



LANGUAGE ARTS

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **12th Grade** | Unit 8

LANGUAGE ARTS 1208

CREATIVE WRITING

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Creative Writing

Introduction

The world of fiction and poetry is a reflection of the world in which we live, work, play, and worship. Although the events in a short story or a novel are not true in the sense that they actually happened, they are patterned after life as the author knows it. His characters behave as real people might behave in their situation. Poetry, too, reflects the world as the poet sees it; it stirs in the reader emotions similar to those the poet feels and paints with words the vision that the poet sees.

By reading fiction and poetry, a student increases his understanding of people both in his own time and culture and in societies and times other than his own. Stories and poems written by other students can often provide as many insights as the works of professional writers. Each person has something to say. Each person has a view of God and man, a sense of right and wrong, and a conception of the meaning of life.

You may have read that each person has a story within him—his own. Viewed from different perspectives, the experience accumulated by every person can form the basis for many stories and many poems. Creative writing is more than a constructive outlet for your emotions and a source of entertainment for your reader. It can also be a means of sharing your Christian view of the world with others. Equally important, creative writing exercises your skill with words and provides you with an insight into the fiction and poetry of professional writers that you could gain in no other way.

In this LIFE PAC® you will study the elements of the short story and of poetry as they relate respectively to a particular story and to specific poems. You will then study the techniques for writing both short stories and poetry. In Section 2 you will learn to write descriptively, to develop an ear for dialogue, and to connect the separate elements of your narrative into a story that is more than the sum of its parts. Section 3 will provide you with the skills needed to link the sound of words with the images that they project into the reader's mind. Both sections provide the opportunity to use the acquired skills in your own writing. You will write both a short story and a poem, types of creative writing that will be uniquely your own, and yet not just your own; for they will be a reflection of universal truths.

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 finished this LIFE PAC, you will be able to:

1. Explain the interrelationship of plot, setting, characterization, and theme.
2. Distinguish between imagery and sound patterns in poetry.
3. Identify specific poetic devices in particular poems.
4. Write descriptive scenes and character sketches using your own experience as inspiration.
5. Write a dialogue between two or more characters.
6. Distinguish between description and narration.
7. Outline a plot.
8. Invent three characters and write a character sketch of each.
9. Write a short story.
10. Develop your own figures of speech.
11. Use specific poetic devices.
12. List the distinguishing characteristics of the sonnet and of other fixed forms.
13. Write two poems based on your own experience and observations.

Survey the LIFE PAC. Ask yourself some questions about this study and write your questions here.

1. READING FICTION AND POETRY

Although the distinction between prose and poetry can be compared with the difference between speech and song, fiction is more closely related to poetry than are other such prose forms as the essay and the report. Both fiction and poetry are emotional experiences; both are products of the imagination. Although the concern of the fiction writer or the poet is not with fact, his work reflects his experience. Each life is unique, yet each repeats the timeless pattern of birth, love, and death. Each person experiences the same needs—for God, for food, for warmth, and for companionship. Such universal experiences—experiences common to all people—form the basis of both fiction and poetry.

Fiction is a prose account of significant events in the lives of imaginary characters, human or non-human. The two most common forms of fiction are the novel and the short story. In a novel the narrative involves a series of incidents that may affect many of the lives of many characters. In a short story the focus is on one central person and one major situation. Plot,

characterization, setting, and theme are concentrated into a few pages.

Poetry, like fiction, may tell a story or it may simply describe or react to a single experience. Poetry has been written about man's relationship with God, about love for other people, about death, about the smell of a rose, about the song of a nightingale, and so forth. Poetry can be written about almost any subject, but it is always an intense emotional reaction demanding an equally intense emotional response from the reader. Poetry can be humorous, but the humor is a response to the situation.

This section is concerned with the elements that distinguish the short story and the poem from other forms of literature. By studying this section you will acquire a better understanding of both genre, or types. Your study will help you to appreciate the Biblical and secular works that are your literary heritage, and it will provide a foundation for the technical writing skills that you will learn in the later sections of this LIFEPAAC.

Section Objectives

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

1. Explain the interrelationship of plot, setting, characterization, and theme.
2. Distinguish between imagery and sound patterns in poetry.
3. Identify specific poetic devices in particular poems.

