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Teaching the Elements of Literature Using Stories from Infancy to Age-appropriate

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Preface

In a time when "inclusion" is on the tip of education's tongue and "differentiated instruction" is the topic of professional development, teachers need new tools for helping students. In a time when students and parents cannot read, yet everyone is held to the same standard of education, we now need strategies and solutions for the future of the public school classroom. We are creeping into a new era of public education when students of all abilities and learning styles are working together on the same subject matter and in the same classroom framework. We are now living in a "standards" world where teachers and students are held accountable by high-stakes test scores and categorized according to these assessments, not before they learn, but thereafter. Teachers are challenged by a classroom of learners with a broad range of abilities. With this in mind, it is time to differentiate our approach and supplement lessons with innovation.

This unit is not a novel approach to Literary Elements, but takes into consideration the range of student abilities as they enter a new year's work in their English class. There are no assumptions as to what students know or have learned prior to entering the classroom. In fact, the idea behind this unit is to assume that no student is prepared for the grade-appropriate reading and writing they will be assigned. In starting at a lower level and then moving toward the actual standard curriculum, students will either take a deeper look at simple text (as in the case of the advanced student) or study at an uncomplicated level to work toward the higher-level curriculum standards (as in the case of the low-level student). In both scenarios, the learners will undergo somewhat of an equalization strategy prior to learning their age-appropriate material. Suitable steps will be taken to ensure that the more advanced students see the value of going back to basics, and don't condescend toward the material. Consequently, in this approach, there is an individual progression considering each learner's needs, and instruction is differentiated for every special requirement per student and their level of achievement. Also, as in Wiggin's *Understanding By Design*, this unit unveils and explains the end product expectation prior to beginning the lesson. Thus students are not held to some invisible standard and teachers are not leading their sheep into oblivion.

The goal is to set unambiguous objectives, which are clearly explained, drive varied student abilities onto the same plane, and push students farther than the normal expectation. This can happen because the instructor has made no assumption that they are all at the same level while using standard texts to teach the given

curriculum. This unit *does* teach the curriculum and can certainly be adapted for every grade-level, but moves through a progression of understanding and level of ability prior to getting to the grade-appropriate text. Nonetheless, reading is the primary concern, as well it might be: frequently reading abilities have translated into improved math test scores because of the complex nature of the math questions. My belief is that once students can read at their grade-level, whatever level that may be, they will have a higher success rate in math, science, social studies, and any other pertinent content areas.

All of this is done by using literature from infancy to age-appropriate and passing through different levels of reading expectation on the way. As students gain skills in reading at their level or below, they will transfer those skills to what has been deemed suitable for their grade and year. The particular skill to develop, which is important for readers and writers, is an acute understanding of the Elements of Literature. In this approach, students will grasp the content of a story for comprehension and use prior knowledge of each element to read at every new level and write a story incorporating the elements.

The Student

This unit is targeted at students in middle or high school; but this is not to say that the unit cannot work at any other grade-level. Because somewhere along the educational path, students are not learning at the same rate, by high school each student is on a different reading level. My students are vocational students and with this come several quandaries and tribulations. Vocational students are not tracked into ability level classrooms, as would happen in most comprehensive high schools, which have not adapted the "inclusion" theories. Thus, a diverse learner population is in the same room. Another difficulty is that vocational schools, as in this case, gather their student enrollment from surrounding districts; hence have a populace of students who have learned from many different teaching methods (as districts often have different initiatives and programs). The final supposition concerning the vocational student is that they have moved toward their chosen vocation because of a lack of interest in standard school subjects. This, of course, is not always the case, but may be true for a large number of students. In addition, one must keep in mind that if a student has chosen to go to a vocational school because of this assumed lack of interest in academics, it could be that they are suffering from a learning disorder or special need. These circumstances are often pre-scanned and uncovered, but may not be identified in every student. And so, in the case of the vocational student, we can sometimes assume a learner who is uninterested in academics, with a learning obstacle of some sort, and who has come from and is mixed into a very diverse classroom in terms of prior knowledge and level of ability. I like to use some equalization strategy to gain a beginning point where the lowest level student is comfortable and an ending point at which the most advanced students are challenged. Therefore, this unit can be used in any classroom, but especially those with an inclusive environment and a breadth of students to teach.

