



LANGUAGE ARTS

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **10th Grade | Unit 8**

LANGUAGE ARTS 1008

The Short Story

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The Short Story

Introduction

This LIFE PAC® is designed to increase your enjoyment and understanding of worthwhile literature. You will learn about the structure of the short story, one of the most popular types of literature today. By considering the themes of famous stories, you will learn how literature stimulates thinking about moral choices and the resultant effects on human lives.

You will learn through practice some of the techniques of planning and composing a literary critique and an original short story, and you will learn to appreciate the craftsmanship required for successful writing.

You will increase your mastery of the written sentence and the mechanics of punctuation, and you will have the opportunity to apply these skills to your own written work.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFE PAC. When you have completed this LIFE PAC, you should be able to:

1. Identify three well-known short story writers by name and country.
2. Recall the most important details and characteristics of three famous stories.
3. Identify the six elements common to all short stories and recognize these elements in the stories read.
4. Recognize, explain, and give examples of three common figures of speech.
5. Explain personal beliefs and moral standards revealed in the stories.
6. Define what is meant by literary criticism.
7. Identify and express in your own words the central idea in a story.
8. Explain how an author has used setting, plot, and character to achieve his purpose.
9. Summarize the plot.
10. Select significant examples of the writer's style.
11. Identify and describe the strong and weak points of a story.
12. Recommend the story to appropriate readers.
13. Punctuate compound and complex sentences.
14. Write and punctuate sentences containing appositives.
15. Punctuate quotations.
16. Use the apostrophe correctly.
17. Select an appropriate theme for a short story that you will write.
18. Write the setting of the story.
19. Develop interesting and believable characters.
20. Plan a coherent and interesting plot sequence.
21. Employ figures of speech and other literary devices in writing.
22. Write dialogue for a story.

1. ENJOYING SHORT STORIES

In Section I you will be reading three well-known short stories that are very different from each other in locale, characters, and affect on the reader. You will discover what the elements of a successful short story are, how the writer reveals character through speech and action,

and how he selects details to enliven his tale. These famous stories have entertained readers for many years. The three authors, Mark Twain, Frank R. Stockton, and Guy de Maupassant, are no longer living, but their work lives on in the mind of each new reader.

Section Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Identify three well-known short-story writers by name and country.
2. Recall the most important details and characteristics of three famous stories.
3. Identify the six elements common to all short stories and recognize these elements in the stories read.
4. Recognize, explain, and give examples of three common figures of speech.
5. Explain personal beliefs and moral standards revealed in the stories.

Vocabulary

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

contemporary
novel
style

eerie
omniscient
tone

incident
prose fiction

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFE PAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given in the glossary.

SHORT STORY ELEMENTS

The short story is a form of **prose fiction**; that is, it presents imaginary characters who meet problems and have adventures in an imaginary world created by the writer. Unlike the **novel**, the short story is designed to be read in one sitting. It concerns a single problem or idea and has a single plot. Everything in the story must help to create a single affect in the reader's mind.

The short-story writer must plunge into his story quickly, tell it in a series of dramatic action pictures, and conclude it in few words once the action has ended. You will see how writers demonstrate these three skills.

The musician's life story, British life in India, and the settling of a whole new colony would be too long and complex to be written as a single short story. The other three would be more suitable.

Setting. Every story must take place in some specific location and time, called its *setting*. Although a short-story writer may know many fascinating details about the location, he will

use only those details that are important to the story. A story set in the **contemporary** United States may describe the setting only briefly, since most readers will know how a dentist's office or a supermarket looks, sounds, and smells. If the setting is a foreign country or if the story takes place in the distant past, more particulars may be needed. Details that are central to the action, such as the exact location of a secret room, must be emphasized.

Sometimes, the setting shows the reader something about the personality of one of the important characters. The bedroom, garden, or garage of a fussy, precise person would look very different from those of a disorganized, absent-minded individual. A woodcutter's hut in the forest will have different furnishings than the home of a wealthy landowner.

Often, the description of the setting helps the author to set the mood of the story, and to make the reader feel sad, uneasy, or confident. Writers of ghost stories know what a few cobwebs, a banging shutter, and a moaning wind can do to enhance their **eerie** tales.



Complete this activity.

- 1.1** Read the following phrases and decide which ones could be used as a basis for a short story. Put a check in the blank at the left of these items.

