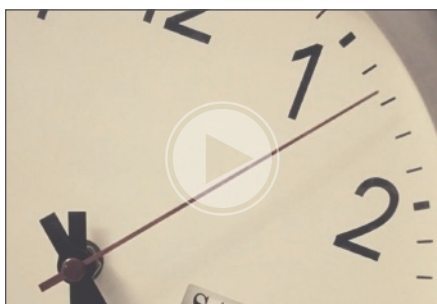



Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Tales

The American Short Story



Why Do Stories Matter? That's Like
Asking Why You Should Eat

 **Discuss It** Which of the thoughts expressed in this video are most similar to your own thoughts about stories?

Write your response before sharing your ideas.

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UNIT 6

UNIT INTRODUCTION

ESSENTIAL
QUESTION:

What do stories reveal about
the human condition?

LAUNCH TEXT
NARRATIVE MODEL
**Old Man at the
Bridge**
Ernest Hemingway

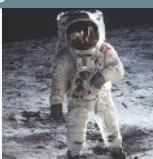


WHOLE-CLASS LEARNING

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Focus Period: 1950–Present

**A Fast-Changing
Society**



ANCHOR TEXT: SHORT STORY

Everyday Use

Alice Walker

MEDIA CONNECTION:
Alice Walker's
"Everyday Use"



ANCHOR TEXT: SHORT STORY

**Everything Stuck
to Him**

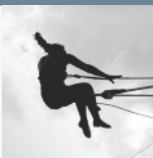
Raymond Carver



ANCHOR TEXT: SHORT STORY

The Leap

Louise Erdrich



PERFORMANCE TASK

WRITING FOCUS:

Write a Narrative

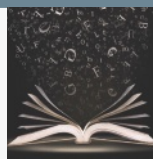


SMALL-GROUP LEARNING

LITERARY HISTORY

**A Brief History of
the Short Story**

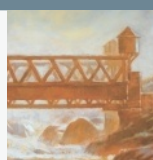
D. F. McCourt



SHORT STORY

**An Occurrence at
Owl Creek Bridge**

Ambrose Bierce



SHORT STORY

**The Jilting of
Granny Weatherall**

Katherine Anne Porter



PERFORMANCE TASK

SPEAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS:

Present a Narrative

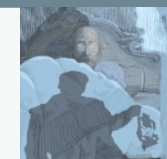


INDEPENDENT LEARNING

SHORT STORY

The Tell-Tale Heart

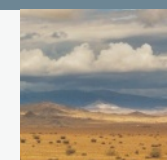
Edgar Allan Poe



SHORT STORY

**The Man to Send
Rain Clouds**

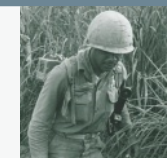
Leslie Marmon Silko



SHORT STORY

Ambush

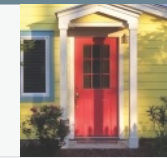
Tim O'Brien



SHORT STORY

Housepainting

Lan Samantha Chang



PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT PREP

Review Notes for a Narrative

PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT

Narrative: Short Story and Storytelling Session

PROMPT:

How does a fictional character or characters respond to life-changing news?

Unit Goals

Throughout this unit, you will deepen your perspective on how stories explore the human condition by reading, writing, speaking, listening, and presenting. These goals will help you succeed on the Unit Performance-Based Assessment.

Rate how well you meet these goals right now. You will revisit your ratings later when you reflect on your growth during this unit.

SCALE	1	2	3	4	5
	NOT AT ALL WELL	NOT VERY WELL	SOMEWHAT WELL	VERY WELL	EXTREMELY WELL
READING GOALS					
	1	2	3	4	5
• Analyze narratives to understand how authors order the action, introduce and develop characters, and introduce and develop multiple themes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Expand your knowledge and use of academic and concept vocabulary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WRITING AND RESEARCH GOALS					
	1	2	3	4	5
• Write a narrative text that uses effective narrative techniques to develop fictional experiences, events, and characters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Conduct research projects of various lengths to explore topics and clarify meaning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LANGUAGE GOALS					
	1	2	3	4	5
• Make effective style choices regarding figurative language and dialect.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Demonstrate an understanding of frequently confused words, passive voice, and sentence fragments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SPEAKING AND LISTENING GOALS					
	1	2	3	4	5
• Collaborate with your team to build on the ideas of others, develop consensus, and communicate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Integrate audio, visuals, and text to present information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

STANDARDS

L.11–12.6 Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.



Academic Vocabulary: Narrative Text

Understanding and using academic terms can help you read, write, and speak with precision and clarity. Here are five academic words that will be useful to you in this unit as you analyze and write fictional narratives.

Complete the chart.

1. Review each word, its root, and the mentor sentences.
2. Use the information and your own knowledge to predict the meaning of each word.
3. For each word, list at least two related words.
4. Refer to a dictionary or other resources if needed.

TIP

FOLLOW THROUGH

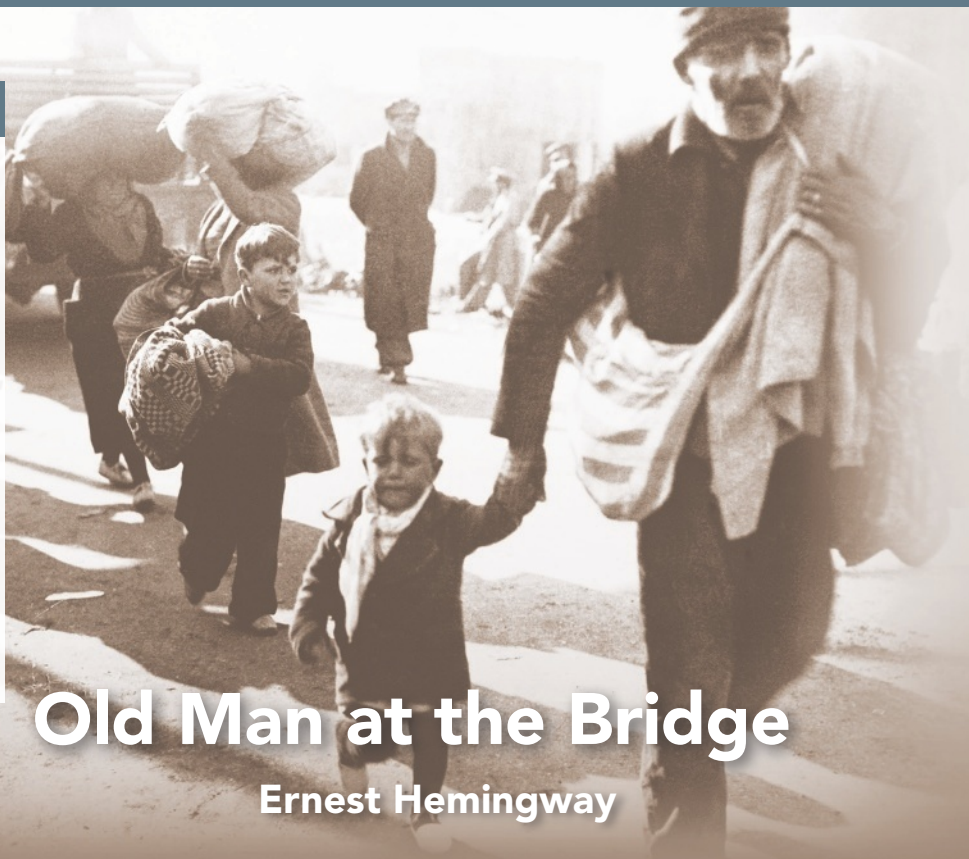
Study the words in this chart, and mark them or their forms wherever they appear in the unit.

WORD	MENTOR SENTENCES	PREDICT MEANING	RELATED WORDS
colloquial ROOT: -loqu- "speak"; "say"	1. When I was studying Spanish, I learned formal terms more easily than <i>colloquial</i> expressions. 2. I love how the poet combines cultured diction with <i>colloquial</i> language.		colloquially; colloquialism
protagonist ROOT: -agon- "contest"	1. Is the <i>protagonist</i> of the story really a talking dog? 2. In this movie, the <i>protagonist</i> must defeat a politician who has a sinister goal.		
tension ROOT: -tens- "stretch"	1. News of an important announcement increased the level of <i>tension</i> at school. 2. What <i>tension</i> I felt as my turn to speak drew close!		
resolution ROOT: -solv- "loosen"	1. In the play's <i>resolution</i> , the thief is caught and taken to jail. 2. The two sides in the dispute reached a surprising and imaginative <i>resolution</i> .		
epiphany ROOT: -phan-/phen- "show"	1. That <i>epiphany</i> changed my life because it made my career choice clear. 2. At the end of the story, Julia has an <i>epiphany</i> , but we aren't sure if she will act on that insight.		

LAUNCH TEXT | NARRATIVE MODEL

This selection is an example of a **narrative text**. It is a **fictional narrative** because it is narrated by a character and describes events that did not actually happen. This is the type of writing you will develop in the Performance-Based Assessment at the end of the unit.

As you read, look closely at the author's use of details and dialogue. Mark words and phrases that suggest the personalities of the narrator and the old man, as well as the tension of the situation in which they meet.



Old Man at the Bridge

Ernest Hemingway

1 **A**n old man with steel rimmed spectacles and very dusty clothes sat by the side of the road. There was a pontoon bridge across the river and carts, trucks, and men, women and children were crossing it. The mule-drawn carts staggered up the steep bank from the bridge with soldiers helping push against the spokes of the wheels. The trucks ground up and away heading out of it all and the peasants plodded along in the ankle deep dust. But the old man sat there without moving. He was too tired to go any farther.

2 It was my business to cross the bridge, explore the bridgehead beyond and find out to what point the enemy had advanced. I did this and returned over the bridge. There were not so many carts now and very few people on foot, but the old man was still there.

3 "Where do you come from?" I asked him.

4 "From San Carlos," he said, and smiled.

5 That was his native town and so it gave him pleasure to mention it and he smiled.

6 "I was taking care of animals," he explained.

7 "Oh," I said, not quite understanding.

8 "Yes," he said, "I stayed, you see, taking care of animals. I was the last one to leave the town of San Carlos."

9 He did not look like a shepherd nor a herdsman and I looked at his black dusty clothes and his gray dusty face and his steel rimmed spectacles and said, "What animals were they?"

10 "Various animals," he said, and shook his head. "I had to leave them."

11 I was watching the bridge and the African looking country of the Ebro Delta and wondering how long now it would be before we would see the enemy, and listening all the while for the first noises that would signal that ever mysterious event called contact, and the old man still sat there.

12 "What animals were they?" I asked.

13 "There were three animals altogether," he explained. "There were two goats and a cat and then there were four pairs of pigeons."

14 "And you had to leave them?" I asked.

15 "Yes. Because of the artillery. The captain told me to go because of the artillery."



- 16 “And you have no family?” I asked, watching the far end of the bridge where a few last carts were hurrying down the slope of the bank.
- 17 “No,” he said, “only the animals I stated. The cat, of course, will be all right. A cat can look out for itself, but I cannot think what will become of the others.”
- 18 “What politics have you?” I asked.
- 19 “I am without politics,” he said. “I am seventy-six years old. I have come twelve kilometers now and I think now I can go no further.”
- 20 “This is not a good place to stop,” I said. “If you can make it, there are trucks up the road where it forks for Tortosa.”
- 21 “I will wait a while,” he said, “and then I will go. Where do the trucks go?”
- 22 “Towards Barcelona,” I told him.
- 23 “I know no one in that direction,” he said, “but thank you very much. Thank you again very much.”
- 24 He looked at me very blankly and tiredly, then said, having to share his worry with some one, “The cat will be all right, I am sure. There is no need to be unquiet about the cat. But the others. Now what do you think about the others?”
- 25 “Why they’ll probably come through it all right.”

- 26 “You think so?”
- 27 “Why not,” I said, watching the far bank where now there were no carts.
- 28 “But what will they do under the artillery when I was told to leave because of the artillery?”
- 29 “Did you leave the dove cage unlocked?” I asked.
- 30 “Yes.”
- 31 “Then they’ll fly.”
- 32 “Yes, certainly they’ll fly. But the others. It’s better not to think about the others,” he said.
- 33 “If you are rested I would go,” I urged. “Get up and try to walk now.”
- 34 “Thank you,” he said and got to his feet, swayed from side to side and then sat down backwards in the dust.
- 35 “I was taking care of animals,” he said dully, but no longer to me. “I was only taking care of animals.”
- 36 There was nothing to do about him. It was Easter Sunday and the Fascists were advancing toward the Ebro. It was a gray overcast day with a low ceiling so their planes were not up. That and the fact that cats know how to look after themselves was all the good luck that old man would ever have. 🐾

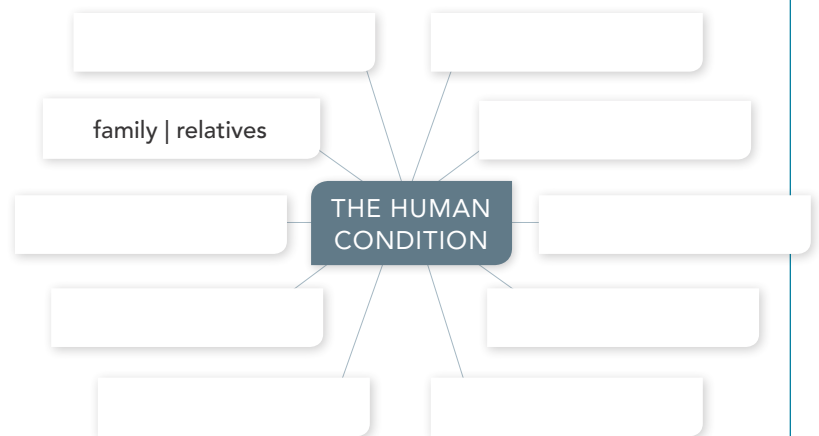


WORD NETWORK FOR ORDINARY LIVES, EXTRAORDINARY TALES

Vocabulary A Word Network is a collection of words related to a topic. As you read the unit selections, identify words related to the human condition and add them to your Word Network. For example, you might begin by adding words from the Launch Text, such as *family*. For each word you add, add a related word, such as a synonym or an antonym. Continue to add words as you complete this unit.



Tool Kit
Word Network Model



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OVERVIEW: WHOLE-CLASS LEARNING

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What do stories reveal about the human condition?

As you read these selections, work with your whole class to explore how short stories provide insights into what it means to be human.

From Text to Topic For one family, conflict over an heirloom highlights individual strengths and weaknesses, and suggests different ways of valuing the past. For one father and daughter, a present moment opens a window to a poignant memory. For one woman, a series of anecdotes reveals her mother's extraordinary character. As you read these stories, consider the understanding of human nature that informs each one—how it reveals qualities that we equate with the human condition, regardless of time or place.

Whole-Class Learning Strategies

Throughout your life, in school, in your community, and in your career, you will continue to learn and work in large-group environments.

Review these strategies and the actions you can take to practice them as you work with your whole class. Add ideas of your own for each step. Get ready to use these strategies during Whole-Class Learning.

STRATEGY	ACTION PLAN
Listen actively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminate distractions. For example, put your cellphone away.• Record brief notes on main ideas and points of confusion.•
Clarify by asking questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you're confused, other people probably are, too. Ask a question to help your whole class.• Ask follow-up questions as needed.•
Monitor understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notice what information you already know, and be ready to build on it.• Ask for help if you are struggling.•
Interact and share ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share your ideas and offer answers, even if you are unsure.• Build on the ideas of others by adding details or making a connection.•



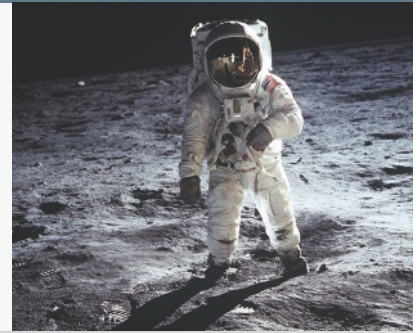
CONTENTS

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Focus Period: 1950–Present

A Fast-Changing Society

The years that span the middle of the twentieth century through the beginning of the twenty-first century were marked by unprecedented changes in society and technology. Americans related to each other in new ways and enjoyed the benefits of scientific progress.



ANCHOR TEXT: SHORT STORY

Everyday Use

Alice Walker

How can family keepsakes stir up tensions for members of different generations?

► MEDIA CONNECTION: Alice Walker's "Everyday Use"



ANCHOR TEXT: SHORT STORY

Everything Stuck to Him

Raymond Carver

A father's visit with his adult daughter evokes memories of early parenthood.



ANCHOR TEXT: SHORT STORY

The Leap

Louise Erdrich

What unexpected benefits might result from having a mother who was a trapeze artist?



PERFORMANCE TASK

WRITING FOCUS

Write a Narrative

The Whole-Class readings introduce you to characters with various motivations. After reading, you will write a story of your own, using an element of a story in this section as a model.



A Fast-Changing Society

Voices of the Period

“There is more recognition now that things are changing, but not because there is a political move to do it. It is simply a result of the information being there. Our survival won’t depend on political or economic systems. It’s going to depend on the courage of the individual to speak the truth, and to speak it lovingly and not destructively.”

—Buckminster Fuller, architect and inventor

“[E]xperience has taught me that you cannot value dreams according to the odds of their coming true. Their real value is in stirring within us the will to aspire.”

—Sonia Sotomayor, Supreme Court Justice

“Beyond work and love, I would add two other ingredients that give meaning to life. First, to fulfill whatever talents we are born with. However blessed we are by fate with different abilities and strengths, we should try to develop them to the fullest. . . . Second, we should try to leave the world a better place than when we entered it.”

—Michio Kaku, futurist, theoretical physicist, and author

History of the Period

Chasing the American Dream By the 1950s, postwar America was “on top of the world” with pride and confidence in its position as a world power. The nation had a booming economy and a booming population. As a result of a strong job market and the availability of federal loans to returning soldiers and other service personnel, Americans purchased houses in record numbers. More than eighty percent of new homes were in suburbs, which became the new lifestyle norm—a change made possible by the rise of “car culture.”

The Age of Aquarius Elected president in 1960, John F. Kennedy spearheaded new domestic and foreign programs, known collectively as the New Frontier. Among these initiatives was the goal of landing an American on the moon and the establishment of the Peace Corps, an overseas volunteer program. A national spirit of optimism turned to grief, however, when Kennedy was assassinated in 1963.

The escalating and increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam elicited waves of protest, with idealistic but strident demands for an end to the conflict, as well as changes in society. As the 1960s wore on, more and more Americans made strong assertions of their individuality. This new spirit of independence energized passions for justice and equality. Some Americans expressed idealistic values that called for an “Age of Aquarius”—an era of universal peace and love. At the same time, some Americans created a counterculture, seeking lifestyles that challenged the prevailing

TIMELINE

1950

1952: The U.S. detonates the first hydrogen bomb.



1957: President Eisenhower sends troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce high school integration.



1957: Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* is published.

1965: Congress passes the Voting Rights Act.



1963: President John F. Kennedy is assassinated.

norms in music, art, literature, occupations, speech, and dress.

Protest and Progress Although there were times of crisis and confrontation, the 1960s also was an era of genuine progress, especially in the continuing struggle for civil rights and racial equality. Civil rights leaders and other Americans, both black and white, protested segregation and racism. Violence and unrest spread as protestors faced resistance in places such as Birmingham and Selma, Alabama. The nation made momentous progress when, under the leadership of President Lyndon B. Johnson, Congress passed key legislation in 1964 and 1965 to counter racism. A century after constitutional amendments guaranteed rights to African Americans, the struggle to claim them continued.

Changing Roles Throughout the 1960s, American women struggled for greater economic and social power, changing the workforce and the political landscape in the process. In 1970, thousands of women marched to honor the fiftieth anniversary of women's suffrage. The women's movement continued to gain strength in the 1970s, with various groups forming to protest gender discrimination.

Following the lead of the civil rights and women's movements, other groups from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from Native Americans to migrant workers to gays and lesbians, organized to demand their rights. Over time, most Americans have come to appreciate the variety of perspectives that diversity can bring. Today, virtually every societal group has entered into the mainstream of American political, business, and artistic life.

Leadership and Conflict Voters sent Ronald Reagan, the Republican governor of California,

to the White House in 1980 and again in 1984.

George H. W. Bush, Reagan's vice president, was elected president in 1988 and sought reelection in 1992, but was defeated by Democrats Bill Clinton and his running mate, Al Gore—the youngest ticket in American history—who were reelected in 1996. In 2000, Vice President Al Gore lost his presidential bid to George Bush's son, George W. Bush. Bush was reelected in 2004. The contests of 2008 and 2012 resulted in historic victories, with the election and reelection of Barack Obama, the nation's first African American president.

9/11: A World Transformed The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, had an enormous impact on the American consciousness. In addition to the tragic loss of thousands of lives, the threat of terrorism brought profound changes to the sense of security and openness that Americans had long enjoyed. The 9/11 attacks also precipitated controversial military action in Afghanistan and later in Iraq. Today, the continued rise of global terrorism continues to challenge the world's safety.

Planet Earth In 1962, Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* exposed the sometimes catastrophic effect of human actions on the natural world. In 1972, American astronauts took a photograph of Earth that became famously known as "the big blue marble." Over the years, Americans have become increasingly aware of the importance of caring for the planet's health. In recent years, human-induced climate change—long a concern of scientists—has emerged as a significant issue in the public's consciousness and actions to slow its impact are widely discussed and argued about in the media and in government.

1968: Civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., is assassinated.



1969: Astronaut Neil Armstrong becomes the first person to set foot on the moon.

1972: Congress passes the Equal Rights Amendment, but it fails to achieve ratification.



1973: The last U.S. combat troops leave Vietnam, where war has been waged since 1955.

1974: President Richard Nixon resigns after the Watergate crisis.

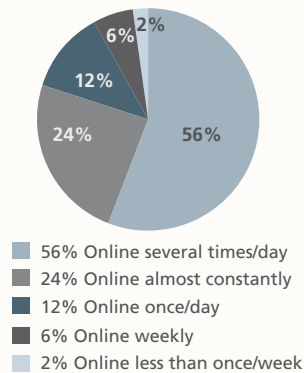
1980



Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Notebook According to this survey, what total percentage of teenagers go online at least once a day? What do the graph and table suggest about entertainment among today's teens?

Teenagers Online, 2015



Teenagers and Video Games, 2015

Own or have access to a game console



Play video games online or on their phone



Source: Pew Research Center's Teens Relationship Survey 2014, 2015

A Technological Revolution With the introduction of the microprocessor in the 1970s, life shifted dramatically. In a breathtakingly short time, computers—which began as military and business tools—transformed industry and became personal companions for many Americans. Ever smaller, faster, and easier to use, technology—via the Internet—can now electronically connect anyone with everyone, raising complex questions about privacy and personal relations.

The New Millennium Despite technological advances, traditional issues still dominate human affairs. How do—and how should—human beings relate to the natural world? How can people of different cultures live together peacefully? How can people build a better future? One thing is certain: Although the world will continue to change as the new millennium moves forward, Americans will continue to explore new aspects and applications of the principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

TIMELINE

1980



1981: IBM releases its first personal computer.

1982: Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* is published.



1989: Germany The Berlin Wall, constructed in 1961, comes down.

1991: South Africa Apartheid, the system of racial segregation, is repealed.

1991: USSR The Soviet Union is dissolved, resulting in the formation of fifteen independent nations.

Literature Selections

Literature of the Focus Period Some of the selections in this unit were written during the Focus Period and pertain to an exploration of the human condition:

- "Everyday Use," Alice Walker
- "Everything Stuck to Him," Raymond Carver
- "The Leap," Louise Erdrich
- "A Brief History of the Short Story," D. F. McCourt
- "The Man to Send Rain Clouds," Leslie Marmon Silko
- "Ambush," Tim O'Brien
- "Housepainting," Lan Samantha Chang

Connections Across Time Literary works that consider aspects of the human condition are not confined to the Focus Period, of course. They have been a topic of interest in every era of literature in every culture since ancient times. These American short stories are from a period that precedes the Focus Period by several decades:

- "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," Ambrose Bierce
- "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," Katherine Anne Porter
- "The Tell-Tale Heart," Edgar Allan Poe

ADDITIONAL FOCUS PERIOD LITERATURE

Student Edition

UNIT 1

"Speech to the Young
Speech to the Progress-Toward,"
Gwendolyn Brooks

"The Pedestrian," Ray Bradbury

UNIT 2

"Sweet Land of . . . Conformity?"
Claude Fischer

"Hamadi," Naomi Shihab Nye

UNIT 3

from *The Warmth of Other Suns*, Isabel
Wilkerson

"Books as Bombs," Louis Menand

UNIT 4

"In the Longhouse, Oneida Museum,"
Roberta Hill

"Cloudy Day," Jimmy Santiago Baca

"The Rockpile," James Baldwin

UNIT 5

The Crucible, Arthur Miller

from *Farewell to Manzanar*, Jeanne
Wakatsuki Houston and James D.
Houston

"What You Don't Know Can Kill You,"
Jason Daley

"Runagate Runagate," Robert Hayden

"For Black Women Who Are Afraid,"
Toi Derricote

"What Are You So Afraid Of?" Akiko
Busch



1993: Toni Morrison wins the Nobel Prize for Literature.

1996: Scotland "Dolly" the sheep becomes the first mammal to be cloned from an adult cell.



2001: Terrorists use commercial planes to attack the United States on 9/11, killing some 3,000 people.

2008: Barack Obama is elected the first African American president of the United States.



2010: The population of the United States reaches 308.7 million.

Present



About the Author



When **Alice Walker** (b. 1944) was eight, she suffered an injury that blinded her in one eye and left her scarred. For comfort, she turned to reading and writing poetry. Later, she became a highly successful writer with many bestsellers—among them the novel *The Color Purple*, a 1983 Pulitzer Prize winner. Her writing is renowned for its keen observations about relationships and for its strong personal voice. Walker has also published numerous short-story collections and many volumes of poetry.

Tool Kit

First-Read Guide and Model Annotation

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Everyday Use

Concept Vocabulary

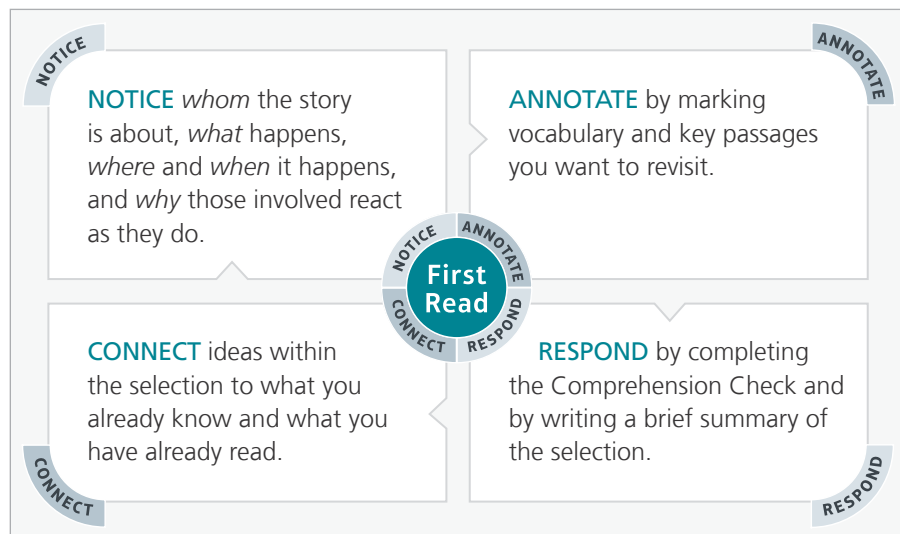
You will encounter the following words as you read “Everyday Use.” Before reading, note how familiar you are with each word. Then, rank the words in order from most familiar (1) to least familiar (6).

WORD	YOUR RANKING
sidle	
shuffle	
furtive	
cowering	
awkward	
hangdog	

After completing the first read, come back to the concept vocabulary and review your rankings. Mark changes to your original rankings as needed.

First Read FICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete the close-read notes after your first read.



Everyday Use

Alice Walker

BACKGROUND

Quilts play an important part in this story. Quilting, in which layers of fabric and padding are sewn together, dates back to the Middle Ages and perhaps even to ancient Egypt. Today, quilts serve both practical and aesthetic purposes: keeping people warm, recycling old clothing, providing focal points for social gatherings, preserving precious bits of family history, and adding color and beauty to a home. Pay attention to how these purposes relate to the tension that arises among the characters you meet in this story.

SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA



- 1 **I** will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon. A yard like this is more comfortable than most people know. It is not just a yard. It is like an extended living room. When the hard clay is swept clean as a floor and the fine sand around the edges lined with tiny, irregular grooves, anyone can come and sit and look up into the elm tree and wait for the breezes that never come inside the house.
- 2 Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: she will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eyeing her sister with a mixture of envy and awe. She thinks her sister has held life always in the palm of one hand, that “no” is a word the world never learned to say to her.

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 2, mark the adjectives that describe Maggie.

QUESTION: Why does the author choose these adjectives?

CONCLUDE: What portrait of Maggie do these adjectives help paint?