Rationale

All stories contain Elements of Literature, of which most can be found in any and every story—whether spoken word, book, or film. Even when all of the elements are not included in any particular story, some or most are still essential. These elements are usually recognizable to a literate person but often misinterpreted or misunderstood by a novice or learner. When a reader *can* identify the Elements of Literature, the story is often appreciated at a higher level and leads to a deeper examination of the text. Especially in higher-level literature and analysis, the reader may not comprehend the novel if he or she does not understand the

elements therein. Thus, by learning the fundamentals of *any* story, known as the Elements of Literature to English Language Arts (ELA) instructors, a reader will have a better chance at comprehension and study of every story. With this said, it is quite impossible to learn this skill while studying literature using age-appropriate or higher-level reading. Because this skill is not intrinsic, it cannot be accessed through prior knowledge or applied at every *new* level. To use this skill in reading, the reader must already possess the ability; the reader must learn the skill using simple texts in which the Elements are easily identified. Once a student understands any given element, they can recall their understanding during any new read.

To teach the Elements of Literature to be used as a crucial reading skill, an instructor must start with an elementary text. Once the reader can identify the elements within a simple story, knowledge can then be transferred to higher-level readings. This works best with traditional children's stories that are time-honored, so that the learner has a level of familiarity with the text, at least by hearsay. Such traditional stories make finding elements simple because they are generally short and uncomplicated in their approach to story telling. For example, the *climax* in "Little Red Riding Hood" is undoubtedly when the wolf eats the little girl (in one version). In this case, it is undemanding for a reader to comprehend the point of most intensity in the story. Consequently, the reader should begin to have acquired the ability to find *climax* in other stories and stories new to them as a reader, progressing toward his or her level of ability.

In using an elementary text to discover the elements, the reader may grasp the writer's purpose in creating any portion of the book. With respect to *characterization*, for example, it is normal for a novelist to spend a great deal of time developing characters. In this leisurely approach, mainly used in a longer text, the reader will have a better understanding of the characters and their motives, but only as the story unfolds. This may provide an obstacle for lower-level readers; as the writer is simply describing a character, the reader is confused and perhaps looking for the building of a *plot* or *rising action*. In this case, the reader almost always says, "I don't understand" or "what's happening here?" Nothing is actually "happening," as far as the *plot* of the story is concerned. This novice reader, if familiar with the Elements of Literature, should be patient and simply read on, soaking in the characterization, while waiting for the actual action to take place. This is often the point at which a novice reader will resist going forward, owing to a lack of understanding and/or appreciation of the writer's style. A perfect example is in *The Great Gatsby*; here Fitzgerald spends most of the beginning chapters, in a nine chapter book, by simply characterizing his players. It is not until the final three chapters that any really intense action takes place. Therefore, two thirds of the novel is *characterization*; the rest of the elements, frequently the interesting elements, do not occur until the end of the book. A lower-level reader will usually put the book down after chapter two because they "don't understand." What this elementary reader does not "understand" is that no one, reading this novel for the first time, really "understands." It is not until the very end of the book that the reader can grasp the writer's purpose or *theme*.

If *characterization* is first taught using simple stories, a beginner might then be more patient during a longer, more complicated text with extended character descriptions. If a learner is shown precisely where *characterization* occurs within a text which is familiar or easy to that learner, it should then be undemanding for him or her when realizing *characterization* within a slightly higher-level selection with added onerous content. This learning process must happen in due course to result in steady advancement for the reader; it becomes easier over time. Hence an instructor can first teach *characterization* as an Element of Literature, using, for example, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. In this very short, very elementary story, the rabbit's character descriptions are easily singled out. Serially, the reader should not follow *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* with *The Great Gatsby*. In a gradual approach that develops concrete, fundamental, and transferable understanding, the reader might move from this story to *Charlotte's Web* and then to *James and the Giant Peach*. There may be other selections prior to *Gatsby*, but eventually the novice reader should have an understanding of

characterization sufficient to make a higher-level text easier to comprehend and tolerable to examine.

Each element is beneficial in order to understand, to examine, and to achieve an ideal level of comprehension of any story. As the understanding of literary elements increases, the reader's ability to comprehend the text increases thereby. If the reader is able to recognize each element as it occurs, that reader will grasp the author's style and purpose in unfurling each aspect of the story. This knowledge of literary elements can be transferred to any story at every level of reading and comprehension. Once the elements are known, struggling readers can delve into a text that would normally seem complex. Furthermore, novice readers can reallocate their knowledge of the Elements of Literature when writing stories.

