



Short Stories

For ESOL 160- Reading 6

RAMIREZ

This book belongs to:

Short Stories

for Level 6 Academic Reading

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To the Teacher

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This workbook has also been designed with assessment in mind. Every chapter includes assignments that can be evaluated with a rubric such as the LEAP VALUE rubric for “Reading.” Chapter 2 is explicitly designed to elicit assignments that can be evaluated with rubrics for “Intercultural Knowledge and Competence” and “Critical Thinking.”

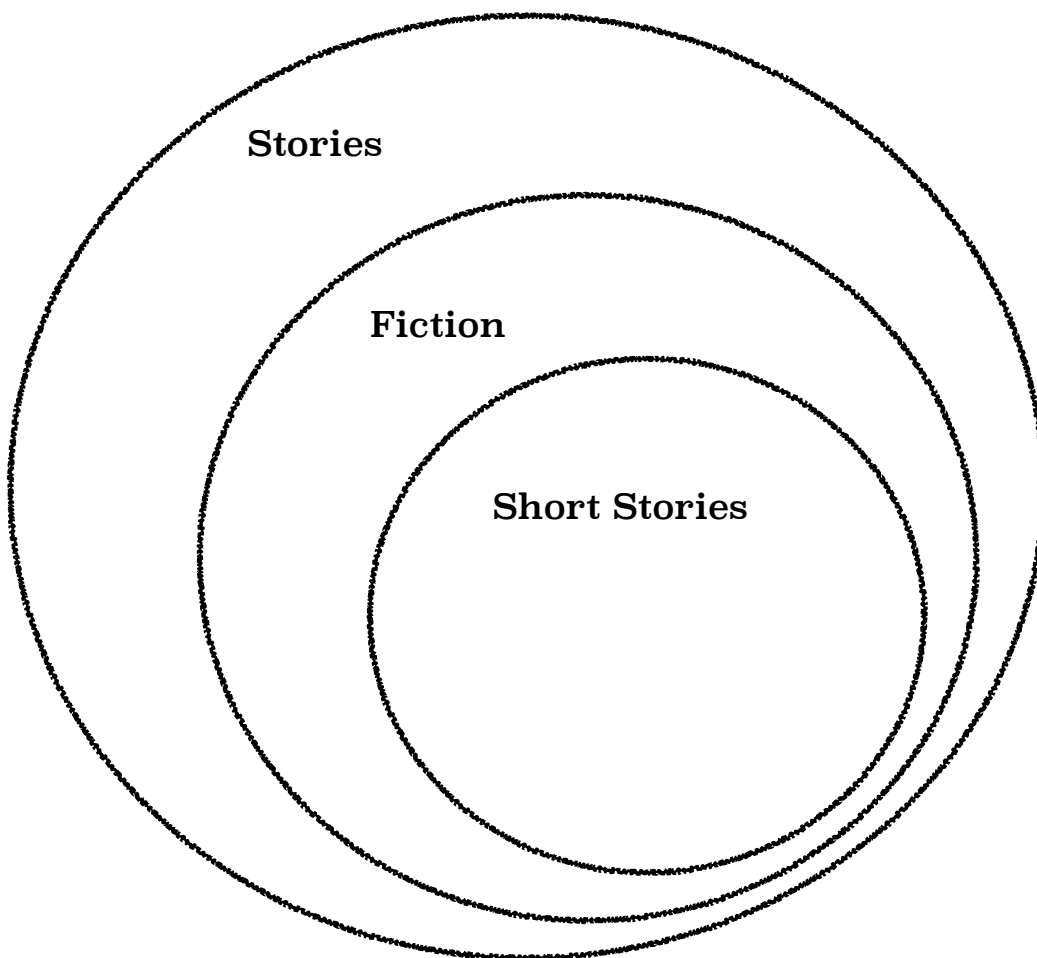
I maintain a website with supplementary materials, including slideshows and videos, at <http://spot.pcc.edu/~dramirez>. Those materials are also available to you under the same Creative Commons license. If you use the video lectures for the readings (or create your own), this workbook can be used for the “flipped classroom” approach. You can also alternate a traditional approach for some chapters and a flipped approach for others.

I hope you find this workbook useful!

Davina Ramirez

A story or narrative is a connected series of events told through words (written or spoken), imagery (still and moving), body language, performance, music, or any other form of communication. You can tell a story about anything, and the events described can be real or imaginary ... Whenever you're telling somebody about a series of events, you are telling a story, no matter what the subject nor when they occurred. As such, stories are of great value to human culture, and are some of the oldest, most important parts of life.
from "What Is a Story?" LiteraryTerms.net

Note: A "short story" is a specific type of fiction. When discussing readings in general, we can use both "story" and "short story" to mean the same thing, but when we need to be precise, we must understand that these terms have slightly different meanings. Discuss the Venn diagram below to clarify your understanding.



1. Vocabulary for Discussing Fiction

Learning Objectives 1

After completing this chapter, you will be able to **define** these terms and **apply** them to different works of fiction:

1. Setting
2. Character
3. Plot
4. Theme
5. Figurative Language

When readers talk about texts, they also need specialized vocabulary. Every chapter in this workbook will define some of these terms and offer exercises to help you use them to analyze texts. Some of these words are used mostly for fiction, and some are used for both fiction and non-fiction.

Know these words and phrases. We will use them when discussing the readings.

1. Setting

“Setting” is the **time and the place** of the story.

When and where does the story happen? The answer is the *setting*.

Examples:

Many people know the story of Aladdin. This story is set in the Middle East, in the past.

Another well-known story is *Les Miserables*. The setting of this story is France during the French Revolution of the 1800s.

Many people know the story of *Dracula*. The original *Dracula* story was set in Europe in the past.

It’s OK to describe a setting using very general words, like “Europe in the past.” If you are familiar with the story, you can name the setting more specifically: “The novel *Dracula* takes place during the late 1800s, in both Transylvania and England.”

Be Careful!

- * “Place” is **not** where the writer lived
- * “Time” is **not** when the story was written
- * “Time” is **not** how long the story takes

Try It: Identify the settings of each story.

Movie: Titanic

Place:

Time:

Fairy tale: “Cinderella”

Place:

Time:

Play: Romeo and Juliet

Place:

Time:

Movie: Star Wars

Place:

Time:

2. Character

“Characters” are the **people or participants** in the story.
Who is in the story? The answer is *the characters*.

Every work of fiction has characters: the people, animals, or beings who “live” in the story. Main characters are the ones who participate the most in the story — whose personalities and actions make the story happen.

Many stories and novels have three types of **main characters**:

- * the protagonist, or “good guy — hero — heroine”
- * the protagonist’s friend or helper, or “sidekick”
- * the antagonist, or “bad guy — villain”

All the other people or animals who “live” in the story are also characters, but most are considered **minor characters**. They can be more or less important.

For example, in the Disney movie *The Lion King*, three of the main characters are Simba (the protagonist), the bird Zazu (the sidekick), and Scar (the antagonist). This movie also has several additional sidekicks and a *love interest*.

The story of Batman has been told many times, but one main character is always the same: the protagonist, Batman. He has many enemies, but his most popular antagonist is The Joker.

Try It: For each of these works of fiction, list the main characters.

<i>Titanic:</i>	“Cinderella:”	<i>Romeo and Juliet:</i>	<i>Star Wars:</i>

Think About ...

Can an animal be a character?

Can something that’s not alive be a character?

What’s the difference between a main character and a minor character?

How many main characters do most stories have?

3. Plot

“Plot” is **the sequence of events** of the story.
What happens in the story? The answer is *the plot*.

