters as far as the dialogue is concerned. The character's viewpoint may be of some value, but the author's is the one that usually best leads to good story understanding.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

5-7

The characterization in a good short story is often the most important single element. The development of character usually serves two purposes:

① To bring the reader closer to the people in the story.

② To clarify situations

In the short story the author must state the main character traits briefly with emphasis, and not waver from these established facts. Some short stories are lacking in literary value because of not sticking to its once set stipulations as far as character.

The setting which deals with the physical environment of the characters must—and I say this with emphasis—must be closely related to their experiences as the plot. The setting simply gives more background for story enjoyment and understanding.

## WHAT MAKES GOOD FICTION?

Good fiction is like good cake, good buildings, or good people; there is more than one important constituent to its make-up. Here are several of the most necessary:

Characters who come alive for the reader. This is sometimes a symbiosis of author and reader. The reader has to give the author a chance (i.e. be willing to be absorbed by the story, to begin neutrally in all respects). Then the author must present his tale in a fashion which fulfills the reader's expectations.

Setting that aids the mobilization of the plot (from paper pages to reading minds) either by being decorative, functional, or symbolic.

Action that will ricochet with questions to lure the inquisitive observer into and through the narrative.

A theme or reason for telling a story is nearly ~~indispensable~~ <sup>indispensable</sup>. When a Seattle man says, "I saw a sea gull today" with no further explanation, he remains meaningless to everyone as he has no reason to say that. He just "up and said it". Likewise a story must have something to say about life in general (first), then on a deeper plane, to each person individually. Reading a story without grasping the theme is like listening to the Seattle man and enjoying what he said. One doesn't really enjoy, or appreciate, or even understand the significance of the statement (story) until the explanation (theme) is rooted out.

A geometry axiom states that "The whole is equal to the sum of its parts." And so it is with literature. Any piece of writing is only as good as are its independent parts combined. My own axiom: "The excellence of the elements renders the finesse of the work."

5-26  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Page: 2  
1961

What is a short story? A story written about "Everything in the world, all of life and all that the imagination can conceive." It must have a good moral theme that can be applied to the reader's life. The reader may have to dig for it though. The setting must be suitable for the action of the story and also to help show the characters. If the setting is downtown San Diego you wouldn't expect a lion hunt to take place. Also the setting may be used to characterize one of the main people in the story. If a city slicker goes out on the range to round up cattle and brand them it's going to show.

The characters must be people that can be exchanged for the reader. If the reader can't read a story and live right along with the characters and die with the martyrs the story loses most of its meaning. The action, on the other hand, must be of a type to keep the reader's interest aroused enough to make him read on and look over the next mountain to see what's there. A short story should be written so as to make the reader feel and sense what the real theme is, to experience the story.

The happenings in the story must be in order in such a way as to bring the most interesting climax. The plot must be used to keep the reader in suspense,



5-16

feeling that just around the next corner is a big new world to explore.

Back story will bring a different response from the reader, but when the reader wants to explore the world with the author, which he has built with words, the writer has succeeded.

lit. II, p. 3  
5 June 1961

## What Makes a Short Story Great?

Great short stories create a single lasting impression on the reader. They extend and enrich our experience, making it possible for us to find more meaning in our own personal dealings with life. By actually experiencing these great stories through comprehension, we extend the limits of our world.

In my opinion one of the most important tasks of the author of a great short story is to use superb mechanics. Take, as an example, "The Gift of the Magi". Every little word and phrase fits perfectly into a set pattern. A short story resembles a poem in the fact that both depend much on mechanics. All of these words, phrases, and sentences build toward a climax and help demonstrate the author's theme. Without proper order and technique, the author cannot possibly illustrate his hidden purpose. If the story is poorly written, it is not only unenjoyed, but benefits no one. The reader gains nothing from the story.

5-21

A great short story creates much curiosity. The reader must be kept searching for that hidden thought which exemplifies the author's purpose. This curiosity can be accomplished in several ways. Again it depends much on the actual mechanics. Sometimes this eager desire to know is handled by character development. By raising questions in the reader's mind, the author urges the reader to read on. Excellent examples of character development can be found in many short stories, but especially "Quality" and "The Terrible Miss Dove". Tone, point-of-view, style, setting-all play important roles in creating curiosity. Take setting in "By the Waters of Babylon". Almost immediately we discover there is something symbolic about this particular setting. Or the tricky tone of Steinbeck's "The Affair at 7, Rue de M-". Through the use of all these elements, an author is able to create a truly great short story. But what makes it great? The question it creates in our mind as we read.