Objectives

The specific goals for teaching a unit on the Elements of Literature¹ have many facets, which can be added to and subtracted from, depending on the desired outcome set by teachers and standards alike. The first objective is that students gain a better understanding of *age-appropriate*² literature. This involves the practice of comprehension skills while reading and diving deeper into the interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of text. Additional justification is that reading comprehension is tested by and required by state and federal standards. Understanding the Elements of Literature is a key tool for students' success in becoming better readers and writers. The second objective for this unit is for students to ascend from elementary stories into complicated selections, and in doing so, to apply prior knowledge and transfer skills from one text to the next. The third objective is for students to gain an appreciation of literature in order to become lifelong readers and writers and ultimately thinkers. The aim is to shape a productive member of society and someone who is critical and analytical yet compassionate.

My belief is that if students understand the core and foundation in any and every story, they will then have the ability to potentially read any and every story. Furthermore, in realizing the organization of a story, students will have an easier time creating original stories themselves. Once more, providing a successful completion of this unit, students will read at their age-appropriate level, and therefore meet state standards, find value in learning, and further their own education.

Strategies

An acceptable strategy must entail some template in which the instructor knows what students should produce as an end result prior to teaching the unit³. This end result can be targeted close to the beginning of the unit or as far away as the end of the class or semester, or for any other given time period for teaching the unit. *My* template, as described below, will be set for a semester's time during one school year, which is divided into two semesters. This specific model has its introduction of the unit at the beginning of the semester with the conclusion of the unit at the end of the semester. With this in mind, the unit can be taught, depending on the particular goals, in any given time period as long as there is some sequential order envisioned for ascending texts and the ideas therein. The only tangible materials that students will need are a

place to keep notes and their novel of choice.

Steps Leading to Student Assessments⁴

1. Explain the unit to the class. Students will understand the expectation and duration of the unit prior to beginning the actual lessons: assign two external projects. The first is for students to choose from a list of grade-appropriate books and produce a reader response specifically analyzing and explaining the literary elements within the text. The second is for students to write a story or narrative, using guidelines and writing prompts, which encompasses the Elements of Literature.
2. As time moves on, students take notes during instructional time on the Elements of Literature, touching on each element. They will read several examples of short elementary literature, using the Annotated Reading List for Students (below, under the heading of Resources) as a guide, moving from very basic to age-appropriate. While engaged in reading, as a class, identify each element of literature within the given text for that lesson. This can be done in pairs, groups, or whole class, but must be reported and commented on by students and teacher. Students should be granted a set time each day for reading and/or writing, approximately fifteen minutes towards the beginning of the class period, to work on the 'external' portion of the assignment. The next section of class time is to touch on each element as it appears in the in-class reading. The remainder of the period is used for any other pertinent lesson to be taught according to the curriculum and standards. Differentiate the instructional time and the lesson taught during that time to eliminate student apathy.
3. Students should now have some prior knowledge to use and find the elements in slightly more difficult texts, not yet approaching long chapter books.
4. This is the step in which the instructor uses some adolescent literature to find more Elements of Fiction.
5. Students transfer their acquired knowledge once more, this time using short stories at grade reading level.
6. Read a grade appropriate novel, in-class, and touch on each element as it appears in the text.
7. Student use the knowledge and notes from in-class learning to mirror this approach to the elements in an essay about the novel they selected to read at the beginning of the unit. Students do not have to be at any particular place in the novel to do this; they may need to look back or monitor their pace more closely.
8. Students use prior knowledge of literary elements to write a story, narrative, or personal expository. Prompts provided by the teacher can make this simple for struggling readers or challenging for advanced students.
9. Students may then choose to illustrate their story or provide a cover.

Step One

Step one is to introduce the unit and describe its objectives to the students so that they will understand what, exactly, is expected of them throughout the duration of the timeframe and in their finished product. This step is an explanation of what will happen over the time allotted for the unit. My unit's end product is due at the end of the semester so that students get a chance to work independently on the projects, managing their own time, and so that instruction is differentiated, as individuals will be working at their own pace. Students should, at this point, have a clear understanding of the purpose, procedures, and expectations of the unit. Students also need to know what materials they are expected to bring to class each day and how the unit will be taught to them, in keeping with the idea that they should know what will happen before it does happen. The theory is, if students are completely clear on their responsibility, they will have less stress in the anticipation of an end result to be assessed. In this step students are told about the note section of a

notebook, which they will need each day for class. They will also choose a book from the grade-appropriate list and bring the book to class each day. Instructors may choose to keep all materials in the class, depending on the classroom design and space; this also depends on the nature of the student and their level of responsibility pertaining to belongings, as students have a tendency to "lose" things and often report that "somebody stole it." In addition to the "notes" section of a notebook, I find it beneficial to student organization if they have a writing section for topics in progress. This may be a suggestion or mandatory. I like to assess the notebook as part of the completion of the unit; this is left to the instructor, as it may not be relevant to others' curriculum and standards.