- 3 You've no doubt seen those TV shows where the child who has "made it" is confronted, as a surprise, by her own mother and father, tottering in weakly from backstage. (A pleasant surprise, of course: What would they do if parent and child came on the show only to curse out and insult each other?) On TV mother and child embrace and smile into each other's faces. Sometimes the mother and father weep, the child wraps them in her arms and leans across the table to tell how she would not have made it without their help. I have seen these programs.
- 4 Sometimes I dream a dream in which Dee and I are suddenly brought together on a TV program of this sort. Out of a dark and soft-seated limousine I am ushered into a bright room filled with many people. There I meet a smiling, gray, sporty man like Johnny Carson who shakes my hand and tells me what a fine girl I have. Then we are on the stage and Dee is embracing me with tears in her eyes. She pins on my dress a large orchid, even though she has told me once that she thinks orchids are tacky flowers.
- 5 In real life I am a large, big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands. In the winter I wear flannel nightgowns to bed and overalls during the day. I can kill and clean a hog as mercilessly as a man. My fat keeps me hot in zero weather. I can work outside all day, breaking ice to get water for washing; I can eat pork liver cooked over the open fire minutes after it comes steaming from the hog. One winter I knocked a bull calf straight in the brain between the eyes with a sledge hammer and had the meat hung up to chill before nightfall. But of course all of this does not show on television. I am the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake. My hair glistens in the hot bright lights. Johnny Carson has much to do to keep up with my quick and witty tongue.
- 6 But that is a mistake. I know even before I wake up. Who ever knew a Johnson with a quick tongue? Who can even imagine me looking a strange white man in the eye? It seems to me I have talked to them always with one foot raised in flight, with my head turned in whichever way is farthest from them. Dee, though. She would always look anyone in the eye. Hesitation was no part of her nature.
- 7 "How do I look, Mama?" Maggie says, showing just enough of her thin body enveloped in pink skirt and red blouse for me to know she's there, almost hidden by the door.
- 8 "Come out into the yard," I say.
- 9 Have you ever seen a lame animal, perhaps a dog run over by some careless person rich enough to own a car, **sidle** up to someone who is ignorant enough to be kind to him? That is the way my Maggie walks. She has been like this, chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in **shuffle**, ever since the fire that burned the other house to the ground.

sidle (SY duhl) v. move sideways, as in an unobtrusive, stealthy, or shy manner

shuffle (SHUHF uhl) n. dragging movement of the feet over the ground or floor without lifting them

- 10 Dee is lighter than Maggie, with nicer hair and a fuller figure. She's a woman now, though sometimes I forget. How long ago was it that the other house burned? Ten, twelve years? Sometimes I can still hear the flames and feel Maggie's arms sticking to me, her hair smoking and her dress falling off her in little black papery flakes. Her eyes seemed stretched open, blazed open by the flames reflected in them. And Dee. I see her standing off under the sweet gum tree she used to dig gum out of; a look of concentration on her face as she watched the last dingy gray board of the house fall in toward the red-hot brick chimney. Why don't you do a dance around the ashes? I'd want to ask her. She had hated the house that much.
- 11 I used to think she hated Maggie, too. But that was before we raised the money, the church and me, to send her to Augusta to school. She used to read to us without pity; forcing words, lies, other folks' habits, whole lives upon us two, sitting trapped and ignorant underneath her voice. She washed us in a river of make-believe, burned us with a lot of knowledge we didn't necessarily need to know. Pressed us to her with the serious way she read, to shove us away at just the moment, like dimwits, we seemed about to understand.
- 12 Dee wanted nice things. A yellow organdy dress to wear to her graduation from high school; black pumps to match a green suit she'd made from an old suit somebody gave me. She was determined to stare down any disaster in her efforts. Her eyelids would not flicker for minutes at a time. Often I fought off the temptation to shake her. At sixteen she had a style of her own, and knew what style was.
- 13 I never had an education myself. After second grade the school was closed down. Don't ask me why: in 1927 colored asked fewer questions than they do now. Sometimes Maggie reads to me. She stumbles along good-naturedly but can't see well. She knows she is not bright. Like good looks and money, quickness passed her by. She will marry John Thomas (who has mossy teeth in an earnest face) and then I'll be free to sit here and I guess just sing church songs to myself. Although I never was a good singer. Never could carry a tune. I was always better at a man's job. I used to love to milk till I was hooved in the side in '49. Cows are soothing and slow and don't bother you, unless you try to milk them the wrong way.
- 14 I have deliberately turned my back on the house. It is three rooms, just like the one that burned, except the roof is tin; they don't make shingle roofs any more. There are no real windows, just some holes cut in the sides, like the portholes in a ship, but not round and not square, with rawhide holding the shutters up on the outside. This house is in a pasture, too, like the other one. No doubt when Dee sees it she will want to tear it down. She wrote me once that no matter where we "choose" to live, she will manage to come see us. But she will never bring her friends. Maggie and I thought about this and Maggie asked me, "Mama, when did Dee ever *have* any friends?"

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 14, mark Maggie's response to Dee's declaration about never bringing friends to Mama's house.

QUESTION: What is surprising about this response?

CONCLUDE: What might this response signal to readers?

NOTES

furtive (FUHR tihv) *adj.*
done or acting in a stealthy
manner to avoid being
noticed; secret

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 20, mark sentence fragments—groups of words punctuated as sentences that do not contain both a subject and a verb.

QUESTION: Why does the author use fragments in this description?

CONCLUDE: How does the use of fragments add to the drama or tension of the moment?

- 15 She had a few. **Furtive** boys in pink shirts hanging about on washday after school. Nervous girls who never laughed. Impressed with her they worshiped the well-turned phrase, the cute shape, the scalding humor that erupted like bubbles in lye.¹ She read to them.
- 16 When she was courting Jimmy T she didn't have much time to pay to us, but turned all her faultfinding power on him. He *flew* to marry a cheap city girl from a family of ignorant flashy people. She hardly had time to recompose herself.
- 17 When she comes I will meet—but there they are!
- 18 Maggie attempts to make a dash for the house, in her shuffling way, but I stay her with my hand. "Come back here," I say. And she stops and tries to dig a well in the sand with her toe.
- 19 It is hard to see them clearly through the strong sun. But even the first glimpse of leg out of the car tells me it is Dee. Her feet were always neat-looking, as if God himself had shaped them with a certain style. From the other side of the car comes a short, stocky man. Hair is all over his head a foot long and hanging from his chin like a kinky mule tail. I hear Maggie suck in her breath. "Uhhnnh," is what it sounds like. Like when you see the wriggling end of a snake just in front of your foot on the road. "Uhhnnh."
- 20 Dee next. A dress down to the ground, in this hot weather. A dress so loud it hurts my eyes. There are yellows and oranges enough to throw back the light of the sun. I feel my whole face warming from the heat waves it throws out. Earrings gold, too, and hanging down to her shoulders. Bracelets dangling and making noises when she moves her arm up to shake the folds of the dress out of her armpits. The dress is loose and flows, and as she walks closer, I like it. I hear Maggie go "Uhhnnh" again. It is her sister's hair. It stands straight up like the wool on a sheep. It is black as night and around the edges are two long pigtails that rope about like small lizards disappearing behind her ears.
- 21 "Wa-su-zo-Teen-o!"² she says, coming on in that gliding way the dress makes her move. The short stocky fellow with the hair to his navel is all grinning and he follows up with "Asalamalakim,³ my mother and sister!" He moves to hug Maggie but she falls back, right up against the back of my chair. I feel her trembling there and when I look up I see the perspiration falling off her chin.
- 22 "Don't get up," says Dee. Since I am stout it takes something of a push. You can see me trying to move a second or two before I make it. She turns, showing white heels through her sandals, and goes back to the car. Out she peeks next with a Polaroid. She stoops down quickly and lines up picture after picture of me sitting there in front

1. **lye** (ly) *n.* strong alkaline solution used in cleaning and making soap.

2. **Wa-su-zo-Teen-o** (wah soo zoh TEEN oh) "Good morning" in Lugandan, a language spoken in the African country of Uganda.

3. **Asalamalakim** *Salaam aleikhim* (suh LAHM ah LY keem) Arabic greeting meaning "Peace be with you" that is commonly used by Muslims.

of the house with Maggie **cowering** behind me. She never takes a shot without making sure the house is included. When a cow comes nibbling around the edge of the yard she snaps it and me and Maggie and the house. Then she puts the Polaroid in the back seat of the car, and comes up and kisses me on the forehead.

23 Meanwhile Asalamalakim is going through motions with Maggie's hand. Maggie's hand is as limp as a fish, and probably as cold, despite the sweat, and she keeps trying to pull it back. It looks like Asalamalakim wants to shake hands but wants to do it fancy. Or maybe he don't know how people shake hands. Anyhow, he soon gives up on Maggie.

24 "Well," I say. "Dee."

25 "No, Mama," she says. "Not 'Dee,' Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo!"

26 "What happened to 'Dee'?" I wanted to know.

27 "She's dead." Wangero said. "I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me."

28 "You know as well as me you was named after your aunt Dicie," I said. Dicie is my sister. She named Dee. We called her "Big Dee" after Dee was born.

29 "But who was *she* named after?" asked Wangero.

30 "I guess after Grandma Dee," I said.

31 "And who was she named after?" asked Wangero.

32 "Her mother," I said, and saw Wangero was getting tired. "That's about as far back as I can trace it," I said. Though, in fact, I probably could have carried it back beyond the Civil War through the branches.

33 "Well," said Asalamalakim, "there you are."

34 "Uhhnnh," I heard Maggie say.

35 "There I was not," I said, "before 'Dicie' cropped up in our family, so why should I try to trace it that far back?"

36 He just stood there grinning, looking down on me like somebody inspecting a Model A car. Every once in a while he and Wangero sent eye signals over my head.

37 "How do you pronounce this name?" I asked.

38 "You don't have to call me by it if you don't want to," said Wangero.

39 "Why shouldn't I?" I asked. "If that's what you want us to call you, we'll call you."

40 "I know it might sound **awkward** at first," said Wangero.

41 "I'll get used to it," I said. "Ream it out again."

42 Well, soon we got the name out of the way. Asalamalakim had a name twice as long and three times as hard. After I tripped over it two or three times he told me to just call him Hakim-a-barber. I wanted to ask him was he a barber, but I didn't really think he was, so I didn't ask.

43 "You must belong to those beef-cattle people down the road," I said. They said "Asalamalakim" when they met you, too, but they didn't shake hands. Always too busy: feeding the cattle, fixing the fences,

NOTES

cowering (KOW uhr ihng) *adj.*
crouching or drawing back
in fear or shame

"I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me."

awkward (AWK wuhrd) *adj.*
not graceful or skillful in
movement or shape; clumsy

putting up salt-lick shelters, throwing down hay. When the white folks poisoned some of the herd the men stayed up all night with rifles in their hands. I walked a mile and a half just to see the sight.

44 Hakim-a-barber said, "I accept some of their doctrines, but farming and raising cattle is not my style." (They didn't tell me, and I didn't ask, whether Wangero (Dee) had really gone and married him.)

45 We sat down to eat and right away he said he didn't eat collards⁴ and pork was unclean. Wangero, though, went on through the chitlins⁵ and corn bread, the greens and everything else. She talked a blue streak over the sweet potatoes. Everything delighted her. Even the fact that we still used the benches her daddy made for the table when we couldn't afford to buy chairs.

46 "Oh, Mama!" she cried. Then turned to Hakim-a-barber. "I never knew how lovely these benches are. You can feel the rump prints," she said, running her hands underneath her and along the bench. Then she gave a sigh and her hand closed over Grandma Dee's butter dish. "That's it!" she said. "I knew there was something I wanted to ask you if I could have." She jumped up from the table and went over in the corner where the churn stood, the milk in it clabber by now. She looked at the churn and looked at it.

47 "This churn top is what I need," she said. "Didn't Uncle Buddy whittle it out of a tree you all used to have?"

48 "Yes," I said.

49 "Uh huh," she said happily. "And I want the dasher, too."

50 "Uncle Buddy whittle that, too?" asked the barber.

51 Dee (Wangero) looked up at me.

52 "Aunt Dee's first husband whittled the dash," said Maggie so low you almost couldn't hear her. "His name was Henry, but they called him Stash."

53 "Maggie's brain is like an elephant's," Wangero said, laughing. "I can use the churn top as a centerpiece for the alcove table," she said, sliding a plate over the churn, "and I'll think of something artistic to do with the dasher."

54 When she finished wrapping the dasher the handle stuck out. I took it for a moment in my hands. You didn't even have to look close to see where hands pushing the dasher up and down to make butter had left a kind of sink in the wood. In fact, there were a lot of small sinks; you could see where thumbs and fingers had sunk into the wood. It was beautiful light yellow wood, from a tree that grew in the yard where Big Dee and Stash had lived.

55 After dinner Dee (Wangero) went to the trunk at the foot of my bed and started rifling through it. Maggie hung back in the kitchen over the dishpan. Out came Wangero with two quilts. They had been pieced by Grandma Dee and then Big Dee and me had hung them on the quilt frames on the front porch and quilted them. One was in the Lone Star pattern. The other was Walk Around the Mountain. In both of them

4. **collards** *n.* leaves of the collard plant, often referred to as "collard greens."

5. **chitlins** *n.* chitterlings, a pork dish popular among southern African Americans.

were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn fifty and more years ago. Bits and pieces of Grandpa Jarrell's Paisley shirts. And one teeny faded blue piece, about the size of a penny matchbox, that was from Great Grandpa Ezra's uniform that he wore in the Civil War.

56 "Mama," Wangero said sweet as a bird. "Can I have these old quilts?"

57 I heard something fall in the kitchen, and a minute later the kitchen door slammed.

58 "Why don't you take one or two of the others?" I asked. "These old things was just done by me and Big Dee from some tops your grandma pieced before she died."

59 "No," said Wangero. "I don't want those. They are stitched around the borders by machine."

60 "That'll make them last better," I said.

61 "That's not the point," said Wangero. "These are all pieces of dresses Grandma used to wear. She did all this stitching by hand. Imagine!" She held the quilts securely in her arms, stroking them.

62 "Some of the pieces, like those lavender ones, come from old clothes her mother handed down to her," I said, moving up to touch the quilts. Dee (Wangero) moved back just enough so that I couldn't reach the quilts. They already belonged to her.

63 "Imagine!" she breathed again, clutching them closely to her bosom.

64 "The truth is," I said, "I promised to give them quilts to Maggie, for when she marries John Thomas."

65 She gasped like a bee had stung her.

66 "Maggie can't appreciate these quilts!" she said. "She'd probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use."

67 "I reckon she would," I said. "God knows I been saving 'em for long enough with nobody using 'em. I hope she will!" I didn't want to bring up how I had offered Dee (Wangero) a quilt when she went away to college. Then she had told me they were old-fashioned, out of style.

68 "But they're *priceless*!" she was saying now, furiously; for she has a temper. "Maggie would put them on the bed and in five years they'd be in rags. Less than that!"

69 "She can always make some more," I said. "Maggie knows how to quilt."

70 Dee (Wangero) looked at me with hatred. "You just will not understand. The point is these quilts, *these quilts*!"

71 "Well," I said, stumped. "What would *you* do with them?"

72 "Hang them," she said. As if that was the only thing you *could* do with quilts.

73 Maggie by now was standing in the door. I could almost hear the sound her feet made as they scraped over each other.

74 "She can have them, Mama," she said, like somebody used to never winning anything, or having anything reserved for her.

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 55, mark details that describe the fabrics used in the quilts.

QUESTION: Why does the author include this information?

CONCLUDE: How does this information affect readers' sympathies?



NOTES

hangdog (HANG DAWG) *adj.*
sad; ashamed; guilty

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 76, mark the sentences in which Mama expresses Maggie's feelings and thoughts.

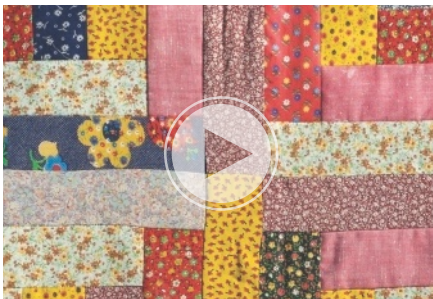
QUESTION: Why does the author choose to have Mama express Maggie's feelings?

CONCLUDE: How does this choice emphasize differences in Mama's relationships with her two daughters?

- 75 "I can 'member Grandma Dee without the quilts."
76 I looked at her hard. She had filled her bottom lip with checkerberry snuff and it gave her face a kind of dopey, **hangdog** look. It was Grandma Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself. She stood there with her scarred hands hidden in the folds of her skirt. She looked at her sister with something like fear but she wasn't mad at her. This was Maggie's portion. This was the way she knew God to work.
- 77 When I looked at her like that something hit me in the top of my head and ran down to the soles of my feet. Just like when I'm in church and the spirit of God touches me and I get happy and shout. I did something I never had done before: hugged Maggie to me, then dragged her on into the room, snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap. Maggie just sat there on my bed with her mouth open.
- 78 "Take one or two of the others," I said to Dee.
79 But she turned without a word and went out to Hakim-a-barber.
80 "You just don't understand,'" she said, as Maggie and I came out to the car.
81 "What don't I understand?" I wanted to know.
82 "Your heritage," she said. And then she turned to Maggie, kissed her, and said, "You ought to try to make something of yourself, too, Maggie. It's really a new day for us. But from the way you and Mama still live you'd never know it."
83 She put on some sunglasses that hid everything above the tip of her nose and her chin.
84 Maggie smiled; maybe at the sunglasses. But a real smile, not scared. After we watched the car dust settle I asked Maggie to bring me a dip of snuff. And then the two of us sat there just enjoying, until it was time to go in the house and go to bed. 🐼

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MEDIA CONNECTION



Alice Walker's "Everyday Use"

Discuss It How does listening to someone tell this story help you understand Mama and the tensions among the characters?


Write your response before sharing your ideas.

SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA



Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. Early in the story, how does Mama describe herself?
2. According to Mama, how did Dee treat her and Maggie when she came home from college?
3. Who arrives with Dee/Wangero on this visit?
4. Why has Dee changed her name to Wangero?
5. What household objects does Dee/Wangero want? Which ones does Mama give her?
6.  **Notebook** To confirm your understanding, write a summary of “Everyday Use.”

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story?

Research to Explore Conduct research on an aspect of the text you find interesting. For example, you may want to learn about the Black Power movement of the 1970s that led to the cultural nationalism Dee/Wangero and Asalamalakim find appealing.



EVERYDAY USE

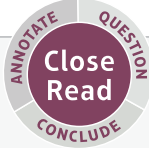
Close Read the Text

1. This model, from paragraph 10 of the text, shows two sample annotations, along with questions and conclusions. Close read the passage, and find another detail to annotate. Then, write a question and your conclusion.

ANNOTATE: These details contrast the two daughters' reactions to the fire.

QUESTION: Why does the author include these details?

CONCLUDE: The details emphasize Maggie's involvement and Dee's distance.



Sometimes I can still . . . feel Maggie's arms sticking to me, her hair smoking and her dress falling off her in little black papery flakes. . . . And Dee. I see her standing off under the sweet gum tree. . . . Why don't you do a dance around the ashes? I'd want to ask her.

ANNOTATE: This question is sarcastic and funny.

QUESTION: What does this detail reveal about Mama?

CONCLUDE: Mama is not naive; she has good insight about her daughters.

2. For more practice, go back into the text and complete the close-read notes.
3. Revisit a section of the text you found important during your first read. Read this section closely, and **annotate** what you notice. Ask yourself **questions** such as "Why did the author make this choice?" What can you **conclude**?

Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

 **Notebook** Respond to these questions.

1. **Make Inferences** What does Mama's dream of being on Johnny Carson's show illustrate about her relationship to Dee/Wangero?
2. (a) **Interpret** What do the quilts symbolize, or represent?
(b) **Compare and Contrast** In what ways do the quilts hold different meanings for Dee/Wangero and for Maggie?
3. (a) What does Dee/Wangero plan to do with the items that she requests?
(b) **Evaluate** What is ironic about her request for these objects and her professed interest in her heritage?
4. **Historical Perspectives** How do Dee/Wangero's and her companion's clothing and overall appearances reflect a change in African American culture in the 1960s?
5. **Essential Question:** *What do stories reveal about the human condition?* What has reading this story taught you about family relationships?

Tool Kit

Close-Read Guide and
Model Annotation

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11–12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.


Analyze Craft and Structure

Literary Elements: Character Writers reveal key messages or themes in stories through **characterization**—what characters say, what they do, and how they interact with other characters.

Short stories often feature a main character as a first-person narrator. It is through this character's eyes that readers learn about events and perceive the other characters. This first-person narrator serves as a guide through the world of the story, presenting his or her thoughts, feelings, observations, and perceptions. Inevitably, every narrator comes with biases, or leanings, so readers have to decide how much they trust the narrator's interpretation of events. The perspective the first-person narrator brings to the story is a key element that leads readers to the story's **themes**, or insights about life.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

 **Notebook** Respond to these questions.

1. (a) Who is the narrator of "Everyday Use"? (b) Identify three thoughts and feelings that the narrator shares with readers. (c) Do you trust this narrator's account of people and events? Explain.
2. In the chart, record details about Mama and Dee/Wangero related to their appearances, life experiences, relationships, and values. Then, identify a possible theme that Walker develops by setting up contrasts between these two characters.

MAMA	DEE (WANGERO)
THEME:	

3. Think about the words and actions of Hakim-a-barber. How does the inclusion of this character help develop other characters in the story?



EVERYDAY USE

Concept Vocabulary

sidle	furtive	awkward
shuffle	cowering	hangdog

Why These Words? These concept vocabulary words help reveal the tentative way Maggie acts in the story. Mama describes Maggie as *cowering* behind her and as moving her feet in a *shuffle*. These words describe a person who wants to be invisible.

1. How do the concept vocabulary words help you understand why Mama and Dee/Wangero have different attitudes toward Maggie?
2. What other words in the selection connect to this concept?

Practice

Notebook The concept vocabulary words appear in “Everyday Use.”

1. Write three sentences, using two of the concept words in each sentence, to demonstrate your understanding of the words’ meanings.
2. Choose an antonym—a word with an opposite meaning—for each concept vocabulary word. How would the story be different if these words were used to describe Maggie?

Word Study

Exocentric Compounds Most compound words contain at least one word part that connects directly to what is being named or described. For example, the compound word *sunflower* names a type of flower. Some compound words, however, connect two words of which neither names the thing or person described. These **exocentric compound** words are often used to name or describe people—for example, *tattletale*, *birdbrain*, and *pickpocket*. In “Everyday Use,” the narrator describes Maggie as having “a dopey, hangdog look.” *Hangdog* means “guilty” or “ashamed.”

1. Use a dictionary to find five examples of exocentric compounds. Record them here.
2. Use each of your choices in a sentence. Be sure to include context clues that hint at each word’s meaning.

WORD NETWORK

Add words related to the human condition from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

L.11–12.1.a Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

L.11–12.1.b Resolve issues of complex or contested usage, consulting references as needed.

L.11–12.3.a Vary syntax for effect, consulting references for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.

Conventions and Style

Dialect Writers may use dialect and regionalisms to add depth to characters and settings.

- **Dialect** is a way of using English that is specific to a certain area or group of people.
- **A regionalism** is an expression common to a specific place.

These nonstandard forms of language can make characters more realistic by reflecting culture, customs, and educational levels.


Read It

1. Study the examples of dialogue in this chart. Then, use formal English to rewrite each sentence. One example has been done for you.

FROM "EVERYDAY USE"	FORMAL ENGLISH
"You know as well as me you was named after your aunt Dicie." (paragraph 28)	"You know as well as I do that you were named after your aunt Dicie."
"I'll get used to it. . . . Ream it out again." (paragraph 41)	
"The truth is . . . I promised to give them quilts to Maggie, for when she marries John Thomas." (paragraph 64)	
"I reckon she would. . . . God knows I been saving 'em for long enough with nobody using 'em." (paragraph 67)	

2. **Connect to Style** Find one other example of dialect or regionalism in "Everyday Use." Explain how the example develops a character or the setting.

Write It

 **Notebook** Use examples from "Everyday Use" to describe what would be lost if Alice Walker had chosen to write dialogue using the same style that she uses for description.



EVERYDAY USE

Writing to Sources

Narrative writing would be dull if it only reported basic events. However, vivid descriptive details about setting and characters can bring a narrative to life and engage readers. For example, recall how the narrator in “Everyday Use” describes Maggie: “Have you ever seen a lame animal, perhaps a dog run over by some careless person rich enough to own a car, sidle up to someone who is ignorant enough to be kind to him?” This description helps readers picture precisely how Maggie moves and acts around other people.

Assignment

Write a short **narrative** of 500 words or less in which you retell an event from “Everyday Use” from the perspective of a character other than Mama. You may choose to describe Dee’s visit or an event from the past. Make sure your narrative is consistent with the characters and setting created by Walker. Include descriptive details that illustrate the character’s thoughts and engage the reader.

Include these elements in your narrative:

- a narrator other than Mama from “Everyday Use”
- a clear description of the event, including how the narrator feels about it
- dialect or regionalisms in dialogue or narration, as appropriate

Vocabulary Connection Consider including a few of the concept vocabulary words in your narrative.

sidle	furtive	awkward
shuffle	cowering	hangdog

STANDARDS

W.11–12.3.a–e Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

SL.11–12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on *grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11–12.1.a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

Reflect on Your Writing

After you have written your short narrative, answer these questions.

1. How did writing your narrative strengthen your understanding of Walker’s story?
2. What part of writing this narrative was most challenging, and how did you handle it?
3. **Why These Words?** The words you choose make a difference in your writing. Which words did you choose to create vivid descriptive details?

Speaking and Listening

Assignment

Have a **partner discussion** about what factors lead a person to embrace, reject, or feel neutral about his or her heritage. Before working with your partner, think about the two daughters' perspectives on heritage, and take notes about how the text inspires your own thoughts on the subject. As you discuss, build on one another's ideas, asking respectful questions, listening politely, and adding your own insights. At the end of your discussion, create an extended definition of *heritage*. Follow these steps to complete the assignment.

1. **Focus on the Text** Choose examples from the story.
 - Consider ways the author indirectly describes characters.
 - Compare and contrast the three women's attitudes toward objects in the house.
 - Discuss what the story's resolution says about heritage.
2. **Share Personal Experiences** Share your own experiences with heritage and traditions in your family. Consider questions such as the following:
 - What are some objects in your home or family that are part of a heritage or tradition?
 - How and when are these objects used? Every day? Only on holidays?
 - Does everyone recognize the objects as special?
3. **Craft an Extended Definition** To create an extended definition of *heritage*, come to a consensus about the most important ideas to include.
 - Summarize your notes in three main points.
 - Summarize your personal experiences with heritage.
 - Draft and refine an extended definition that includes all of your most important thoughts.
4. **Evaluate the Activity** When you have finished, use the evaluation guide to analyze the way that you and your partner worked together to discuss a topic and create an extended definition.

EVALUATION GUIDE

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 (not demonstrated) to 5 (demonstrated).

- ☐ Both partners contributed equally to the discussion.
- ☐ Partners commented upon the text and also shared personal experiences.
- ☐ Partners were attentive to and respectful of the thoughts presented.
- ☐ Partners worked collaboratively to create an extended definition of *heritage*.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from "Everyday Use."



About the Author



Born in a small Oregon logging town to a mill worker and a waitress, **Raymond Carver** (1938–1988) drew heavily from his life in his stories about the hardships of the working poor. By age twenty, Carver had two children and was struggling to support his family, taking on a series of jobs as a janitor, a sawmill worker, and a gas-station attendant. In 1958, he took a creative writing class, and soon he began to work nights and study writing during the day. His earliest acclaim was for his 1967 story “Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?” In 1971, he began a decade-long partnership with the editor Gordon Lish, who encouraged a “less-is-more” writing approach. Carver’s writing became lean and sparse, earning him a reputation as an expert minimalist and one of the greatest storytellers of his time.

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Everything Stuck to Him

Concept Vocabulary

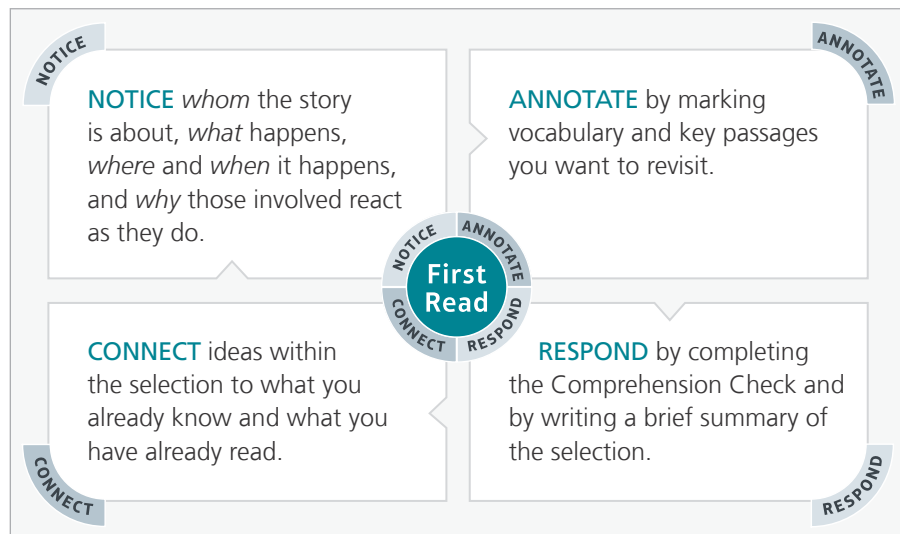
You will encounter the following words as you read “Everything Stuck to Him.” Before reading, note how familiar you are with each word. Then, rank the words in order from most familiar (1) to least familiar (4).

WORD	YOUR RANKING
waterfowl	
letterhead	
overcast	
shotgun	

After completing the first read, come back to the concept vocabulary and review your rankings. Mark changes to your original rankings as needed.

First Read FICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete the close-read notes after your first read.



Everything Stuck to Him

Raymond Carver

BACKGROUND

This is a frame story, or a story within a story. There are many frame narratives in world literature, including the *Arabian Nights* and *The Canterbury Tales*. “The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County,” by Mark Twain (in Unit 4), is an American example. In frame narratives, the introductory story is typically of secondary importance to the internal one. Consider whether this is true of Carver’s tale.

SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA



- 1 **S**he’s in Milan for Christmas and wants to know what it was like when she was a kid.
- 2 Tell me, she says. Tell me what it was like when I was a kid. She sips Strega,¹ waits, eyes him closely.
- 3 She is a cool, slim, attractive girl, a survivor from top to bottom.
- 4 That was a long time ago. That was twenty years ago, he says.
- 5 You can remember, she says. Go on.
- 6 What do you want to hear? he says. What else can I tell you? I could tell you about something that happened when you were a baby. It involves you, he says. But only in a minor way.