When a person tells you “what happened” in a movie, they’re summarizing the *plot*. It’s usually fairly easy for us to do this. Our human brains naturally understand stories — all kinds of stories — very naturally; you probably know a lot about plot already, without even studying anything.

In college, students are often asked to summarize both fiction and non-fiction readings. You probably have a clear idea about how to summarize non-fiction; you identify the main ideas and rephrase them into your own words. Summarizing fiction is a little different. After all, fiction doesn’t have main ideas. To summarize, first **analyze** the plot and then explain it in your own words, and don’t try to rephrase description, dialogue, or figurative language.

Let’s learn two ways to analyze the plot: with a timeline and with a narrative arc.

Timeline

Writing a timeline is straightforward.

- * Read and understand the story
- * Identify the most important events
- * Choose your own verb for each event
- * Use simple present tense for each verb
- * Put the events in exact time order

It can be difficult to identify which events are the most important in a story; you will get better with practice. Discussing with a group will help, too.

It can also be difficult to choose your own verbs to summarize points on your timeline. Don’t simply copy verbs from the story; you may need original words. Use simple present tense in a timeline.

Finally, be sure what the **actual time order of events** is. By the time you create a timeline, you will have probably read the story at least three times. Notice time words as you read.

Your instructor may ask for a timeline, or you may want to create a timeline to help plan a summary paragraph or essay — which is a very common college assignment.

Be Careful!

Sometimes writers do **not** tell a story in the same time order it happened. A writer may keep something as a surprise, or the characters may not know something important that happened. Always remember: your **timeline** must put events in **real time order**, but a **story** can put events in **any order the author wishes**.

In the classic fairy tale “Cinderella,” the main character has a big problem. She lives with a stepmother and stepsisters who hate her. She’s happy when she gets invited to a ball, but her stepmother says she can’t go. Luckily, her fairy godmother gives her a dress, shoes and a coach, but warns her she must return home by midnight. She goes to the ball and meets the prince, but when running home at midnight, she loses a shoe. The prince wants to marry her, but only knows that she is the girl who lost her shoe. He discovers the shoe only fits Cinderella, so she and the prince get married and live happily ever after.

Example Timeline: “Cinderella”

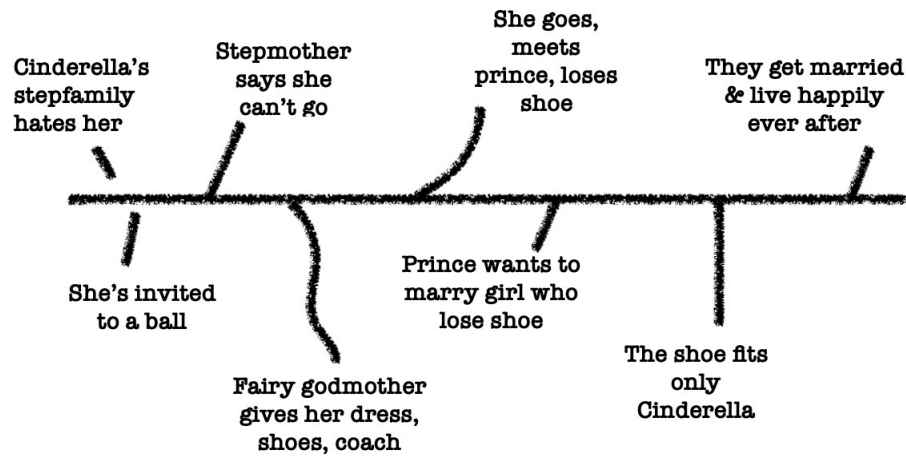


Fig 2. Timeline for “Cinderella”

This story is fairly easy because this fairy tale is told in time order. Notice that every point on the timeline has a key verb. If you use this timeline to write a Summary paragraph, it might look like this:

It’s also OK to write a Timeline as a list, but creating it as a traditional Timeline along a straight line can help you think more creatively.

Try It: Write timelines for stories you know.

Directions: Form small groups. Each person should take several minutes to think of a simple story they know. Then, tell the stories - speak for 1 minute or less. As a group, write a timeline for each story. If you can't think of a story, ask your teacher for ideas!

Use this checklist:

- _____ Read and understand the story
- _____ Identify the most important events
- _____ Choose your own verb for each event
- _____ Use simple present tense
- _____ Put the events in exact time order

Narrative Arc

A different way to understand the plot is by asking “What basic problems do the characters have? How do these problems make the story happen?”

This is the **narrative arc** method.

narrative = Story

arc = curved line

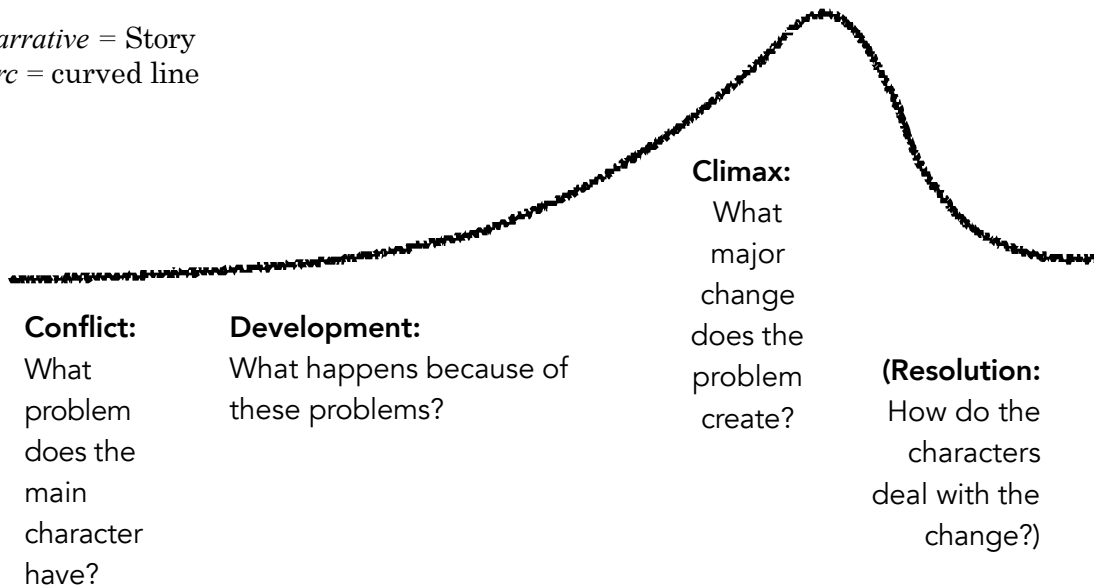
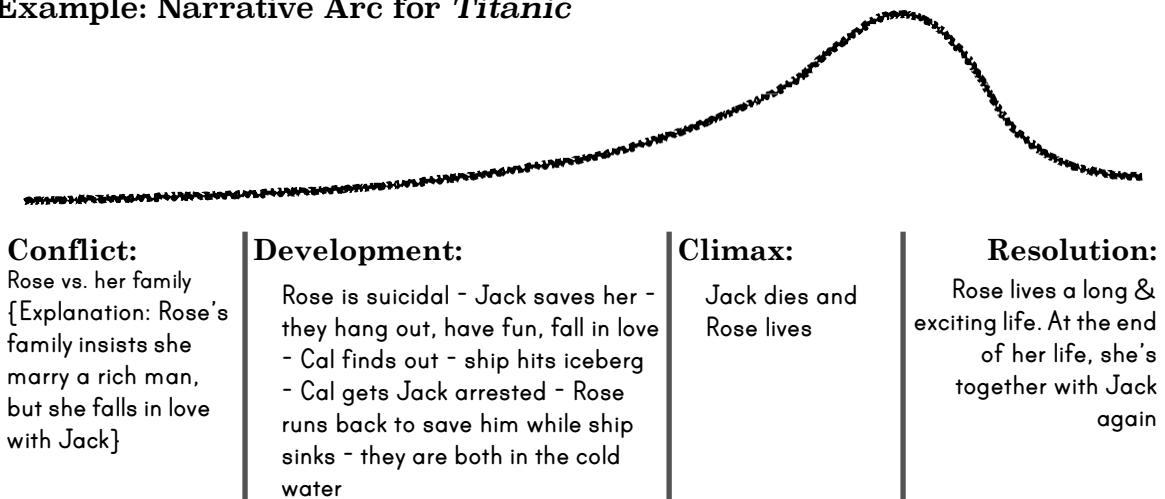


Fig 3. The shape and components of a Narrative Arc

A Narrative Arc is different from a Timeline in several ways, and it gives us different information.