Step Two (See also Lesson Plan One)

This is the initial step in teaching the Elements of Literature. Now that students understand the expectation, they can begin to follow through with the process set forth. In this step the instructor must pick the most elementary of the texts to be taught (see Annotated Reading List for Students to choose from the list or discover something germane). I am inclined to use *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* because it is great for *plot*, the first element necessary for comprehension, and it can be revisited later in the unit for other elements. In teaching *plot*, it is key to explain *plot* before reading for its identification. Students must take notes on *plot*, and understand how it works in the story. First the teacher must provide definitions; this can be done on the blackboard or by any other means for note-taking. Once students have an idea of the progression of a *plot* for any given story, it is time to read the elementary selection and recognize the story's plot as a whole class or in groups but with the intention to have a class discussion. Because a *plot* rises to a climax and descends toward the resolution, students are able to diagram the *plot* of a story providing the rising action, climax, and resolution in an easy to view format. This can be done on a mountain-like graph where students describe all three parts, as in an upside-down "U" or something similar. In fact, students may easily conceptualize the plot if it is explained as an upside-down "U". All told, the function of this step is to read an elementary text to observe examples of plot as they happen, and to realize the importance of a story's design. Students take notes, using real examples, and the process is not lengthy or elaborate. Plus, with a simple text, this only takes a small chunk of class time and produces a skill that can be transferred into the next text.

Step Three

Now that students understand plot and can see its function in the story, it is time to move to another element, and a text selection which may be slightly more complicated. At this point, it is acceptable, and even desirable, to move slowly. *Cat in the Hat* may be the next appropriate read. Again, this is elementary but perfect to teach plot for a second time and to add theme or another element. This way one element is reinforced while another is introduced; prior knowledge is applied and a new skill is born. This is also the time to assess the next move in the unit. Should students go straight into something more complicated (not yet grade-appropriate) or move more slowly into the repeat of another elementary selection? This is a question that can only be answered on a class-to-class basis. Unhurried progression is the foundation of the unit. One should not just assume understanding; it does not take too much time to review another elementary text, and a selection should be ready. Any step can be repeated until the students are ready to move forward into the more complicated readings.

Step Four (See Lesson Plan Two)

It is time to move into a slightly more complex text. This is not to say that the students are ready to read an advanced selection and find the elements. At this point, they may only understand a few of the important components of a story; but they are now ready to move toward adolescent literature (if the unit is geared

toward high school students). Together as a class, it is time to read something as short as *James and the Giant Peach*, which is not too difficult, but certainly is not too elementary either.

Again, teacher chooses the focus, determining which elements to study for this step, and thus defines the elements for student-notes prior to reading. The class, as a whole, reads the selection to identify the new elements and provide examples within the new text. This can be done as a whole-class read or in reading groups or by any other means to read the story and study the elements. It is important that the elements be defined prior to the reading and that the students understand what they are searching for. Again, the end result is in place for an expectation and requirement rather than an abstract concept, which may be intangible. At the end of this step, students should be familiar with a few new elements of a story, and able to transfer their knowledge in the next step. It is important to assess, as a class, whether or not to move to the next level or repeat this step. The secret lies in accessing prior knowledge, repetition of the skill, and transfer of new skill-sets; therefore, duplicating the same step is good, not bad.

Step Five (See Lesson Plan Three)

It is now time to read age-appropriate short stories as a whole class. Students should be moving along through their own selection while the group reads various short stories at grade level, prior to getting into the whole-class grade-level novel. Many short stories can be found in the classroom textbook (if available). This guarantees an age-appropriate reading selection and can provide supplemental questions and activities. Again, there is no need to reinvent the wheel, because adequate materials are provided in any standard curriculum.