- _____ a. the life story of a famous musician
- _____ b. a championship basketball game in which a new player is the star
- _____ c. a family mix-up over selecting a birthday present for Father
- _____ d. an account of three generations of a British family in India
- _____ e. settling the first earth colony on another planet
- _____ f. the mysterious disappearance of a cake from the home economics room

Complete the following activity.

- 1.2** Read each of the following descriptions of settings for short stories and write one sentence to tell what kind of story you believe will follow.

a. In dreams I return each night to the cottage and smell again its sun-drenched pine walls and finger the shells left by the children long ago on the old porch table and listen once more to the sea.

b. There was no nonsense about Miss Madigan's office. In one corner was an olive-drab metal file; and on the desk was a black telephone, a note pad, and one sharp pencil. On the wall was a district map with red and green push pins. One of the red pins was at our house, 238 Mill Street.

c. Gregory opened the door on a scene of wild confusion. Apparently he would be living with a roommate who enjoyed books, marshmallows, hamsters, open cupboard doors, weightlifting, loud music, and photography but not peace, order, or quiet study.

Characters. People in stories are referred to as *characters*. In the short story, the number of characters must be limited; usually, a story has no more than three or four, with one or two receiving most of the attention. The main character, the one of greatest interest to the reader, is called the *protagonist* from a Greek word meaning *first actor*. In most stories, the protagonist will be opposed by a second person called the *antagonist*. This term is from another Greek word meaning to *struggle against*, and it is related to our word antagonize. In the Bible story, David would be considered the protagonist and Goliath the antagonist.

Minor characters receive very little attention; they are quickly introduced, play their necessary parts in the action, and vanish. In this respect, the short story is very different from the novel, which may introduce any number of interesting side characters.

The skillful writer shows what his characters are like through what they do (action) and what they say (dialogue) rather than by lengthy descriptive paragraphs. He must concentrate on one or two outstanding traits in each character. He does not have the time to show all the contradictions and inconsistencies that exist in all human beings.



Complete the following activity.

1.3 Read the following descriptions of characters and, in one or two words, tell what you think each person is like.

a. In five minutes, Grandmother had hugged us, carried her own bags upstairs, straightened my blouse, sent Roger to wash his hands, whisked the dirty dishes off the table, and started to sing as she washed them.

Grandmother is _____.

b. The young man jogged past the stand of eucalyptus trees, his whites quickly shedding the patterns of leafy shadows. A season of sunshine had gently warmed his tan complexion and had brightened his rich auburn hair. Passing by the slatted benches, he smiled encouragement to the elderly men eager to collect the memories of less-weary days. As he approached the courts, his shouted greeting was answered by the high wave of his partner's racquet.

The young man is _____.

c. "I'm not sure I can do this," said Lonnie, "I've never even been to a banquet. And I got a D in public speaking, and even that was a—" He stopped in despair and stared hopelessly at his broken shoelace.

Lonnie is _____.



| External conflict



| Internal conflict

Conflict. Every story is based on a *conflict*, or some sort of struggle that ends in success or defeat for the protagonist. Many stories are about physical or intellectual struggles between the main character and a real enemy, such as an animal, a force of nature, or another human being. Such stories are usually exciting; we admire the hero for his courage and persistence or his intelligence and quick wit. An example of this kind of story from the Bible is the struggle between Samson and the lion. A struggle between the protagonist and someone or something *outside himself* is called an *external conflict*.

At times, everyone experiences difficulty in making a choice between two courses of action. An example would be your own hesitation between your homework and a visit with a friend. Sometimes, the conflict is much more serious, as when a man has to choose between lying on the witness stand and sending a friend to prison. Such dilemmas are called *internal conflicts* because the person is struggling *within himself*.

His decision, however, may have important results in the outside world, for himself and for others. Such conflicts within people are often the basis for powerful and thought-provoking short stories.



Complete the following activity.

1.4 Write *I* on the blank if the stated conflict is internal; write *E* if it is external.

- _____ a. A man works hard on a pioneer farm, only to have his first crop threatened by grasshoppers.
- _____ b. A young woman has to choose between two careers.
- _____ c. A boy blinded in an accident is afraid to go out alone.
- _____ d. Two rival boatmen have an exciting race to win a trophy.
- _____ e. A girl lost in a storm finds her way to shelter.
- _____ f. A Christian is asked to make a secret contribution to a candidate's election. He knows office policy forbids this action.