Example: Narrative Arc for *Titanic*



Timeline Compared to Narrative Arc

Timeline:	Narrative Arc:
Shows the major events of the story	Shows the major events of the story – the Development
Shows the time order	Also shows the reason why the events happen – the Conflict
	Also shows which events are more exciting – the Arc
	Also shows what event changes the story permanently – the Climax or Turning Point
	Sometimes shows how the characters are changed by the events – the Resolution

Things to Notice:

- ★ The Conflict can be explained as “the main character **versus (vs)** something or someone”
- ★ A longer story can have multiple Conflicts
- ★ Everything that happens in the Development section is a result of the basic Conflict. If Jack were rich, or if Rose wasn’t being forced to marry Cal, nothing in the story would happen
- ★ The Development part is the longest part, and the upward curve shows that the tension or excitement is rising
- ★ The Climax is short: it is an event that changes the story permanently
- ★ Not all stories have a Resolution
- ★ The Resolution can follow a **pattern** (like “And they lived happily ever after” for fairy tales) or represent how characters change and learn

Try It: Create a narrative arc for a story of your choice.

Story: _____



Notice that these first three concepts answer the key questions
“Where? When? Who? What? Why?”

4. Theme

“Theme” is the major concept the author wants to explore with their writing. What “big ideas” was the writer thinking about, and what “big ideas” do they want the reader to think about? Those are *the themes*.

The theme of a work is usually a universal, abstract idea.

Examples: “Romantic love,” “Family loyalty,” “War,”
“Freedom,” “Fear of the unknown,” “Loss of a loved one,”
“The conflict between duty and desire,” “Becoming a parent”

A work of fiction can have multiple themes. Some themes will be more obvious to one reader or another — we are all different people with different life experiences, so we see different things in art. Some themes are more obvious than others. Discussing and even arguing about themes in literature is something many people love to do!

5. Figurative Language

“Figurative language” is the technique of comparing two things in an interesting, emotional way.

There are two general kinds of figurative language:

- ★ A simile is figurative language that uses “like” or “as.”
- ★ A metaphor is figurative language that does NOT use “like” or “as.”
- ★ There’s a special kind of metaphor called personification: that’s where the metaphor describes something non-human by comparing it to a human.

Examples:

1. Last night, I slept like a log. (S)
2. You are the sunshine of my life. (M)
3. He’s as dumb as a box of rocks. (S)
4. They fought like cats and dogs. (S)
5. “Baby, you’re a firework.” (Katy Perry) (M)
6. “You ain’t nothin’ but a hound dog.” (Elvis Presley) (M)
7. That’s as clear as mud. (S)
8. “Built Like A Rock” (Chevrolet ad) (S)

9. You're as cold as ice. (S)
10. I'm drowning in work. (M)
11. He had hoped to sail on the ocean of love, but found himself lost in a desert. (M, M)
12. The lonely train whistle called out in the night. (M/P)
13. The snow wrapped a white blanket around each tree. (M/P)
14. In the garden, eggplants grow curving like ox horns. (S)
15. The noise split the air. (M)
16. And with those four words, her happiness died. (M/P)
17. Her dark eyes were not bad-looking, like a pair of tadpoles. (Ha Jin)
(S)

Try It: Complete each sentence starter to create a simile or metaphor.

1. I am as tall as ... *a tree in the forest* .
2. I am as fast as a
3. Beyoncé can sing like
4. The airplane flew through the air like a
5. The snow is ... *a fluffy blanket covering the ground*
6. His heart is a
7. The world is a
8. My best friend is a
9. The wind ... *screamed into my ears*.
10. The falling raindrops

Using the Study Guides

For each short story, this workbook has a Study Guide. There are several possible ways to use them. Here are some suggestions.

1. Complete the exercises independently

You can work through some or all the exercises as homework or in class, working in small groups to discuss the answers. Write the answers on your own paper and submit as a homework assignment.

2. Discuss in a literature circle

A literature circle is a small group of readers who discuss their reading in depth. There are many possible ways to form a literature circle; usually, each participant in a lit circle has a different job. If you do work in a lit circle, then each participant can choose one or more of the Study Guide questions and work on them independently before getting together with other members of the circle. Some suggested roles for members of a lit circle are:

- * **Plot Expert:** This person understands the *conflict*, *development*, *climax* and *resolution*. This person can write BOTH a timeline and a Narrative Arc for the story. They can explain these to their group.
- * **Character expert:** This person defines who the major characters are and describes their characters. They choose adjectives and quotations to support their ideas. This person may want to bring a handout with pictures or drawings of the characters to support their ideas.
- * **Summarizer:** This person creates a summary of the plot to share with the group. The Summary should be short but include all the most important points.
- * **Sentence Clarifier:** This person is responsible for explaining some challenging quotations or words to the group. The teacher might assign some phrases, the group might choose some lines, or the clarifier might choose their own difficult parts. They should be able to explain the difficult sections until everyone in the group understands them.
- * **Context Expert:** This person goes beyond the story itself to understand it. They may choose to research the author's life or the time period when the story was written. They can explain to the group how the time period of the author affected the story.
- * **Creative Writer:** This person writes the next part of the story. What happens after the ending?

If you choose to complete the study guide in a lit circle, meet in your group to divide the tasks fairly. Your teacher may prefer you to discuss the reading in your circle, then use your notes to complete the study guide, or they may prefer you to complete the study guide as part of the literature circle discussion.

3. Poster presentation

To prepare a poster presentation, a group will work in a similar way to the literature circle. Each person should have a specific job within the group. Each person should be responsible for part of the poster that explains some aspect of the story: *setting*, *characters*, *plot*, *context*, and *meaning*. As a group, design your poster, following any specific requirements your teacher gives you. You may choose to present your poster verbally to the class or by displaying it to everyone.

4. Slideshow presentation

You might want to do this type of presentation individually, or work in a group. Your teacher might provide a basic slide show for you to complete. Include pictures – always remember to give the source for every picture! – and quotes from the story. Present your slideshow to the class and explain each slide. This is a great opportunity to be creative.

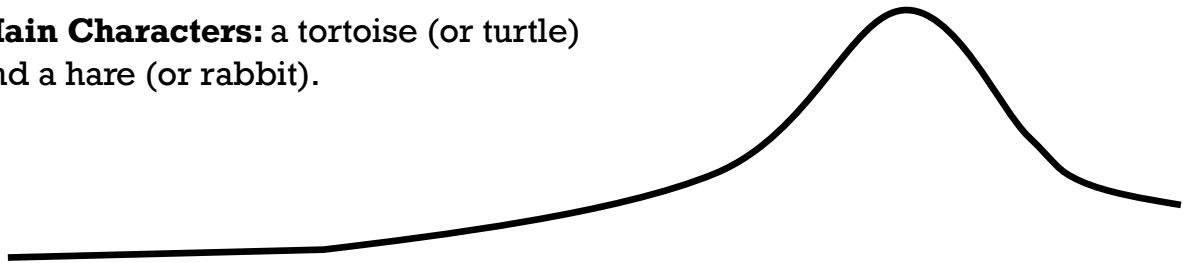
2. Fables

A fable is a specific type of traditional story. Fables are short; they often have speaking animals as characters; and they always teach a lesson. You probably know some fables already. Try to complete the narrative arcs for these two examples. The titles and main characters of each fable are given.