1. **Strega** Italian herbal liqueur.

NOTES

waterfowl (WAWT uhr fowl)
n. birds that live in or near water

letterhead (LEHT uhr hehd)
n. personalized stationery

- 7 Tell me, she says. But first fix us another so you won't have to stop in the middle.
- 8 He comes back from the kitchen with drinks, settles into his chair, begins.
- 9 They were kids themselves, but they were crazy in love, this eighteen-year-old boy and this seventeen-year-old girl when they married. Not all that long afterwards they had a daughter.
- 10 The baby came along in late November during a cold spell that just happened to coincide with the peak of the **waterfowl** season. The boy loved to hunt, you see. That's part of it.
- 11 The boy and girl, husband and wife, father and mother, they lived in a little apartment under a dentist's office. Each night they cleaned the dentist's place upstairs in exchange for rent and utilities. In summer they were expected to maintain the lawn and the flowers. In winter the boy shoveled snow and spread rock salt on the walks. Are you still with me? Are you getting the picture?
- 12 I am, she says.
- 13 That's good, he says. So one day the dentist finds out they were using his **letterhead** for their personal correspondence. But that's another story.
- 14 He gets up from his chair and looks out the window. He sees the tile rooftops and the snow that is falling steadily on them.
- 15 Tell the story, she says.
- 16 The two kids were very much in love. On top of this they had great ambitions. They were always talking about the things they were going to do and the places they were going to go.



- 17 Now the boy and girl slept in the bedroom, and the baby slept in the living room. Let's say the baby was about three months old and had only just begun to sleep through the night.
- 18 On this one Saturday night after finishing his work upstairs, the boy stayed in the dentist's office and called an old hunting friend of his father's.
- 19 Carl, he said when the man picked up the receiver, believe it or not, I'm a father.
- 20 Congratulations, Carl said. How is the wife?
- 21 She's fine, Carl. Everybody's fine.
- 22 That's good, Carl said, I'm glad to hear it. But if you called about going hunting, I'll tell you something. The geese are flying to beat the band. I don't think I've ever seen so many. Got five today. Going back in the morning, so come along if you want to.
- 23 I want to, the boy said.
- 24 The boy hung up the telephone and went downstairs to tell the girl. She watched while he laid out his things. Hunting coat, shell bag, boots, socks, hunting cap, long underwear, pump gun.
- 25 What time will you be back? the girl said.
- 26 Probably around noon, the boy said. But maybe as late as six o'clock. Would that be too late?
- 27 It's fine, she said. The baby and I will get along fine. You go and have some fun. When you get back, we'll dress the baby up and go visit Sally.
- 28 The boy said, Sounds like a good idea.
- 29 Sally was the girl's sister. She was striking. I don't know if you've seen pictures of her. The boy was a little in love with Sally, just as he

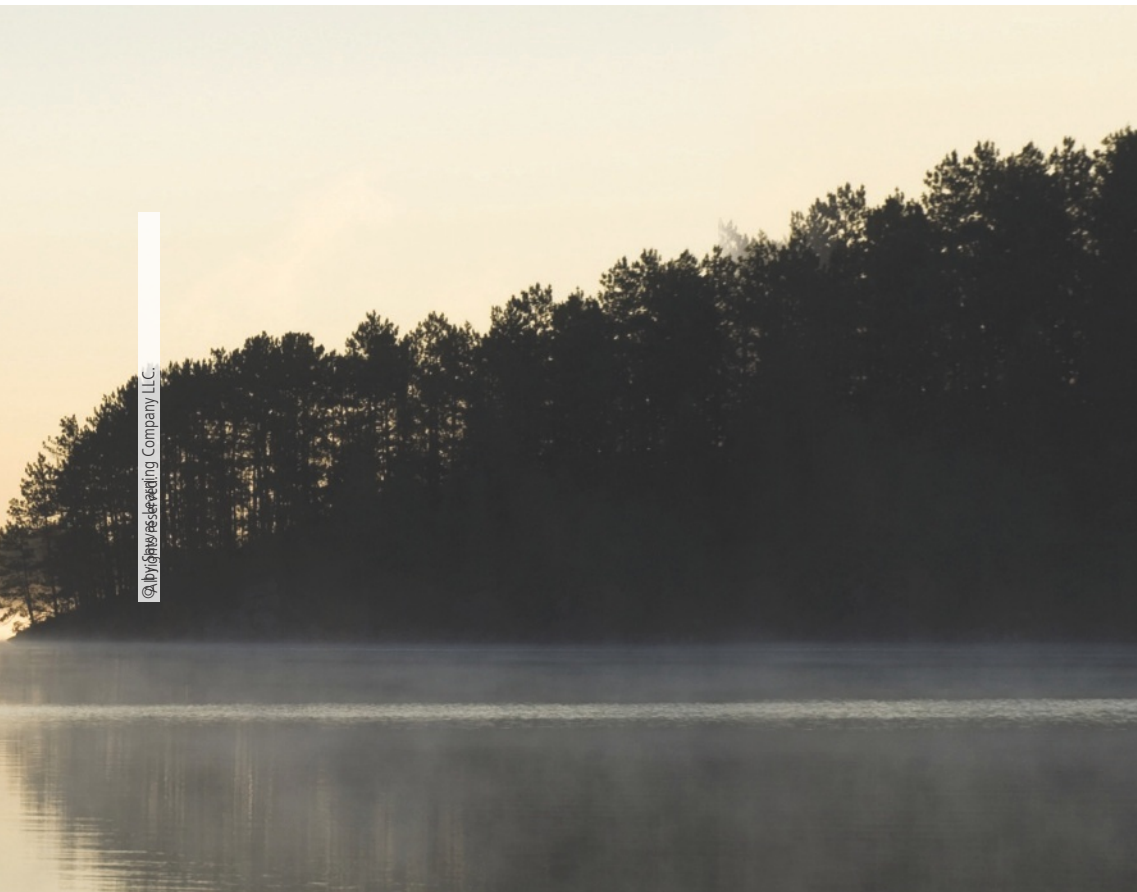
NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraphs 18–24, mark the phrases that the author uses to refer to the two protagonists of the remembered (internal) story.

QUESTION: Why does the author name Carl, a minor character, but leave the two protagonists unnamed?

CONCLUDE: What effect does this choice have on the way that readers perceive the characters?



overcast (OH vuhr kast) *adj.*
covered with clouds, as a
gray sky

shotgun (SHOT guhn) *n.* gun
with a long, smooth barrel,
that is often used to fire
“shot,” or small, pellet-like
ammunition

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraphs
39–45, mark the repeated
actions of the baby.

QUESTION: Why does the
author repeat references to
this action?

CONCLUDE: How does this
repeated detail add to the
effect of the remembered
story?

was a little in love with Betsy, who was another sister the girl had. The boy used to say to the girl, If we weren’t married, I could go for Sally.

30 What about Betsy? the girl used to say. I hate to admit it, but I truly feel she’s better looking than Sally and me. What about Betsy?

31 Betsy too, the boy used to say.

32 After dinner he turned up the furnace and helped her bathe the baby. He marveled again at the infant who had half his features and half the girl’s. He powdered the tiny body. He powdered between fingers and toes.

33 He emptied the bath into the sink and went upstairs to check the air. It was **overcast** and cold. The grass, what there was of it, looked like canvas, stiff and gray under the street light.

34 Snow lay in piles beside the walk. A car went by. He heard sand under the tires. He let himself imagine what it might be like tomorrow, geese beating the air over his head, **shotgun** plunging against his shoulder.

35 Then he locked the door and went downstairs.

36 In bed they tried to read. But both of them fell asleep, she first, letting the magazine sink to the quilt.

37 It was the baby’s cries that woke him up.

38 The light was on out there, and the girl was standing next to the crib rocking the baby in her arms. She put the baby down, turned out the light, and came back to the bed.

39 He heard the baby cry. This time the girl stayed where she was. The baby cried fitfully and stopped. The boy listened, then dozed. But the baby’s cries woke him again. The living room light was burning. He sat up and turned on the lamp.

40 I don’t know what’s wrong, the girl said, walking back and forth with the baby. I’ve changed her and fed her, but she keeps on crying. I’m so tired I’m afraid I might drop her.

41 You come back to bed, the boy said. I’ll hold her for a while.

42 He got up and took the baby, and the girl went to lie down again.

43 Just rock her for a few minutes, the girl said from the bedroom. Maybe she’ll go back to sleep.

44 The boy sat on the sofa and held the baby. He jiggled it in his lap until he got its eyes to close, his own eyes closing right along. He rose carefully and put the baby back in the crib.

45 It was a quarter to four, which gave him forty-five minutes. He crawled into bed and dropped off. But a few minutes later the baby was crying again, and this time they both got up.

46 The boy did a terrible thing. He swore.

47 For God’s sake, what’s the matter with you? the girl said to the boy. Maybe she’s sick or something. Maybe we shouldn’t have given her the bath.

48 The boy picked up the baby. The baby kicked its feet and smiled.

- 49 Look, the boy said, I really don't think there's anything wrong with her.
- 50 How do you know that? the girl said. Here, let me have her. I know I ought to give her something, but I don't know what it's supposed to be.
- 51 The girl put the baby down again. The boy and the girl looked at the baby, and the baby began to cry.
- 52 The girl took the baby. Baby, baby, the girl said with tears in her eyes.
- 53 Probably it's something on her stomach, the boy said.
- 54 The girl didn't answer. She went on rocking the baby, paying no attention to the boy.
- 55 The boy waited. He went to the kitchen and put on water for coffee. He drew his woolen underwear on over his shorts and T-shirt, buttoned up, then got into his clothes.
- 56 What are you doing? the girl said.
- 57 Going hunting, the boy said.
- 58 I don't think you should, she said. I don't want to be left alone with her like this.
- 59 Carl's planning on me going, the boy said. We've planned it.
- 60 I don't care about what you and Carl planned, she said. And I don't care about Carl, either. I don't even know Carl.
- 61 You've met Carl before. You know him, the boy said. What do you mean you don't know him?
- 62 That's not the point and you know it, the girl said.
- 63 What is the point? the boy said. The point is we planned it.
- 64 The girl said, I'm your wife. This is your baby. She's sick or something. Look at her. Why else is she crying?
- 65 I know you're my wife, the boy said.
- 66 The girl began to cry. She put the baby back in the crib. But the baby started up again. The girl dried her eyes on the sleeve of her nightgown and picked the baby up.
- 67 The boy laced up his boots. He put on his shirt, his sweater, his coat. The kettle whistled on the stove in the kitchen.
- 68 You're going to have to choose, the girl said. Carl or us. I mean it.
- 69 What do you mean? the boy said.
- 70 You heard what I said, the girl said. If you want a family, you're going to have to choose.
- 71 They stared at each other. Then the boy took up his hunting gear and went outside. He started the car. He went around to the car windows and, making a job of it, scraped away the ice.
- 72 He turned off the motor and sat awhile. And then he got out and went back inside.

If you want a family, you're going to have to choose.

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraphs 74–84, mark the main parts of speech—nouns, verbs, and any adjectives or adverbs.


QUESTION: Why does the author omit most modifiers?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of the author's choice to limit the types of words used in this scene?

- 73 The living-room light was on. The girl was asleep on the bed. The baby was asleep beside her.
- 74 The boy took off his boots. Then he took off everything else. In his socks and his long underwear, he sat on the sofa and read the Sunday paper.
- 75 The girl and the baby slept on. After a while, the boy went to the kitchen and started frying bacon.
- 76 The girl came out in her robe and put her arms around the boy.
- 77 Hey, the boy said.
- 78 I'm sorry, the girl said.
- 79 It's all right, the boy said.
- 80 I didn't mean to snap like that.
- 81 It was my fault, he said.
- 82 You sit down, the girl said. How does a waffle sound with bacon?
- 83 Sounds great, the boy said.
- 84 She took the bacon out of the pan and made waffle batter. He sat at the table and watched her move around the kitchen.
- 85 She put a plate in front of him with bacon, a waffle. He spread butter and poured syrup. But when he started to cut, he turned the plate into his lap.
- 86 I don't believe it, he said, jumping up from the table.
- 87 If you could see yourself, the girl said.
- 88 The boy looked down at himself, at everything stuck to his underwear.
- 89 I was starved, he said, shaking his head.
- 90 You were starved, she said, laughing.
- 91 He peeled off the woolen underwear and threw it at the bathroom door. Then he opened his arms and the girl moved into them.
- 92 We won't fight anymore, she said.
- 93 The boy said, We won't.
- 94 He gets up from his chair and refills their glasses.
- 95 That's it, he says. End of story. I admit it's not much of a story.
- 96 I was interested, she says.
- 97 He shrugs and carries his drink over to the window. It's dark now but still snowing.
- 98 Things change, he says. I don't know how they do. But they do without your realizing it or wanting them to.
- 99 Yes, that's true, only—But she does not finish what she started.
- 100 She drops the subject. In the window's reflection he sees her study her nails. Then she raises her head. Speaking brightly, she asks if he is going to show her the city, after all.
- 101 He says, Put your boots on and let's go.
- 102 But he stays by the window, remembering. They had laughed. They had leaned on each other and laughed until the tears had come, while everything else—the cold, and where he'd go in it—was outside, for a while anyway. ❄️

Comprehension Check

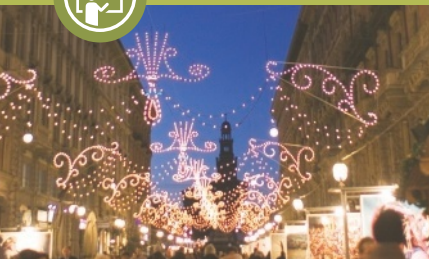
Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. Where and at what time of year does the introductory story take place?
2. How old are the boy and girl in the internal story?
3. What does the boy want to do on Sunday?
4. What causes the quarrel between the young husband and wife?
5. What event at breakfast explains the story's title?
6.  **Notebook** Write a summary of "Everything Stuck to Him" to confirm your understanding of the text.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the story. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story?

Research to Explore Conduct research on an aspect of the text you find interesting. Think about ways in which your research helped deepen your understanding of the story.



EVERYTHING STUCK TO HIM

Close Read the Text

1. This model, from paragraph 11 of the text, shows two sample annotations, along with questions and conclusions. Close read the passage, and find another detail to annotate. Then, write a question and your conclusion.

ANNOTATE: The narrator uses third-person pronouns.

QUESTION: Why does the narrator use this point of view?

CONCLUDE: The narrator may be trying to distance himself from the person he was.

Each night **they** cleaned the dentist's place upstairs in exchange for rent and utilities. In summer **they** were expected to maintain the lawn and the flowers. In winter **the boy** shoveled snow and spread rock salt on the walks. **Are you still with me? Are you getting the picture?**

ANNOTATE: The narrator asks two questions.

QUESTION: Why do these questions appear here?

CONCLUDE: The narrator is pausing to check his daughter's understanding of the story thus far.



Tool Kit

Close-Read Guide and Model Annotation

2. For more practice, go back into the text, and complete the close-read notes.
3. Revisit a section of the text you found important during your first read. Read this section closely, and **annotate** what you notice. Ask yourself **questions** such as "Why did the author make this choice?" What can you **conclude**?

Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE to support your answers.



Notebook Respond to these questions.

1. **Make Inferences** What does the daughter's request suggest about her relationship to her father?
2. (a) **Interpret** Why might the boy have been so eager to go hunting with Carl? (b) **Support** What details in the text support your interpretation?
3. **Make a Judgment** Was the girl right to insist that the boy stay home? Explain your answer.
4. **Historical Perspectives** Could this story have taken place in any historical period, or do you see evidence that the tale is specifically anchored in the mid-twentieth century? Explain.
5. **Essential Question: What do stories reveal about the human condition?** What have you learned about relationships and youth by reading this text?

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11–12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Analyze Craft and Structure

Narrative Structure A **frame story** is a narrative that consists of two parts: an introductory story and an internal story. The narrative begins and ends with the **introductory story**, which frames the **internal story** like bookends.

- In this narrative structure, the internal story, or story-within-a-story, is typically the more important tale.
- The internal story usually takes place in another time and place.
- The narrator of the introductory story may or may not be a character in the internal story.

Practice

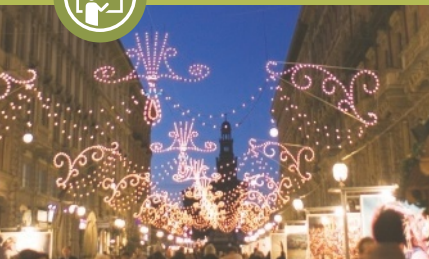
CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

 **Notebook** Respond to these questions.

1. In which paragraph does the internal story begin? How do you know?
2. Use this chart to record notes about the internal story in “Everything Stuck to Him.”

ELEMENTS	DETAILS AND IMAGES
Setting	
Characters	
Conflict	
Climax	
Resolution	

3. Suppose that the internal story had a first-person narrator. How do you think the story’s emotional impact would be different? Explain.
4. Reread paragraphs 93–99, when the narrative returns to the introductory story.
 - (a) What do you think the father may mean when he says, “Things change”?
 - (b) Why do you think the adult daughter “does not finish what she started”?



EVERYTHING STUCK TO HIM

Concept Vocabulary

waterfowl

letterhead

overcast

shotgun

Why These Words? The concept vocabulary words are all compound words. They help create a sense of the internal story's setting and action. For example, the sky was *overcast*, and the boy planned to hunt *waterfowl*.

1. How does the concept vocabulary clarify the reader's understanding of the internal story's setting and action?
2. What other compound words in the selection can you identify?

Practice



Notebook The concept vocabulary words appear in "Everything Stuck to Him."

1. Use each word in a sentence that demonstrates your understanding of the word's meaning.
2. Challenge yourself to replace each concept vocabulary word in the sentences you wrote with one or two related words. How does each word change affect the meaning of your original sentence?

Word Study

Endocentric Compounds A compound word is made up of two or more individual words. An **endocentric compound** combines one word that conveys the basic meaning and a modifier that restricts or specifies the meaning of the word. For example, the compound word *waterfowl* combines the words *water* and *fowl*. The modifier *water* describes the type of fowl, or bird.

1. Find five examples of endocentric compounds, and record them.
2. For each word, note the base word and the modifier. Finally, provide a definition of each word.



WORD NETWORK

Add words related to the human condition from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

L.11–12.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L.11–12.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Conventions and Style

Pronouns and Antecedents An experienced writer may stretch or break the rules and conventions of standard English in order to achieve an effect, create a personal style, or capture the reader's attention.

Carver purposely breaks English conventions in “Everything Stuck to Him.” For example, he does not enclose dialogue with quotation marks. He also leaves the subjects of some sentences deliberately ambiguous, or unclear. This is especially true when the subjects of his sentences are **pronouns**, words that stand for a person, place, or thing, without a clear **antecedent**, what the pronoun refers to.

EXAMPLE

“**She’s** in Milan for Christmas and wants to know what it was like when she was a kid.”

The pronoun *she* does not have a clear antecedent. Readers need to gather details over the next few paragraphs before concluding that “She” is the narrator’s adult daughter.

TIP

FOLLOW THROUGH

Refer to the Grammar Handbook to learn more about these terms.


Read It

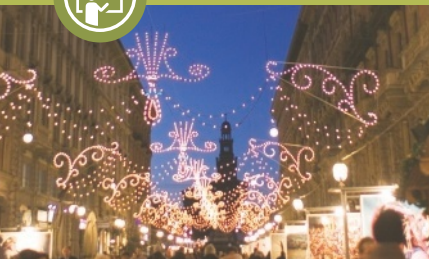
1. Analyze examples of pronouns in Carver’s story that lack a clear antecedent. In the right-hand column, rewrite the example so that the meaning is clear.

PASSAGE	REWRITE
The boy loved to hunt, you see. That’s part of it. (paragraph 10)	When he was younger, the narrator loved to hunt. His love of hunting will be an important part of the story.
He gets up from his chair and looks out the window. (paragraph 14)	
It’s fine, she said. (paragraph 27)	
That’s not the point and you know it, the girl said. (paragraph 62)	
It was my fault, he said. (paragraph 81)	

2. **Connect to Style** Reread paragraphs 94–95 of “Everything Stuck to Him.” Mark the pronouns, and identify their antecedents. Then, write a possible explanation of why Carver leaves pronoun-antecedent relationships unclear. What effect does this ambiguity have on readers?

Write It

 **Notebook** Choose a short passage from “Everything Stuck to Him” that contains unclear antecedents, and rewrite it to be unambiguous. Then, explain how the rewrite changes the impact of the passage.



EVERYTHING STUCK TO HIM

Writing to Sources

Narrative writing often contains factual details that make the plot and setting seem realistic, even when the story is fictional.

Assignment

Colic is a condition in which an otherwise healthy baby cries for extended periods of time. Conduct research on colic and its effects on newborns and parents. Then, integrate the information you find into a realistic **narrative scene** that shows how the boy and the girl in “Everything Stuck to Him” might have reacted if they had known what colic is and whether or not their baby had it.

Your narrative should include:

- information about colic and its effects
- details from “Everything Stuck to Him,” used as background to develop events and dialogue
- a minimalist style consistent with Carver’s

Vocabulary and Conventions Connection In your narrative, consider including several of the concept vocabulary words. Consider whether ambiguous pronouns will help you create an effective narrative.

waterfowl

letterhead

overcast

shotgun

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.3 Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.

W.11–12.3.a–e Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

SL.11–12.4.a Plan and deliver a reflective narrative that: explores the significance of a personal experience, event, or concern; uses sensory language to convey a vivid picture; includes appropriate narrative techniques; and draws comparisons between the specific incident and broader themes.

SL.11–12.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Reflect on Your Writing

After you have written your narrative, answer the following questions.

1. How did your effort to imitate Carver’s style influence your understanding of his story and writing style?
2. What details about colic or characteristics of the boy and the girl characters did you use in your writing? How did they help support your narrative?
3. **Why These Words?** The words you choose make a difference in your writing. Which words helped you to convey important ideas precisely?

Speaking and Listening

Assignment

With a partner, improvise a **dialogue** between the father and his daughter that continues the conversation they were having at the end of “Everything Stuck to Him.” Once you have polished and rehearsed your dialogue, present it to the class. After your presentation, lead a whole-class discussion about how the dialogue connected to the story and continued its themes. Follow these steps to complete the assignment.

1. **Analyze the Characters** With your partner, discuss the relationship between the father and his daughter. Decide what the daughter was starting to say at the end of the story before she changed the subject. Draw a conclusion about what happened to the mother. Make sure your decisions are consistent with information in the story.
2. **Plan Your Dialogue** As you develop your dialogue, focus on each character’s motivations. Why is the daughter bringing this topic up now? Is there anything the father has been wanting to say to his daughter? Do the characters want to reach an understanding or resolution before their dialogue is over?
3. **Prepare Your Delivery** Practice your dialogue with your partner. Pay attention to nonverbal methods of communication, such as tone, pitch, volume, pacing, facial expressions, and body language.
4. **Evaluate Dialogues** As your classmates deliver their dialogues, listen carefully. Use an evaluation guide like the one shown to analyze their dialogues.

EVALUATION GUIDE

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 (not demonstrated) to 4 (demonstrated).

- ☐ Partners clearly enacted the characters and the situation.
- ☐ Partners crafted a dialogue consistent with the story.
- ☐ Partners communicated clearly and expressively.
- ☐ Partners used a variety of speaking tones and pitches.
- ☐ Partners used gestures and other body language effectively.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from “Everything Stuck to Him.”



About the Author



Award-winning novelist, poet, and short-story writer **Louise Erdrich** (b.1954) was born to a German American father and a mother who was half Chippewa. In a popular series of interrelated novels, including *Love Medicine* (1984) and *The Beet Queen* (1986), Erdrich describes the lives of three families living in a fictional North Dakota town. Native American traditions and lore have greatly influenced Erdrich's writing, which often merges local history with current issues and employs multiple narrators to reflect a complex variety of perspectives. Her 2012 novel *The Round House* won the National Book Award.

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

The Leap

Concept Vocabulary

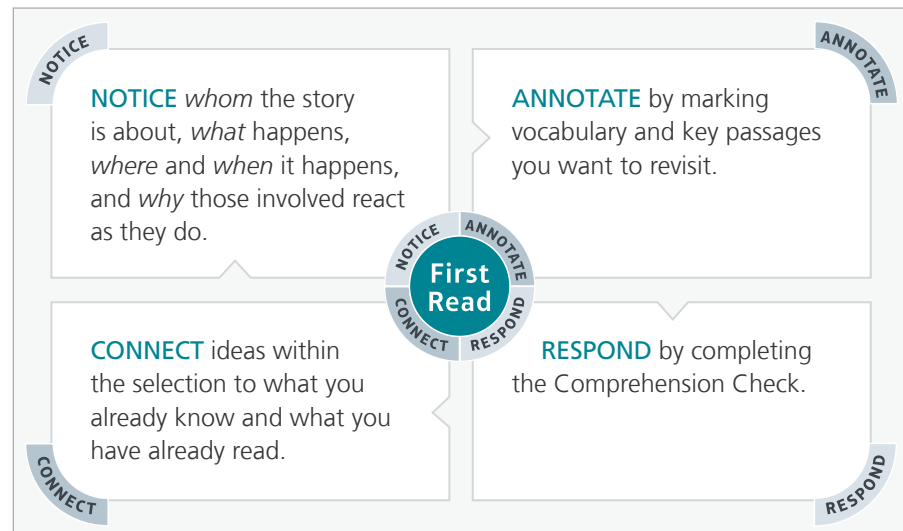
You will encounter the following words as you read “The Leap.” Before reading, note how familiar you are with each word. Then, rank the words in order from most familiar (1) to least familiar (6).

WORD	YOUR RANKING
encroaching	
instantaneously	
anticipation	
constricting	
perpetually	
superannuated	

After completing the first read, come back to the concept vocabulary and review your rankings. Mark changes to your original rankings as needed.

First Read FICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete the close-read notes after your first read.





The Leap

Louise Erdrich

BACKGROUND

Traveling circuses first came to the United States from Great Britain in 1793 and quickly established themselves as a part of American popular culture. Showcasing a variety of performers—including clowns, animal trainers, and trapeze artists—circuses would draw and thrill crowds in large cities and small towns alike.

SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA



- 1 **M**y mother is the surviving half of a blindfold trapeze act, not a fact I think about much even now that she is sightless, the result of **encroaching** and stubborn cataracts. She walks slowly through her house here in New Hampshire, lightly touching her way along walls and running her hands over knickknacks, books, the drift of a grown child's belongings and castoffs. She has never upset an object or as much as brushed a magazine onto the floor. She has never lost her balance or bumped into a closet door left carelessly open.
- 2 It has occurred to me that the catlike precision of her movements in old age might be the result of her early training, but she shows so little of the drama or flair one might expect from a performer that I tend to forget the Flying Avalons. She has kept no sequined costume, no photographs, no fliers or posters from that part of her youth. I would, in fact, tend to think that all memory of double somersaults and heart-stopping catches had left her arms and legs were it not for the fact that sometimes, as I sit sewing in the room of the rebuilt house in which I slept as a child, I hear the crackle, catch a whiff of smoke from the stove downstairs, and suddenly the room goes dark, the stitches burn beneath my fingers, and I am sewing with a needle of hot silver, a thread of fire.

NOTES

encroaching (ehn KROHCH ihng) *adj.* intruding; steadily advancing

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 2, mark descriptive words and phrases in the final sentence.

QUESTION: Why might the author have chosen to craft such a long, almost poetic, sentence to follow two ordinary sentences?

CONCLUDE: What overall effect does this sentence create?

instantaneously (ihn stuhn TAY nee uhs lee) *adv.* immediately

anticipation (an tihs uh PAY shuhn) *n.* eager expectation

- 3 I owe her my existence three times. The first was when she saved herself. In the town square a replica tent pole, cracked and splintered, now stands cast in concrete. It commemorates the disaster that put our town smack on the front page of the Boston and New York tabloids. It is from those old newspapers, now historical records, that I get my information. Not from my mother, Anna of the Flying Avalons, nor from any of her in-laws, nor certainly from the other half of her particular act, Harold Avalon, her first husband. In one news account it says, “The day was mildly overcast, but nothing in the air or temperature gave any hint of the sudden force with which the deadly gale would strike.”
- 4 I have lived in the West, where you can see the weather coming for miles, and it is true that out here we are at something of a disadvantage. When extremes of temperature collide, a hot and cold front, winds generate **instantaneously** behind a hill and crash upon you without warning. That, I think, was the likely situation on that day in June. People probably commented on the pleasant air, grateful that no hot sun beat upon the striped tent that stretched over the entire center green. They bought their tickets and surrendered them in **anticipation**. They sat. They ate caramelized popcorn and roasted peanuts. There was time, before the storm, for three acts. The White Arabians¹ of Ali-Khazar rose on their hind legs and waltzed. The Mysterious Bernie folded himself into a painted cracker tin, and the Lady of the Mists made herself appear and disappear in surprising places. As the clouds gathered outside, unnoticed, the ringmaster cracked his whip, shouted his introduction, and pointed to the ceiling of the tent, where the Flying Avalons were perched.
- 5 They loved to drop gracefully from nowhere, like two sparkling birds, and blow kisses as they threw off their plumed helmets and high-collared capes. They laughed and flirted openly as they beat their way up again on the trapeze bars. In the final vignette of their act, they actually would kiss in midair, pausing, almost hovering as they swooped past one another. On the ground, between bows, Harry Avalon would skip quickly to the front rows and point out the smear of my mother’s lipstick, just off the edge of his mouth. They made a romantic pair all right, especially in the blindfold sequence.
- 6 That afternoon, as the anticipation increased, as Mr. and Mrs. Avalon tied sparkling strips of cloth onto each other’s face and as they puckered their lips in mock kisses, lips destined “never again to meet,” as one long breathless article put it, the wind rose, miles off, wrapped itself into a cone, and howled. There came a rumble of electrical energy, drowned out by the sudden roll of drums. One detail not mentioned by the press, perhaps unknown—Anna was pregnant at the time, seven months and hardly showing, her stomach muscles were that strong. It seems incredible that she would work high above the ground when any fall could be so dangerous, but the

1. **Arabians** horses of the Arabian breed.

explanation—I know from watching her go blind—is that my mother lives comfortably in extreme elements. She is one with the constant dark now, just as the air was her home, familiar to her, safe, before the storm that afternoon.