## Composition of a good short story

To compose a good short story an author must be able to make his exposition brief but explanatory. In a full length novel, an author may spend two or three chapters on this alone but the short story author has to cut his down to maybe less than one chapter and still have it explain the story's background thoroughly. In order to cut down on words in his exposition the author will usually leave out lengthy, detailed descriptions or cut them down to a few words. He must have a good command of vocabulary to convey in a few what usually takes many to say.

The second step of writing a good short story is that of characterization. This step must also be brief but it also has to convey what the author wants it to. He has to make the actions of his characters reflect the kind of person he has portrayed. In a novel an author can give little bits of characterization as he goes along and if one of his characters does something the reader didn't expect, this part of his character will probably come up in the reading fairly soon. In the short story there is not room for this type of characterization so it calls for a little more skill on the writer's part.

The third aspect of the short story is the plot. In building his plot the author must be careful not to get it too involved or tangled because he may not be able to get it untangled by the end of the story. It is possible

5-22

However, for an author to get his plot quite involved and still get it worked out by the end of the story. Also there are authors who rejoice in getting the plot all fouled up, on purpose of course, and then they end the story when it's just getting good and leave you pondering "weab and weary," trying to figure what happened. I would much rather a story by an orthodox, or least by my standards, author who tells you what in the heck happened at the end.

In summing up, the three main points I thought were important are the brevity of exposition, the complying of characters with their actions, and keeping the plot from becoming too involved to straighten out.

## The Short Story

What makes a good short story? This is a question that is puzzling to me. I'm almost positive I couldn't write one.

I think that the fact that the author must have an imagination is very important. How else could some of these short stories be written. They start with an idea, and imagination forms the body of the story.

Some good and interesting characters are a necessity for a short story. If the people involved are not fascinating enough the story is ruined. Also the character and his description must fit the part. It wouldn't seem right to have an old, bedraggled man playing the part of a gallant knight who comes to save the fair young maiden. The character's looks and actions must correspond to the theme and seriousness of the story.

A short story should have a good initial incident. Without this the story starts out to be boring and so it probably won't ever really get the interest of the reader.

There must be some exposition. If the reader doesn't understand the setting and background of a story, he

5 June 1955

probably won't understand the story either.

A good short story must contain some interesting plot questions which make him want to read on to find the answers.

The story must have an interesting plot and theme. Without this the story will be a flop.

I think that these are the things that make up a good short story. There are probably many other elements but these are all that I know.

The boy who wrote paper 5-6 illustrates the sort of problem shown by many students at the sophomore level: he discusses his own feelings, abilities, and inabilities while avoiding the question. On the other hand, 5-21 leaps directly to the point and begins his discussion with a direct restatement of the problem. He tries to cover each item of importance as it occurs to him; he sees the part-to-whole relationships of the fictional elements. This paper epitomizes the desired outcome of the assignment.

Paper 5-20 shows another common sophomore approach to analysis. The student says, "He [the author] must characterize the people and present the exposition and setting correctly. The theme, action, plot, and climax have to be considered." But he doesn't attempt to show what is correct or what kind of consideration is needed. The rest of the paper, however, has some rather valuable points. Another, 5-16, gives a creditable discussion of setting and plot; 5-22 shows thought and considerable time spent on the assignment (despite the misspellings and omissions). The analogical mind of the boy who wrote paper 5-10 makes his papers interesting to read. Had he carried his comparison a little further, his might well have been the best paper of the lot. Paper 5-19 deals with generalities and fails to take issue with specifics. Papers 5-1 and 5-23 also show a tendency to deal with generalizations, although these are valid.



It is interesting to note that many of the students were unable to point out precisely what it is that constitutes a good story; they were generally willing to concede that the story is only as good as its individual parts. In the next set of papers, the final test, a few of the class became very perspicacious in their criticism.