Fable 1

Title: “The Tortoise and the Hare”

Main Characters: a tortoise (or turtle) and a hare (or rabbit).



Conflict:

Development:

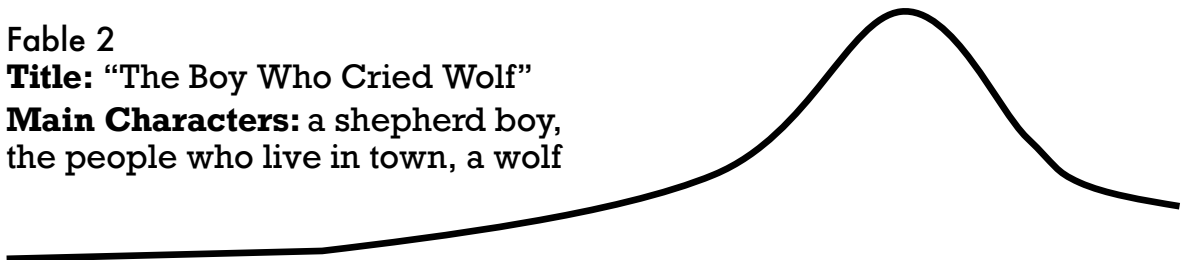
Climax:

Resolution:

Fable 2

Title: “The Boy Who Cried Wolf”

Main Characters: a shepherd boy, the people who live in town, a wolf



Conflict:

Development:

Climax:

Resolution:

Notice that the Resolution is very special: it is the *lesson the story teaches the reader*. This is called “the moral of the story.” Only fables have *morals*.

Chapter 2 Reading: Fables Part 1

The Flies and the Honey-Pot

A family of Flies smelled a pot of honey that had been left open in a kitchen. They swarmed to it and, crowding around its surface, ate greedily. In order to eat more, they landed on the honey itself. However, their feet sank into the sticky honey. Soon their wings could not lift them. They could not free their feet, and they sank deeper and deeper. All were slowly suffocated in the honey itself.

Moral: Too much pleasure leads to pain.

The Lioness

An argument arose among the animals in a certain forest. They could not agree on which animal had the greatest number of children at a birth. The Fox claimed that she could produce five, six or even more cubs. The Goose replied that she could easily raise eight children. The Wolf snapped that she had ten pups at a time. The argument went on until they remembered the Lioness, the Queen of them all, and decided that she would settle the dispute. So, they came to her, but first, they asked, “And you, Queen, how many children do you have at once?” The Lioness laughed. “Only one,” she replied, “but that one is a Lion.”

Moral: Quality is more important than quantity.

The Miser

A miser sold everything that he had and bought a lump of gold. He buried the gold in a hole in the ground by the side of an old wall and went to look at daily. One of his servants became curious about his movements. After watching the Miser visit the same spot again and again, he returned late at night. He dug down into the earth, found the lump of gold, and stole it. The Miser, on his next visit, found the empty hole and began to pull his hair and to wail in grief. A neighbor, seeing him so overcome, asked what the problem was. When he understood the problem, he said, “Just put a stone in the hole and cover it again. That will do you just as much good as the gold did.”

Moral: Wealth that is not used is wealth that does not exist.

Literature Circle: Fables 1

After reading all three stories, choose a role and form small groups. Your teacher should help choose which roles your class will use. First, work with others who have the **same role** that you do. Discuss your task and answer each question until you feel confident enough to teach it to others. Consider creating a visual aid to share with your literature circle. You may choose to work on one fable at a time, or you may choose to do all three fables at once.

Then, form small groups with people who have different roles than you do. Start by reading each fable aloud. Everyone should read a section. Then, share your ideas. Be sure to keep track of time.

Plot Expert: Create a narrative arc or a timeline for each fable.

Character Expert: Create a list of the main characters. Write a few sentences to describe the personalities of these characters.

Sentence Clarifier: Choose a sentence or two that contains difficult vocabulary word. Explain the meaning of each word and the meaning of each sentence.

Context Expert: Each of these three fables seems to give some advice about how to be happy. Think of a context – a real-life situation – which fits each fable. Describe a person who needs the advice given in the fable.

Questioner: Write a 5-question quiz about the fable. Give your group the quiz, either verbally (by asking the questions) or with a printed handout.

Fables Part 2

Read these three versions of the same story.

The Ants and the Grasshopper 1

One summer day a Grasshopper who was singing in the sun saw the ants, who were hot and tired, busy gathering and storing grain for the winter.

“Why do you work so hard?” asked the Grasshopper. “There is plenty of food and the day is warm. Sing with me instead.”

“Oh no,” said the Ants. “Winter is coming. We are storing up food for the winter. You should do the same.”

“Winter is a long time off,” replied the Grasshopper. “I’ll sing and enjoy the day instead.”

When winter came the Grasshopper had no food and was starving. He went to the Ants’ house and asked for food. “All summer you sang, so now you can dance,” replied the Ants. And they gave him no food.

The Ants and the Grasshopper 2

One summer day a Grasshopper who was singing in the sun saw the Ants, who were hot and tired, busy gathering and storing grain for the winter. One Ant spied him and shouted over to him: “Lazy creature! Aren’t you prepared for winter?”

“This day is too beautiful,” replied the Grasshopper. “I admire your hard work, but I cannot waste such beauty. I have a song to sing.” The Ants shook their heads. Some felt pity, and some felt contempt. They kept working that day and for the rest of the summer.

At the end of summer, the farmer plowed the fields under and sprayed them with insecticide. All the insects were killed. The Ants died in their dark hole, surrounded by grain they would never eat. The Grasshopper, as he died in the fresh air, remembered the warm summer days and the beautiful songs he had sung, and died happy.

The Ants and the Grasshopper 3

One summer day a Grasshopper who was singing in the sun saw the Ants, who were hot and tired, busy gathering and storing grain for the winter. He watched them for a while, then continued to sing and feel the warm sun, gaze at the colors of the flowers, and hear the songs of the birds.

When winter came the Grasshopper had no food and was starving. He went to the Ant’s house and asked for food. “What can you give us in return?” asked the Ants.

“I can give you the summer,” replied the Grasshopper. Puzzled but interested, the Ants opened their door. He entered their cold, dark hole and began to sing. He sang about the sunshine, the green leaves, the bright flowers and the soaring birds. Listening to his song, the Ants remembered the warmth, the colors, and the joy of summer. They happily repaid the Grasshopper with a meal, and begged him to stay, to make the long, cold winter bearable.

Literature Circle: Fables 2

After reading all three stories, choose a role and form small groups. First, work with others who have the same role that you do. Discuss your task and answer each question until you feel confident enough to teach it to others. Consider creating a visual aid to share with your literature circle. You may choose to work on one fable at a time, or you may choose to do all three fables at once.

Then, form small groups with people who have different roles than you do. Start by reading each fable aloud. Everyone should read a section. Then, share your ideas. Be sure to keep track of time.

Plot Expert: Create a narrative arc or a timeline for each fable. Include about four points. How are the plots the same, and how are they different?

Character Expert: Compare the personalities of the Ants and the Grasshopper in each story. How does each version of the fable show the different sides of their characters?

Creative Writer: Each of these three fables is incomplete, because each one lacks a Moral. Write a Moral for each one.