Vocabulary

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

atmosphere

aural

crisis

dominant foot

fastidious

prosody

tone

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are not sure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

SHORT STORY FUNDAMENTALS

Fiction involves relationships. What happens to the people in a story is less important than their reaction to the events and the effect of this reaction on their relationships with one another. Whether the event is a natural disaster or a move from the farm to a city, its significance is in its effect on the people and their effect on one another.

A story, then, must have characters. Something must happen to the characters—they cannot be exactly the same people at the beginning of the story as at the end of it. A character sketch is not a story. Since events do not occur in a vacuum and since the society in which people live governs their

lives to a remarkable extent, the story must have a background, or *setting*. This setting helps the reader to visualize the characters and their actions.

The most abstract and probably the most misunderstood element of the short story is *theme*. A theme is the concept or idea that underlies a story and gives it universal meaning. Theme is not synonymous with *moral*, however. A story may teach a lesson, as the Biblical account of Abraham and Isaac, but most modern short stories do not. Their themes are comments on life, not advice on how to live it.

Not all short stories are fiction. Read the true story found in Genesis 22:1–9 and try to discover the theme. Then complete the following activities.

- 1.1**
- What is the setting of the story? _____
 - How much do you learn from the story about the physical appearance of the land?

- 1.2**
- Who are the two main characters? _____
 - What do you know about them from the story? (Do not use any other Biblical passages as reference.) _____

- 1.3** Number these incidents 1 through 7 to indicate their chronological order in the story.
- _____ An angel appears to Abraham.
 - _____ Isaac asks where the ram is.
 - _____ God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.
 - _____ Abraham sees a ram in the thicket.
 - _____ Abraham sets out with Isaac for Moriah.
 - _____ Abraham binds Isaac and lays him on the altar.
 - _____ Abraham makes an altar.
- 1.4** Could the events of the plot have occurred in any other order? _____

1.5 Describe the effects of the incident on Abraham. _____

1.6 Without telling what happened in the story, briefly state its essence or theme. _____

The following short story, “Three Small Miracles,” explores the relationships of three characters: a teenage girl, her older brother, and their younger sister. The young people have been left alone in their home while their parents attend a church

conference in another town. The protagonist, Kelly, has been given an assignment she does not want to complete. The situation is ordinary enough, but it tests Kelly’s sense of responsibility, her honesty, and her love for her family.



Three Small Miracles

by Carol L. Thoma

Beyond the yellow ruffled curtains Kelly could see the bare branches of two elm trees, thin black arms framing the seeming emptiness of the winter sky. If she pulled the curtains closed, shutting out the bleakness, she would be trapped again in the too familiar, brightly colored bedroom, its floral bedspread and dainty white dressing table straight out of a mail-order catalog.

She closed her eyes and lay back on her bed. The view out her window was of no more use to her than the English book that lay face down on her desk. Nothing was going to inspire her to write a poem. Nothing. Her parents had chosen this weekend, of all weekends, to leave her and Robbie in charge of the house. True, he and Evelyn were leaving her alone, but the room was almost too quiet. She might as well be downstairs with the blaring radio and the barking dog. She could get as much accomplished.

Sighing, she got up from the bed. All right, she thought, frowning at her reflection in the dressing table mirror. It’s your own fault. What are you going to do about it?

She picked up a brush, furiously snapping the brush through her auburn hair until it stood out from her head in a frizzy, electric-charged cloud.

“Ludicrous,” she said, addressing her reflection. “A comic spectacle.”

“Who are you talking to?”

Kelly jumped, startled, and turned around. Her nine-year-old sister, Evelyn, was standing in the doorway.

“Did you ever hear of knocking?” demanded Kelly, smoothing back the wild hair with one hand and holding up the brush with the other.

Evelyn looked up at Kelly, her lower lip trembling and her eyes threatening tears. “You usually let me come in.”

“I’m sorry,” Kelly said. “You just startled me, that’s all.”

“Oh.” Evelyn flounced over to the bed, sitting down on it and smiling as she smoothed her dress. “Can I stay?”

“Why not? It won’t make any difference.”

“What do you mean? What are you trying to do?”

"Write a poem," Kelly said. She looked at the little girl, sitting so primly in her spotlessly clean dress, her white anklets neatly folded and unwrinkled. Evelyn had been blessed with their mother's smooth brown hair and blue eyes. The perfect child, Kelly thought. If only she had an intellect to match her curiosity.

"Why?" asked Evelyn.

Kelly sighed, flopping the hairbrush onto the dressing table. It landed with a loud clunk.