Step Six

After reading a few—at least two—short stories at the grade-appropriate level for the students, it is time to read a novel together. Each day, or several days per week, students must be working independently on their own reading and reader response to their own selections. On these days, a period of time will also be dedicated to whole-class reading, as it has been in the past. This time it will be toward the completion of a novel, chosen by the teacher. I may choose to read *Speak* with ninth graders or *The Great Gatsby* with eleventh graders. The selection does not matter a great deal, as long as it is approved for the grade level. Progress through the novel should take several forms: teacher should read to students, students can read in groups to each other, or students can read independently. This can be done by giving students the choice or dictating it day by day. As each element appears in the novel, students should comment, discuss, take notes, and answer questions accordingly. They will not be writing a reader's response or analysis of this whole-group read, but will use their learned skills and knowledge when writing about their own selection.

Step Seven

This step is not necessarily the seventh step within the sequence that appears in this unit. This step—the writing of a response—should be in progress throughout the unit's time frame. Students are writing a response to the novel they chose at the beginning of the semester. They write in an allotted period of time per day, while reading or after reading their selected novel. It is at this time (the seventh step) that no more in-class, teacher-led, readings will take place. Students should now have the tools and skills to complete their reading and analysis. I like to give students a loose outline for their composition, wherein the first paragraph is a simple synopsis or summary of their book (maybe a bit about the author), and the second paragraph (and each subsequent paragraph) is an analysis of one Element of Literature found in the text. Therefore, all body paragraphs will be an examination of individual elements. In these paragraphs students will discuss the

element, explain how it is used by the author, and give examples of the element from the text. The final paragraph or conclusion is the student's evaluation of the book. This can be an opinion about the text or author, it may be a recommendation for another reader, or something interesting about the author's other novels; this kind of response is certainly not an exact science, and students should be allowed some creative leeway to reach their conclusion. It is in the body paragraphs that students unveil their new awareness and inspection of literary elements. I require at least five paragraphs for this reader response, and thus three elements are to be discussed, but students are not limited to three thereafter.

Step Eight

Again, some of these steps take place simultaneously, and students will be working at different paces; this is not only okay, it is exactly the point of differentiated instructional strategies. Now that students have produced an analysis of the elements, they should then use their knowledge of the elements in the construction of fiction to write an original story. I like to provide some suggestions and guidelines. I provide students with topic choices for their original story, but, again, they are not limited to these topics as long as they have their proposal approved by the instructor. Some of the choices are to write a narrative about their life or a portion of their life, write an original story in the first person, or retell a story from a new perspective (with a new theme or from another character's viewpoint). All of my suggestions force the student to use the first person *I* so that they can express a point of view as a character within the story. This text-to-self reflection is part of the state standard and is easily assessed when students write stories using first person.

Step Nine

This step is altogether optional and may be assigned as optional for students. I do not give "extra credit," but this lends itself to an extra credit type assignment. I incorporate this for several reasons, one being that my vocational students are very creative by nature and often enjoy such efforts as drawing or constructing something. I propose, then, that students have an option to illustrate their original stories, written in Step Eight. In this assignment, students may choose to make a cover or complement their prose with illustrations, as in some of the selections read along the way. This is an exercise in the Elements of Literature because students must now depict the scenes, plot and characterization through pictures. As I say, this can be optional or mandatory, but should be explained to students prior to the allotted timeframe. This also can be a great way to differentiate instruction for the advanced student who is finished before the others; in this case, they have further work to do while others are catching up or following a normal pace.

Exemplary Lessons

Lesson Plan One⁵

This lesson will occur over the period of sixty minutes in a ninety-minute block-period. I never like to use the entire class period for any one thing. I feel that the students need to move through a series of exercises to keep busy and pass the time with less apathy. The half-hour that follows the lesson can be used for any other curriculum need or standard to be taught. This entire unit is taught over time, one semester in my case, and should not encompass whole class periods, for it is not the only thing of importance to students. I dedicate, most days, the first fifteen minutes of class time to individual reading or writing. I call this SSR or Sustained

Silent Reading⁶ ; the key is silence during this time. It is a differentiated exercise in that not all students will be reading at the same pace or writing at the same pace and they choose what is most important for them at any given time. Prior to this lesson, the only essential step is that students must have chosen a book for their reader response and the teacher must have approved the book. Students must also have a place to keep notes. I approach this by teaching students about organization. I like to see a three-ring binder, and a section for class notes. This component can be accomplished in many ways but must be in place prior to the first lesson on the elements.