Questioner: Consider this list of questions. You can also add your own. Discuss them until you understand them well, then choose several questions to ask the next group.

What do you need to be happy? Respond to each statement by agreeing or disagreeing, and explain your answers. How does each fable relate to these questions?

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| a) Nobody is happy without dreams. | Agree - Disagree |
| b) The happiest people are satisfied with what they already have. | Agree - Disagree |
| c) It is better to have a short, happy life than a long, unhappy one. | Agree - Disagree |
| d) We are most happy when we are helping others. | Agree - Disagree |
| e) A person must be generous to be happy. | Agree - Disagree |
| f) Happiness can only come from yourself, not the outside world. | Agree - Disagree |
| g) Relationships are essential to one's happiness. | Agree - Disagree |
| h) Having a job that one loves is a key element of happiness. | Agree - Disagree |
| i) Not everyone needs the same things to be happy. | Agree - Disagree |
| j) You cannot be both lonely and happy at the same time. | Agree - Disagree |

Cultural Values

“Cultural values” are the beliefs and principles that a group of people share. Fables are a way that cultures and communities share those beliefs.

Cultural values are beliefs about the “best” or “right” ways to behave. They are beliefs about what human qualities are more valuable than others. Some societies have a stronger belief that “*Traditional ways are best,*” while others believe “*Things get better over time.*” These cultural values influence the choices people make and the directions of societies.

Cultural values are shared by stories. For example, if “*It’s important to be generous*” is a cultural value for a group of people, they will tell their children stories where the hero gets rewarded for being generous. If “*Show respect for elders*” is a cultural value, they will tell scary stories where characters who don’t take care of their grandparents have terrible consequences.

What cultural values do the six fables in this chapter show? Read the first three fables again, then circle what values you think each one demonstrates.

The Flies and the Honey-pot

Pleasure doesn’t last long. Greed is bad. It’s very important to be clean.

Don’t follow groups; always think for yourself. It’s important to have self-control.

If you don’t use something, it will become worthless.

The Lioness

The truth is usually hard to see. It’s rude to show anger publicly.

Greed is bad. It’s better to have a few valuable things than many cheap things.

If you see something unfair, you should speak up.

Show respect to those with more power than you. Don’t express pride.

The Miser

If you don’t use something, it will become worthless.

It’s important to have self-control. Don’t express pride.

It’s better to have a few valuable things than many cheap things.

The truth is usually hard to see. Show respect to those who are older than you.

Theme

The “theme” of a story is the large, abstract concept that the writer explores. A theme is not stated directly in a story. Usually, you must read the entire story and understand its plot before the theme becomes clear.

Common themes in literature are *love, war, family, and loss*. However, literary themes can be more specific. Think back to some of the stories we discussed at the start of this book. The play *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, explores the themes of *romantic love, violence between families, and risking safety for love*. The movie *Titanic* explores the themes of *wealth and poverty, the value of love compared to financial security, and self-sacrifice*.

Most literary works have more than one theme, especially if they are long. Novels often have five or more recognizable themes.

Go back to the six fables in this chapter. All six explore the theme of “happiness.” Each fable gives a different perspective on the question, “How can we be happy?” In your own words, explain what message each fable gives us about how to find happiness in our own lives.

Option 1: Discuss this question in small groups and as a whole class.

Option 2: Give a short answer explaining how each fable answers the question “How can we be happy?” Your completed assignment should have six numbered answers. Each answer should indicate the title of the fable. Write two to four sentences for each, explaining the message the fable gives us about how to be happy.

Option 3: Choose one fable and consider how this fable answers the question. Write a paragraph discussing your ideas. Your topic sentence must indicate which fable you are discussing. Include one or more quotes, correctly formatted. You may want to compare to your own beliefs about how to be happy. Do you agree or disagree with the fable’s message?

3. “All Summer in a Day”

Before you read: Answer each with a short discussion. Use complete sentences.

1. Will people ever live on other planets? Why do you think we will or will not?
2. Does the weather influence your mood? Explain: what specific weather makes you feel good or bad?
3. Do you remember being nine years old? What is special about this age?
4. Is it **fair** for children when their parents move to a different culture? What can be hard or easy for children when they are forced to move to an unfamiliar place?
5. Remember a time in your life when you felt different from those around you. What was that like? Describe the time and place.
6. Have you ever been jealous of one of your peers? How did those feelings make you act towards what person?

Reading in Chunks

A good reader reads in units of meaning, sometimes called “thought groups” or “chunks.” These are word groups that go together to make one idea. When we speak, we use intonation for each chunk. Your reading will improve if you read one chunk at a time. Try reading aloud, or listen to your instructor read.

Glosses

A “gloss” is a short note to help you understand a text. It is not a paraphrase, but it is similar. This section has some glosses and some questions to help you complete your own gloss.

Story

The children pressed to each other
like
so many roses,
so many weeds,
intermixed,
peering out
for a look
at the hidden sun.
It rained.
It had been raining for seven years;
thousands upon thousands of days
compounded and filled
from one end to the other
with rain,
with the drum and gush of water,
with the sweet crystal fall of showers
and the concussion of storms
so heavy
they were tidal waves
come over the islands.
A thousand forests had been crushed
under the rain
and grown up a thousand times
to be crushed again.

And this was the way life was forever
on the planet Venus,
and this was the schoolroom
of the children of the rocket men and women
who had come to a raining world
to set up civilization
and live out their lives.
“It’s stopping, it’s stopping!”
“Yes, yes!”

Glosses

The kids are crowded together

Some are nice,
some not nice

It rains a lot,
in different ways

The plants grow,
then get killed by heavy rain, and this
repeats over and over

They aren’t on Earth

Some people live on this planet

They will stay until they die

Margot stood apart from them,
from these children
who could never remember a time
when there wasn't rain and rain and rain.
They were all nine years old,
and if there had been a day,
seven years ago,
when the sun came out for an hour
and showed its face
to the stunned world,
they could not recall.

Margot (/margow/) is different

Maybe they saw the sun
when they were 2

They don't remember it

Setting

Where and when does this story take place? Guess! What clues make you think so? Write a quotation - a few words - from the story to support your guess.

Place: Indoors or outdoors?

Why?

What place?

Why?

What planet?

Why?

Time: What day?

Why?

In the past, present or future?

Why?

Cultural Background

“All Summer in a Day” was written in 1950. Ray Bradbury, the writer, was one of the original creators of the science fiction genre.

The US in 1950

World War II ended in 1945. This war affected the US deeply. First, science and technology in the US was suddenly much more advanced, because the country had developed new weapons, including rockets and the atomic bomb, for the war. Second, the world political situation was different after this war. Most countries at this time could be divided into two groups: the capitalist and democratic group, which included the US and Western Europe, and the Communist group, which included Russia. At this time Russia was called the USSR.

Learn more about post-war America here:

<https://www.history.com/news/post-world-war-ii-boom-economy>

The Cold War

The US and the USSR were not friendly with each other. They did not openly fight, but they competed in many ways, including by building weapons and by spying on each other. This competition was called the “Cold War.” It affected the US by creating a feeling of distrust and fear. Americans were suspicious and sometimes accused each other of being “Communists”. The Cold War went on until the 1980s, and it affected many countries. (Was your home country also affected by the Cold War?)

Learn more about the Cold War here:

https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War

Learn about the Space Race here:

https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Race

Science Fiction

The U.S.’s new technology included rocket ships and the government goal of going to the moon. This affected the imagination of artists and writers deeply, and a new writing style, science fiction, was created. These stories described situations where humans traveled to other planets, or where aliens visited our planet. Many of the stories included the feelings of fear and mistrust that the Cold War had created.