Plot. The *plot* of a story is its plan of action—the series of events that bring the conflict to an end. A short story has one plot; a novel may also have several less important subplots interwoven with the main plot.

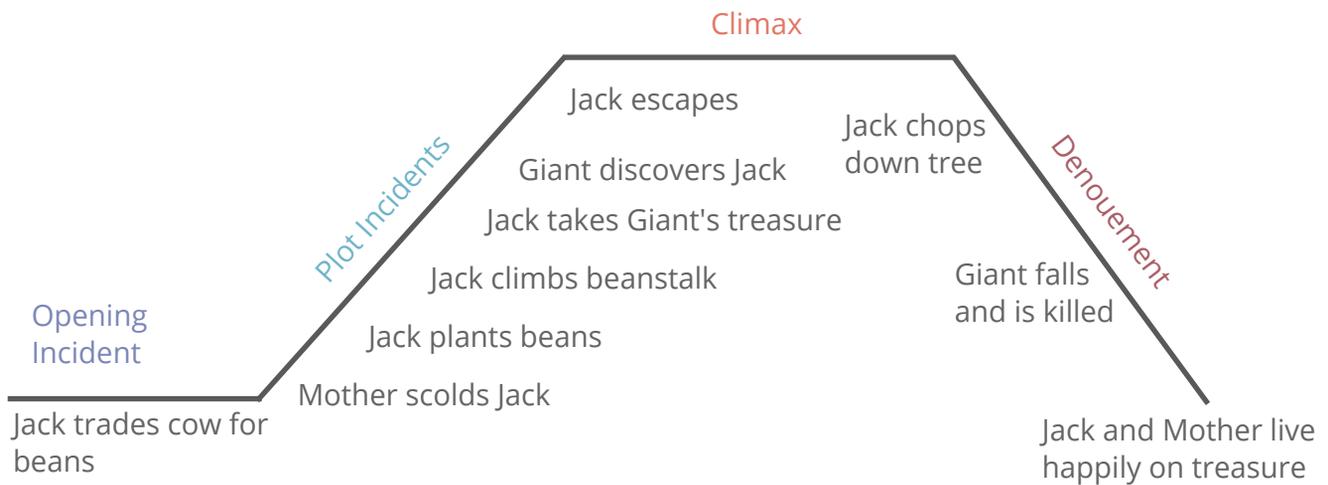
The short-story writer must capture the reader’s interest at the very beginning; therefore, he usually starts with an exciting or intriguing **incident**. He follows this incident with other carefully planned incidents that advance the story, add to the excitement, and keep the reader’s interest high. The protagonist may have to overcome several obstacles.

The incident that brings the action to an end and shows how the conflict is to be resolved is

called the *climax*. The climax is the most interesting part of the story, the deciding moment the reader is waiting for.

The final sentences or paragraphs, which explain the outcome, tie up any loose ends, and conclude the story, are called the *denouement* (day no mon).

Plot construction can be illustrated by drawing a line like the one that follows and placing the incidents in the story in it. The illustrated plot line is based on the childhood story of “Jack and the Beanstalk.” You can see that the climax is the point of highest interest. Some authors use this kind of diagram as they plan their stories.



**Complete the following activity.**

- 1.5** Draw a story line on a piece of paper; and then plot the main events of another familiar story, such as “Cinderella” or a favorite Bible story, on your story line. After you have finished have another student check your story line to see whether he understands it.

TEACHER CHECK

_____ initials

_____ date

Theme. Often the short-story writer wants only to entertain the reader, but sometimes he has a more serious purpose. He wants to teach a lesson, express a new idea, or set the reader to thinking. His story will then have a recognizable *theme*. Usually, the theme can be expressed in a general sentence, such as these:

Misfortune can be followed by good fortune. (Cinderella)

Poor outward appearances may hide something of great beauty or value if one is patient. (The Ugly Duckling)

Promises, once made, should be kept. (The Frog Prince)

Each Christian should feel responsible for the care and protection of his fellow men. (The Good Samaritan)

A writer with a specific purpose or theme in mind might choose to develop different stories to illustrate his point. Intelligent readers will enjoy thinking about the theme of a good story long after they have forgotten the details of the setting or plot.

Complete the following activity.

- 1.6** Choose a Bible story with which you are familiar and express the theme in one sentence. Noah and the ark, the story of Ruth, or the parable of the prodigal son might be good choices.

a. name of the story _____

b. I think the theme of this story is _____

SELF TEST 1

Select the best definition for each literary term (each answer, 2 points).

- | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1.01 | _____ character | a. all-powerful |
| 1.02 | _____ dialogue | b. speeches made by characters in a story |
| 1.03 | _____ climax | c. solution to a mystery |
| 1.04 | _____ internal conflict | d. one of the persons in a story |
| 1.05 | _____ setting | e. struggle within one person's mind |
| 1.06 | _____ theme | f. person who opposes the hero |
| 1.07 | _____ protagonist | g. point of highest interest or excitement |
| 1.08 | _____ omniscient point of view | h. most important person in a story |
| 1.09 | _____ frame story | i. author is all-seeing, all knowing |
| 1.010 | _____ incident | j. where a story takes place |
| | | k. a single happening in a story |
| | | l. basic idea; what the story is about |
| | | m. person telling the story |
| | | n. story-within-a-story |

Complete these statements (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.011 Details of the setting may be used to describe the a. _____
or the b. _____ of the story.
- 1.012 If the protagonist tells the story himself, it is told in the _____ person.
- 1.013 If the author tells the story but does not take part, it is in the _____ person.
- 1.014 When a speaker uses the words *you, yours, yourself*, he is using the _____ person.
- 1.015 The one story in this section that uses first person is _____.
- 1.016 The conclusion of a story, in which all the loose ends are tied up, is called the _____.
- 1.017 A pattern of speech in which pronunciation and choice of words differs from standard English is called a _____.

- 1.018** Four of the six elements of the short story are
 a. _____, b. _____,
 c. _____, and d. _____.
- 1.019** The events as they happen in the story make up the _____.

Answer true or false (each answer, 1 point).

- 1.020** _____ Jim Smiley was more interested in betting than in anything else.
- 1.021** _____ Madame Forestier was a popular guest at the ball.
- 1.022** _____ Simon Wheeler loved to tell long stories to anyone who would listen.
- 1.023** _____ The princess had the power of life and death over her lover.
- 1.024** _____ Madame Loisel was vain and shallow but not spiteful.
- 1.025** _____ Jim Smiley had carefully trained his own frog, but he gave the stranger an untrained frog for the contest.
- 1.026** _____ In the story “The Lady or the Tiger,” the reader is told what choice the young man will make.
- 1.027** _____ The frog contest took place in a steamboat on the Mississippi.
- 1.028** _____ The king who invented the trial of the two doors was a historical person, whose name and birth date are given.
- 1.029** _____ Monsieur and Madame Loisel borrowed more money than was needed to pay for the lost necklace because Madame Forestier insisted on it.

Match these characteristics and the author’s name (each answer, 2 points).

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1.030 _____ a naturalistic writer | a. Mark Twain |
| 1.031 _____ French writer | b. Frank R. Stockton |
| 1.032 _____ American writer less famous than Mark Twain | c. Guy de Maupassant |
| 1.033 _____ lived for a time in California | |
| 1.034 _____ wrote about Paris society | |
| 1.035 _____ wrote about a barbaric king | |
| 1.036 _____ liked to use dialect in his stories | |
| 1.037 _____ real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens | |
| 1.038 _____ wrote a famous story without an ending | |
| 1.039 _____ wrote humorous tales about the Gold Rush | |

Complete these statement (each answer, 3 points).

1.040 Because the length of his story is limited, the short-story writer must do these three things:

- a. _____ ,
- b. _____ , and
- c. _____ .

Name the figure of speech illustrated by each sentence (each answer, 3 points).

1.041 Her face lit up with pleasure as quickly as a light flashing on.

1.042 Fame is not always kind; sometimes she tramples on the deserving and shouts the praises of the unworthy.

1.043 The students stampeded into the classroom.

Circle the letter of the choice that is closest in meaning to the first word (each answer, 2 points).

1.044 eerie

- a. weird
- b. noisy
- c. eagle's nest
- d. healthy

1.045 garrulous

- a. poverty-stricken
- b. talkative
- c. old
- d. warlike

1.046 obsequious

- a. disobedient
- b. deadly
- c. haughty
- d. submissive

1.047 rivière

- a. broken
- b. crown
- c. necklace
- d. avenue

1.048 contemporary

- a. haughty
- b. late
- c. routine
- d. present-day

1.049 barbarian

- a. clipped
- b. splendid
- c. refined
- d. savage

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