- 7 From opposite ends of the tent they waved, blind and smiling, to the crowd below. The ringmaster removed his hat and called for silence, so that the two above could concentrate. They rubbed their hands in chalky powder, then Harry launched himself and swung, once, twice, in huge calibrated beats across space. He hung from his knees and on the third swing stretched wide his arms, held his hands out to receive his pregnant wife as she dove from her shining bar.
- 8 It was while the two were in midair, their hands about to meet, that lightning struck the main pole and sizzled down the guy wires, filling the air with a blue radiance that Harry Avalon must certainly have seen through the cloth of his blindfold as the tent buckled and the edifice² toppled him forward, the swing continuing and not returning in its sweep, and Harry going down, down into the crowd with his last thought, perhaps, just a prickle of surprise at his empty hands.
- 9 My mother once said that I'd be amazed at how many things a person can do within the act of falling. Perhaps, at the time, she was teaching me to dive off a board at the town pool, for I associate the idea with midair somersaults. But I also think she meant that even in that awful doomed second one could think, for she certainly did. When her hands did not meet her husband's, my mother tore her blindfold away. As he swept past her on the wrong side, she could have grasped his ankle, the toe-end of his tights, and gone down clutching him. Instead, she changed direction. Her body twisted toward a heavy wire and she managed to hang on to the braided metal, still hot from the lightning strike. Her palms were burned so terribly that once healed they bore no lines, only the blank scar tissue of a quieter future. She was lowered, gently, to the sawdust ring just underneath the dome of the canvas roof, which did not entirely settle but was held up on one end and jabbed through, torn, and still on fire in places from the giant spark, though rain and men's jackets soon put that out.
- 10 Three people died, but except for her hands my mother was not seriously harmed until an overeager rescuer broke her arm in extricating her and also, in the process, collapsed a portion of the tent bearing a huge buckle that knocked her unconscious. She was taken to the town hospital, and there she must have hemorrhaged,³ for they kept her, confined to her bed, a month and a half before her baby was born without life.
- 11 Harry Avalon had wanted to be buried in the circus cemetery next to the original Avalon, his uncle, so she sent him back with his brothers. The child, however, is buried around the corner, beyond

2. **edifice** (EHD uh fihs) *n.* large structure or building.

3. **hemorrhaged** (HEHM uh rihjd) *v.* bled heavily.

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: Mark the section of paragraph 9 that interrupts the story the narrator is telling about her mother's feat at the circus years earlier.

QUESTION: Why does the narrator interrupt her story?

CONCLUDE: How does this interruption affect the reader's understanding of both the mother and the narrator?

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 12, mark words and phrases that describe increasing size or clarity.

QUESTION: For the narrator, what types of things are becoming larger or more clearly defined?

CONCLUDE: What does this passage suggest about the narrator's perspective on life?

this house and just down the highway. Sometimes I used to walk there just to sit. She was a girl, but I rarely thought of her as a sister or even as a separate person really. I suppose you could call it the egocentrism⁴ of a child, of all young children, but I considered her a less finished version of myself.

12 When the snow falls, throwing shadows among the stones, I can easily pick hers out from the road, for it is bigger than the others and in the shape of a lamb at rest, its legs curled beneath. The carved lamb looms larger as the years pass, though it is probably only my eyes, the vision shifting, as what is close to me blurs and distances sharpen. In odd moments, I think it is the edge drawing near, the edge of everything, the unseen horizon we do not really speak of in the eastern woods. And it also seems to me, although this is probably an idle fantasy, that the statue is growing more sharply etched, as if, instead of weathering itself into a porous mass, it is hardening on the hillside with each snowfall, perfecting itself.

13 It was during her confinement in the hospital that my mother met my father. He was called in to look at the set of her arm, which was complicated. He stayed, sitting at her bedside, for he was something of an armchair traveler and had spent his war quietly, at an air force training grounds, where he became a specialist in arms and legs broken during parachute training exercises. Anna Avalon had been to many of the places he longed to visit—Venice, Rome, Mexico, all through France and Spain. She had no family of her own and was taken in by the Avalons, trained to perform from a very young age. They toured Europe before the war, then based themselves in New York. She was illiterate.

14 It was in the hospital that she finally learned to read and write, as a way of overcoming the boredom and depression of those weeks, and it was my father who insisted on teaching her. In return for stories of her adventures, he graded her first exercises. He bought her her first book, and over her bold letters, which the pale guides of the penmanship pads could not contain, they fell in love.

15 I wonder if my father calculated the exchange he offered: one form of flight for another. For after that, and for as long as I can remember, my mother has never been without a book. Until now, that is, and it remains the greatest difficulty of her blindness. Since my father's recent death, there is no one to read to her, which is why I returned, in fact, from my failed life where the land is flat. I came home to read to my mother, to read out loud, to read long into the dark if I must, to read all night.

16 Once my father and mother married, they moved onto the old farm he had inherited but didn't care much for. Though he'd been thinking of moving to a larger city, he settled down and broadened his practice in this valley. It still seems odd to me, when they could have gone anywhere else, that they chose to stay in the town where

4. **egocentrism** (ee goh SEHN trihz uhm) *n.* self-centeredness; inability to distinguish one's own needs and interests from those of others.



NOTES

the disaster had occurred, and which my father in the first place had found so **constricting**. It was my mother who insisted upon it, after her child did not survive. And then, too, she loved the sagging farmhouse with its scrap of what was left of a vast acreage of woods and hidden hay fields that stretched to the game park.

17 I owe my existence, the second time then, to the two of them and the hospital that brought them together. That is the debt we take for granted since none of us asks for life. It is only once we have it that we hang on so dearly.

18 I was seven the year the house caught fire, probably from standing ash. It can rekindle, and my father, forgetful around the house and **perpetually** exhausted from night hours on call, often emptied what he thought were ashes from cold stoves into wooden or cardboard containers. The fire could have started from a flaming box, or perhaps a buildup of creosote inside the chimney was the culprit. It started right around the stove, and the heart of the house was gutted. The baby-sitter, fallen asleep in my father's den on the first floor, woke to find the stairway to my upstairs room cut off by flames. She used the phone, then ran outside to stand beneath my window.

19 When my parents arrived, the town volunteers had drawn water from the fire pond and were spraying the outside of the house, preparing to go inside after me, not knowing at the time that there was only one staircase and that it was lost. On the other side of the house, the **superannuated** extension ladder broke in half. Perhaps the clatter of it falling against the walls woke me, for I'd been asleep up to that point.

20 As soon as I awakened, in the small room that I now use for sewing, I smelled the smoke. I followed things by the letter then, was good at memorizing instructions, and so I did exactly what was taught in the second-grade home fire drill. I got up. I touched the back of my door before opening it. Finding it hot, I left it closed and

constricting (kuhn STRIHKT ihng) *adj.* limiting; tightening

perpetually (puhr PEHCH oo uhl lee) *adv.* happening all the time

superannuated (soo puhr AN yu ayt ihd) *adj.* too old to be usable; obsolete

stuffed my rolled-up rug beneath the crack. I did not hide under my bed or crawl into my closet. I put on my flannel robe, and then I sat down to wait.

21 Outside, my mother stood below my dark window and saw clearly that there was no rescue. Flames had pierced one side wall, and the glare of the fire lighted the massive limbs and trunk of the vigorous old elm that had probably been planted the year the house was built, a hundred years ago at least. No leaf touched the wall, and just one thin branch scraped the roof. From below, it looked as though even a squirrel would have had trouble jumping from the tree onto the house, for the breadth of that small branch was no bigger than my mother's wrist.

22 Standing there, beside Father, who was preparing to rush back around to the front of the house, my mother asked him to unzip her dress. When he wouldn't be bothered, she made him understand. He couldn't make his hands work, so she finally tore it off and stood there in her pearls and stockings. She directed one of the men to lean the broken half of the extension ladder up against the trunk of the tree. In surprise, he complied. She ascended. She vanished. Then she could be seen among the leafless branches of late November as she made her way up and, along her stomach, inched the length of a bough that curved above the branch that brushed the roof.

23 Once there, swaying, she stood and balanced. There were plenty of people in the crowd and many who still remember, or think they do, my mother's leap through the ice-dark air toward that thinnest extension, and how she broke the branch falling so that it cracked in her hands, cracked louder than the flames as she vaulted with it toward the edge of the roof, and how it hurtled down end over end without her, and their eyes went up, again, to see where she had flown.

24 I didn't see her leap through air, only heard the sudden thump and looked out my window. She was hanging by the backs of her heels from the new gutter we had put in that year, and she was smiling. I was not surprised to see her, she was so matter-of-fact. She tapped on the window. I remember how she did it, too. It was the friendliest tap, a bit tentative, as if she was afraid she had arrived too early at a friend's house. Then she gestured at the latch, and when I opened the window she told me to raise it wider and prop it up with the stick so it wouldn't crush her fingers. She swung down, caught the ledge, and crawled through the opening. Once she was in my room, I realized she had on only underclothing, a bra of the heavy stitched cotton women used to wear and step-in, lace-trimmed drawers. I remember feeling light-headed, of course, terribly relieved, and then embarrassed for her to be seen by the crowd undressed.

25 I was still embarrassed as we flew out the window, toward earth, me in her lap, her toes pointed as we skimmed toward the painted target of the fire fighter's net.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 24, mark words and phrases that describe the mother's manner as she rescues her daughter.


QUESTION: What aspect of the mother's character does the author emphasize with these details?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of the contrast between the mother's actions and her attitude?

I know that she's right. I knew it even then. As you fall there is time to think. Curled as I was, against her stomach, I was not startled by the cries of the crowd or the looming faces. The wind roared and beat its hot breath at our back, the flames whistled. I slowly wondered what would happen if we missed the circle or bounced out of it. Then I wrapped my hands around my mother's hands. I felt the brush of her lips and heard the beat of her heart in my ears, loud as thunder, long as the roll of drums. 🐼

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. What happened when lightning hit the circus tent while the Avalons were performing?
2. What did Anna's second husband teach Anna to do?
3. Why has the narrator returned from the West to live with her mother?
4. How did Anna Avalon save the narrator when the narrator was seven years old?
5.  **Notebook** To confirm your understanding, create a timeline of key events in "The Leap."

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story?



THE LEAP

Close Read the Text

1. This model, from paragraph 9 of the text, shows two sample annotations, along with questions and conclusions. Close read the passage, and find another detail to annotate. Then, write a question and your conclusion.

ANNOTATE: This sentence describes Anna's actions as she falls.

QUESTION: What do these actions suggest about Anna?

CONCLUDE: She is brave and quick thinking.

Her body twisted toward a heavy wire and she managed to hang on to the braided metal, still hot from the lightning strike. Her palms were burned so terribly that once healed they bore no lines, only the blank scar tissue of a quieter future.

ANNOTATE: This phrase seems to have a deeper meaning for Anna's future.

QUESTION: What later decision does this phrase suggest?

CONCLUDE: Anna will leave her circus life behind.

Tool Kit

Close-Read Guide and Model Annotation

2. For more practice, go back into the text and complete the close-read notes.
3. Revisit a section of the text you found important during your first read. Read this section closely and **annotate** what you notice. Ask yourself **questions** such as "Why did the author make this choice?" What can you **conclude**?

Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Notebook Respond to these questions.

1. (a) What is the source for the narrator's account of the tent pole disaster?
(b) **Interpret** What does this explanation suggest about the impact of the disaster on Anna? Explain.
2. **Analyze** What does the narrator's return from the West to her mother's house suggest about her feelings toward her mother? Does she feel obligated, or does she feel something deeper?
3. **Historical Perspectives** What connections can you make between Anna's life changes and the United States before and after World War II?
4. **Essential Question Connection:** *What do stories reveal about the human condition?* What have you learned about human bravery and sacrifice by reading this story?

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11–12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.

Analyze Craft and Structure

Narrative Structure In literary works, **suspense** is the feeling of growing curiosity, tension, or anxiety the reader feels about the outcome of events. Writers create suspense by raising questions in the minds of their readers. Suspense reaches its peak at the climax of a plot. In “The Leap,” Erdrich skillfully uses two techniques to build suspense.

- **Foreshadowing** is the use of clues to suggest events that have not yet happened. For example, at the end of paragraph 2, details such as “I hear the crackle,” “the stitches burn,” and “a thread of fire” hint at the impact of the powerful fire that the narrator will describe in the climax of the short story.
- **Pacing** is the speed or rhythm of writing. Writers may deliberately speed up or slow down pacing in order to create suspense. For example, in paragraph 4, the narrator delays her account of the tent pole disaster by describing the setting and the circus acts. These digressions increase readers’ feelings of tension and anticipation.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

 **Notebook** Respond to these questions.

1. Reread paragraph 7 and identify three details that contribute to suspense.
2. Reread paragraphs 18–19. Describe how the story is paced in these paragraphs. What effect does this pacing create?
3. Use this chart to record notes about Erdrich’s use of suspense, foreshadowing, and pacing.

PARAGRAPH(S)	NOTES ON SUSPENSE, FORESHADOWING, OR PACING
3	
6–9	
15	
24	

4. Describe the overall effect of pacing and foreshadowing in the story. How do these elements affect the reader’s understanding of events, characters, and themes?



THE LEAP

Concept Vocabulary

encroaching

anticipation

perpetually

instantaneously

constricting

superannuated

Why These Words? These concept vocabulary words all suggest distance or closeness, especially in relation to time. For example, *instantaneously* means “in an instant,” or “immediately.” Something that happens *perpetually* is continuous or endless. A *superannuated* tool or object is so old-fashioned or worn out that it is no longer useful.

1. How does the concept vocabulary clarify the reader’s understanding of the story?
2. What other words in the selection connect to this concept?

Practice



Notebook Respond to these questions.

1. Use each concept vocabulary word in a sentence that demonstrates your understanding of the word’s meaning.
2. Challenge yourself to replace each concept vocabulary word in your sentences with a synonym. How does changing the words affect the meanings of your sentences? Which word choices are more effective?



WORD NETWORK

Add words related to the human condition from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

L.11–12.4.b Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech. Apply knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes to draw inferences concerning the meaning of scientific and mathematical terminology.

Word Study

Latin Root: -strict- The Latin root *-strict-* means “to bind” or “to compress.” In paragraph 16, the narrator’s father finds his hometown *constricting*, or limiting. The word *constrict* also has a medical meaning. It is used to describe a part of the body that narrows, closes, or compresses. For example, when you step out in bright sunlight, your pupils *constrict*, or get smaller, to take in less light.

1. Find four words that contain the root *-strict-*. Challenge yourself to come up with one word that has a medical meaning.
2. For each word you choose, record the word, its part of speech, and its meaning. Use a print or online college-level dictionary as needed.

Author's Style

Motif A **motif** is an important recurring, or repeating, element in literature, mythology, or other type of artistic expression. In “The Leap,” Erdrich uses recurring motifs to highlight symbols and develop themes.

- A **symbol** is a person, place, object, or idea that represents not only itself but also something beyond or outside itself.
- A **theme** in a work is an underlying central insight about human life or behavior.

The first step in interpreting motifs is to recognize when they are present. While reading, be alert to repetition in events, imagery, description, or dialogue. For example, you might notice the repetition of Anna’s three “leaps.” Once you have identified a possible motif, consider what this repetition may represent and how it connects to the story’s themes.


Read It

1. Use the chart to analyze motifs in “The Leap.” Consider how the meanings and associations of each motif change with each appearance.

MOTIF	WHERE IT APPEARS	ANALYSIS
“roll of drums”	paragraph 6	
	paragraph 26	
arms/limbs	paragraph 10	
	paragraph 13	
	paragraph 21	

2. Explain how Anna’s three leaps are both literal and symbolic.
3. **Connect to Style** How does Erdrich use recurring images to develop the story’s most important themes?

Write It

 **Notebook** Another motif in the story is the idea of the narrator’s debt to her mother for her existence. This motif first occurs in paragraph 3: “I owe her my existence three times.” In a paragraph, explain what this motif contributes to the story. What would be lost if this motif were omitted?



THE LEAP

Writing to Sources

An anecdote is a brief story about an interesting, amusing, or strange event. An anecdote is told to entertain or to make a point. The person telling an anecdote may include a brief opinion or argument to underscore a moral or lesson. For example, in paragraph 17 of “The Leap” the narrator provides this commentary:

I owe my existence, the second time then, to the two of them and the hospital that brought them together. That is the debt we take for granted since none of us asks for life. It is once we have it that we hang on so dearly.

Assignment

Write a short, entertaining **anecdote** about an event in your or your family’s past. Tell about a time when a parent, teacher, or coach intervened in a situation in a way that made you feel grateful. Include an opinion that highlights an important lesson. Conclude your anecdote with a paragraph that explains how your experience compares to that of the narrator in “The Leap.”

Vocabulary and Conventions Connection You may want to use some of the concept vocabulary words in your anecdote. Consider varying your pacing or adding foreshadowing to increase suspense.

encroaching

anticipation

perpetually

instantaneously

constricting

superannuated

Reflect on Your Writing

After completing your anecdote, answer the following questions.

1. How did writing an anecdote improve your understanding of Erdrich’s style?
2. What literary elements did you use to make your anecdote more entertaining or effective? Were they successful? Explain.
3. **Why These Words?** The words you choose make a difference in your writing. Which words helped you convey important details or ideas?

STANDARDS

W.11–12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

SL.11–12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective and a logical argument, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks. Use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Speaking and Listening

Assignment

Choose one of the following quotations, and explain in a brief **oral response to literature** how it connects to the plot and themes of “The Leap.” Present your response to the class, and lead the class in a discussion of your ideas.

- Love is the chain whereby to bind a child to its parents.
— Abraham Lincoln
- Courage is grace under pressure.
— Ernest Hemingway
- What do we owe to those we love?
— Ellen McLaughlin

1. **Analyze the Quotations** Carefully consider each quotation—both its meaning and its associations. Paraphrase each quotation and think about its purpose. Lincoln’s statement, for example, focuses on children, parents, and love; Hemingway provides a concise definition of courage. Choose the quotation that you think is the best match with “The Leap.”
2. **Connect to Plot and Theme** Review the major plot events in the story. Check that you understand the chronology of events, as well as their causes and effects. Then, state one important theme the events bring out, and explain how that theme relates to the quotation you selected.
3. **Prepare Your Delivery** As you practice, be sure to pay attention to nonverbal methods of communication, such as volume, tone, pitch, pacing, posture, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions.
4. **Evaluate Responses** As your classmates deliver their oral responses, listen carefully. Use an evaluation guide like the one shown to analyze their responses.

EVALUATION GUIDE

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 (not demonstrated) to 4 (demonstrated).

- ☐ The speaker clearly identified the quotation being discussed.
- ☐ The speaker identified specific and persuasive links between the meaning of the quotation and the story’s plot and theme.
- ☐ The speaker used a variety of inflections and tones when speaking.
- ☐ The speaker used appropriate pacing, posture, gestures, and facial expressions.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from “The Leap.”



WRITING TO SOURCES

- EVERYDAY USE
- EVERYTHING STUCK TO HIM
- THE LEAP

Write a Narrative

You have read three short stories that employ flashbacks or framing devices to tell stories. Now you will use your understanding of those texts to create a narrative that explores a question related to the human condition in a fresh way.

Assignment

Write a **fictional narrative** addressing this question:

How do stressful situations often reveal the best and worst in people?

Begin by creating a fictional scenario that is dramatic and stressful enough to trigger widely different responses from characters. Then, think about how you might develop characters whose reactions will give readers insight into the issues raised by the prompt. Finally, reflect on the structure of the stories you read in this unit. Use plot devices similar to the ones in those texts, such as frame stories or flashbacks, to add interest to your narrative and provide additional insight into characters and events.

Elements of a Fictional Narrative

A **fictional narrative** is a story about an imagined experience. The elements of such narratives are invented by their authors. A fictional narrative may feature a narrator who is part of the story or a narrator who is a detached observer of the action.

A well-written fictional narrative usually contains these elements:

- a clear and consistent point of view
- well-developed characters
- a smooth sequence of events or experiences, which may include flashbacks, subplots, or frame stories
- effective use of dialogue, description, and/or reflection to develop the story
- sensory language and precise, descriptive details to clarify experiences
- a conclusion that brings the story to a satisfying close

Model Narrative Text For a model of a well-crafted fictional narrative, see the Launch Text, “Old Man at the Bridge.”

Challenge yourself to find all of the elements of an effective fictional narrative in the text. You will have an opportunity to review these elements as you prepare to write your own fictional narrative.



Tool Kit

Student Model of a Fictional Narrative

STANDARDS

W.11–12.3.a–e Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

W.11–12.10 Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Prewriting / Planning

Focus on a Conflict The stories that you, like all writers, tell are influenced by your own life. Make a list of conflicts you have experienced, witnessed, or studied. Choose a conflict from your list, and think about ways you can turn that conflict into a fictional story that reveals characters at their best and worst.

EVIDENCE LOG

Review your Evidence Log and identify key details you may want to use in your narrative.

Create a Story Chart Make a story chart, like the one shown, to plan the stages of your narrative. Events from “Old Man at the Bridge” have been filled in so that you can trace the narrative arc in the Launch Text.

STORY CHART			
Exposition: Establish the setting and characters, and set up the conflict.	Rising Action: Describe the events that increase the conflict and tension.	Climax: Identify the point of greatest tension.	Resolution: Tell how the conflict is or is not resolved.
<i>During the Spanish Civil War, an old man sits by a bridge while others evacuate. The narrator stops to talk to him.</i>	<i>The narrator wants to get the old man out of danger, but the old man is too tired to move.</i>	<i>The old man tries to get up and move, but he sits back down. He can't get up. He is worried about animals he left behind.</i>	<i>The conflict doesn't resolve: The old man gives up; the narrator leaves him to face the advancing enemy alone.</i>

Develop Your Characters Once you have selected the characters who will appear in your narrative, start to develop them using a chart like this one.

	MAIN CHARACTER
Appearance	
Attitude/Personal Characteristics	
Motivations	

Connect to Texts After you have identified the basic plot events and characters, decide how you can use *plot devices* to add interest to your story. Review the use of the *frame story* in “Everything Stuck to Him” and “The Leap.” Determine if a similar framing device might work for your story. Also, consider Erdrich’s use of *foreshadowing* in “The Leap.” Just as she dropped hints about the fire, you could hint at later events in your story.

One final device to consider is the **flashback**, in which the action suddenly reverts back to a past event that was important to the main character’s development or to the present action of the story.

STANDARDS

W.11–12.3.a Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

W.11–12.3.c Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome.



Drafting

Establish a Point of View The point of view you choose helps set the tone for your story. Are you going to be a neutral observer, reporting on events rather than participating in them? Then, you will use a third-person narrator. Are you going to interpret events directly through the eyes of a narrator who participates in the events of the story? Then, you will write using a first-person point of view. Notice how the choice of point of view affects the examples in this chart.

NARRATOR	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
First-person	The narrator is a character in the story.	<i>I knew what I had to do. I had to tell Shana the truth.</i>
Third-person omniscient	The narrator is outside the story and knows everything that happens.	<i>Julia was finally ready to tell Shana the truth, but Shana didn't want to hear it.</i>
Third-person limited	The narrator is outside the story and knows only what one character does and thinks.	<i>Julia was finally ready to tell Shana the truth. But would Shana listen?</i>

Begin the Story Memorably You can draw from a variety of strategies to engage your readers right from the start. Remember to select a strategy that sets a proper tone for your story, whether you intend your story to be serious or humorous, thoughtful or lighthearted. Here are a few ideas to grab the attention of your audience:

- *Start off with a simple declarative statement:* It was not my most heroic moment.
- *Start off with a question:* What makes us do the right thing in the worst possible situations?
- *Start in the middle of the action:* As I looked down at the 200-foot drop I said to myself, "What am I doing here?"

Highlight the Conflict When you are setting up the exposition, rising action, and climax of the story, be sure to emphasize the main conflict. The prompt asks you to explore how people react in times of stress. This lends itself naturally to describing characters and their responses to events in a way that builds tension throughout the story until the climax.

End in a Satisfying Way Make sure that your ending flows naturally from the events of the story. Above all, though, end it in a way that will be satisfying and memorable, and that reinforces the main point of the story—people under stress behave both their best and their worst. Keep in mind that it can be just as effective to end a story with some elements unresolved as it is to tie all the loose ends up neatly.

STANDARDS

W.11–12.3.a Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

W.11–12.3.c Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome.

W.11–12.3.e Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: STYLE

Add Variety: Dialogue

Dialogue The conversations between and among people in a story are called **dialogue**. This narrative technique can serve several purposes:

- exposing conflict between characters
- revealing personality traits
- providing explanation or advancing the plot
- showing what characters think and value
- indicating what characters understand and how they communicate

Read It

These sentences from the Launch Text use dialogue to establish a connection between the two characters and to reveal their feelings and traits.

- *"Where do you come from?" I asked him.* (The narrator expresses his interest mainly through questions directed to the old man.)
- *"I am without politics," he said. "I am seventy-six years old. I have come twelve kilometers now and I think now I can go no further."* (The old man states his problem and reveals his innocence in his own words.)
- *"Why not," I said, watching the far bank where now there were no carts.* (The narrator's curt response suggests that the old man's problems are not his main concern.)
- *"I was taking care of animals," he said dully, but no longer to me. "I was only taking care of animals."* (The old man talks to himself, expressing his confusion and sorrow.)

Write It

As you draft your narrative, look for ways to incorporate dialogue. Start a new paragraph each time the speaker changes. There are a variety of ways in which to write dialogue. Notice in these examples how the words being spoken are set apart from their tags, such as *he said* or *I urged*.

PLACEMENT OF DIALOGUE	EXAMPLE
before a tag	<i>"Where do you come from?" I asked him.</i>
after a tag	<i>. . . I looked at his black dusty clothes and his gray dusty face and his steel rimmed spectacles and said, "What animals were they?"</i>
splitting a single sentence	<i>"I know no one in that direction," he said, "but thank you very much."</i>
splitting multiple sentences	<i>"If you are rested I would go," I urged. "Get up and try to walk now."</i>

TIP

PUNCTUATION

Punctuate dialogue correctly.

- Use quotation marks before and after a character's spoken words.
- Use a comma to set off the speaker's tag from the speaker's words.
- Use quotation marks around each part of a divided quotation.
- If end punctuation, such as a question mark or an exclamation point, is part of the quotation, keep it inside the quotation marks.

STANDARDS

W.11–12.3.b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

L.11–12.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.



MAKING WRITING SOPHISTICATED

Integrating Sensory Language Vivid, detailed description makes characters and settings come alive for readers. An important part of such description is **sensory language**, which features details that appeal to one of the five senses. Writers use sensory language to describe how things look, sound, taste, feel, or smell. Vivid sensory adjectives, adverbs, and verbs can combine to create an overall impression of a scene or event. Notice how each of these examples affects you as you read it.

	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB	VERB
Sight	scarlet	garishly	soar
Hearing (Sound)	piercing	softly	creak
Taste	bitter	juicily	savor
Touch	slippery	roughly	tap
Smell	rancid	fragrantly	reek

Read It

These examples from the Launch Text show how the writer uses sensory language to establish a sense of place

LAUNCH TEXT EXCERPT

An old man with steel rimmed spectacles and very dusty clothes sat by the side of the road. There was a pontoon bridge across the river and carts, trucks, and men, women and children were crossing it. The mule-drawn carts staggered up the steep bank from the bridge with soldiers helping push against the spokes of the wheels. The trucks ground up and away heading out of it all and the peasants plodded along in the ankle deep dust. But the old man sat there without moving. He was too tired to go any farther.

...

I was watching the bridge and the African looking country of the Ebro Delta and wondering how long now it would be before we would see the enemy, and listening all the while for the first noises that would signal that ever mysterious event called contact, and the old man still sat there.

The initial description sets the scene. Readers can envision the old man and can both "see" and "hear" the peasants, carts, and trucks.

The comparison in this paragraph shows the dryness of the Spanish countryside and points to the silence and the strain on the narrator as he listens for the enemy's approach.

Write It

Think of sensory words and phrases that can clarify a reader's impression of your characters and the situations in which you place them. Start by completing this chart with specific details. Then, go back to your draft to determine how to incorporate those details into your narrative.

SENSE	CHARACTER 1	CHARACTER 2	SETTING
Sight			
Hearing (Sound)			
Taste			
Touch			
Smell			

Use a Thesaurus to Find Precise Words Even the most experienced writers sometimes refer to a thesaurus to find the words that best express what they want to say. A thesaurus can be a valuable resource when it comes to finding sensory language that fits your needs. Here are thesaurus lists of synonyms for the first three examples from the chart of sensory words. Note that not every synonym is appropriate in every case; you must choose the word that works best in context.

SCARLET *syn.* crimson, red, ruby, cherry, garnet

GARISHLY *syn.* brashly, gaudily, brightly, vulgarly, flamboyantly

SOAR *syn.* fly, ascend, rocket, circle, arise, climb

STANDARDS

W.11–12.3.d Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

L.11–12.4.c Consult general and specialized reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.



Revising

Evaluating Your Draft

Use the following checklist to evaluate the effectiveness of your first draft. Then, use your evaluation and the instruction on this page to guide your revision.

FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION	EVIDENCE AND ELABORATION	CONVENTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Provides an introduction that sets the scene and introduces characters and conflict.	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses techniques such as dialogue, description, and reflection to develop the experience being narrated.	<input type="checkbox"/> Attends to the norms and conventions of the discipline, especially the correct punctuation of dialogue.
<input type="checkbox"/> Establishes a sequence of events that unfolds smoothly and logically.	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses sensory language and precise details to clarify events for the reader.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporates plot devices, such as foreshadowing, flashback, and frame stories, to add interest to the story.	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses vocabulary and word choices that are appropriate for the audience and purpose.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Provides a conclusion that resolves the narrative in a satisfying way.		