Learn more about science fiction here:

https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction

Vocabulary for "All Summer in a Day" List 1:

You might know the meanings of these words. They are non-academic, ordinary English. For each word, try to:

Identify the part of speech

Translate into your first language or give a synonym

intermixed	dim, dimly	spell
peering	vital	tumultuously
gush	savage	wavering
concussion	blink	octopi
stunned	plead	squeak
blush	muffled	resilient
protested	apparatus	savor
slacken	repercussion	glance
spokes (of a wheel)	tropical	wail
drench	tremor	stake
pattern	bronze	glance
		solemn

List 2:

These are academic words. You should learn these words and their word families.

compound	insert
civilization	brief
consequence	seek
predict	suspend

After You Read:

Read several times. Look up words you don't know. Try to read in "chunks."

Plot

What happens in this story? Complete the time-order list.

1. Men and women go to Venus to create a civilization
2. Children are born
3. Margot arrives on Venus
4. She feels _____
5. On the day of the story, _____
6. The other children _____
7. They go outside
8. _____
9. The rain starts again
10. _____
11. _____

Expanding Your Vocabulary: Personality Words

English has hundreds of adjectives for appearance, mood and personality. Some are more general, while others are very exact. Which of these personality words do you know? Do you know antonyms of any of these words?

- A. There are people who make good friends. They make you feel comfortable; they make you feel happy; they always seem to hang out with lots of people. Some of these words can describe these friends.

positive likable cheerful helpful enthusiastic
energetic lively easy-going playful silly open-minded

- B. Other friends may not be part of big social groups, but when you're having a hard time, these are the best friends to have. You might describe these friends with these words.

non-judgemental trustworthy generous reliable kind gentle
observant intuitive loyal sympathetic considerate caring

- C. Some people may or may not be your friends, but you can recognize that they will probably succeed in life. If you're looking for an employee, you might look for these qualities, even if you might not value these qualities in a friend.

persistent decisive pushy courageous creative ambitious
resourceful disciplined controlling practical demanding

- D. On the other hand, there are flaws that every friend or co-worker has. We can probably recognize our own personality weaknesses in this list. After all, nobody's perfect.

gullible grumpy self-centered annoying pessimistic
unreliable careless weak-willed sloppy passive
stubborn irresponsible over-emotional finicky moody
irreverent naive neurotic inobservant odd

- E. Nobody is perfect, but some personality problems are more serious than others. If a person has even one of these bad qualities, you might want to avoid them.

sneaky ignorant untrustworthy intolerant resentful tactless
unimaginative unpredictable jealous boastful

- F. Finally, there are qualities that can actually be dangerous. If you realize someone you know has these personality traits, stay away from them!

arrogant inconsiderate aggressive hostile
cruel abusive scary

Characters

Main characters are the people who speak and affect the story the most. This story has ONE main character, but also a group of children who are like a main character. Compare their physical appearance and actions with the deeper personality qualities you can guess they have. Use some “personality words” in the following exercise.

We can observe:	We can describe:
What does Margo LOOK like?	In your opinion, what’s her personality like?
What does the group DO?	In your opinion, what personality qualities do the children show?

Characterization

“Characterization” means the way the author shows the personality of each character. Look for actions (verbs), not just adjectives!

Look back at the “Characters” exercise. Choose one “personality” quality that you wrote there, and copy it here. You can explain why you chose this adjective if you want. Then, write a quote from the story that supports your choice. Include quotation marks. One is done as an example.

Personality Trait: Children	Supporting Quote:
The children are <u>ignorant</u>	"these children who could never remember a time when there wasn't rain and rain and rain. ... if there had been a day ... when the sun came out for an hour ... they could not recall."

Personality Trait: William	Supporting Quote:

Personality Trait: Margot	Supporting Quote:

Vocabulary: Circle the word that does not fit with the others in meaning.

- | | | | | |
|---------------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| 1. concussion | blow | injury | blossom | |
| 2. octopi | tree | jellyfish | squid | |
| 3. slipping | tapping | hammering | drumming | |
| 4. frail | thin | strange | weak | |
| 5. shake | bright | tremor | rattle | repercussion |
| 6. avalanche | tornado | sunshine | volcanic | hurricane |
| 7. drench | drown | soak | crispy | shower |
| 8. gush | dry | trickle | pour | flow |
| 9. speed | slacken | hesitate | lessen | suspend |
| 10. wild | feverish | excited | shy | hyperactive |

What idea is Bradbury trying to create with these repetitive sentences?

“It had been raining for seven years; thousands upon thousands of days compounded and filled from one end to the other with rain, with the drum and gush of water, with the sweet crystal fall of showers and the concussion of storms so heavy they were tidal waves come over the islands” (p 1).

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A. Rain is always the same | B. There are many varieties of rain |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|

“She was a very frail girl who looked as if she had been lost in the rain for years and the rain had washed out the blue from her eyes and the red from her mouth and the yellow from her hair” (p 2).

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| A. Rain is helpful to this child | B. Rain is bad for this child |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|

“So after that, dimly, dimly, she sensed it, she was different and they knew her difference and kept away” (p 2).

- | | |
|---|---|
| A. There is a problem, but she can't see it | B. Children avoid a child who is different from |
|---|---|

“It was the color of rubber and ash, this jungle, from the many years without sun. It was the color of stones and white cheeses and ink, and it was the color of the moon” (4).

A. The jungle is alive without sunlight	B. The jungle is dead
---	-----------------------

“ ... but most of all they squinted at the sun until the tears ran down their faces; they put their hands up to that yellowness and that amazing blueness and they breathed of the fresh, fresh air and listened and listened to the silence which suspended them in a blessed sea of no sound and no motion” (p 4).

A. Being under the sea is an intense experience	B. The colors, smells and silence are new experiences
---	---

Figurative Language Review:

Figurative language is an emotional way to add description to writing. It is used to compare two things creatively. There are two general kinds of figurative language:

- ★ A simile compares two things using the words “like” or “as.”
- ★ A metaphor is figurative language that does NOT use “like” or “as.”

Identify: Are these Metaphors or Similes?

1. Last night, I slept like a log. _____
2. You are the sunshine of my life. _____
3. He’s as dumb as a box of rocks. _____
4. They fought like cats and dogs. _____
5. “Baby, you’re a firework.” (Katy Perry) _____
6. “You ain’t nothin’ but a hound dog.” (Elvis Presley) _____
7. That’s as clear as mud. _____
8. "Built Like A Rock" (Chevrolet ad) _____
9. You're as cold as ice. _____
10. I'm drowning in work. _____

Decide whether each quote is a simile or a metaphor.

_____	1. "The children pressed to each other like so many roses, so many weeds intermixed."
_____	2. "They were remembering gold or a yellow crayon or a coin large enough to build the world with."
_____	3. "They always awoke to the tating drum, the endless snaking of clear bead necklaces upon the roof."
_____	4. "They turned on themselves, like a feverish wheel, all fumbling spokes."
_____	5. "She was an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away and if she spoke at all her voice would be a ghost."
_____	6. "It's like a penny."
_____	7. "It was a nest of octopi, clustering up great arms of fleshlike weed, wavering, flowering in this brief spring."

What Does It Mean?

Maybe the most common question leaders have when they finish reading a short story is, "What does it mean?" What is a lesson the writer wants to teach us? What are the difficult ideas the writer wants us to think about? In small groups, discuss what you think this short story means. Make notes in this space.

Reading in Chunks

Read this part of the story aloud or listen to your instructor. Add glosses and comments.