"Uhhmm," Evelyn said, rubbing her right index finger against her left one and raising her eyebrows.

Kelly picked up the brush and set it carefully back into place. "It's all right. It didn't damage the paint."

"Why are you writing a poem?" persisted Evelyn.

"Because it's required," Kelly said. "It's my English assignment. It's due tomorrow. First period."

"Oh," Evelyn said.

Oh, Kelly thought. Yes, it's that simple. Of course.

"I know a poem." Evelyn said.

"A poem?"

"Yes. I don't mean nursery rhymes and baby stuff. Robbie taught it to me."

"That's nice," Kelly said. Robbie! she thought. Why hadn't she realized it before? He was a genius at English, and he had been in the same class only a year before. He could help her if anyone could.

"Don't you want to hear my poem?" asked Evelyn pathetically.

Kelly glanced at the clock, an absurd little French provincial miniature with red rosette trim and pedestal legs. It read seven forty-two: she had forgotten to wind it again. "What time is it?" she asked.

With a brisk movement like a soldier's salute Evelyn produced the wristwatch that she had received for Christmas the year before and had not once misplaced or forgotten to wind. "Twelve fourteen," she announced.

"No wonder I'm hungry," Kelly said. "Let's go downstairs."

"But the poem—"

"Oh, all right. Let's hear it."

Evelyn beamed and stood up, her posture perfect and her hands behind her back, looking, Kelly thought, like Amy in *Little Women*. She suppressed a smile.

Evelyn began a monotone recitation. "The little toy dog is covered with dust—"

"—but sturdy and staunch he stands," interrupted Kelly. "Eugene Field."

"How did you know?"

"I just knew."

"But it's a beautiful poem."

"Heart-rending," Kelly said tartly. She felt a stab of remorse and took her sister's hand, smiling.

Evelyn snatched her hand away. "I'm not six."



"Of course not," Kelly said. "Evie, I'm sorry. I'll listen to your poem."

"You don't have to. You have more important things to do." Evelyn left, closing the door behind her. Kelly heard the soft thud of another door closing. Evelyn had gone to her room.

Kelly picked up her English book and smoothed the pages, debating whether to reread the chapter on **prosody**, and decided to talk to Robbie instead. She went downstairs.

Robbie, seventeen and smug in his temporary role as head of the household, smiled up at her from his easy chair. His completed calculus assignment lay on a table beside him. "Did you decide to make lunch?" he asked.

"Did I what?"

"Decide to make lunch," repeated Robbie. "It is noon, you know. Past noon, in fact."

"I'll make a can of soup."

"Why don't you make some sandwiches to go with it?"

"On one condition," Kelly said.

"What condition?"

"That you help me with my homework."

"What? Help you? You're supposed to be an honor student."

Kelly looked down at the calculus assignment, avoiding her brother's eyes. "I have to write a poem."

"You don't have to," Robbie said. "If you can't, you can't. I'm certainly not going to write it for you."

"I'm not asking you to. I just thought you might give me a little advice. An idea to work with or something."

"Don't you remember what the teacher told you?"

"No. I only remember one thing she said."

"Which was?"

"Let your subconscious emotions spill out onto the paper."

Robbie laughed. "For a teacher like that you want to produce a poem?"

"It's an assignment. I have to do it."

"One F isn't going to spoil your average."

"That's not the point. I'll know I failed."

"Pride," Robbie said, smiling angelically, "is a mortal sin."

"You're so perfect!" Kelly turned away abruptly, nearly tripping over Orphan, the dog, as she stormed out of the room. At the other end of the house, the phone began ringing furiously. Robbie leaned back in his chair, making no move to answer the phone, and Evelyn was nowhere in sight.

Kelly made a breathless rush to the kitchen but picked up the receiver just as the party at the other end hung up. "Oh, I give up," muttered Kelly, slamming down the receiver. She considered kicking the table leg but thought better of it and hugged Orphan instead, stroking him and burying her face in his orange fur. We're a pair of Orphan Annies, she thought. The phone rang again and she got up to answer it.

"Hamilton residence," she said. "No, I'm sorry, they're out at the moment.... No, sir, a church conference.... Yes, I'll take a message." She put down the telephone and found a pencil and paper, hastily scratching a message. "Yes, sir, I'll tell him.... Thank you.... Goodbye." She hung up.

"Who was that?" asked Robbie as she re-entered the family room.



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