WORD NETWORK

Include interesting words from your Word Network in your narrative.

STANDARDS

W.11–12.3.b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

W.11–12.3.e Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

Revising for Focus and Organization

Sequence of Events Maintaining a consistent point of view will help you present a realistic perspective on setting, characters, and events. Would a reader be puzzled about what happened first, next, and last in your narrative? Consider adding time words and phrases that clarify the sequence. Some examples are given here.

after a while	at that point	before	by then
eventually	initially	just then	later
meanwhile	previously	soon afterward	ultimately

Conclusion Remember that your conclusion should settle or resolve the conflict and provide a satisfying ending for the reader. Is your conclusion too abrupt? Should you add more detail to the falling action in the plot to make your conclusion seem more plausible?

Revising for Evidence and Elaboration

Dialogue The effectiveness of your narrative depends on how well you establish a believable conversation between the characters. Have you captured the “sound” of each character? Would each character be likely to say the words you have given him or her? If not, make some changes to your dialogue to improve its authenticity.

PEER REVIEW

Exchange drafts with a classmate. Use the checklist to evaluate your classmate's narrative, and provide supportive feedback.

1. Does the dialogue advance the plot or serve some other important purpose, such as building tension?

☐ yes ☐ no If no, suggest what you might change.

2. Does the introduction clearly set a scene and introduce the conflict?

☐ yes ☐ no If no, tell what you think should be added.

3. Is the ending satisfying, believable, and understandable?

☐ yes ☐ no If no, tell what you found confusing.

4. What is the strongest part of your classmate's narrative? Why?

Editing and Proofreading

Edit for Conventions Reread your draft for accuracy and consistency. Correct errors in grammar and word usage. Make sure that you have used sensory language correctly in context.

Proofread for Accuracy Read your draft carefully, correcting errors in spelling and punctuation. Punctuate dialogue correctly, using quotation marks and commas or end marks as needed.

Publishing and Presenting

Work with a partner to present your narrative as a dramatic dialogue. Each of you should take the part of one of your characters and read the dialogue as though you were actors in a play. If you wish, one of you may read the narration as well. Practice together and then present your dialogue to the class.

Reflecting

Reflect on what you learned by writing your narrative. Are you happy with the characters you chose? Were you able to incorporate them into a unified narrative? What was difficult about incorporating a narrative technique, such as flashback or foreshadowing, into your narrative?

STANDARDS

W.11–12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.



OVERVIEW: SMALL-GROUP LEARNING

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What do stories reveal about the human condition?

As you read these selections, work with your group to explore how short stories allow us to see life from vastly different perspectives.

From Text to Topic Perhaps the word *change* best characterizes the past few decades of American life. In a time of rapid change, Americans have embraced new technologies, new social rules, and new ways of interacting with the rest of the world. As you read the selections in this section, consider how they address enduring human traits and what it means to live in a civil society.

Small-Group Learning Strategies

Throughout your life, in school, in your community, and in your career, you will continue to develop strategies when you work in teams. Use these strategies during Small-Group Learning. Add ideas of your own at each step.

STRATEGY	ACTION PLAN
Prepare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete your assignments so that you are prepared for group work.• Organize your thinking so you can contribute to your group's discussions.•
Participate fully	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make eye contact to signal that you are listening and taking in what is being said.• Use text evidence when making a point.•
Support others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build on ideas from others in your group.• Invite others who have not yet spoken to join the discussion.•
Clarify	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paraphrase the ideas of others to ensure that your understanding is correct.• Ask follow-up questions.•



LITERARY HISTORY

A Brief History of the Short Story

D. F. McCourt

The short story, as a genre, is passing away—or is it?



COMPARE

SHORT STORY

An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

Ambrose Bierce

What thoughts go through the mind of a man who is about to be executed?

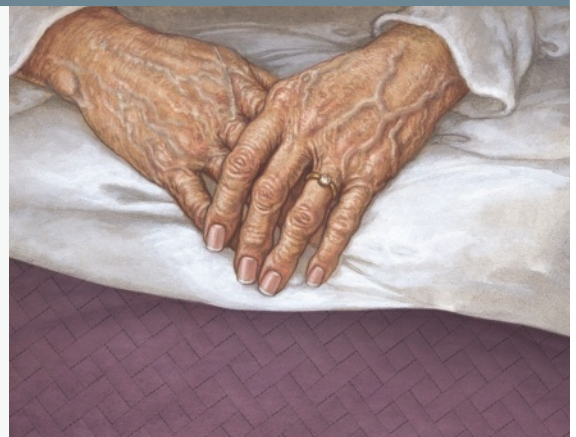


SHORT STORY

The Jilting of Granny Weatherall

Katherine Anne Porter

A dying woman wrestles with memories of the past and realities of the present.



PERFORMANCE TASK

SPEAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS

Present a Narrative

The Small-Group readings focus on “last moments”—of characters’ lives and possibly even for short stories as a genre. After reading, your group will write and present a narrative.



OVERVIEW: SMALL-GROUP LEARNING

Working as a Team

1. **Take a Position** In your group, discuss the following question:

What life experiences or situations are universal—true for all people in all times and places?

As you take turns sharing your positions, be sure to provide reasons for your response. After all group members have shared, discuss how people deal with these experiences or situations differently and what their responses reveal about their personalities.

2. **List Your Rules** As a group, decide on the rules that you will follow as you work together. Two samples are provided. Add two more of your own. As you work together, you may add or revise rules based on your experience together.

- Encourage a variety of ideas before you look for common features.
- Give group members the chance to comment further on their ideas as discussion continues.

- _____

- _____

3. **Apply the Rules** Practice working as a group. Share what you have learned about the ways in which stories reveal truths about the human condition. Make sure each person in the group contributes. Take notes on and be prepared to share with the class one insight that you heard from another member of your group.

4. **Name Your Group** Choose a name that reflects the unit topic.

Our group's name: _____

5. **Create a Communication Plan** Decide how you want to communicate with one another. For example, you might use online collaboration tools, email, or instant messaging.

Our group's decision: _____

Making a Schedule

First, find out the due dates for the small-group activities. Then, preview the texts and activities with your group, and make a schedule for completing the tasks.

SELECTION	ACTIVITIES	DUE DATE
A Brief History of the Short Story		
An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge		
The Jilting of Granny Weatherall		

Working on Group Projects

As your group works together, you'll find it more effective if each person has a specific role. Different projects require different roles. Before beginning a project, discuss the necessary roles, and choose one for each group member. Some possible roles are listed here. Add your ideas to the list.

Project Manager: monitors the schedule and keeps everyone on task

Researcher: organizes research activities

Recorder: takes notes during group meetings



About the Author



As a child, **D. F. ("Duff") McCourt**, a freelance writer and the co-founder and editor of *AE—The Canadian Science Fiction Review*, developed a great love for books and magazines. That passion continued into his adult life. A writer of published short stories and novellas himself, he is interested in the history of both forms. He believes firmly that the strength of magazines as a medium is essential to the continued vitality of science fiction and other genres.

STANDARDS

RI.11–12.10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

L.11–12.4.a Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

A Brief History of the Short Story

Concept Vocabulary

As you perform your first read of "A Brief History of the Short Story," you will encounter these words.

supplanted

ascendant

renaissance

Context Clues If these words are unfamiliar to you, try using **context clues**—words and phrases that appear in nearby text—to help you determine their meanings. There are various types of context clues that you may encounter as you read.

Restatement, or Synonyms: That **diminutive** child is so tiny that she can't reach the first step.

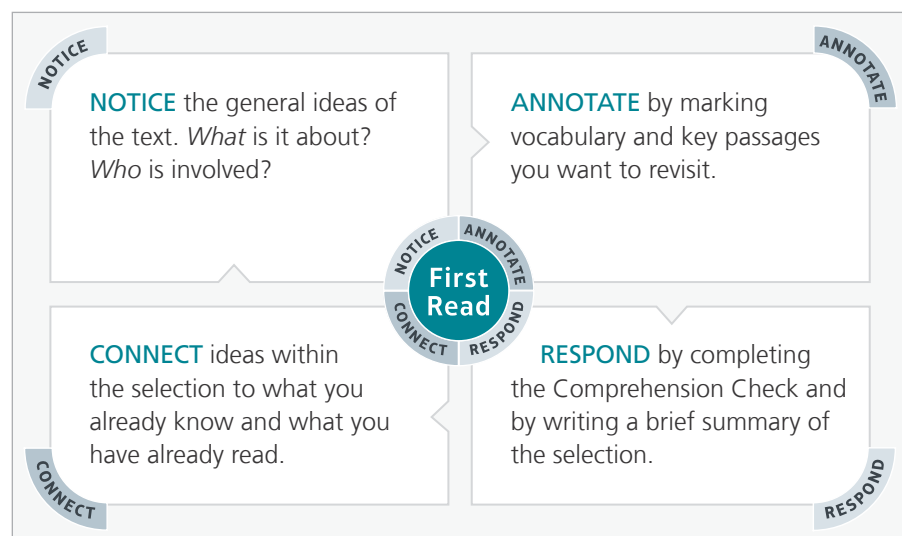
Definition: Studies show that the vocabulary children learn when they are very young is **formative**, or fundamental to their development.

Contrast of Ideas: That social movement could have **soldiered on**. Instead, it died out.

Apply your knowledge of context clues and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

First Read NONFICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.



A Brief History of the Short Story

D. F. McCourt

BACKGROUND

Electronic books, or e-books, are digital files that can display on various devices, such as computers and cellphones, in a way similar to printed books. Though e-books first emerged in the late 1990s, they failed to gain popularity until the mid-2000s, when dedicated electronic reading devices improved the quality of the reading experience. This new medium has allowed more writers to publish a wider variety of work, including short stories. It has also lowered the costs that writers and publishers previously faced when bringing new work to appreciative audiences.

SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA



¹ **T**here's something you should know. The short story was very nearly drowned in the tub as an infant. As literary forms go, the short story is very young. Certainly its roots go back centuries—we can see it gestating in *The Canterbury Tales*,¹ in fairy tales, and in poems of a middling length. Arguably, even the conversational traditions of the anecdote, the joke, and the parable can be seen as precursors of the form. But the short story as we know it sprang into full-fledged existence as recently as the 1820s. It appeared, unheralded, to fill a sudden need created by the invention of the “gift book.”

² Gift books were annual collections of poems, artwork, and literary criticism, aimed primarily at an audience of upper-class women in England and North America. Seeking additional ways to fill the pages of these popular publications, editors began soliciting submissions of short pieces of prose to accompany artwork already purchased (rather the opposite of the way it is usually done these days). In so doing, they created the first paying market for short fiction. All modern literary magazines can trace their pedigree back to these gift books. In 1837, Nathaniel Hawthorne collected a number of stories that he had written for the gift book market and published them to great critical acclaim as *Twice Told Tales*. And with that, short stories had arrived.

1. *The Canterbury Tales* collection of stories written by Geoffrey Chaucer in the fourteenth century.

NOTES

- 3 Two hundred years may seem quite a long time, but consider that the novel dates back to at least 1605 (the year Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* was published) and you get a better idea of the short story's relative youth. Over its entire lifetime, the fate of the form has been inextricably tied to that of magazines. In the early twentieth century, literacy in the United States and Canada became near universal for the first time and, as a direct result, magazine sales boomed. On the erudite² front, there were publications like *The English Review* and *The Southwest Review*, but there were also the decidedly lower brow *Argosy* and *Adventure*. This was the era of the pulp magazine and it brought with it the birth of genre literature.
- 4 Horror stories, detective stories, and most especially science fiction evolved in short stories, cut their teeth in the magazines. It is no surprise that the beginning of the Golden Age of Science Fiction is identified most strongly not with a novel but with the publication of a magazine (the July 1939 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*, to be precise). Most of the formative novels of early- and mid-twentieth-century science fiction were more like grown-up short stories in form than like other contemporary novels. In fact, some of the most famous science fiction novels—including Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*, A. E. Van Vogt's *The Silkie*, Robert A. Heinlein's *Orphans of the Sky*, and Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*—were fix-ups (a term for a novel created by stitching a series of previously published short stories together). It wasn't until quite recently, around the 1984 publication of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and the 1985 publication of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, that the two parallel traditions of the science fiction novel and the modern literary novel began to collide.
- 5 And yet, despite the fact that in its brief history the short story had brought into existence entire genres and traditions of literature, it came perilously close to death. In the 1950s, owning a television suddenly became within reach of the average North American family. The half-an-hour-less-commercials format of shows like *I Love Lucy*, *Dragnet*, and *The Honeymooners* targeted the same entertainment niche as the magazine. Over the decades that followed, the circulation numbers of almost all magazines that ran short fiction saw a steady decline. The novel soldiered on, but the state of the short story became so dire that in 2007 Stephen King³ opened his piece "What Ails the Short Story" for the *New York Times Book Review* thus:
- The American short story is alive and well. Do you like the sound of that? Me too. I only wish it were actually true.*
- 6 So much can happen in four years. 2007 was the year that e-book readers burst onto the scene and, while the rise of the online magazine was already underway, it has stepped up considerably in the years since. More importantly, in 2007 television was still clinging to its cultural sovereignty, but it has since been firmly **supplanted**

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

supplanted (suh PLANT ihd) v.

MEANING:

2. **erudite** (EHR oo dyt) *adj.* characterized by great knowledge; learned or scholarly.

3. **Stephen King** (b. 1947) American author of horror novels and short stories.

by the Internet. At the turn of the millennium, there was much ink spilled over the decline in the amount of reading people were doing, but the truth is that many of us are reading more than ever, we just aren't doing it on paper. When reading on a screen rather than the page, there are new considerations. A narrative of a few thousand words can be easily read, enjoyed, and digested while sitting before a monitor; a novella, far less so. This is an environment practically designed for the literary form Edgar Allan Poe defined as a tale that "can be read in one sitting." Further, e-book readers are allowing publishers to easily make shorter works available at a reasonable price, without having to worry that a book's spine be thick enough to hold its own on a bookstore shelf.

- 7 Video, of course, is quite at home online, but the real meat of the Internet has always been text. Preferably text that limits itself to a screen or two in length. As long as the Internet holds its throne as the defining medium of our time, the short story will be **ascendant**. It is true however that the form is undoubtedly being influenced and changed by the demands of its new homes. Personally, I'm thrilled to be taking part in that continued evolution, thrilled just to be present for the **renaissance** of the form that shaped science fiction, thrilled to be able to say unequivocally: "The short story is alive and well." 🐼

NOTES

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

ascendant (uh SEHN duhnt)
adj.


MEANING:

renaissance (REHN uh sons) *n.*

MEANING:

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

1. According to the author, what significant event happened in 1837?
2. According to the author, what three genres owe their origins to the short story?
3. Why did the short story nearly die in the 1950s? What developments made it strong again?
4.  **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of the text by writing a summary.

RESEARCH

Research to Explore Conduct research on an aspect of the text you find interesting. For example, you may want to learn more about one of the short-story magazines the author mentions: *The English Review*, *The Southwest Review*, *Argosy*, *Adventure*, or *Astounding Science Fiction*. Share your discoveries with your group.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE
SHORT STORY

TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

Almost everyone has personal preferences regarding short fiction. Encourage group members to relate the author's information and insights to their own reading experiences.

WORD NETWORK

Add words related to the human condition from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

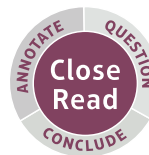
RI.11–12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

RI.11–12.5 Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

L.11–12.4.b Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech. Apply knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes to draw inferences concerning the meaning of scientific and mathematical terminology.

Close Read the Text

With your group, revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. **Annotate** details that you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?



Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Complete the activities.

- 1. Review and Clarify** With your group, reread paragraphs 1–2. How did the gift book give rise to the short story and to literary magazines?
- 2. Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share the passages from the selection that you found especially important. Take turns presenting your passages. Discuss what you noticed in the selection, what questions you asked, and what conclusions you reached.
- 3. Essential Question:** *What do stories reveal about the human condition?* How does this literary history shed light on the short story's ability to address the human condition? Discuss with your group.


LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Concept Vocabulary

supplanted ascendant renaissance

Why These Words? The three concept vocabulary words from the text are related. With your group, determine what the words have in common. Write your ideas and add another word that fits the category.

Practice

 **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of these words from the text by using them in sentences. Be sure to use context clues that hint at each word's meaning.

Word Study

Latin Root: -scend- Many words in English use the Latin root *-scend-*, which means “climb.” For example, *ascendant* is an adjective that combines the root *-scend-* with the prefix *ad-*, meaning “to” or “toward.” *Ascendant*, then, means “climbing toward” or “rising.” Find several other words that have this same root. Use a reliable print or digital dictionary to verify your choices. Record the words and their meanings.

Analyze Craft and Structure

Sequence of Events Authors often use **chronological order**, or the order in which things happened, to structure nonfiction pieces that describe historical events or explain a change over time. When you read a text that describes a sequence of events, look at how specific people, ideas, or events are connected. Consider the details the author chooses to include about each time period and why those details might be significant or important.

TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

As members of your group discuss their charts, you may find it helpful to plot out key events on a timeline.

Practice

Use the chart below to analyze how McCourt structures events in “A Brief History of the Short Story.” Then, share your chart with your group, and discuss how McCourt uses this organization to emphasize his main ideas about the short story.

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

PARAGRAPH	TIME FRAME	EVENT	SIGNIFICANCE
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14th century 1820s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Canterbury Tales</i> published “gift books” invented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> first use of short story form created need for short stories
2			
3			
4			
5–6			
7–8			



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE
SHORT STORY

TIP

CLARIFICATION

Some grammar handbooks or style guides may advise against using passive voice. However, it is a stylistic choice that may give clarity or provide emphasis. For example, “The reactor was shut down” emphasizes the event, whereas “The head engineer shut the reactor down” gives more emphasis to the person performing the action.

STANDARDS

W.11–12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

L.11–12.1.a Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

Conventions and Style

Active and Passive Voice In grammar, **voice** reveals the relationship between the subject of a sentence and the action described in that sentence. Voice may be either active or passive.

- In active voice, the subject of the sentence *performs* the action.
Isabel reads science fiction novels.
A high-speed elevator carried passengers to the Observation Deck.
- In **passive voice**, the subject of the sentence *receives* the action. Passive voice often uses or implies a form of the verb “be,” such as *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, or *were*.
Science fiction novels are read by Isabel.
The passengers were carried to the Observation Deck by a high-speed elevator.

Active voice helps the writer create strong, clear writing. Active voice also keeps writing concise because it uses fewer words than passive voice does to describe an action. However, the passive voice may be useful in scientific writing or other explanations because it removes names or pronouns and instead focuses on describing facts or concepts. Passive voice can also be useful when the writer does not know—or does not want to name—the person or thing performing the action, or when that person or thing is unimportant.

The lost toddler was found in the mall’s food court.

The rumors that are being spread have no basis in fact.

Read It

1. Label each of these sentences from the text as active or passive.
 - a. The short story was very nearly drowned in the tub as an infant.
 - b. All modern literary magazines can trace their pedigree back to these gift books.
 - c. But the short story . . . sprang into full-fledged existence as recently as the 1820s.
 - d. A narrative of a few thousand words can be easily read, enjoyed, and digested while sitting before a monitor. . . .

Connect to Style With your group, discuss why the author’s use of the active voice is effective, as well as why he uses the passive voice when he does.

Write It

Notebook Write a paragraph to express your thoughts about a short story you found particularly exciting or moving. Experiment with using both the active and the passive voice in your writing.



Research

Assignment

As a group, create a **research report** that relates to “A Brief History of the Short Story” to share with the class. Choose one of these options:

- ☐ an **extended definition** of the term *short story* that shows how its meaning has developed over time
- ☐ a **graph** that shows how e-book sales compare with print book sales over time, along with a summary of what you learned about publishing trends and people’s reading habits
- ☐ an **analytical paper** that presents and compares what a variety of famous American authors have said about the short story genre

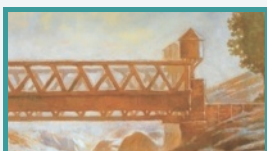
Project Plan Have each group member review “A Brief History of the Short Story” and do some general reading about the subject you have chosen, to get an idea of the information you need. Then, as a group, list these kinds of information. Assign individual group members to research different aspects of the topic. Finally, determine how you will present the text and what images will accompany it.

Conduct Research Use this chart to keep track of the types of information you are researching and the group member assigned to each type. Also, record the sources each person consults and the details needed for proper citation.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from “A Brief History of the Short Story.”

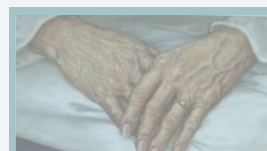
KIND OF INFORMATION	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	SOURCE INFORMATION FOR CITATION



AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE

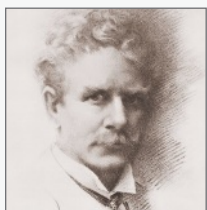
Comparing Texts

In this lesson, you will read and compare “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” and “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall.” The work you do with your group on “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” will help prepare you for the comparing task.



THE JILTING OF GRANNY WEATHERALL

About the Author



Ambrose Bierce

(1842–1914?) was born in Ohio and raised on a farm in Indiana. The poverty in which he was raised helped foster Bierce’s unsentimental outlook. His writing and worldview were further shaped by his career as a Union officer in the Civil War. The brutality he saw during the war cemented his cynicism. Bierce explored themes of cruelty and death in his writing, earning himself the nickname “Bitter Bierce.”

An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

Concept Vocabulary

As you perform your first read of “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” you will encounter these words.

etiquette **deference** **dictum**

Context Clues If these words are unfamiliar to you, try using **context clues** such as these to help you determine their meanings.

Elaborating Details: The former officer was **abject** when he was reduced in rank from captain to corporal.

Restatement, or Synonyms: The general was a **paragon** of leadership, the standard against which other officers were judged.

Apply your knowledge of context clues and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

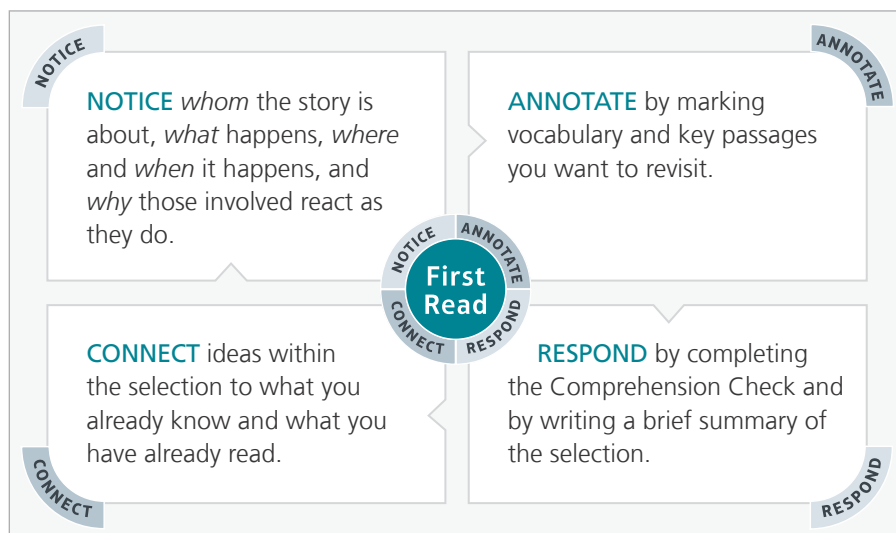
First Read FICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.

STANDARDS

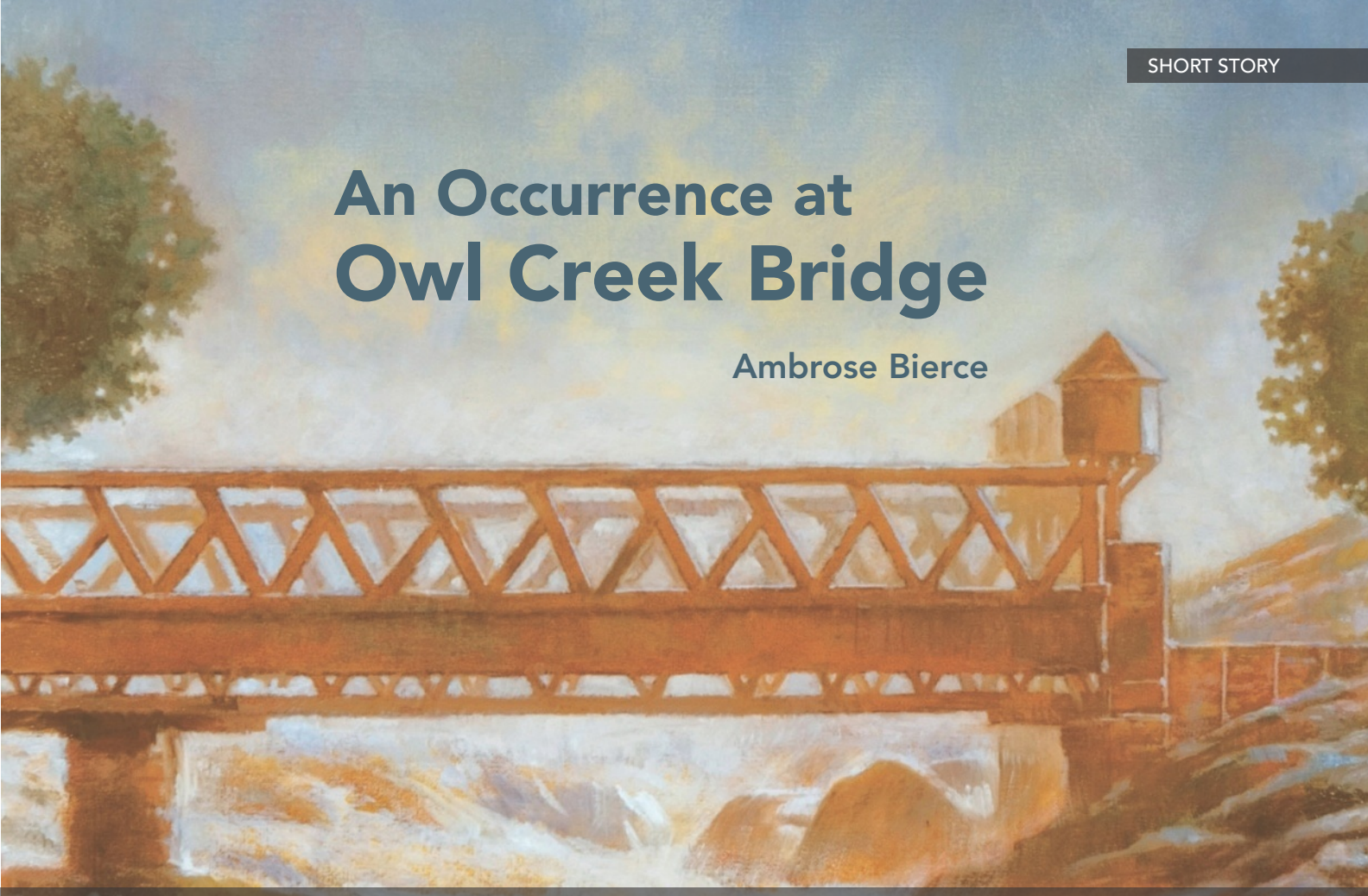
RL.11–12.10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

L.11–12.4.a Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.



An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

Ambrose Bierce



BACKGROUND

The senseless violence, death, and destruction Ambrose Bierce witnessed during the American Civil War (1861–1865) convinced him that war was terrible and futile. He set much of his best fiction, including this story, against the backdrop of this divisive war, in which the agricultural South, whose economy was based on slavery, battled the more industrialized North. Fought mostly in the South, the war caused hundreds of thousands of casualties on both sides.

SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA



I

¹ A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man's hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross timber above his head and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the sleepers supporting the metals of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners—two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed. He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in

NOTES

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

etiquette (EHT ih kiht) *n.*

MEANING:

deference (DEHF uhr uhns) *n.*

MEANING:

the position known as “support,” that is to say, vertical in front of the left shoulder, the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest—a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the center of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot planking that traversed it.

2 Beyond one of the sentinels nobody was in sight: the railroad ran straight away into a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an out-post farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground—a gentle acclivity¹ topped with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loopholed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Midway of the slope between bridge and fort were the spectators—a single company of infantry in line, at “parade rest,” the butts of the rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder, the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the point of his sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the center of the bridge, not a man moved. The company faced the bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates, but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military **etiquette** silence and fixity are forms of **deference**.

3 The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his habit, which was that of a planter. His features were good—a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well-fitting frock coat. He wore a mustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded.

4 The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the crossties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of

1. **acclivity** (uh KLIHV uh tee) *n.* upward slope.

the sergeant. At a signal from the former the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgment as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his “unsteadfast footing,” then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move! What a sluggish stream!

- 5 He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift—all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was a sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith’s hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by—it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each stroke with impatience and—he knew not why—apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer; the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the thrust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.
- 6 He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. “If I could free my hands,” he thought, “I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader’s farthest advance.”
- 7 As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man’s brain rather than evolved from it the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside.

II

- 8 Peyton Farquhar was a well-to-do planter, of an old and highly respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner and like other slave owners a politician he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with the gallant army that had fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth,² and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction.

2. **Corinth** Mississippi town that was the site of an 1862 Civil War battle.



NOTES

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

dictum (DIHK tuhm) *n.*

MEANING:

That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in war time. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous **dictum** that all is fair in love and war.

- 9 One evening while Farquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a gray-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Farquhar was only too happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was fetching the water her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.
- 10 “The Yanks are repairing the railroads,” said the man, “and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl Creek bridge, put it in order and built a stockade on the north bank. The commandant has issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels or trains will be summarily hanged. I saw the order.”
- 11 “How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge?” Farquhar asked.
- 12 “About thirty miles.”
- 13 “Is there no force on this side the creek?”
- 14 “Only a picket post³ half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge.”
- 15 “Suppose a man—a civilian and student of hanging—should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel,” said Farquhar, smiling, “what could he accomplish?”
- 16 The soldier reflected. “I was there a month ago,” he replied. “I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of

3. **picket post** troops sent ahead with news of a surprise attack.

driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It is now dry and would burn like tow.”⁴

- 17 The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.