Story

Vera's car was there,
no others,
and Burt gave thanks for that.
He pulled into the drive
and stopped
beside the pie
he'd dropped the night before.
It was still there,
the aluminum pan upside down,
a halo of pumpkin filling on the pavement.
It was the day after Christmas.
He'd come on Christmas day
to visit his wife and children.
Vera had warned him beforehand.
She'd told him the score.
She'd said
he had to be out by six o'clock
because
her friend and his children
were coming for dinner.
They had sat in the living room
and solemnly opened
the presents Burt had brought over.

Glosses and Comments

What is the relationship between Vera and Burt?

Where is the pie?

he'd = he had come
Why perfect tense?

Why is he VISITING his wife and children?

told him the score =

Guess: Who is her friend?

solemn = serious
{Why are they serious when they open presents?}

They had opened his packages
while other packages
wrapped in festive paper
lay piled under the tree
waiting for after six o'clock.

He had watched
the children open their gifts,
waited
while Vera undid the ribbon on hers.
He saw her slip off the paper,
lift the lid,
take out the cashmere sweater.

Who will get the other presents?

Compare the descriptions of the children
opening their gifts and of Vera opening her
gift. What does this show?

cashmere sweater =

Cultural Background

“A Serious Talk” was written in the late 1970s and published in 1980. It is considered one of Raymond Carver’s best short stories.

The US in the 1970s

American culture changed dramatically in the 1970s. First, the US was involved in the Vietnam War, which ended in 1975. Hundreds of thousands of American soldiers died in this war and most Americans agreed it was a mistake to be involved in this conflict. Next, the U.S. President Nixon was impeached for dishonesty. This scandal was called “Watergate.” For many Americans, Watergate destroyed the trust they had in their government. Finally, the civil rights movements of the 1960s began to affect society. Black Americans, other minorities, and women began to demand equal rights.

These three changes meant that society at every level changed rapidly during this decade. This was an exciting time to be alive, but it was also a very confusing and upsetting time. Many people felt that there was nothing to trust.

Divorce

Divorce laws changed in the 1970s. It became much easier to end a marriage, and as divorce became more common, it became socially acceptable. Thousands of people who had been unhappily married finally ended their relationships in this decade. For many women, this meant more freedom.

It is interesting to know that in America, the results of divorce are different for men and for women. After a divorce, women in general lose income and become more poor. They are also generally responsible for all children of the marriage. However, men in general lose their health, become more unhappy, and have shorter lives after divorce. Women tend to feel more happy after a divorce.

Alcoholism

Most Americans do keep some alcohol in their house. And most adult Americans drink some alcohol: 60% have one drink per week on average. However, about 12% of Americans are alcoholics, meaning that they have a long-term addiction to alcohol. These people cannot understand or control how much they drink, even if they are aware that it hurts them. They often use drinking to feel better instead of dealing with their problems. Most alcoholics do not drink all the time, or even every day. However, they often think about drinking, and when they start to drink alcohol, they cannot stop.

Phones

Cell phones had not been invented in the 1970s. Each house had its own phone, which was connected by a wire to the telephone system. Inside the house, there might be multiple separate phones, that they all had the same phone number. If you picked up one phone while somebody else was having a conversation, you could hear the other two people talking.

Vocabulary: Check your understanding of these words.

Nouns	Verbs
aluminum	banged
bubble	betrayed
butts	dumped
carving knife	flamed
ding	fumbled
cashmere	hurl
discus	pose
grease	rapped
grate	shoved
halo	spoil
hearth	to well (welling)
linen	
lint	Adjectives
pavement	consoling
philodendron	festive
potter, pottery	grateful
pumpkin pie filling	grieving
sawdust	lavender
stoneware	solemnly
vase	
vodka	Phrases
wax	tell someone the score
wreath	restraining order

Literature Circle Ideas

If you choose to work on this story in a literature circle, or to present it as a slideshow or poster presentation, consider dividing the work in this way. Not every group needs to have all roles represented. However, every group should read some or all of the story aloud, and every group should discuss the “Deeper Meanings” exercise together.

Extenders

Extenders can read about the cultural background and add to it, or research Raymond Carver’s life, or continue writing the story by adding a paragraph or two about what happens after this story ends.

Clarifiers

Clarifiers can focus on the vocabulary and create a presentation to give examples of each word. For example, they can create a slide show, poster or handout with pictures to illustrate each new or interesting noun they find in the story.

Clarifiers can also focus on the “Glosses” exercise and share their glosses with their groups.

Summarizers

Summarizers can complete the timeline and add a narrative arc.

Questioners

Questioners can answer the “Understanding the Plot” questions, and they can also add their own questions.

Character Experts

Character experts can complete the “Characterization” exercise. They should consider looking at the “Expanding Your Vocabulary: Personality Words” exercise on page 28 for precise adjectives to use.

After You Read:

Read several times – once is not enough for college! Look up words you don't know.

Try to read in “chunks.”

Setting

Where and when does this story take place? Guess! What clues make you think so?

Write a quotation (a few words is OK) from the story to support your guess. Use quotation marks.

Place: City, countryside, suburbia?

Why?

What house?

Why?

Time: What day?

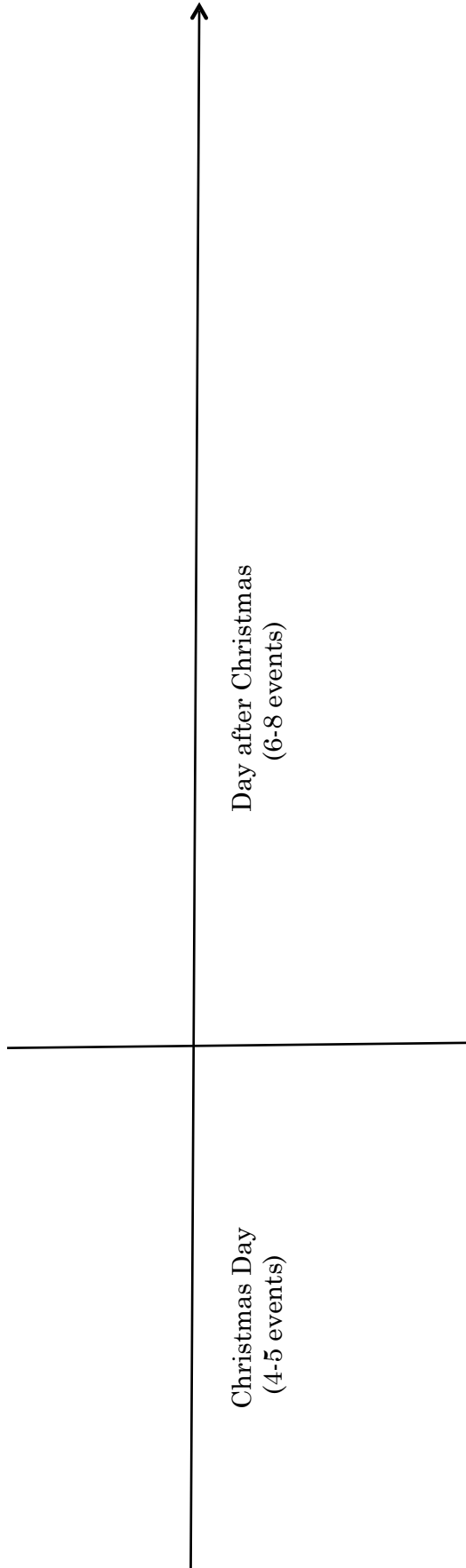
Why?

In the past, present or future?

Why?

Plot: Timeline

What happens in this story?
Complete the timeline.



Glosses

Write your own gloss of each sentence. Don't focus on synonyms; instead, try to communicate the meaning of each sentence.

- 1) "It's nice on *you*," Burt said, and felt a welling in his chest.

- 2) A carton of five more sat ready on the hearth. He got up from the sofa and put them all in the fireplace. He watched until they flamed.

- 3) The front door was permanently locked since the night his key had broken off inside it.