At this stage, students really should be reading during SSR. I cannot imagine that a student is ready to write this close to the beginning of the unit. The instructor must monitor progress by moving about the room and watching student behaviors. If students know what is expected and teacher monitors this expectation, success is nearly assured. Today's lesson is on *plot* and only this single element. In lessons to come, two or three elements may be introduced, but in the beginning it is wise to establish less rather than more. We are now fifteen minutes into our lessons and student must turn to the note-section of their notebook. This next ten to fifteen minutes is teacher-led instruction, with students taking notes and asking questions. In this case, the intention is *plot* discovery; the teacher puts definitions of *plot* on the board (or any relevant medium for note taking). The objective for the lesson is that students understand *plot* as a design of incidents in all fiction writing. This design is explained in detail, in terms of what students should realize, below under the heading "Elements of Literature". This design is exactly what students should observe as they read from the *exposition* to the *resolution*. Now that notes are taken and available for further use during the unit, the ninety-minute period is one-third over. The next fifteen to twenty minutes should be spent reading an elementary text, the first of the basic stories to examine. I will use *Tony the Tow Truck*, by Robert Krauss, which is short enough to read aloud and still leave time to discuss. Students will then diagram the story using the upside-down "U" chart. On the diagram, students will choose which parts of the story are exposition, rising action, crisis, climax, falling action, and resolution. These may be one-sentence discoveries for each part of the plot. *Tony the Tow Truck* may be reused for *characterization* in the next lesson, mainly because students are now familiar with the text. Once each student has a diagram—this may take ten minutes or so—this lesson and portion of the block period have concluded. The reading of the text should be done aloud, with the diagram done by partners, and with an additional diagram drawn on the board by the teacher once students have finished. This ensures that all students have the same diagram for their notes and can revisit *plot* when needed. The remainder of the period is used for another lesson or unit. Alternatively, teachers may have students or pairs of students put their diagram on the board and discuss it; students may switch partners and share; students may work alone and share with a partner, or the teacher can choose any other creative method for this portion of the lesson.

Timetable Breakdown, 90-Minute Block Period⁷

- 15 minutes: SSR
- 15 minutes: Plot note taking
- 15 minutes: Read story as whole group
- 15 minutes: Diagram and report findings
- 30 minutes: Additional lesson

Lesson Plan Two

This lesson will occur over the first seventy minutes of a ninety-minute block period (just as in Lesson Plan One). The objective is for students to see characterization in a work of somewhat more advanced fiction. At

this point in the unit, we have moved past the using of elementary texts and have begun to delve into adolescent literature. I will use *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl because of its great characterization and descriptions. In the first fifteen minutes of the period students will be given time for SSR; again, they are reading and/or writing, depending on their schedule. This time is teacher-monitored, but at this point in the unit students should keep themselves on task. Once the SSR time is over, it is time to discuss, whole-class, characterization as an Element of Literature. As done for plot, students should take notes from the board in a teacher-led forum. Students need the definitions only, and these should be kept in the "notes" section of their notebooks for further use in the unit. Below, beneath the section headed "Elements of Literature," please find a working definition of characterization. Once students have their notes, it is time to turn to the text and read. This can be done in several ways, and I propose to do it in as many ways as possible. I will read aloud to students, break them into reading partners or reading groups, or have them read silently or take volunteers for reading aloud; this instructional time should also be differentiated. About twenty minutes into reading, it is time to discuss; I prompt the students with a question, such as, which character is the protagonist, and why? I take responses after students jot down their answers. Depending on how far we get in the text, other levels of characterization can be discussed. It is also important to touch on any of the elements which have been taught in previous lessons, as a reinforcement method. I continue with this type of lesson at the beginning of the period each day until the novel is finished. I observe the level of student understanding of characterization, and if they do well I may add another element for study.

Timetable Breakdown, 90-Minute Block Period

- 15 minutes: SSR
- 15 minutes: Characterization note taking
- 25 minutes: Read (several different techniques)
- 15 minutes: Character discussion question and answer
- 20 minutes: Additional lesson