III

- 18 As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened—ages later, it seemed to him—by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fiber of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well-defined lines of ramification⁵ and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fullness—of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced: he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud splash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him and kept the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river!—the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface—knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. “To be hanged and drowned,” he thought, “that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair.”

- 19 He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrist apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort!— what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavor!

4. **tow** (toh) *n.* coarse, broken fibers of hemp or flax before spinning.

5. **flash along well-defined lines of ramification** spread out quickly along branches from a central point.

Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hands dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water-snake. "Put it back, put it back!" He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang that he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire; his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick, downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge: his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs engulfed a great draft of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

20 He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally⁶ keen and alert. Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf—saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the gray spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragonflies' wings, the strokes of the water spiders' legs, like oars which had lifted their boat—all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

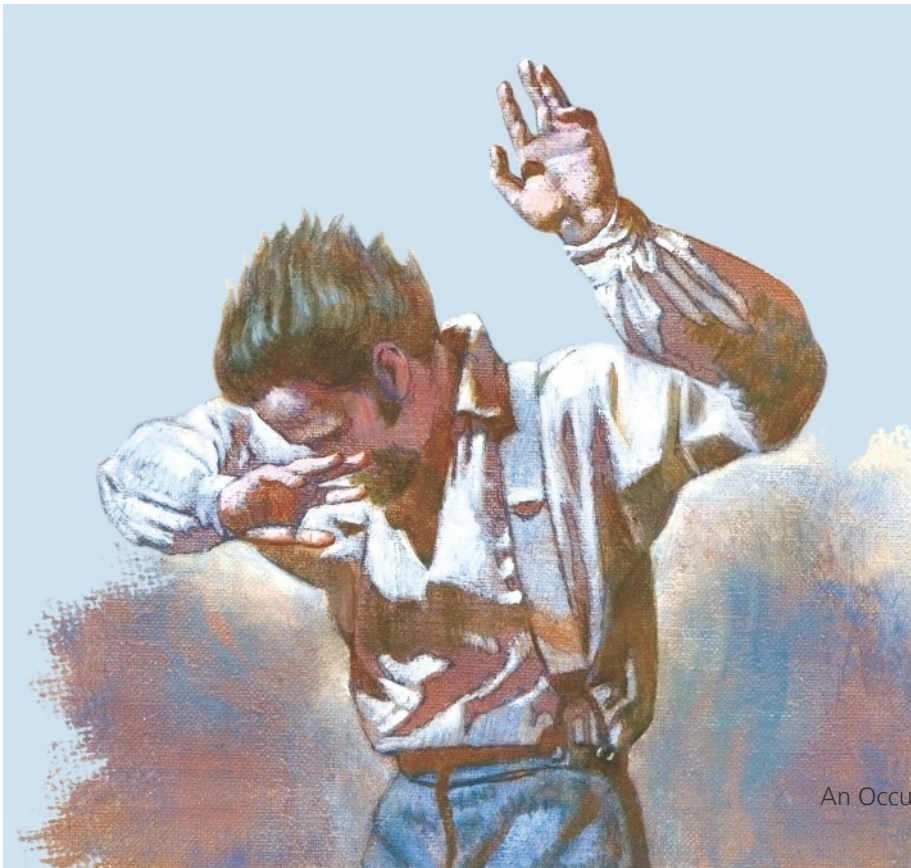
21 He had come to the surface facing down the stream: in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. The captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

22 Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, splattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a gray eye and remembered having read that gray eyes were keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

6. **preternaturally** (pree tuhr NACH uhr uh lee) *adv.* abnormally; extraordinarily.

- 23 A counterswirl had caught Farquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking into the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now rang out behind him and came across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning's work. How coldly and pitilessly—with what an even, calm intonation, presaging,⁷ and enforcing tranquility in the men—with what accurately measured intervals fell those cruel words:
- 24 “Attention, company! . . . Shoulder arms! . . . Ready! . . . Aim! . . . Fire!”
- 25 Farquhar dived—dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dulled thunder of the volley and, rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm and he snatched it out.
- 26 As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther down stream—nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust

7. **presaging** (prih SAY jihng) v. predicting; warning.



into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

27 The hunted man saw all this over his shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as his arms and legs: he thought with the rapidity of lightning.

28 “The officer,” he reasoned, “will not make that martinet’s⁸ error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!”

29 An appalling splash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, *diminuendo*,⁹ which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its depths! A rising sheet of water curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken a hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

30 “They will not do that again,” he thought; “the next time they will use a charge of grape.¹⁰ I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me—the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun.”

31 Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round—spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forests, the now distant bridge, fort and men—all were commingled and blurred. Objects were represented by their colors only; circular horizontal streaks of color—that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration that made him giddy and sick. In a few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream—the southern bank—and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him, and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls and audibly blessed it. It looked like diamonds, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange, roseate¹¹ light shone through the spaces among their trunks and the wind made in their branches the music of aeolian harps.¹² He had no wish to perfect his escape—was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken.

8. **martinet** (mahr tuh NEHT) *n.* strict military disciplinarian.

9. **diminuendo** (duh mihn yoo EHN doh) musical term used to describe a gradual reduction in volume.

10. **charge of grape** cluster of small iron balls—“grape shot”—that disperse once fired from a cannon.

11. **roseate** (ROH zee iht) *adj.* rose-colored.

12. **aeolian** (ee OH lee uhn) **harps** stringed instruments that produce music when played by the wind. In Greek mythology, Aeolus is the god of the winds.

32 A whiz and rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

33 All that day he traveled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman's road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

34 By night fall he was fatigued, footsore, famishing. The thought of his wife and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Overhead, as he looked up through this rift in the wood, shone great golden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which—once, twice, and again, he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

35 His neck was in pain and lifting his hand to it he found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested: he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cold air. How softly the turf had carpeted the untraveled avenue—he could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

36 Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene—perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have traveled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the veranda to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forward with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon—then all is darkness and silence!

37 Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge. 🦉

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

1. As the story begins, what event is about to take place on the bridge?
2. In the war that divides the nation, which side does Farquhar support?
3. Why has Farquhar been sentenced to die?
4. What surprising event happens after Farquhar first loses consciousness?
5. How do the soldiers try to stop Farquhar after he drops into the water?

6.  **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of the story by writing a summary.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the story. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story?

Research to Explore Conduct research on an aspect of the story you find interesting. For example, you may want to learn about the Battle of Shiloh, which took place in part along Owl Creek.



Close Read the Text

With your group, revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. **Annotate** details that you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?



Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Complete the activities.

- 1. Review and Clarify** With your group, reread paragraphs 36–37 of the selection. Do the details in the story prepare readers for that ending, or does it come as a complete surprise? What does the ending suggest about the nature of reality?
- 2. Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share the passages from the text that you found especially important. Take turns presenting your passages. Discuss what you noticed in the selection, what questions you asked, and what conclusions you reached.
- 3. Essential Question:** *What do stories reveal about the human condition?* What has this narrative taught you about the human condition? Discuss with your group.



AN OCCURRENCE AT
OWL CREEK BRIDGE

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Concept Vocabulary


etiquette

deference

dictum

Why These Words? The concept vocabulary words from the text are related. With your group, determine what the words have in common. Write your ideas, and add another word that fits the category.

Practice

 **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of these words from the text by using them in a short narrative paragraph. Then, trade papers with another group member and challenge him or her to underline the context clues that reveal the meaning of each word.

Word Study

Latin Suffix: -um In “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” the author uses the word *dictum*, which is the singular form of the Latin noun *dicta*. The Latin suffix *-um* is used to form the singular of many Latin nouns, including *bacteria*, *curricula*, and *media*. Use a dictionary or online source to find three other words that feature this suffix. Record the words and their meanings.



WORD NETWORK

Add words related to the human condition from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

L.11–12.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11–12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

L.11–12.4.b Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech. Apply knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes to draw inferences concerning the meaning of scientific and mathematical terminology.



AN OCCURRENCE AT
OWL CREEK BRIDGE

TIP

COLLABORATION

You may want to have individual group members complete the activity and questions first, and then work as a group to share and agree on responses.

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Analyze Craft and Structure

Author's Choices: Structure Ambrose Bierce chose to structure this story in three sections, each representing a shift in time and perspective. The shift in perspective is amplified by Bierce's choice of point of view, which affects every aspect of the story. Different points of view convey different types of information to the reader.

- In stories told from an **omniscient third-person point of view**, the narrator is an observer who can describe everything that happens, as well as the private thoughts and feelings of all the characters.
- In stories told from a **limited third-person point of view**, readers' information is limited to what a single character feels, thinks, and observes.

The point of view in this story shifts. As it shifts, so do the emotional tone and sense of time. To emphasize this change, Bierce introduces yet another narrative approach. He uses **stream of consciousness**, a technique in which a character's thoughts are presented as the mind experiences them—in short bursts without obvious logic.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Notebook Complete the activity and questions.

1. Working with your group, reread the story to find examples of the two different points of view Bierce uses. Then, use a chart like this one to analyze the effect of these choices.

THIRD-PERSON POINT OF VIEW	
Limited or Omniscient?	Effect

2. **(a)** What do you learn in Section II about the main character's home life, political loyalties, and motivations? **(b)** How does this detailed information shed light on the scene described in Section I?
3. **(a)** What point of view does Bierce use in Section III? **(b)** Explain why this choice of point of view is essential to the story's overall impact. **(c)** What is the effect of the shift in point of view in the last paragraph of the story?
4. **(a)** Which details in the second paragraph of Section III are revealed through the use of stream of consciousness? **(b)** What is the "sharp pain" that sparks Farquhar's thoughts? **(c)** In what way does this passage mimic the natural, jumbled flow of thought?



Conventions and Style

Varying Syntax for Effect Writers often vary their **syntax**, or the structures of their sentences, to achieve particular effects. In doing so, they may even choose to deviate from the conventions of standard English grammar. Ambrose Bierce, for example, employs a device known as **asyndeton**—the omission of a coordinating conjunction, such as *and* or *or*, where one would normally appear—to reinforce the stream-of-consciousness feel of Section III of “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.”

Consider this excerpt from the story:

He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf—saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the gray spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. (paragraph 20)

Typically, the coordinating conjunction *and* would precede the underlined word. Bierce’s choice to employ asyndeton, however, speeds up the rhythm of the passage. The reader gets the sense that the narrator is listing each creature just as it catches Farquhar’s eye—that the reader is experiencing Farquhar’s world at the very moment that he is.


Read It

1. Work individually. Read these examples of Bierce’s use of asyndeton in “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.” In each sentence, mark where Bierce has chosen to omit a coordinating conjunction.

- a. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragonflies’ wings, the strokes of the water spiders’ legs, like oars which had lifted their boat—all these made audible music.
- b. A rising sheet of water curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him!
- c. It looked like diamonds, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble.
- d. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms.

2. **Connect to Style** Reread paragraph 21 of “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” and identify the sentence in which Bierce employs asyndeton. Then, discuss with your group how the syntax of this sentence contributes to Bierce’s stream-of-consciousness narration.

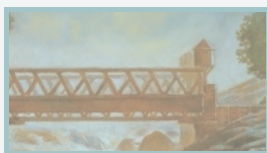
Write It

 **Notebook** Write a one-paragraph stream-of-consciousness narrative. Use asyndeton in at least one of your sentences. Indicate where you have omitted any coordinating conjunctions.

STANDARDS

L.11–12.1.a Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

L.11–12.3.a Vary syntax for effect, consulting references for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.



AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE

Comparing Texts

You will now read “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall.” First, complete the first-read and close-read activities. Then, compare the narrative structures in “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” and “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.”



THE JILTING OF GRANNY WEATHERALL

About the Author



The life of **Katherine Anne Porter** (1890–1980) spanned World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and the rise of the nuclear age. For Porter, her fiction was an “effort to grasp the meaning of those threats, to trace them to their sources, and to understand the logic of this majestic and terrible failure of the life of man in the Western world.” Her stories often feature characters at pivotal moments, who face dramatic change, the constricting bonds of family, and the weight of the past.

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

L.11–12.4.b Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech. Apply knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes to draw inferences concerning the meaning of scientific and mathematical terminology.

The Jilting of Granny Weatherall

Concept Vocabulary

As you perform your first read of “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,” you will encounter these words.

clammy **hypodermic** **dyspepsia**

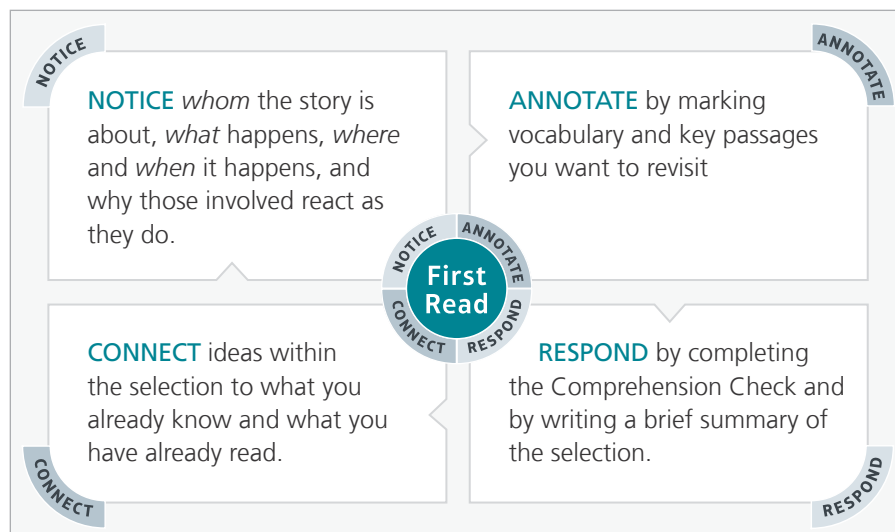
Familiar Word Parts Separating an unfamiliar word into its parts—roots, prefixes, or suffixes—can often help you determine its meaning.

Example: The root *-circ-* means “ring” or “circle.” Thus, something that is *circular* has a ringlike shape, and something that *circulates* moves in a ringlike path. When you come across an unfamiliar word that contains the root *-circ-*, such as *circuitous*, you know that it has properties that relate to a circle. Even if you cannot identify a word’s exact definition, you can approximate the meaning well enough to keep reading. *Circuitous* is an adjective that means “roundabout; indirect.”

Apply your knowledge of familiar word parts and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

First Read FICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.





The Jilting of Granny Weatherall

Katherine Anne Porter

BACKGROUND

Katherine Anne Porter's view of life and the fiction she wrote were shaped by a sense of disillusionment resulting from World War I, the despair of the Great Depression, and the World War II horrors of Nazism and nuclear warfare. Sometimes, as in the novel *Ship of Fools*, Porter focuses on political issues such as Nazism. In contrast, works such as "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" pinpoint the dissolving families and communities of the modern age.

SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA



- 1 **S**he flicked her wrist neatly out of Doctor Harry's pudgy careful fingers and pulled the sheet up to her chin. The brat ought to be in knee breeches. Doctoring around the country with spectacles on his nose! "Get along now, take your schoolbooks and go. There's nothing wrong with me."
- 2 Doctor Harry spread a warm paw like a cushion on her forehead where the forked green vein danced and made her eyelids twitch. "Now, now, be a good girl, and we'll have you up in no time."
- 3 "That's no way to speak to a woman nearly eighty years old just because she's down. I'd have you respect your elders, young man."
- 4 "Well, Missy, excuse me," Doctor Harry patted her cheek. "But I've got to warn you, haven't I? You're a marvel, but you must be careful or you're going to be good and sorry."

NOTES

- 5 “Don’t tell me what I’m going to be. I’m on my feet now, morally speaking. It’s Cornelia. I had to go to bed to get rid of her.”
- 6 Her bones felt loose, and floated around in her skin, and Doctor Harry floated like a balloon around the foot of the bed. He floated and pulled down his waistcoat and swung his glasses on a cord. “Well, stay where you are, it certainly can’t hurt you.”
- 7 “Get along and doctor your sick,” said Granny Weatherall. “Leave a well woman alone. I’ll call for you when I want you . . . Where were you forty years ago when I pulled through milk leg¹ and double pneumonia? You weren’t even born. Don’t let Cornelia lead you on,” she shouted, because Doctor Harry appeared to float up to the ceiling and out. “I pay my own bills, and I don’t throw my money away on nonsense!”
- 8 She meant to wave good-bye, but it was too much trouble. Her eyes closed of themselves, it was like a dark curtain drawn around the bed. The pillow rose and floated under her, pleasant as a hammock in a light wind. She listened to the leaves rustling outside the window. No, somebody was swishing newspapers: no, Cornelia and Doctor Harry were whispering together. She leaped broad awake, thinking they whispered in her ear.
- 9 “She was never like this, never like this!” “Well, what can we expect?” “Yes, eighty years old. . . .”
- 10 Well, and what if she was? She still had ears. It was like Cornelia to whisper around doors. She always kept things secret in such a public way. She was always being tactful and kind. Cornelia was dutiful; that was the trouble with her. Dutiful and good: “So good and dutiful,” said Granny, “that I’d like to spank her.” She saw herself spanking Cornelia and making a fine job of it.
- 11 “What’d you say, Mother?”
- 12 Granny felt her face tying up in hard knots.
- 13 “Can’t a body think, I’d like to know?”
- 14 “I thought you might want something.”
- 15 “I do. I want a lot of things. First off, go away and don’t whisper.”
- 16 She lay and drowsed, hoping in her sleep that the children would keep out and let her rest a minute. It had been a long day. Not that she was tired. It was always pleasant to snatch a minute now and then. There was always so much to be done, let me see: tomorrow.
- 17 Tomorrow was far away and there was nothing to trouble about. Things were finished somehow when the time came; thank God there was always a little margin over for peace: then a person could spread out the plan of life and tuck in the edges orderly. It was good to have everything clean and folded away, with the hair brushes and tonic bottles sitting straight on the white embroidered linen: the day started without fuss and the pantry shelves laid out with rows of jelly glasses and brown jugs and white stone-china jars with blue whirligigs and words painted on them: coffee, tea, sugar, ginger,

1. **milk leg** painful swelling of the leg.

cinnamon, allspice: and the bronze clock with the lion on top nicely dusted off. The dust that lion could collect in twenty-four hours! The box in the attic with all those letters tied up, well, she'd have to go through that tomorrow. All those letters—George's letters and John's letters and her letters to them both—lying around for the children to find afterwards made her uneasy. Yes, that would be tomorrow's business. No use to let them know how silly she had been once.

- 18 While she was rummaging around she found death in her mind and it felt **clammy** and unfamiliar. She had spent so much time preparing for death there was no need for bringing it up again. Let it take care of itself now. When she was sixty she had felt very old, finished, and went around making farewell trips to see her children and grandchildren, with a secret in her mind: This is the very last of your mother, children! Then she made her will and came down with a long fever. That was all just a notion like a lot of other things, but it was lucky too, for she had once for all got over the idea of dying for a long time. Now she couldn't be worried. She hoped she had better sense now. Her father had lived to be one hundred and two years old and had drunk a noggin of strong hot toddy on his last birthday. He told the reporters it was his daily habit, and he owed his long life to that. He had made quite a scandal and was very pleased about it. She believed she'd just plague Cornelia a little.
- 19 "Cornelia! Cornelia!" No footsteps, but a sudden hand on her cheek. "Bless you, where have you been?"
- 20 "Here, mother."
- 21 "Well, Cornelia, I want a noggin of hot toddy."
- 22 "Are you cold, darling?"
- 23 "I'm chilly, Cornelia. Lying in bed stops the circulation. I must have told you that a thousand times."
- 24 Well, she could just hear Cornelia telling her husband that Mother was getting a little childish and they'd have to humor her. The thing that most annoyed her was that Cornelia thought she was deaf, dumb, and blind. Little hasty glances and tiny gestures tossed around her and over her head saying, "Don't cross her, let her have her way, she's eighty years old," and she sitting there as if she lived in a thin glass cage. Sometimes Granny almost made up her mind to pack up and move back to her own house where nobody could remind her every minute that she was old. Wait, wait, Cornelia, till your own children whisper behind your back!
- 25 In her day she had kept a better house and had got more work done. She wasn't too old yet for Lydia to be driving eighty miles for advice when one of the children jumped the track, and Jimmy still dropped in and talked things over: "Now, Mammy, you've a good business head, I want to know what you think of this? . . ." Old. Cornelia couldn't change the furniture around without asking. Little things, little things! They had been so sweet when they were little. Granny wished the old days were back again with the children young and everything to be done over. It had been a hard pull, but not too

NOTES

Mark familiar word parts or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

clammy (KLAM ee) *adj.*

MEANING:

much for her. When she thought of all the food she had cooked, and all the clothes she had cut and sewed, and all the gardens she had made—well, the children showed it. There they were, made out of her, and they couldn't get away from that. Sometimes she wanted to see John again and point to them and say, Well, I didn't do so badly, did I? But that would have to wait. That was for tomorrow. She used to think of him as a man, but now all the children were older than their father, and he would be a child beside her if she saw him now. It seemed strange and there was something wrong in the idea. Why, he couldn't possibly recognize her. She had fenced in a hundred acres once, digging the post holes herself and clamping the wires with just a negro boy to help. That changed a woman. John would be looking for a young woman with the peaked Spanish comb in her hair and the painted fan. Digging post holes changed a woman. Riding country roads in the winter when women had their babies was another thing: sitting up nights with sick horses and sick children and hardly ever losing one. John, I hardly ever lost one of them! John would see that in a minute, that would be something he could understand, she wouldn't have to explain anything!

26 It made her feel like rolling up her sleeves and putting the whole place to rights again. No matter if Cornelia was determined to be everywhere at once, there were a great many things left undone on this place. She would start tomorrow and do them. It was good to be strong enough for everything, even if all you made melted and changed and slipped under your hands, so that by the time you finished you almost forgot what you were working for. What was it I set out to do? she asked herself intently, but she could not remember. A fog rose over the valley, she saw it marching across the creek swallowing the trees and moving up the hill like an army of ghosts. Soon it would be at the near edge of the orchard, and then it was time to go in and light the lamps. Come in, children, don't stay out in the night air.

27 Lighting the lamps had been beautiful. The children huddled up to her and breathed like little calves waiting at the bars in the twilight. Their eyes followed the match and watched the flame rise and settle in a blue curve, then they moved away from her. The lamp was lit, they didn't have to be scared and hang on to mother any more. Never, never, never more. God, for all my life I thank Thee. Without Thee, my God, I could never have done it. Hail Mary, full of grace.

28 I want you to pick all the fruit this year and see that nothing is wasted. There's always someone who can use it. Don't let good things rot for want of using. You waste life when you waste good food. Don't let things get lost. It's bitter to lose things. Now, don't let me get to thinking, not when I am tired and taking a little nap before supper. . . .

29 The pillow rose about her shoulders and pressed against her heart and the memory was being squeezed out of it: oh, push down the pillow, somebody: it would smother her if she tried to hold it. Such a

fresh breeze blowing and such a green day with no threats in it. But he had not come, just the same. What does a woman do when she has put on the white veil and set out the white cake for a man and he doesn't come? She tried to remember. No, I swear he never harmed me but in that. He never harmed me but in that . . . and what if he did? There was the day, the day, but a whirl of dark smoke rose and covered it, crept up and over into the bright field where everything was planted so carefully in orderly rows. That was hell, she knew hell when she saw it. For sixty years she had prayed against remembering him and against losing her soul in the deep pit of hell, and now the two things were mingled in one and the thought of him was a smoky cloud from hell that moved and crept in her head when she had just got rid of Doctor Harry and was trying to rest a minute. Wounded vanity, Ellen, said a sharp voice in the top of her mind. Don't let your wounded vanity get the upper hand of you. Plenty of girls get jilted. You were jilted, weren't you? Then stand up to it. Her eyelids wavered and let in streamers of blue-gray light like tissue paper over

NOTES



Mark familiar word parts or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

hypodermic (hy puh DUR mihk) *n.*

MEANING:

her eyes. She must get up and pull the shades down or she'd never sleep. She was in bed again and the shades were not down. How could that happen? Better turn over, hide from the light, sleeping in the light gave you nightmares. "Mother, how do you feel now?" and a stinging wetness on her forehead. But I don't like having my face washed in cold water!

- 30 Hapsy? George? Lydia? Jimmy? No, Cornelia, and her features were swollen and full of little puddles. "They're coming, darling, they'll all be here soon." Go wash your face, child, you look funny.
- 31 Instead of obeying, Cornelia knelt down and put her head on the pillow. She seemed to be talking but there was no sound. "Well, are you tongue-tied? Whose birthday is it? Are you going to give a party?"
- 32 Cornelia's mouth moved urgently in strange shapes. "Don't do that, you bother me, daughter."
- 33 "Oh, no, Mother. Oh, no. . . ."
- 34 Nonsense. It was strange about children. They disputed your every word. "No what, Cornelia?"
- 35 "Here's Doctor Harry."
- 36 "I won't see that boy again. He just left five minutes ago."
- 37 "That was this morning, Mother. It's night now. Here's the nurse."
- 38 "This is Doctor Harry, Mrs. Weatherall. I never saw you look so young and happy!"
- 39 "Ah, I'll never be young again—but I'd be happy if they'd let me lie in peace and get rested."
- 40 She thought she spoke up loudly, but no one answered. A warm weight on her forehead, a warm bracelet on her wrist, and a breeze went on whispering, trying to tell her something. A shuffle of leaves in the everlasting hand of God, He blew on them and they danced and rattled. "Mother, don't mind, we're going to give you a little **hypodermic**." "Look here, daughter, how do ants get in this bed? I saw sugar ants yesterday." Did you send for Hapsy too?
- 41 It was Hapsy she really wanted. She had to go a long way back through a great many rooms to find Hapsy standing with a baby on her arm. She seemed to herself to be Hapsy also, and the baby on Hapsy's arm was Hapsy and himself and herself, all at once, and there was no surprise in the meeting. Then Hapsy melted from within and turned flimsy as gray gauze and the baby was a gauzy shadow, and Hapsy came up close and said, "I thought you'd never come," and looked at her very searchingly and said, "You haven't changed a bit!" They leaned forward to kiss, when Cornelia began whispering from a long way off, "Oh, is there anything you want to tell me? Is there anything I can do for you?"
- 42 Yes, she had changed her mind after sixty years and she would like to see George. I want you to find George. Find him and be sure to tell him I forgot him. I want him to know I had my husband just the same and my children and my house like any other woman. A good house too and a good husband that I loved and fine children out of him.

Better than I hoped for even. Tell him I was given back everything he took away and more. Oh, no, oh, God, no, there was something else besides the house and the man and the children. Oh, surely they were not all? What was it? Something not given back. . . . Her breath crowded down under her ribs and grew into a monstrous frightening shape with cutting edges; it bored up into her head, and the agony was unbelievable: Yes, John, get the Doctor now, no more talk, my time has come.

- 43 When this one was born it should be the last. The last. It should have been born first, for it was the one she had truly wanted. Everything came in good time. Nothing left out, left over. She was strong, in three days she would be as well as ever. Better. A woman needed milk in her to have her full health.
- 44 "Mother, do you hear me?"
- 45 "I've been telling you—"
- 46 "Mother, Father Connolly's here."
- 47 "I went to Holy Communion only last week. Tell him I'm not so sinful as all that."
- 48 "Father just wants to speak to you."
- 49 He could speak as much as he pleased. It was like him to drop in and inquire about her soul as if it were a teething baby, and then stay on for a cup of tea and a round of cards and gossip. He always had a funny story of some sort, usually about an Irishman who made his little mistakes and confessed them, and the point lay in some absurd thing he would blurt out in the confessional showing his struggles between native piety and original sin. Granny felt easy about her soul. Cornelia, where are your manners? Give Father Connolly a chair. She had her secret comfortable understanding with a few favorite saints who cleared a straight road to God for her. All as surely signed and sealed as the papers for the new Forty Acres. Forever . . . heirs and assigns² forever. Since the day the wedding cake was not cut, but thrown out and wasted. The whole bottom dropped out of the world, and there she was blind and sweating with nothing under her feet and the walls falling away. His hand had caught her under the breast, she had not fallen, there was the freshly polished floor with the green rug on it, just as before. He had cursed like a sailor's parrot and said, "I'll kill him for you." Don't lay a hand on him, for my sake leave something to God. "Now, Ellen, you must believe what I tell you. . . ."
- 50 So there was nothing, nothing to worry about any more, except sometimes in the night one of the children screamed in a nightmare, and they both hustled out shaking and hunting for the matches and calling, "There, wait a minute, here we are!" John, get the doctor now, Hapsy's time has come. But there was Hapsy standing by the bed in a white cap. "Cornelia, tell Hapsy to take off her cap. I can't see her plain."

2. **assigns** *n.* people to whom property is transferred.

- 51 Her eyes opened very wide and the room stood out like a picture she had seen somewhere. Dark colors with the shadows rising towards the ceiling in long angles. The tall black dresser gleamed with nothing on it but John's picture, enlarged from a little one, with John's eyes very black when they should have been blue. You never saw him, so how do you know how he looked? But the man insisted the copy was perfect, it was very rich and handsome. For a picture, yes, but it's not my husband. The table by the bed had a linen cover and a candle and a crucifix. The light was blue from Cornelia's silk lampshades. No sort of light at all, just frippery. You had to live forty years with kerosene lamps to appreciate honest electricity. She felt very strong and she saw Doctor Harry with a rosy nimbus around him.
- 52 "You look like a saint, Doctor Harry, and I vow that's as near as you'll ever come to it."
- 53 "She's saying something."
- 54 "I heard you, Cornelia. What's all this carrying on?"
- 55 "Father Connolly's saying—"
- 56 Cornelia's voice staggered and bumped like a cart in a bad road. It rounded corners and turned back again and arrived nowhere. Granny stepped up in the cart very lightly and reached for the reins, but a man sat beside her and she knew him by his hands, driving



the cart. She did not look in his face, for she knew without seeing, but looked instead down the road where the trees leaned over and bowed to each other and a thousand birds were singing a Mass. She felt like singing too, but she put her hand in the bosom of her dress and pulled out a rosary, and Father Connolly murmured Latin in a very solemn voice and tickled her feet.³ My God, will you stop that nonsense? I'm a married woman. What if he did run away and leave me to face the priest by myself? I found another a whole world better. I wouldn't have exchanged my husband for anybody except St. Michael⁴ himself, and you may tell him that for me with a thank you in the bargain.