## VI. THE FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Purposes. The teacher and the class had been criticized very harshly (by another teacher) for approaching fiction in the manner outlined in this unit. This criticism was made on the grounds that analysis of short stories by this technical approach is no more than "mental gymnastics, and it is destructive rather than instructive. Can't a person read a story simply to get enjoyment from it? Can't an author write a story just for the sake of the story?" These questions were used as the final examination question. The students were asked to answer this critic.

Comments. The first paper of this set, 6-2, relates the opinions of several students--this without conscious intention on the part of the girl writing it. Again, one can see that the student recognizes the "what" but does not dig into the "why."

Paper 6-21 shows a good understanding of the reasons for analyzing stories. The boy is able to see that analysis

## To Analyze or Not to Analyze

After the class had carefully read and analyzed several short stories, the literature teacher asked, "I would like you to answer the critic who says that "our" method of analyzing fiction is merely mental gymnastics and is destructive rather than instructive. Can't a person simply tell a story for the story's sake?"

"I don't agree at all," said Tom. "There is a hidden meaning in most stories because nearly all authors have some purpose in writing them. After all most authors are of a higher intelligence than the average person, everyone knows that, so if he writes a story with a slightly hidden meaning the reader can feel that he is learning something if he analyzes the story and finds this hidden meaning."

"I'll have to agree with the critic," retorted John. "So different people the story would have different

meanings. Some people analyze every little word in the story and it spoils it because I don't believe that the author meant for the book to be used in that way. Certainly he wants the readers to learn something, but when they start picking everything apart and making up their own interpretation it becomes a different matter."

"I feel the same way John does, Mary stated. Besides it's terribly boring to have to analyze a story. If the author has something to say he should come right out and say it, and not beat around the bush so much."

"I used to read a story for the story's sake", but now I think that you must understand a story to enjoy to its fullest extent and what better way is there to understand it than to analyze it?" asked Patty.

"That's right!" said Gene. The author writes a story for it to be

enjoyed and understood, and to fully understand it, the story must be analyzed to an extent."

"Yes, but take into consideration us less intelligent people, said Jane. We enjoy reading too if we can read for the "story's sake"."

"These are all good points, stated the teacher. I hope that you can all see the good and the bad sides of analyzing stories. Now, class is dismissed."

## "Criticism"

"Can't a person read a story just for the sake of reading?" The answer to this question can be, I feel, both yes and no. The views on these answers may depend a lot on the kind of story you are reading. I will begin first with the positive answer to the question.

I am sure that at one time or another wants to appease the tension of everyday concentration with a commendable, alluring book. Reading is the best way I know to take your mind off your afflictions. The type of book you choose to read is important. A story with a single plot, and not many complications such as difficult to understand language and very small print would be the best to read in one sitting. With a story such as this you can read it, understand it and return to your worry and frets, return "back to reality" refreshed and ready to attack your most annoying mission. Why then should you have to stop and analyze the story and try to find some hidden idea when the plot is laid out before you?

On the other hand, shouldn't you

evaluate a story. How can you get the full meaning of the story if you don't stop to think about it after you've read it? Many stories have hidden plots. Many stories have been written with every minute detail symbolizing something that would be very true to life if you would just stop to analyze it. For example, would you go downtown to buy a new suit or a new pair of shoes without trying them on, pricing them, and observing whether or not it will go with go with your wardrobe? Would you go into a furniture store and pick out a new bedroom set without figuring to see whether or not it would fit in your room or whether it would match the colors of your walls and carpet? I don't believe you would. Some people look at the label or who did the manufacturing before they even think of looking into it further. Why then, if you do all of these things, shouldn't you stop to analyze a story the same way? After you read a story "try it on," see if it fits to your way of life, "price it," see if ~~it fits your way of life~~ is the type of book you would enjoy reading more of. Of so obtain some more by the same author.

So you see, whether or not you

6-3  
analyze a story depends a lot on the  
type of story you read and whether  
you are reading just to be reading or  
whether you are reading to get something  
out of the book.

Literature, Ser. III  
June 6-20, 1961

Answer the critic who says that "our" method of analyzing fiction is merely mental gymnastics and is destructive rather than instructive. Can't a person simply tell a story for the story's sake?