Lesson Plan Three

This lesson incorporates short stories into the unit. Because short stories are "short," it is a great way to begin looking at a grade-appropriate text before reading an entire novel (which is the next segment of the unit). In this case, students can diagram plot as they have done before in "Lesson Plan One," and/or look at every element that has already been covered. It is not assumed that all elements have been introduced at this point, but most of the elements, listed in the section entitled "Elements of Literature," should have been covered at least briefly. The idea behind reading the short story is to introduce and review as many elements as possible, in an age-appropriate format, prior to the novel. I suggest looking for these short stories in the grade-level literature textbook, finding something there that is suitable and has supplementary materials. I will use such titles as "To Build a Fire" by Jack London, "The Euphio Question" by Kurt Vonnegut, and "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell. I suggest doing three stories using the same approach, which is to read aloud as a group and identify the elements. Students should answer questions, usually provided by the textbook, to ensure comprehension *and then* answer a set of teacher prepared questions pertaining to the elements. Some questions may be as simple as, "Describe something ironic in 'The Most Dangerous Game'. Why is this irony? What type of irony is this?" Students can work on these questions in pairs, using their notes, and report their findings during an in-class discussion. Some stories may take more than one or two days to complete, but I do not spend an entire class period on this subject matter alone. Also, at this point in the unit it is important, with supervision and prior knowledge of the class's momentum, to spend more time with the difficult elements (irony and satire for example), and simply touch on the others. It is vital to verify student involvement in SSR

time at this stage, as students should be writing or finishing *their* "novels". This is also the point at which SSR time can become teacher-student conference time.

Timetable Breakdown, 90-Minute Block Period

- 15 minutes: SSR
- 25-30 minutes: Introduce and read short story
- 15-25 minutes: Students answer questions for comprehension and Literary Elements
- 15 minutes: Class discussion/note taking
- 0-20 minutes: Additional lesson

Supplementary Lessons⁸

- Students do an author study for one of the books read in-class and then do an author study for their own novelist. I have students read a few biographies; then imitate the biographical approach on their own, using some research. This can lead to a presentation.
- Students can read some autobiographies written by the authors of some of the in-class readings. They can then write their own autobiography as a supplement to their story.
- When students write their story they can dedicate it to someone, as many authors do. They can put their own picture on the back cover and illustrate the front cover (using a scanner or computer imaging).
- An in-depth interpretation of a story or two, engaging students to look at political ideology, race, gender, class, and historical context. They can then use these techniques to study their own novel and add a paragraph on this subject matter to their reader response.
- A study in dialogue, how it is used, and the different ways to punctuate characters' voices can be a lesson. Students can choose one way to use dialogue in their own stories and stay consistent with this usage.

Elements of Literature⁹

Plot

Exposition

The introductory material, which gives the setting, creates the tone, presents the characters, and presents other facts necessary to understanding the story.

Rising Action

This is a series of events that builds from and during conflict. It begins with the inciting force and ends with the climax.

Crisis

The conflict reaches a turning point. At this point the opposing forces in the story meet and the conflict becomes most intense. The crisis occurs before or at the same time as the climax.

Climax

The climax is the result of the crisis. It is the high point of the story for the reader. Frequently, it is the moment of the highest interest and greatest emotion—the point at which the outcome of the conflict can be predicted.

Falling Action

These are the events after the climax, which close the story.

Resolution

This is the ending of the story, which rounds out and concludes the action. It can resolve the conflict or close the actions.

Characterization

Major Characters

These are almost always round or three-dimensional characters. They have good and bad qualities. Their goals, ambitions and values change. A round character changes as a result of what happens to him or her. A character that changes inside as a result of what happens to him or her is referred to in literature as a "dynamic" character. A dynamic character grows or progresses to a higher level of understanding in the course of the story.

(table 06.03.02.01 available in print form)

Minor Characters

These characters are almost always flat or two-dimensional characters. They have only one or two striking qualities. Their predominant quality is not balanced by an opposite quality. They are usually all good or all bad. Such characters can be interesting or amusing in their own right, but they lack depth. Flat characters are sometimes referred to as "static" characters because they do not change in the course of the story.

Point of View

First Person

The narrator is a character in the story who can reveal only personal thoughts and feelings and what he or she sees and is told by other characters. He can't tell us the thoughts of other characters.

Third-Person Objective

The narrator is an outsider who can report only what he or she sees and hears. This narrator can tell us what is happening, but he can't tell us the thoughts of the characters.

Third-Person Limited

The narrator is an outsider who sees into the mind of one of the characters.

Omniscient

The narrator is an all-knowing outsider who can enter the minds of more than one of the characters.

Conflict

Conflict is the essence of fiction. It creates *plot*. The conflicts we encounter can usually be identified as one of four kinds:

Man versus Man

This conflict pits one person against another.

Man versus Nature

This conflict is a run-in with the forces of nature. On the one hand, it expresses the insignificance of a single human life in the cosmic scheme of things. On the other hand, it tests the limits of a person's strength and will to live.

Man versus Society

The values and customs by which everyone else lives are being challenged. The character may come to an end as a result of his or her own convictions. The character may, on the other hand, bring others around to a sympathetic point of view, or it may be decided that society was right after all.