57 Light flashed on her closed eyelids, and a deep roaring shook her. Cornelia, is that lightning? I hear thunder. There's going to be a storm. Close all the windows. Call the children in. . . . "Mother, here we are, all of us." "Is that you, Hapsy?" "Oh, no. I'm Lydia. We drove as fast as we could." Their faces drifted above her, drifted away. The rosary fell out of her hands and Lydia put it back. Jimmy tried to help, their hands fumbled together, and Granny closed two fingers around Jimmy's thumb. Beads wouldn't do, it must be something alive. She was so amazed her thoughts ran round and round. So, my dear Lord, this is my death and I wasn't even thinking about it. My children have come to see me die. But I can't, it's not time. Oh, I always hated surprises. I wanted to give Cornelia the amethyst set—Cornelia, you're to have the amethyst set, but Hapsy's to wear it when she wants, and, Doctor Harry, do shut up. Nobody sent for you. Oh, my dear Lord, do wait a minute. I meant to do something about the Forty Acres, Jimmy doesn't need it and Lydia will later on, with that worthless husband of hers. I meant to finish the altar cloth and send six bottles of wine to Sister Borgia for her **dyspepsia**. I want to send six bottles of wine to Sister Borgia, Father Connolly, now don't let me forget.

58 Cornelia's voice made short turns and tilted over and crashed. "Oh, Mother, oh, Mother, oh Mother. . . ."

59 "I'm not going, Cornelia. I'm taken by surprise. I can't go."

60 You'll see Hapsy again. What about her? "I thought you'd never come." Granny made a long journey outward, looking for Hapsy. What if I don't find her? What then? Her heart sank down and down, there was no bottom to death, she couldn't come to the end of it. The blue light from Cornelia's lampshade drew into a tiny point in the center of her brain, it flickered and winked like an eye, quietly it fluttered and dwindled. Granny lay curled down within herself, amazed and watchful, staring at the point of light that was herself; her body was now only a deeper mass of shadow in an endless darkness and this darkness would curl around the light and swallow it up. God, give a sign!

3. **murmured . . . feet** administered the last rites of the Catholic Church.

4. **St. Michael** one of the archangels.

NOTES

Mark familiar word parts or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

dyspepsia (dihs PEHP see uh) n.

MEANING:

- 61 For the second time there was no sign. Again no bridegroom and the priest in the house. She could not remember any other sorrow because this grief wiped them all away. Oh, no, there's nothing more cruel than this—I'll never forgive it. She stretched herself with a deep breath and blew out the light. 🕯️

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

1. Where is Granny Weatherall as she speaks to the doctor?
2. Who is taking care of Granny Weatherall as she is dying?
3. What journey did Granny Weatherall take when she was sixty years old?
4. What happened to Granny Weatherall sixty years earlier?
5. What does Granny Weatherall want George to know?

6.  **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of the text by writing a summary.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story?

Research to Explore Conduct research on an aspect of the text you find interesting. For example, you may want to learn about doctors' house calls—why they once were a widespread practice, why they are less common today, and whether they might again become popular. Share your findings with your group.



Close Read the Text

With your group, revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. **Annotate** details that you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?



Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Complete the activities.

- 1. Review and Clarify** With your group, reread the sections of the story that describe Hapsy (paragraphs 41, 50, and 57–60). Discuss her role in Granny Weatherall's thoughts. Why do you think Hapsy is such an important figure for Granny Weatherall?
- 2. Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share the passages from the selection that you found especially important. Take turns presenting your passages. Discuss what you noticed in the story, what questions you asked, and what conclusions you reached.
- 3. Essential Question: *What do stories reveal about the human condition?*** What has this story taught you about life and loss? Discuss with your group.



THE JILTING OF
GRANNY WEATHERALL

TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

Granny Weatherall's jumbled thoughts concern the past and the present. As you discuss the story, cite textual evidence to support your interpretation of when the events are taking place.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Concept Vocabulary

hypodermic clammy dyspepsia

Why These Words? The three concept vocabulary words from the text are related. With your group, determine what the words have in common. Write your ideas, and add another word that fits the category.

Practice

Confirm your understanding of the concept vocabulary words by using them in a short conversation with your group members. If you are unsure about the exact meaning of a word, look it up in a print or online college-level dictionary before you begin.

Word Study

Greek Prefix: *dys-* In "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," Granny Weatherall thinks about Sister Borgia's *dyspepsia*. This word includes the Greek prefix *dys-*, meaning "bad" or "difficult." This prefix often appears in scientific terms involving medical or psychological diagnoses. Use a dictionary or online resource to identify three other words that have this prefix. Write the words and their meanings. Explain how the meaning of the prefix contributes to the meaning of each word.



WORD NETWORK

Add words related to the human condition from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

L.11–12.4.b Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech. Apply knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes to draw inferences concerning the meaning of scientific and mathematical terminology.

THE JILTING OF
GRANNY WEATHERALL

Analyze Craft and Structure

Author's Choices: Narrative Structure People's thoughts do not flow in neat patterns. Instead, they move unpredictably among perceptions, memories, and ideas. During the early 1900s, some writers began using a literary device called **stream of consciousness** to try to re-create a sense of the disjointed, natural flow of thought. Stream-of-consciousness narratives feature the following qualities:

- They present sequences of thought as if they were coming directly from a character's mind. The thoughts may or may not be complete or relate to one another.
- They tend to omit punctuation and transitions that appear in more traditional prose.

Stream-of-consciousness narratives often involve the use of **flashback**, a scene from the past that interrupts the present action of a story. A flashback may take the form of a memory, a story, a dream or daydream, or a switch by the narrator to a time in the past. Stream-of-consciousness stories may also involve shifts in the **narrative point of view**, or the perspective from which events are told. In this story, Porter's third-person narrator essentially disappears into Granny Weatherall's first-person narration.

Practice



Notebook Work with your group to answer the questions.

1. Use the chart to identify two points at which Granny's thoughts shift from one subject to another without an obvious transition. What associations might connect her thoughts in each of these examples?

THOUGHT OR MEMORY	TRIGGERING DETAIL	NEXT THOUGHT OR MEMORY

2. **(a)** What details trigger Granny's flashback to lighting the lamps when the children were young? **(b)** What is the connection between the flashback and her experience in the present?
3. Analyze two other flashbacks in the story. **(a)** Identify the form the flashback takes (i.e., dream, memory, etc.). **(b)** Explain what you learn from each flashback about Granny's life.
4. **(a)** What qualities does the use of stream-of-consciousness narration, flashback, and shifting narrative point of view lend to the story? **(b)** Overall, do you think these techniques are effective for the telling of this particular tale? Explain.

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.



Author's Style

Author's Choices: Figurative Language Literary works almost always contain two broad types of language—literal and figurative. Literal language means what it says, conveying information, ideas, and feelings in a direct way. **Figurative language**, by contrast, is language that is used imaginatively and expresses more than its literal meanings. Two common types of figurative language are metaphors and similes.

- A **metaphor** is a direct comparison between two apparently unlike things.

Example: *Doctor Harry spread a warm paw . . . on her forehead. . . .* (paragraph 2)

- A **simile** is a comparison between two apparently unlike things made using an explicit comparison word such as *like*, *as*, *than*, or *resembles*.

Example: *The pillow rose and floated under her, pleasant as a hammock in a light wind.* (paragraph 8)

Porter uses these devices to show how Granny Weatherall makes connections in her mind as she begins to lose her connection to reality.


Read It

1. Work individually. Use this chart to identify the simile or metaphor in each passage from “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall.”

PASSAGE	METAPHOR OR SIMILE	EFFECT
<i>Her bones felt loose, and floated around in her skin, and Doctor Harry floated like a balloon around the foot of the bed.</i> (paragraph 6)		
<i>Cornelia's voice staggered and bumped like a cart in a bad road.</i> (paragraph 56)		
<i>Things were finished somehow when the time came; thank God there was always a little margin over for peace: then a person could spread out the plan of life and tuck in the edges orderly.</i> (paragraph 17)		

2. **Connect to Style** With your group, discuss how the author's use of simile and metaphor affects what you envision as you read each of the passages in the chart.

Write It

 **Notebook** Write a paragraph in which you describe what you learned about the human condition from “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall.” Use at least one simile and one metaphor to make your language more vivid and interesting.

STANDARDS

RL.11–12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

L.11–12.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

AN OCCURRENCE AT
OWL CREEK BRIDGETHE JILTING OF
GRANNY WEATHERALL**STANDARDS**

RL.11–12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

W.11–12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

SL.11–12.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Writing to Compare

You have read two classic American stories that employ nonlinear narrative techniques: “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” and “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall.” Now, deepen your understanding of both stories by comparing them and sharing your analysis in a group presentation.

Assignment

Prepare and deliver an **oral presentation** in which you compare and contrast how stream-of-consciousness narration works in the two stories you have studied. During your presentation, include dramatic readings of relevant passages to highlight important features of the stream-of-consciousness technique. End your presentation by drawing conclusions about the strengths and limitations of this literary device. Then, hold a brief question-and-answer session with your audience.

Planning

Define the Term Work with your group to craft a definition of stream of consciousness. Complete this sentence.

Stream of consciousness is _____

Analyze the Texts Review the stories individually, looking for passages that illustrate specific features of stream-of-consciousness narration. Use the chart to gather your ideas. Then, work together as a group to select examples that best reveal similarities and differences between the two stories. Aim to include at least two passages from each story.

	PROPOSED PASSAGE	QUALITY OR EFFECT IT SHOWS
An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge		
The Jilting of Granny Weatherall		

Organize the Presentation

Outline the Content Your presentation should include these elements:

- a formal introduction in which you define stream of consciousness
- explanations of at least two effects of stream-of-consciousness narration
- dramatic readings from the stories that provide strong examples of each effect and reveal similarities and differences between the two works
- a memorable conclusion
- a lively question-and-answer session

With your group, follow this outline frame to plan an effective sequence. Decide how you will transition from explanations to examples.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” and “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall.”

Outline Frame

1. **Introduction:** Define stream-of-consciousness narration.
2. **Present Point 1:** Explain one effect of stream-of-consciousness narration. *Deliver readings:* Read passages from each story that show similarities and differences in how this quality appears in the two stories.
3. **Present Point 2:** Explain a second effect of stream-of-consciousness narration. *Deliver readings:* Read passages from each story that show similarities and differences in how this quality appears in the two stories.
4. **Conclusion:** Explain what makes stream-of-consciousness narration effective in the two stories under discussion.
5. **Question & Answer Session**

Assign Tasks and Write Some of the sections of your presentation need to be written ahead of time, whereas others simply need preparation. Decide whether you will work together to draft or prepare for each section, or whether you will assign the different tasks to individual group members.

Annotate Passages and Rehearse An annotated reading script will help you deliver dramatic readings with power and expression. Copy the passages exactly and practice reading them aloud several times, trying different approaches. The following annotations can help you remember the best choices.

/ = brief pause

// = longer pause

underscore = emphasis

double underscore = strong emphasis

!!! = speed up

XXX = slow down

Deliver the Presentation

Keep the following points in mind as you give your oral presentation:

- Do not keep your eyes glued to the page during the dramatic readings. Instead, look up to make a connection with your audience.
- Speak clearly and avoid either rushing or speaking too slowly.

During the final question-and-answer session, share the responsibility of answering. If your audience is reluctant to speak, pose and answer questions that they might find interesting.



SOURCES

- A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY
- AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE
- THE JILTING OF GRANNY WEATHERALL

Present a Narrative

Assignment

You have read a history of the short story, and you have read and compared two short stories that feature stream-of-consciousness narration. Review how the technique is used in short stories. Then, work with your group to plan, present, and video-record a **stream-of-consciousness narrative** that responds to this statement:

The day felt as if it would never end.

Form teams and work together to find examples from the texts to help you write. Then, present your video narrative for the class.

Plan With Your Group

Analyze the Text Divide into two subgroups. One will analyze stream-of-consciousness techniques within one of the selections; the other group will analyze the other selection. Decide which techniques your group will use in your narrative.

TITLE	WHICH CHARACTERS ARE REVEALED THROUGH STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS? HOW?
An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge	
The Jilting of Granny Weatherall	
The best examples of the techniques are:	

STANDARDS

SL.11–12.1.c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

Draft Your Narrative With your group, plan your narrative, roughing out the plot and characters. Identify the main conflict, and decide how it will be resolved. Then, work on incorporating stream-of-consciousness techniques into the story.

Plan Use of Media Consider how to make the best use of the digital media available to you. With your group, discuss graphics, audio, or visual elements you will use to help viewers better understand your stream-of-consciousness video.

Organize Your Presentation Decide how your group will convert your story into a script and then a video. Create a detailed storyboard. Make sure that your stream-of-consciousness techniques are visually represented. Make a plan for presenting your narrative by answering questions such as these: How many different characters are in your video? How will you divide the technical tasks? Use this chart to organize tasks.

Rehearse With Your Group

Practice With Your Group As you act out your narrative, use this checklist to evaluate the effectiveness of your group's first run-through. Then, use your evaluation and the instructions here to guide your revision.

CONTENT	USE OF MEDIA	PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES
<input type="checkbox"/> The narrative relates to the prompt. <input type="checkbox"/> Stream-of-consciousness techniques are used in the narrative.	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital media is used effectively to aid understanding and create interest.	<input type="checkbox"/> Actors speak clearly, with appropriate emotion. <input type="checkbox"/> Actors seem well prepared.

Film the Narrative When you are satisfied with your narrative, find a quiet place to film it using a recorder or smart phone. Depending on your equipment, you may want to film several versions before deciding on the one you want to share. If desired, you may want to use digital effects to enhance the presentation.

Present and Evaluate

Present your video to the class, and invite feedback. As you watch other groups' videos, evaluate how well they meet the requirements on the checklist.

STANDARDS

W.11–12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

W.11–12.3b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What do stories reveal about the human condition?

Some situations are shaped by changes in society, but many aspects of human life are timeless. In this section, you will complete your study of short stories and the human condition by exploring an additional selection related to the topic. You'll then share what you learn with classmates. To choose a text, follow these steps.

Look Back Think about the selections you have already studied. What more do you want to know about short stories and the insights they provide?

Look Ahead Preview the texts by reading the descriptions. Which one seems most interesting and appealing to you?

Look Inside Take a few minutes to scan the text you chose. Choose a different one if this text doesn't meet your needs.

Independent Learning Strategies

Throughout your life, in school, in your community, and in your career, you will need to rely on yourself to learn and work on your own. Review these strategies and the actions you can take to practice them during Independent Learning. Add ideas of your own for each category.

STRATEGY	ACTION PLAN
Create a schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand your goals and deadlines.• Make a plan for what to do each day.•
Practice what you have learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use first-read and close-read strategies to deepen your understanding.• After you read, evaluate the usefulness of the evidence to help you understand the topic.• Consider the quality and reliability of the source.•
Take notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Record important ideas and information.• Review your notes before preparing to share with a group.•

Choose one selection. Selections are available online only.

SHORT STORY

The Tell-Tale Heart

Edgar Allan Poe

Violence, revenge, and madness converge in this classic short story.



SHORT STORY

The Man to Send Rain Clouds

Leslie Marmon Silko

Initially at odds, two ancient traditions come together in a tribute to a beloved grandfather.



SHORT STORY

Ambush

Tim O'Brien

For one Vietnam War veteran, a child's question evokes vivid memories from a distant battlefield.



SHORT STORY

Housepainting

Lan Samantha Chang

Why would a seemingly simple task spark tensions within a family?



PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT PREP

Review Notes for a Narrative

Complete your Evidence Log for the unit by evaluating what you have learned and synthesizing the information you have recorded.



First-Read Guide



Tool Kit

First-Read Guide and
Model Annotation

Use this page to record your first-read ideas.

Selection Title: _____

NOTICE

NOTICE new information or ideas you learn about the unit topic as you first read this text.

ANNOTATE

ANNOTATE by marking vocabulary and key passages you want to revisit.



CONNECT ideas within the selection to other knowledge and the selections you have read.

RESPOND by writing a brief summary of the selection.

CONNECT

RESPOND

 STANDARD

Anchor Reading Standard 10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Close-Read Guide

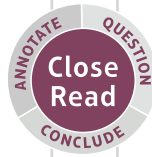
 **Tool Kit**
Close-Read Guide and
Model Annotation

Use this page to record your close-read ideas.

Selection Title: _____

Close Read the Text

Revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. Read these sections closely and **annotate** what you notice. Ask yourself **questions** about the text. What can you **conclude**? Write down your ideas.



Analyze the Text

Think about the author's choices of patterns, structure, techniques, and ideas included in the text. Select one and record your thoughts about what this choice conveys.

QuickWrite

Pick a paragraph from the text that grabbed your interest. Explain the power of this passage.

STANDARD

Anchor Reading Standard 10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

The Tell-Tale Heart

Edgar Allan Poe

About the Author



Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) had a short and troubled life, but his groundbreaking stories have long survived him. Shortly after Poe's birth, his father abandoned his family. When Poe was only two years old, his mother died, leaving him in the care of foster parents. With dreams of becoming a poet, the teenaged Poe quarreled bitterly with his

business-minded foster father, John Allan. Poe then went from one job to another, struggling to make a living while practicing his craft. He died in poverty at the age of 40.

BACKGROUND

Gothic literature is a style of writing that is characterized by fear, death, doom, and horror. Settings in gothic literature are often wildly romantic—with dramatic landscapes, gloomy mansions, and wild weather adding to the sense of suspense. Edgar Allan Poe transformed the genre by moving the settings to everyday locations and focusing on the more subtle, psychological horrors of the human mind.

NOTES

¹ **T** rue!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken!¹ and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

² It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never

1. **Hearken!** (HAHR kuhn) listen!

wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

3 Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen *me*. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation² I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man’s sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha!—would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his evil eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

4 Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch’s minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never, before that night, had I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity.³ I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

2. **dissimulation** (dih sih-m yoo LAY shuhn) *n.* hiding of one’s thoughts or feelings.

3. **sagacity** (suh GAS uh tee) *n.* high intelligence and sound judgment.

- 5 I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out—"Who's there?"
- 6 I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed, listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the deathwatches⁴ in the wall.
- 7 Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart.
- 8 I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. *All in vain*; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to *feel* the presence of my head within the room.
- 9 When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye.
- 10 It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the spot.
- 11 And now—have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

4. **deathwatches** (DETH woch uhz) *n.* wood-boring beetles whose heads make a tapping sound; they are superstitiously regarded as an omen of death.

- 12 But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.
- 13 If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.
- 14 I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings.⁵ I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!
- 15 When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart—for what had I *now* to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.
- 16 I smiled—for *what* had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man,

5. **scantlings** (SKANT lihngz) *n.* small beams or timbers.

I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search *well*. I led them, at length, to *his* chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them *here* to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

- 17 The officers were satisfied. My *manner* had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct:—it continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definitiveness—until, at length, I found that the noise was *not* within my ears.
- 18 No doubt I now grew *very* pale;—but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was a *low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations⁶; but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh! what *could* I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—*louder!* And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not?—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they *knew!*—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!—and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder!*—
- 19 “Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble⁷ no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!” 🗨️

6. **gesticulations** (jehs tihk yuh LAY shuhnz) *n.* energetic hand or arm movements.

7. **dissemble** (dih SEHM buhl) *v.* conceal one's true feelings.

The Man to Send Rain Clouds

Leslie Marmon Silko

About the Author



Leslie Marmon Silko was born in New Mexico in 1948, and grew up on the Laguna Pueblo reservation. After graduating from university, Silko entered law school, but she soon dropped her legal studies to pursue a career in writing. Silko's stories are grounded in the traditional tales she learned growing up in the pueblo, and often focus on the struggle of Native Americans to retain their culture in modern America.

SCAN FOR
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BACKGROUND

When the Spanish began to colonize the American Southwest in the 1600s, two worlds collided. Spanish Catholic friars set out to convert the indigenous people known as the Pueblos to Christianity. Native Americans adopted some Catholic ideas into their own beliefs. However, this was not considered acceptable to the friars, and the Spanish were increasingly violent in their missionary work. Following revolts by the Pueblo people in the 1670s, the friars were more willing to allow Native American religious rituals and practices.

- 1 **T**hey found him under a big cottonwood tree. His Levi jacket and pants were faded light blue so that he had been easy to find. The big cottonwood tree stood apart from a small grove of winterbare cottonwoods which grew in the wide, sandy arroyo.¹ He had been dead for a day or more, and the sheep had wandered and scattered up and down the arroyo. Leon and his brother-in-law, Ken, gathered the sheep and left them in the pen at the sheep camp before they returned to the cottonwood tree. Leon waited under the tree while Ken drove the truck through the deep sand to the edge of the arroyo. He squinted up at the sun and unzipped his jacket—it sure was hot for this time of year. But high and

NOTES

1. **arroyo** (uh ROY oh) *n.* dry gully or hollow in the earth's surface.

northwest the blue mountains were still in snow. Ken came sliding down the low, crumbling bank about fifty yards down, and he was bringing the red blanket.

2 Before they wrapped the old man, Leon took a piece of string out of his pocket and tied a small gray feather in the old man's long white hair. Ken gave him the paint. Across the brown wrinkled forehead he drew a streak of white and along the high cheekbones he drew a strip of blue paint. He paused and watched Ken throw pinches of corn meal and pollen into the wind that fluttered the small gray feather. Then Leon painted with yellow under the old man's broad nose, and finally, when he had painted green across the chin, he smiled.

3 "Send us rain clouds, Grandfather." They laid the bundle in the back of the pickup and covered it with a heavy tarp before they started back to the pueblo.

4 They turned off the highway onto the sandy pueblo road. Not long after they passed the store and post office they saw Father Paul's car coming toward them. When he recognized their faces he slowed his car and waved for them to stop. The young priest rolled down the car window.

5 "Did you find old Teofilo?" he asked loudly.

6 Leon stopped the truck. "Good morning, Father. We were just out to the sheep camp. Everything is O.K. now."

7 "Thank God for that. Teofilo is a very old man. You really shouldn't allow him to stay at the sheep camp alone."

8 "No, he won't do that any more now."

9 "Well, I'm glad you understand. I hope I'll be seeing you at Mass² this week—we missed you last Sunday. See if you can get old Teofilo to come with you." The priest smiled and waved at them as they drove away.

10 Louise and Teresa were waiting. The table was set for lunch, and the coffee was boiling on the black iron stove. Leon looked at Louise and then at Teresa.

11 "We found him under a cottonwood tree in the big arroyo near sheep camp. I guess he sat down to rest in the shade and never got up again." Leon walked toward the old man's bed. The red plaid shawl had been shaken and spread carefully over the bed, and a new brown flannel shirt and pair of stiff new Levi's were arranged neatly beside the pillow. Louise held the screen door open while Leon and Ken carried in the red blanket. He looked small and shriveled, and after they dressed him in the new shirt and pants he seemed more shrunken.

2. **Mass** *n.* church service celebrated by Roman Catholics.

- 12 It was noontime now because the church bells rang the Angelus.³ They ate the beans with hot bread, and nobody said anything until after Teresa poured the coffee.
- 13 Ken stood up and put on his jacket. "I'll see about the gravediggers. Only the top layer of soil is frozen. I think it can be ready before dark."
- 14 Leon nodded his head and finished his coffee. After Ken had been gone for a while, the neighbors and clanspeople came quietly to embrace Teofilo's family and to leave food on the table because the gravediggers would come to eat when they were finished.
- 15 The sky in the west was full of pale yellow light. Louise stood outside with her hands in the pockets of Leon's green army jacket that was too big for her. The funeral was over, and the old men had taken their candles and medicine bags⁴ and were gone. She waited until the body was laid into the pickup before she said anything to Leon. She touched his arm, and he noticed that her hands were still dusty from the corn meal that she had sprinkled around the old man. When she spoke, Leon could not hear her.
- 16 "What did you say? I didn't hear you."
- 17 "I said that I had been thinking about something."
- 18 "About what?"
- 19 "About the priest sprinkling holy water for Grandpa. So he won't be thirsty."
- 20 Leon stared at the new moccasins that Teofilo had made for the ceremonial dances in the summer. They were nearly hidden by the red blanket. It was getting colder, and the wind pushed gray dust down the narrow pueblo road. The sun was approaching the long mesa where it disappeared during the winter. Louise stood there shivering and watching his face. Then he zipped up his jacket and opened the truck door. "I'll see if he's there."
- 21 Ken stopped the pickup at the church, and Leon got out: and then Ken drove down the hill to the graveyard where people were waiting. Leon knocked at the old carved door with its symbols of the Lamb.⁵ While he waited he looked up at the twin bells from the king of Spain with the last sunlight pouring around them in their tower.
- 21 The priest opened the door and smiled when he saw who it was. "Come in! What brings you here this evening?"
- 23 The priest walked toward the kitchen, and Leon stood with his cap in his hand, playing with the earflaps and examining the living room—the brown sofa, the green armchair, and the brass

3. **Angelus** (AN juh luhs) *n.* bell rung at morning, noon, and evening to announce a prayer.

4. **medicine bags** bags containing objects that were thought to have special powers.

5. **the Lamb** Jesus Christ, as the sacrificial Lamb of God.

lamp that hung down from the ceiling by links of chain. The priest dragged a chair out of the kitchen and offered it to Leon.

24 “No thank you, Father. I only came to ask you if you would bring your holy water to the graveyard.”

25 The priest turned away from Leon and looked out the window at the patio full of shadows and the dining-room windows of the nuns’ cloister⁶ across the patio. The curtains were heavy, and the light from within faintly penetrated; it was impossible to see the nuns inside eating supper. “Why didn’t you tell me he was dead? I could have brought the Last Rites⁷ anyway.”

26 Leon smiled. “It wasn’t necessary, Father.”

27 The priest stared down at his scuffed brown loafers and the worn hem of his cassock. “For a Christian burial it was necessary.”

28 His voice was distant, and Leon thought that his blue eyes looked tired.

29 “It’s O.K. Father, we just want him to have plenty of water.”

30 The priest sank down into the green chair and picked up a glossy missionary magazine. He turned the colored pages full of lepers and pagans⁸ without looking at them.

31 “You know I can’t do that, Leon. There should have been the Last Rites and a funeral Mass at the very least.”

32 Leon put on his green cap and pulled the flaps down over his ears. “It’s getting late, Father. I’ve got to go.”

33 When Leon opened the door Father Paul stood up and said, “Wait.” He left the room and came back wearing a long brown overcoat. He followed Leon out the door and across the dim churchyard to the adobe steps in front of the church. They both stooped to fit through the low adobe entrance. And when they started down the hill to the graveyard only half of the sun was visible above the mesa.

34 The priest approached the grave slowly, wondering how they had managed to dig into the frozen ground; and then he remembered that this was New Mexico, and saw the pile of cold loose sand beside the hole. The people stood close to each other with little clouds of steam puffing from their faces. The priest looked at them and saw a pile of jackets, gloves, and scarves in the yellow, dry tumbleweeds that grew in the graveyard. He looked at the red blanket, not sure that Teofilo was so small, wondering if it wasn’t some perverse Indian trick—something they did in March to ensure a good harvest—wondering if maybe old Teofilo was actually at sheep camp corralling the sheep for the night. But there he was, facing into a cold dry wind and squinting at the last sunlight, ready to bury a red wool blanket while the faces of his

6. **cloister** (KLOYS tuhr) *n.* place devoted to religious seclusion.

7. **Last Rites** religious ceremony for a dying person or for someone who has just died.

8. **pagans** (PAY guhnz) *n.* people who are not Christians, Muslims, or Jews.

parishioners were in shadow with the last warmth of the sun on their backs.

35 His fingers were stiff, and it took him a long time to twist the lid off the holy water. Drops of water fell on the red blanket and soaked into dark icy spots. He sprinkled the grave and the water disappeared almost before it touched the dim, cold sand; it reminded him of something—he tried to remember what it was, because he thought if he could remember he might understand this. He sprinkled more water; he shook the container until it was empty, and the water fell through the light from sundown like August rain that fell while the sun was still shining, almost evaporating before it touched the wilted squash flowers.

36 The wind pulled at the priest's brown Franciscan robe⁹ and swirled away the corn meal and pollen that had been sprinkled on the blanket. They lowered the bundle into the ground, and they didn't bother to untie the stiff pieces of new rope that were tied around the ends of the blanket. The sun was gone, and over on the highway the eastbound lane was full of headlights. The priest walked away slowly. Leon watched him climb the hill, and when he had disappeared within the tall, thick walls, Leon turned to look up at the high blue mountains in the deep snow that reflected a faint red light from the west. He felt good because it was finished, and he was happy about the sprinkling of the holy water; now the old man could send them big thunderclouds for sure. ☁

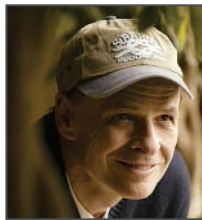
9. **Franciscan robe** (fran SIHS kuhn) robe worn by a member of the Franciscan religious order, founded in 1209 by Saint Francis of Assisi.

Ambush

Tim O'Brien



About the Author



Tim O'Brien (b. 1946) was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1968 and fought in the Vietnam War. The war and its effect on the people who experienced it became the subject of much of his work. O'Brien's novel *Going After Cacciato* won the National Book Award, *The Things They Carried* was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize, and *In the Lake of the Woods* was named the best novel of 1994 by *Time* magazine.