Stories can be classified into three main classifications according to their use. The first classification is called "escape literature". Escape literature is read merely for the sake of the story. Second is stories to be read for the purpose of understanding and benefiting morally and socially. And the last classification is stories for the purpose of their surface information.

Escape literature is determined by the intent of the reader. A story that would present a code of ethics for one person might be escape literature for another person. A different story read by the same two people might just reverse that situation.

Escape literature (which isn't good for a steady diet) is never broken down and analyzed. This is because the reader is relaxing and forgetting his problems in life and he is just reading the story for relaxation.



Stories read for social and moral benefit need to be broken down and analyzed to get the complete value and to appreciate the composition. The benefit comes from the theme of this type of story and how we can apply it to ourselves.

The value of a story of this type such as "the Lottery" which is a symbolical story is only obtained by analyzing the story. By just reading "the Lottery" you will see a strange series of events which probably seems to be ridiculous. But by analyzing the story, it will be brought to your attention that common sense is more practical than out-dated tradition. This alone benefits the people in many situations and also enables the reader to appreciate the composition.

Literature read for the surface information need not be analyzed. If it was written for the same purpose most likely there wouldn't even be a theme to discover and benefit from.

For these reasons I think that some literature should be analyzed and some should not. This is naturally determined by the purpose for which the literature is written and the purpose for which it is read.

Lit II, p. 3  
Jul 6 1921

First of all, in answer to the critic's point of view describing an analyzation of fiction as merely "mental gymnastics":

I feel that to truly enjoy a short story or any other type of fiction, we must thoroughly understand the story. What possible harm can analyzing be if it broadens our understanding? Without a complete comprehension of the various elements of the plot of the story, how can we possibly apply the author's intended purpose to ourselves? The answer is: we can't! The author tries to create certain effects in the reader's mind or feelings. In turn, the reader must draw out, only through critical examination, these effects intended by the author. Take for example, "The Gift of the Magi". How could we apply the deep truths related in this story without proper understanding of the plot? How could we enjoy it? I can see in no way how analyzing of fiction is destructive. It broadens understanding and adds to our

6-21

enjoyment of the story.

Switching now to the critic's question: Can a person tell a story simply for the sake of telling it?

I think not. At least, a person cannot tell a story without an intended purpose. Every story, even though seemingly insignificant, has an intended purpose and is not told just for the sake of telling it. Take a joke or short story. Naturally the intended purpose is to create humor. This is still purpose though, and it plays just as an important role as a short story theme. If the thought behind the joke is very profound (if you're dense!), how can we laugh before we understand the joke. There is purpose in every story, you don't tell it just to be telling it. There is one exception: "escape" type literature or first-hand experience.

is necessary to understanding and appreciation. Some of the students failed to see that analysis is not the end but a means.

Most of the papers show a negative answer to the questions; there may be several reasons for this. First, the students were aware that the teacher disagreed with the critic --and what student wants to jeopardize his grade by openly disagreeing with his teacher? Second, the students could see real benefit in this type of study. Third, some may have been afraid to disagree, not just because they didn't want to endanger their chances for grades but because they couldn't show valid reasons for disagreeing. One must consider these possibilities while evaluating these papers. One must further be reminded that these are only high school sophomores. But despite these qualifications, many of the papers show a remarkable amount of insight and understanding.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There is no question in the mind of the author that this unit of instruction was valuable for the students. Yet there are certain readily recognizable deficiencies in the instruction. Part of the deficiency lies in the fact that this was a new kind of experience, although some of the class had done similar kinds of assignments in the eighth grade. Too, there was the constant possibility that the explanations might be "going over their heads." One can not, or should not, expect to "reach" every student in the class.

#### I. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

The teacher discovered throughout the unit that a few of the class took the assignments to be ends instead of means. It was a continual problem to make the students realize that the analysis of stories in class was merely the tool for better understanding of stories to be read in the future. It must be repeated many times that the transfer of these learning techniques to future reading, whether conscious or unconscious, is the goal to be attained. If a student is able, on paper, to analyze a given story, he will make the same analysis mentally later.

A second difficulty encountered was that of keeping

the students interested in what they were doing. Many of them said they had been told many times before that analyzing something is equivalent to destroying it. To overcome this feeling it was necessary to explain that a story is something to be understood, not merely enjoyed, and that understanding enhances enjoyment. There seems to be a feeling among some that literature is merely a source of idle pleasure, not a learning fount.