Man versus Self

Internal conflict. Not all conflict involves other people. Sometimes people are their own worst enemies. An internal conflict is a good test of a character's values. Does he give in to temptation or rise above it? Does he demand the most from himself or settle for something less? Does he even bother to struggle? The internal conflicts of a character and how they are resolved are good clues to the character's inner strength.

Often, more than one kind of conflict is taking place at the same time. In every case, however, the existence of conflict enhances the reader's understanding of a character and creates the suspense and interest that makes us continue reading.

Foreshadowing

This is the author's use of hints or clues to suggest events that will occur later in the story. Not all foreshadowing is obvious. Frequently, future events are merely hinted at through dialogue, description, or the attitudes and reactions of the characters.

Foreshadowing frequently serves two purposes:

1. It builds suspense by raising questions that encourage the reader to go on and find out more about the event that is being foreshadowed.

2. Foreshadowing is also a means of making a narrative more believable by partially preparing the reader for events that are to follow.

Irony

Irony is the contrast between what is expected or what appears to be and what actually is.

Verbal Irony

The contrast between what is said and what is actually meant.

Irony of Situation

This refers to a happening that is the opposite of what is expected or intended.

Dramatic Irony

This occurs when the audience or reader knows more than the characters know.

Tone/Mood

Tone

Tone is the author's attitude, stated or implied, toward a subject. Some possible attitudes are pessimism, optimism, earnestness, seriousness, bitterness, humor, and joy. An author's tone can be revealed through choice of words and details.

Mood

Mood is the climate or feeling in a literary work. The choice of setting, objects, details, images, and words all contribute towards creating a specific mood. For example, an author may create a mood of mystery around a character or setting but may treat that character or setting in an ironic, serious, or humorous tone.

Symbolism

- A person, place or object which has a meaning in itself but suggests other meanings as well. - Things, characters, and actions can be symbols. - Anything that suggests a meaning beyond the obvious. - Some symbols are conventional, generally meaning the same thing to all readers. For example: bright sunshine symbolizes goodness (or happiness) and water is a symbolic cleanser.

Theme

This is the main idea or underlying meaning of a literary work.

Themes may be major or minor. A major theme is an idea the author returns to time and again. It becomes one of the most important ideas in the story. Minor themes are ideas that may appear from time to time.

It is important to recognize the difference between the theme of a literary work and the subject of a literary work. The subject is the topic on which an author has chosen to write. The theme, however, makes some statement about or expresses some opinion on that topic. For example, the subject of a story might be war while the theme might be the idea that war is useless.

Four ways in which an author can express themes are as follows:

1. Themes are expressed and emphasized by the way the author makes us feel. By sharing feelings of the main character you also share the ideas that go through his mind.
2. Themes are presented in thoughts and conversations. Authors put words in their characters' mouths only for good reasons. One of these is to develop a story's themes. The things a person says are much on their mind. Look for thoughts that are repeated throughout the story.
3. Themes are suggested through the characters. The main character usually illustrates the most important theme of the story. A good way to get at this theme is to ask yourself the question, what does the main character learn in the course of the story?
4. The actions or events in the story are used to suggest theme. People naturally express ideas and feelings through their actions. One thing authors think about is what an action will "say". In other words, how will the action express an idea or theme?

Figurative Language

- Whenever the author describes something by comparing it with something else, the author is using figurative language.
- Any language that goes beyond the literal meaning of words in order to furnish new effects or fresh insights into an idea or a subject is figurative language.
- The most common figures of speech are simile, metaphor, and alliteration.

Simile

Simile is figure of speech, which involves a comparison between two unlike things, usually with the words *like* or *as*. Example: The muscles on his brawny arms are strong as iron bands.

Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech, which involves an implied comparison between two relatively unlike things. The comparison is not announced by *like* or *as*. Example: The road was a ribbon of moonlight.

Alliteration

Repeated consonant sounds occurring at the beginning of words or within words. Alliteration is used to create melody, establish mood, call attention to important words, and point out similarities and contrasts. Example: wide-eyed and wondering while we wait for others to waken.

Personification

This is a figure of speech, which gives the qualities of a person to an animal, an object, or an idea. It is a comparison, which the author uses to show something in an entirely new light, to communicate a certain feeling or attitude towards it and to control the way a reader perceives it. Example: a brave handsome brute fell with a creaking rending cry—the author is giving a tree human qualities.

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