BACKGROUND

The Vietnam War lasted from 1954 through 1975. The communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam were at war with the government of South Vietnam, which was principally supported by the United States. Young American men were drafted to fight from 1965, and eventually the United States lost 58,000 service members in the war. The United States withdrew in 1973, and in 1975 South Vietnam fell.

NOTES

- 1 **W**hen she was nine, my daughter Kathleen asked if I had ever killed anyone. She knew about the war; she knew I'd been a soldier. "You keep writing these war stories," she said, "so I guess you must've killed somebody." It was a difficult moment, but I did what seemed right, which was to say, "Of course not," and then to take her onto my lap and hold her for a while. Someday, I hope, she'll ask again.
- 2 But here I want to pretend she's a grown-up. I want to tell her exactly what happened, or what I remember happening, and then I want to say to her that as a little girl she was absolutely right. This is why I keep writing war stories:

3 He was a short, slender young man of about twenty. I was afraid of him—afraid of something—and as he passed me on the trail I threw a grenade that exploded at his feet and killed him.

4 Or to go back:

5 Shortly after midnight we moved into the ambush¹ site outside My Khe. The whole platoon was there, spread out in the dense brush along the trail, and for five hours nothing at all happened. We were working in two-man teams—one man on guard while the other slept, switching off every two hours—and I remember it was still dark when Kiowa shook me awake for the final watch. The night was foggy and hot. For the first few moments I felt lost, not sure about directions, groping for my helmet and weapon. I reached out and found three grenades and lined them up in front of me; the pins had already been straightened for quick throwing. And then for maybe half an hour I kneeled there and waited. Very gradually, in tiny slivers, dawn began to break through the fog, and from my position in the brush I could see ten or fifteen meters up the trail. The mosquitoes were fierce. I remember slapping at them, wondering if I should wake up Kiowa and ask for some repellent, then thinking it was a bad idea, then looking up and seeing the young man come out of the fog. He wore black clothing and rubber sandals and a gray ammunition² belt. His shoulders were slightly stooped, his head cocked to the side as if listening for something. He seemed at ease. He carried his weapon in one hand, muzzle³ down, moving without any hurry up the center of the trail. There was no sound at all—none that I can remember. In a way, it seemed, he was part of the morning fog, or my own imagination, but there was also the reality of what was happening in my stomach. I had already pulled the pin on a grenade. I had come up to a crouch. It was entirely automatic. I did not hate the young man; I did not see him as the enemy; I did not ponder issues of morality or politics or military duty. I crouched and kept my head low. I tried to swallow whatever was rising from my stomach, which tasted like lemonade, something fruity and sour. I was terrified. There were no thoughts about killing. The grenade was to make him go away—just evaporate—and I leaned back and felt my mind go empty and then felt it fill up again. I had already thrown the grenade before telling myself to throw it. The brush was thick and I had to lob it high, not aiming, and I remember the grenade seeming to freeze above me for an instant, as if a camera had clicked, and I remember ducking down and holding my breath and seeing little wisps of fog rise from the earth. The

1. **ambush** *n.* lying in wait to attack by surprise.

2. **ammunition** (am yuh NIHSH uhn) *n.* anything hurled by a weapon or exploded as a weapon.

3. **muzzle** *n.* front end of a barrel of a gun.

grenade bounced once and rolled across the trail. I did not hear it, but there must've been a sound, because the young man dropped his weapon and began to run, just two or three quick steps, then he hesitated, swiveling to his right, and he glanced down at the grenade and tried to cover his head but never did. It occurred to me then that he was about to die. I wanted to warn him. The grenade made a popping noise—not soft but not loud either—not what I'd expected—and there was a puff of dust and smoke—a small white puff—and the young man seemed to jerk upward as if pulled by invisible wires. He fell on his back. His rubber sandals had been blown off. There was no wind. He lay at the center of the trail, his right leg bent beneath him, his one eye shut, his other eye a huge star-shaped hole.

- 6 It was not a matter of live or die. There was no real peril. Almost certainly the young man would have passed by. And it will always be that way.
- 7 Later, I remember, Kiowa tried to tell me that the man would've died anyway. He told me that it was a good kill, that I was a soldier and this was a war, that I should shape up and stop staring and ask myself what the dead man would've done if things were reversed.
- 8 None of it mattered. The words seemed far too complicated. All I could do was gape at the fact of the young man's body.
- 9 Even now I haven't finished sorting it out. Sometimes I forgive myself, other times I don't. In the ordinary hours of life I try not to dwell on it, but now and then, when I'm reading a newspaper or just sitting alone in a room, I'll look up and see the young man coming out of the morning fog. I'll watch him walk toward me, his shoulders slightly stooped, his head cocked to the side, and he'll pass within a few yards of me and suddenly smile at some secret thought and then continue up the trail to where it bends back into the fog. 🐾

Housepainting

Lan Samantha Chang

About the Author



Lan Samantha Chang (b. 1965) grew up in Appleton, Wisconsin, learning about China from her Chinese immigrant parents. She has received many awards, including a 2008 Guggenheim Fellowship. Chang is currently the Director of the prestigious Iowa Writers' Workshop.

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BACKGROUND

The concept of *face* is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and history. It refers to a person or group's public image as respectable and upright. Within all levels of Chinese society, from family to business relationships, there is a basic social expectation to help others "save face," or maintain their pride or dignity. Children can "give face" to their parents by being obedient or getting good grades. However, actions such as criticizing others in public or not observing proper etiquette can cause people to "lose face." The concept can be difficult for American-born children in immigrant families to negotiate.

- 1 **T**he day before my sister brought her boyfriend home, we had a family conference over fried rice and Campbell's chicken noodle.
- 2 "This is the problem," my mother said. "The thistles are overpowering our mailbox." She looked at my father. "Could you do something about them before Frances and Wei get here?"
- 3 My father grunted from behind his soup. He drank his Campbell's Chinese-style, with the bowl raised to his mouth. "Frances won't care about the thistles," he said. "She thinks only about coming home."

NOTES

- 4 “But what about Wei?” my mother said. “This isn’t his home. To him it’s just a house that hasn’t been painted in ten years. With weeds.” She scowled. To her the weeds were a matter of honor. Although Wei had been dating my sister for four years and had visited us three times, he was technically a stranger and subject to the rules of “saving face.”
- 5 My father slurped. “Frances is a *xiaoxun* daughter,” he said. “She wants to see family, not our lawn. Wei is a good *xiaoxun* boy. He wants Frances to see her family; he doesn’t care about the lawn.”
- 6 *Xiaoxun* means “filial,” or “dutiful to one’s parents.”
- 7 I was almost to the bottom of my bowl of rice when I noticed my parents were looking at me. “Oh,” I said. “Okay, I’ll do it.”
- 8 “Thank you, Annie,” said my mother.
- 9 The next afternoon I went to work on the weeds. My father loved Wei and Frances, but he hated yard work. Whenever I read about Asian gardeners, I thought my father must have come over on a different boat.
- 10 It was a beautiful midwestern afternoon, sunny and dry, with small white clouds high up against a bright blue sky. I wore a pair of my father’s old gloves to pull the thistles but kicked off my sandals, curled my toes around the hot reassuring dirt. Inside the house, my mother napped with the air conditioner humming in the window. My father sat in front of the television, rereading the Chinese newspaper from New York that my parents always snatched out of the mail as if they were receiving news of the emperor from a faraway province. I felt an invisible hand hovering over our shabby blue house, making sure everything stayed the same.
- 11 I was hacking at a milky dandelion root when I heard an engine idling. A small brown car, loaded down with boxes and luggage, turned laboriously into the driveway. Through the open window I heard a scrape as my father pushed aside his footrest. My mother’s window shade snapped up and she peered outside, one hand on her tousled hair. I rose to meet the car, conscious of my dirt-stained feet, sweaty glasses, and muddy gardening gloves.
- 12 “Annie!” Frances shouted from the rolled-down window. She half-emerged from the car and shouted my name again.
- 13 “Wow,” I said. “You guys are early. I thought you wouldn’t get here until five o’clock.”
- 14 “That was the plan,” said Wei, “but your sister here was so excited about getting home that I begged off from call a few hours early.” He grinned. He was always showing off about how well he knew my sister. But other than that he had very few defects, even to my critical thirteen-year-old mind. He was medium-sized

and steady, with a broad, cheerful dark face and one gold-rimmed tooth.

15 My mother and father rushed out the front door and let it slam.

16 “Hi, Frances!” they said. “Hi, Wei!” I could tell my mother had stopped to comb her hair and put on lipstick.

17 We stood blinking foolishly in the sunlight as Wei and Frances got out of the car. My family does not hug. It is one of the few traditions that both my parents have preserved from China’s pre-Revolutionary times.

18 Frances came and stood in front of my mother. “Let me look at you,” my mother said. Her gaze ran over my sister in a way that made me feel knobby and extraneous.

19 Frances was as beautiful as ever. She did not look like she had been sitting in a car all day. Her white shorts and her flowered shirt were fresh, and her long black hair rippled gently when she moved her head. People were always watching Frances, and Wei was no exception. Now he stared transfixed, waiting for her to turn to talk to him, but she did not.

20 Still facing my mother, Frances said, “Wei, could you get the stuff from the car?”

21 “I’ll help you!” my father said. He walked around the back of the car and stood awkwardly aside to let Wei open the trunk. “So, how is medical school?” I heard him ask. They leaned into the trunk, their conversation muffled by the hood. I looked at their matching shorts, polo shirts, brown arms and sturdy legs. When Wei came to visit, my father always acted like a caged animal that has been let outside to play with another of its kind.

22 Afterward, we sat in the kitchen and drank icy sweet green-bean porridge from rice bowls. Frances nudged me.

23 “Hey, Annie, I got you something.”

24 She pulled a package wrapped in flowered paper from a shopping bag. She never came home without presents for everyone, and she never left without a bag full of goodies from home. It was as if she could maintain a strong enough sense of connection to us only by touching things that had actually belonged, or would soon belong, to us.

25 I looked at the package: a book. I stifled a groan. Frances never knew what I wanted.

26 “Well, open it,” my mother said,

27 I tore off the paper. It was a thick volume about the history of medicine. This was supposed to be of great interest to me, because of a family notion that I would become a doctor, like Wei. I did not want to be a doctor.

28 “This is great! Thanks, Frances” I said.

29 “Very nice,” said my mother.

- 30 “Ma, I left your present in my room,” Frances said. “Let’s go get it.” They left the kitchen. My father and Wei began a heated discussion about Wimbledon.¹ After a few minutes, I got bored and went to find my mother and Frances.
- 31 From the entrance to the hall I could see that the bedroom door was closed. I stopped walking and snuck up to the door on the balls of my feet. I crouched against the door to listen.
- 32 “I don’t *know*, Mom,” Frances was saying. She sounded close to tears.
- 33 “What is it that you don’t know?” my mother asked her. When my mother got upset, her sentences became more formal and her Chinese accent more obvious. “Are you unsure that he really cares about you, or are you unsure about your feelings for him?”
- 34 “I know he cares about me,” she said. She had answered my mother’s question. There followed a pause in the conversation.
- 35 Then my mother said, “Well, I think he is a very nice boy. Daddy likes him very much.”
- 36 “And of course that’s the most important thing,” said my sister, her anger startling me. I wrapped my arms around my knees.
- 37 “You know that is not, true.” My mother sounded exasperated. “Your father enjoys spending time with other men, that is all. There aren’t very many Chinese men in this area for him to talk to. He also likes Wei because he is capable of giving you the kind of life we have always wanted you to have. Is there something . . .” She paused. “What is wrong with him?”
- 38 Frances burst into a sob.
- 39 “There’s nothing *wrong* with him. There’s *nothing* wrong with him. It’s just—oh, I just don’t know—I don’t know.” She was almost shouting, as if my mother didn’t understand English. “You and Dad don’t think about me at *all*!”
- 40 I imagined my mother’s face, thin and tight, frozen in the light from the window. “Don’t speak to me that way,” she said stiffly. “I am only trying to help you decide. You are very young. You have never lived through a war. You don’t know about the hardships of life as much as your father and I do.”
- 41 “I’m *sorry*,” my sister said, and sobbed even louder. I got up and snuck away down the hall.
- 42 My parents often mentioned the war, especially when I complained about doing something I didn’t want to do. If I couldn’t get a ride to the swimming pool, my mother told me about when *she* was in seventh grade and had to walk to school every day past a lot of dead bodies. My mother was a brave seventh grader who knew how to shoot a gun and speak four dialects. But what did I know? I’d lived in the Midwest my

1. **Wimbledon** (WIHM buhl duhn) annual international tennis tournament held in Wimbledon, a borough near London, England.

whole life. I ate Sugar Pops and drank milk from a cow. To me, an exciting time meant going downtown to the movies without my parents.

43 That night Wei and Frances and I went to a movie starring Kevin Costner and a blond woman whose name I don't remember. On the way to the theater the car was very quiet. When we arrived, I stood in line to get popcorn and then went into the dim, virtually empty theater to look for Wei and Frances. I saw them almost immediately. They were quarreling. Wei kept trying to take Frances's hand, and she kept snatching it away. As I approached, I heard him say, "Just tell me what you want from me. What do you want?"

44 "I don't know!" Frances said. I approached. She looked up. "Mmm—popcorn! Sit down, Annie. I have to go to the bathroom." Her look said: Don't you dare say a word.

45 I watched her hurry up the aisle. "What's wrong with her?"

46 Wei shook his head a minute, trying to dislodge an answer. "I don't know." My first time alone with him. We sat staring awkwardly at the empty screen. Then he turned to me as if struck by an important thought.

47 "Annie, what would you think if Francie and I got married?"

48 Despite what I had overheard between Frances and my mother, my stomach gave a little jump. I thought about what to say.

49 "That would be nice," I said.

50 "You think so?" Wei said eagerly. "Listen, can you tell her that? I've got to convince her. It's like she can't make up her own mind. Why do you think that is?"

51 "I don't know," I said. "I guess she hasn't had much practice." Although I'd never thought about it before, I knew that I was right. *Xiaoxun* meant that your parents made up your mind. I pictured Wei wrapped up in flowered paper, another gift my sister brought back and forth.

52 Wei sat sunk in his seat, a speculative look on his face. "Hmm," he said. "Hmm."

53 I began to feel uncomfortable, as if I were sitting next to a mad scientist. "I can't wait to see this movie," I said quickly. "Frances and I think Kevin Costner is cute." I stuffed a handful of popcorn into my mouth. While I was chewing, Frances finally came back and sat down between us.

54 "How about it, Frances?" Wei said. "Do you think Kevin Costner is cute?"

55 I looked at Wei's face and suddenly realized that he could not look more different from Kevin Costner.

56 "Actually, Frances doesn't like him," I blurted out. "I just—"

57 At that moment the screen lit up, and despite myself, I gave an audible sigh of relief.

- 58 My father was waiting for us when we got home, under the lamp with the Chinese newspaper, in his sagging easy chair. This habit of waiting had always infuriated Frances, who felt compelled by guilt to return at a reasonable hour.
- 59 Wei greeted my father cheerfully. "Hi, Mr. Wang. Waiting up for us?"
- 60 "Oh no," my father said, regarding Wei with pleasure.
- 61 "I'm glad you're still up," Wei said, with a look of heavy male significance. "I wanted to talk to you about something."
- 62 This time I had no desire to listen in on the conversation. I headed for the bathroom as fast as I could. Frances hurried behind me.
- 63 "Aren't you going to talk with them?" I said.
- 64 Frances grabbed the doorknob. "Just shut up," she said. She closed the door behind us, and we stood for a minute in the pink-tiled room under the glow of the ceiling light. Frances leaned against the counter and sighed. I sat down on the toilet seat.
- 65 "You know," she muttered, "I really do think Kevin Costner is cute."
- 66 "Me too," I said. I stared at the tiny speckle pattern on the floor tiles.
- 67 From the kitchen we heard a burble of laughter.
- 68 "Dad really likes Wei," I said.
- 69 Frances sighed. "It's not just Dad. Mom likes him too. She's just too diplomatic to show it. Dad is more obvious." She raised her eyebrows. "At least I know exactly where I stand with Dad."
- 70 Her words frightened me.
- 71 "I don't get it," I burst out in spite of myself. "Why did you go out with him for four years if you don't really like him?"
- 72 Frances ran her hand around a water faucet. "He reminded me of home," she said. "Why did you sign up for biology instead of art class?" She slid quickly off the counter. "Come on, kiddo, time to hit the sack."
- 73 The next morning I slept late. Around eleven I was awakened by a muffled bang near my bedroom window. My mind whirled like a pinwheel: What on earth—? I jumped out of bed and pushed up the bottom of the shade.
- 74 Two male legs, clad in shorts, stood on a ladder to the right of my window. Then Wei bent down, his smile startling me.
- 75 He was holding a paintbrush.
- 76 "What are you doing?" I almost shrieked.
- 77 "Just giving your father a little help with the house," he said.
- 78 I pulled the shade down, grabbed some clothes, and hurried out of my room to find my mother. As I passed Frances's room, I saw her sitting on her bed, fully dressed, with a completely blank expression on her face.

- 79 My mother was in the kitchen, cutting canned bamboo shoots
into long thin strips.
- 80 “Where is Dad?”
- 81 “Don’t shout, Annie,” she said. “He went to the hardware store
to match some more paint.”
- 82 “Why is Wei painting the house?”
- 83 My mother lined up a handful of bamboo shoots and began
cutting them into cubes. “He’s just being helpful.”
- 84 “Why is Dad letting him be so helpful?” I couldn’t find the right
question. Wei must have asked my father if he needed help with
the house. Why had my father consented? Why was he accepting
help from an outsider?
- 85 My mother turned and looked at me. “Because Wei wanted to
help, that’s all. Why don’t you go and wash up? You’re thirteen
years old; I shouldn’t have to remind you to wash your face.”
- 86 The next few days passed in a blur, marked only by the growing
patch of fresh pale-yellow paint that grew to cover one side of our
blue house and then the back. Wei worked steadily and cheerfully,
with minimal help from my father. My mother went outside now
and then to give him cold drinks and to comment on the evenness
of his job, or something like that. Frances stayed in her room
reading. I reported to her.
- 87 “Wei’s finished with the back side and now he’s starting on the
garage,” I said.
- 88 “Leave me alone,” Frances said.
- 89 I went further into the room and stood in front of her until she
looked up. “I said leave me *alone*, Annie! I’m warning you—”
- 90 “Well, why don’t *you* say something about it?” I demanded.
“Why didn’t you tell him you didn’t want him to do it?”
- 91 Her face contorted in something between anger and tears. “I
can’t tell him! He won’t listen to me! He says he’s just doing them
a favor!” She bent over her book and flipped her hair angrily in
front of her, shielding her face. “Go away!”
- 92 I left the room.
- 93 With things at home going so well, my parents left the next
morning on a day trip to Chicago. Every now and then they made
the four-hour drive to buy supplies—dried mushrooms, canned
vegetables—from a Chinese grocery there. After they left, we ate
breakfast, with Wei and I making awkward conversation because
Frances wouldn’t talk to us. Then Wei got up and went out to the
front yard. From an open window I watched him pry the lid off a
can of paint and stir with a wooden stick from the hardware store;
Frances went out on the front porch and stood at the top of the
steps looking down at him.
- 94 “You can stop now, Wei,” I heard her say.
- 95 He glanced up, puzzled.

96 “You don’t have to paint today. Mom and Dad aren’t around to see what a dutiful boy you are.”

97 Wei didn’t have a short fuse.² He shook his head slowly and looked back down at what he was doing.

98 Frances tried again. “It makes me sick,” she said, “to see you groveling like this around my parents.”

99 Wei didn’t answer.

100 “What is it with you?” she sneered.

101 Finally his eyes flickered. “My painting the house,” he said, “is something between me and your parents. If you don’t like it, why don’t you go pick a fight with them? And why did you wait until they left to pick a fight with me?”

102 Frances’s upper lip pulled back toward her nose. I thought she was sneering at him again, but when she turned back to the house, I realized she was crying. She looked horrible. She slammed the door, rushed past me, and ran into the garage, where she and Wei had parked the brown car. Then before Wei and I could stop her, she drove away down the street.

103 She came back in about an hour. I sat inside pretending to read a book, but Frances didn’t reenter the house, so I figured she and Wei were talking out there. I was surprised when he came inside. “Where’s Frances?” he said.

104 “I thought she was with you.”

105 “Nope. Just finished the front. I’m about to put a second coat on the south side. Want to take a look?”

106 “Okay.” I put down my book. We walked outside and around the house.

107 There stood Frances with her hair up in a painter’s cap, busily putting blue back over Wei’s work, painting fast, as high as she could reach. Two new cans stood in the grass. She had finished most of the side and had worked almost up to the corner.

108 Frances turned to look at us. There were splotches of blue paint on her hands and clothes. “I liked it better the old way,” she said. She glared at Wei, waiting for him to get angry, but he stood perfectly still. I felt cool sweat break out on my neck and forehead.

109 Finally Wei said, “If you wanted it blue again, you just had to tell me.”

110 Frances threw her brush on the ground and burst into tears. “Damn you!” she shouted at Wei. “I hate you! You too, Annie! I hate both of you! I hate everything!” She looked at the house. “I don’t care what color it is, I just hate everything!”

111 I took a step backward, but Wei walked right up to her and put his hand on her shoulder. Frances hid her face in her hands and sobbed. They stood like that for a long time, Frances crying and

2. **short fuse** idiom meaning “a tendency to lose one’s temper easily.”

mumbling under her breath, and then she began to repeat one sentence over and over. I leaned forward, straining to make it out.

112 “Mom and Dad are going to *kill* me.”

113 Wei looked relieved. “If we all start now, we can probably paint yellow over it before they get home,” he said.

114 Two days later Wei finished the house. He and my father drove to the hardware store to buy white paint for the trim. I was sitting in the family room, listlessly leafing through a *Time* magazine, when Frances stopped in the door.

115 “Hey, Annie. Wanna go out and take a look?”

116 “Okay,” I said, surprised by her sudden friendliness.

117 We walked out the front door, crossed the street, and stood facing the house. The street lamps had just turned on, and the house glowed gently in the twilight. Our raggedy lawn and messy garden were hidden in the shadows.

118 We stood for some time, and then Frances said, “I told Wei that I would marry him.”

119 I looked at her. Her face was expressionless in the glow from the street lamp. Finally she turned and briefly met my eyes.

120 “It’s not worth the trouble,” she said. “Let’s not talk about it anymore, okay?”

121 “Okay,” I said. Without talking, we crossed the street and approached the house. It was a beautiful evening. My mother stood behind the kitchen window, washing the dishes. Frances walked smoothly at my side, her long hair flowing back in the dusk. I glanced up at the roof in a hopeful way, but the imaginary hand that had hovered over our home had disappeared. I blinked my eyes a couple of times and looked again, but it was gone.

122 “Come on, Annie,” my sister said, holding the door. “Hurry up, or the mosquitoes will get in.”

123 I took a deep breath and went inside. 🐼



EVIDENCE LOG

Go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from the text you read.

STANDARDS

SL.11–12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.


Share Your Independent Learning

Prepare to Share

What do stories reveal about the human condition?

Even when you read something independently, you can continue to grow by sharing what you have learned with others. Reflect on the text you explored independently, and write notes about its connection to the unit. In your notes, consider why this text belongs in this unit.

Learn From Your Classmates

 **Discuss It** Share your ideas about the text you explored on your own. As you talk with your classmates, jot down ideas that you learn from them.

Reflect

Review your notes, and mark the most important insight you gained from these writing and discussion activities. Explain how this idea adds to your understanding of the importance of stories as they reveal the human condition.



Review Notes for a Narrative

At the beginning of this unit, you expressed a point of view about the following question:

How does a fictional character or characters respond to life-changing news?



EVIDENCE LOG

Review your Evidence Log and your QuickWrite from the beginning of the unit. Have your ideas changed?

<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Identify at least three textual details that caused you to alter your ideas.	Identify at least three textual details that reinforced your original ideas.
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Give one example of life-changing news that might affect someone strongly:

Give one example of a way in which someone might react to that news:

Evaluate the Strength of Your Content Do you have enough content to write your narrative? Do you have enough details to develop multiple characters? If not, make a plan.

☐ Do research about short stories ☐ Talk with my classmates

☐ Reread a selection ☐ Ask a fiction writer

☐ Other: _____



SOURCES

- WHOLE-CLASS SELECTIONS
- SMALL-GROUP SELECTIONS
- INDEPENDENT-LEARNING SELECTION



WORD NETWORK

As you write and revise your narrative, use your Word Network to help vary your word choices.

STANDARDS

W.11–12.1.a–e Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

W.11–12.10 Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

PART 1

Writing to Sources: Narrative

In this unit, you read a variety of texts in which ordinary lives prove to contain extraordinary moments. You met characters who encounter stressful, unexpected, or life-changing situations. In each case, characters' responses reveal their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their hopes and fears. By reading stories about fictional characters, you may have learned something useful about what it means to be human.

Assignment

Write a **short story** in which you introduce and develop a protagonist, and set up a problem or conflict the character must face. Use the third-person point of view. Before you write, think about your answer to this question:

How does a fictional character or characters respond to life-changing news?

As your character faces conflicts, how does he or she respond? Will your character's response be instructive to readers? If so, how? If not, why not? What will your character learn, and in what ways will he or she change? Bring your character's story to a resolution or epiphany that demonstrates a truth about the human condition.

Reread the Assignment Review the assignment to be sure you fully understand it. The task may reference some of the academic words presented at the beginning of the unit. Be sure you understand each of the words given below in order to complete the assignment correctly.

Academic Vocabulary

colloquial	tension	epiphany
protagonist	resolution	

Review the Elements of a Narrative Before you begin writing, read the Narrative Rubric. Once you have completed your first draft, check it against the rubric. If one or more of the elements is missing or not as strong as it could be, revise your narrative to add or strengthen that component.

Narrative Rubric

	Focus and Organization	Technique and Development	Language Conventions
4	<p>The introduction engages the reader and introduces original characters and conflict.</p> <p>The narrative establishes an engrossing sequence of events that unfolds smoothly and logically.</p> <p>The conclusion follows from and resolves the narrative in a satisfying way.</p>	<p>The narrative adeptly incorporates dialogue and description.</p> <p>Precise details and sensory language give the reader a clear picture of events.</p>	<p>The narrative consistently uses conventions of standard English usage and mechanics.</p>
3	<p>The introduction is somewhat engaging and introduces characters and conflict.</p> <p>The narrative establishes a sequence of events that unfolds smoothly and logically.</p> <p>The conclusion follows from and resolves the narrative.</p>	<p>Dialogue and description move the narrative forward.</p> <p>Some precise details and sensory language give the reader a picture of events.</p>	<p>The narrative demonstrates accuracy in conventions of standard English usage and mechanics.</p>
2	<p>The introduction introduces characters and conflict.</p> <p>Events are mostly in sequence, but some events may not belong or may be omitted.</p> <p>The conclusion follows from the narrative.</p>	<p>Some dialogue or description may appear.</p> <p>Some details give the reader a general picture of events.</p>	<p>The narrative demonstrates some accuracy in conventions of standard English usage and mechanics.</p>
1	<p>The introduction fails to introduce characters and conflict, or there is no introduction.</p> <p>Events are not in a clear sequence, and some events may be omitted.</p> <p>The conclusion does not follow from the narrative, or there is no conclusion.</p>	<p>Dialogue and description do not appear or are minimal and seem to appear as afterthoughts.</p> <p>Few details are included, or details fail to give the reader a picture of events.</p>	<p>The narrative contains mistakes in conventions of standard English usage and mechanics.</p>



PART 2

Speaking and Listening: Storytelling Session

Assignment

After completing your narrative, conduct a **storytelling session** for your class. Memorize the key plot points, character descriptions, and most important lines of dialogue from your story. You may refer to some notes as you tell your story, but do not read aloud. When you address your audience, remember to use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Select digital audio to add interest and enhance the mood of your story. Consider using sound effects, background music, or an instrumental musical score to accompany your story.

To be an effective storyteller, consider the following:

- Keep it simple. What can you cut from your written narrative while retaining the gist of the story?
- Pump up the emotion. How can music and sound cues affect your audience and improve their listening experience?

Review the Rubric Before you tell your story, check your plans against this rubric. If one or more of the elements is missing or not as strong as it could be, revise your presentation.

STANDARDS

SL.11–12.5 Make strategic use of digital media in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

	Content	Use of Media	Presentation Techniques
3	The storyteller engages the audience by describing original characters, conflict, and resolution.	Included media have a positive impact on listener experience.	The speaker's word choice, volume, pitch, and eye contact reflect the story's content and are appropriate to the audience.
2	The storyteller describes characters, conflict, and resolution.	Included media neither improve nor detract from listener experience.	The speaker's word choice, volume, pitch, and eye contact somewhat reflect the story's content and are appropriate to the audience.
1	The storyteller's presentation is flat and dull, or the sequence of events is hard to follow.	Included media are distracting or otherwise detract from listener experience.	The speaker's word choice, volume, pitch, and eye contact do not reflect the story's content and are not appropriate to the audience.


Reflect on the Unit

Now that you've completed the unit, take a few moments to reflect on your learning. Use the questions below to think about where you succeeded, what skills and strategies helped you, and where you can continue to grow in the future.

Reflect on the Unit Goals

Look back at the goals at the beginning of the unit. Use a different colored pen to rate yourself again. Think about readings and activities that contributed the most to the growth of your understanding. Record your thoughts.

Reflect on the Learning Strategies

 **Discuss It** Write a reflection on whether you were able to improve your learning based on your Action Plans. Think about what worked, what didn't, and what you might do to keep working on these strategies. Record your ideas before joining a class discussion.

Reflect on the Text

Choose a selection that you found challenging, and explain what made it difficult.

Explain something that surprised you about a text in the unit.

Which activity taught you the most about how stories reveal the human condition? What did you learn?

STANDARDS

SL.11–12.1a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.