A third problem was getting the students to realize that if one is to understand what the author meant in a story he must look at what the author said in that story. A person could read Walsh's "A Quiet Man" with the feeling that Shawn Kelvin was a coward. But if he reads carefully and looks at what the author says about Shawn, if he doesn't judge Shawn by comparing him to some person in his own circle of friends, he will come to know Shawn as the author intended him to be known.

## II. FINDINGS

The most thoroughly learned of the elements of fiction seems to be theme. All the students were able to recognize the theme as the author's purpose in writing. They were able to see that some truth of life is illustrated in a story and that the truth is of significance to each person who reads that story. They no longer consider the theme to be the

subject matter or the action.

They were made aware that the setting of a story is of great importance, not only as a decorative piece of staging but also as a technically integral part of a story. They were able to see that setting is usually deterministic and functional.

Most of the students learned to see that each action, each incident, each bit of exposition is a necessary part of the total narrative. They were able to see that an author skillfully plants certain words, ideas, and concepts in his story to create suspense, mystery, and curiosity. They learned to detect foreshadowing; they learned to be on the lookout for indications of the author's tone--whether he is serious, mocking, or a combination of these.

It is not possible to be objective about the outcome of this unit; that is, there is no objective test or standardized test containing percentiles and norms by which to determine the degree of learning. Instead, the evaluation of this unit must be made subjectively by reading the responses of the students.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

It is reasonably safe to conclude that this unit was effective and instructive. The evidence contained in the student papers indicates that some did not benefit a great

deal, while others were benefited greatly. It also seems safe to assume that some students went through the motions of doing their assignments while others did some serious thinking and planning. Further, it seems that the number who did learn a significant amount is greater than might normally be expected (at this or perhaps at any other level).

#### IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE USE OF THE UNIT

The author believes that this has been a rewarding experience for the students. He also believes that this approach to fiction causes the students to read with a great deal more understanding, forcing them to examine what is said and not to rely on personal experience to evaluate reading experiences. The ramifications of this last skill would seem to make the entire experience worthwhile, even if the students got nothing else from it.

Preparation. The author/teacher recommends that anyone teaching fiction by this method (or any other) do these and similar assignments before assigning them. In stories to be analyzed for character traits, the prospective teacher should make a careful analysis of that story and others so that he may give illustrations and examples. He should study plotting procedure, uses of setting, uses of symbolism, and point of view. It would be desirable for him to have ready a paper of the same nature as the one he is assigning. The



author found it most valuable to be able to point to specific illustrations while explaining the assignments.

Assignments. The teacher should have clearly in mind the purposes of each lesson; he should be extremely careful to make clear each detail. It seems very helpful to write the assignments on the chalkboard to help eliminate uncertainty.

Evaluation. The students who contributed to this study were somewhat reluctant to allow the teacher to keep their themes. They wanted to see "what they got on them." The teacher had each student prepare a sheet of paper with his name, assigned number, and six columns for recording grades. Along with each assignment, the students handed in this sheet, on which were recorded their grades and certain remarks about grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. It is probable that this procedure would not need to be followed by other teachers since the papers will not be kept.

Each teacher probably has his own methods for considering mechanics in the grading of themes; there need be no recommendation about that in this thesis.

Class discussion after the papers were returned was very helpful--especially for those students who had some doubts and misgivings about the exercises. Many students were able to understand things as a result of their fellow students' discussion. If some of the discussions carried on in class

could have been recorded and included in this study, they would have been a valuable portion of it.

#### V. SUMMARY

This study has attempted to prove that teaching fiction in the high school through a structural approach is one valuable means of getting students to evaluate what they read on the basis of what is said by the author. It has further tried to show that high school sophomores are able to read critically, analyze what they read with a great deal of understanding, and able to communicate this understanding. It has attempted to prove that an analytical approach to fiction provides a means whereby a student can learn to see relationships and interrelationships, learn to appreciate a story by analyzing the individual elements of fiction, and indirectly, learn to act and think with a greater degree of certainty through having seen fictional characters undergo the many trials which make up life.

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