- 4) There were things he wanted to say, grieving things, consoling things, things like that.

- 5) He picked up the ashtray. He held it by its edge. He posed with it like a man preparing to hurl a discus.

Understanding the Plot

Discuss these questions to clarify your understanding.

1. On what two days does the story take place?
2. On the first day, why does Vera say that Burt needs to leave the house by six o'clock?
3. How many pies does Burt take? What is his reason?
4. On the second day, why does Burt want to apologize to Vera and the children?
5. Why does Burt ask what time Vera's friend left?
6. What other holiday does Vera accuse Burt of spoiling? What happened then?
7. Why is Burt so interested in the cigarette butts in the ashtray?
8. Who do you think "Charlie" is?
9. Why does Vera not want Burt to hear the telephone conversation?
10. What does Burt do to the phone? Why does he do this?
11. What does Burt take from the house at the end of the story?

Characterization

Focus on the characters Burt and Vera. Choose one or two adjectives that describe each person, then explain in your own words why that adjective fits them.

1. Burt is _____

This adjective fits him because:

.....

2. Burt is _____

This adjective fits him because:

.....

3. Vera is _____

This adjective fits her because:

.....

4. Vera is _____

This adjective fits her because:

Deeper Meanings

Which “deeper meanings” match the given quote?

1) Quote:

They had opened his packages while other packages wrapped in festive paper lay piled under the tree waiting for after six o'clock.

A: They open Burt's presents first because he is their father

B. They will celebrate Christmas later with Vera's friend

C. Christmas starts at 6 o'clock

2) Quote:

On the way, he saw the pies lined up on the sideboard. He stacked them in his arms, all six, one for every ten times she had ever betrayed him.

A: Burt loves pies

B: Vera betrayed Burt

C: Burt wants to hurt Vera

3) Quote:

He said, “Can I come in and talk about it?” She drew the robe together at her throat and moved back inside.

A: Burt still lives in the house with Vera

B: Vera still loves Burt

C: Vera wants to protect herself from Burt

4) Quote:

He saw a bicycle without a front wheel standing upside down. He saw weeds growing along the redwood fence.

A: The bicycle needs two wheels to go, and the marriage needs two people

B: Vera can't take care of the house by herself

C: Burt only notices problems instead of good things

5) Quote:

“Do you have anything to drink? I could use a drink this morning.”

A: Burt is thirsty

B: Burt wants Vera to take care of him

C: Burt may be an alcoholic

6) **Quote:**

He studied the butts in it. Some of them were Vera's brand, and some of them weren't. Some even were lavender-colored.

A: Burt is suspicious that another man is smoking cigarettes in his old house

B: Burt is suspicious that someone is smoking marijuana in his old house

C: Burt is worried that Vera is smoking too many cigarettes

7) **Quote:**

He got up and dumped it all under the sink. The ashtray was not really an ashtray. It was a big dish of stoneware they'd bought from a bearded potter on the mall in Santa Clara. He rinsed it out and dried it. He put it back on the table. And then he ground out his cigarette in it.

A: Burt wishes that Vera would take better care of their

B: Burt wants to kick out any other man from his house

C: Burt wants to be the only man in the house

8) **Quote:**

He picked up the ashtray. He held it by its edge. He posed with it like a man preparing to hurl a discus.

A: Burt almost throws the ashtray at Vera

B: Burt is trying to make Vera laugh

C: Burt is ready for Vera to take a picture

9) **Quote:**

He hoped he had made something clear. The thing was, they had to have a serious talk soon. There were things that needed talking about, important things that had to be discussed. They'd talk again. Maybe after the holidays were over and things got back to normal. He'd tell her the goddamn ashtray was a goddamn dish, for example.

A: Burt wants to know what Vera thinks about their marriage

B: Burt wants to talk about his feelings, but he doesn't know how

C: Burt cares about the dish a lot, because it symbolizes his family

Deeper Understanding

Your instructor may ask you to write a longer response to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the story. A good response includes your original ideas and opinions about the reading. To get a good grade, you should also include quotations directly from the story to support your ideas. Use quotation marks around every quote.

Here is an example of a question and the response. Notice that the response make it clear what the question was.

Example question:

Will Burt and Vera ever have a “serious talk?” Why or why not? Support your answer with quotations from the story.

In this story, Burt wanted to have a serious talk about what is truly going on in the house. “Who is Charlie? Are you dating another man?” I think he figured that out when the stranger called and Vera decided to take the call in her private room. Then Burt cut the wires on the phone. He desires to show her that he is a man by doing horrible things to her. He uses actions because he cannot talk about his thoughts, even though he wants to do that. Do I think he is going to have a serious talk with Vera? My answer is no. Vera is not going to allow him into their home forever. “I’m going next door to call the police if you don’t get out of here now.” She gave him a chance to discuss what he wants, but he blew it. Now he is trying to “have a serious talk” again. He is emotional and he is explosive: “He went to the dining room and got the carving knife. He wiped the blade on his sleeve. He doubled the phone cord and sawed through without any trouble at all.” This is violent, and maybe Burt did violent things before. I don’t think they had a serious talk before and I don’t think they will have one now.

Discussion Questions

After reading this short story at least two times, think about the following questions, which explore the story more deeply. Write answers on your own paper. Support your ideas with quotations. Your topic sentence should make it clear what question you are answering.

1. Which person, Vera or Burt, is doing a better job moving forward with life? What is the evidence?
2. What kind of husband was Burt? In your answer, consider how he reacts to situations that upset him. Give examples.
3. Burt imagines rescuing Vera from a fire. What does this fantasy of rescuing Vera show us about Burt?
4. Has Vera made a good choice by kicking Burt out of the house? Will she change her mind in the future?

Symbolism

A symbol in fiction is a thing that has a bigger meaning. For example, a white dove might symbolize peace. A sunrise might symbolize a new beginning. Discuss these quotations from the story. What symbolism do you recognize? Write notes in the space given.

A. “He saw a bicycle without a front wheel standing upside down.”

B. “The water on the stove began to bubble just as the phone began to ring.”

C. “He stepped around the pie in the driveway and got back into his car.”

5. “Thank You, Ma’am”

Start by reading this excerpt of the story aloud. Add glosses as helpful.

The Story	Glosses
<p>She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o’clock at night, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy’s weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance so, instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk, and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.</p>	<p>snatch =</p> <p>tug =</p> <p>full blast =</p> <p>sitter =</p>

Before You Read: Cultural Background

The Jim Crow Era

This story was written and published in the late 1950's. During this time, many states had laws that forced African-American, or Black, people into a low social and economic position. These laws were nicknamed "Jim Crow laws." The nickname summarizes a wide variety of laws from all over the country, but especially the American South, that targeted Black people. Some examples are:

- Laws against Black and white children attending school together
- Laws preventing Black people from voting or buying homes
- Laws preventing white doctors and hospitals from having Black patients
- Laws requiring Black people to sit in the back seats of buses only
- Laws requiring businesses to have two separate doors for Black and white customers

There were many unofficial social rules, too. For example, white people never used words like "Mr., Miss, Mrs., Dr., sir" to speak to a Black person, but every Black person was expected to use these words to every white person – even to children. Black men were expected to take off their hat to every white person they met. Black people who broke these rules could be killed in public, or *lynched*. It was a terrifying, difficult time to live. Learn more about these laws here: https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_laws

Langston Hughes

The author of "Thank You, Ma'am," Langston Hughes, was a Black man whose life was strongly affected by racism and Jim Crow. His father could not stand life under Jim Crow laws and moved to Mexico when Hughes was a child, so his mother raised him alone in the US. Hughes' father became rich and successful in Mexico; Hughes spent time with his father there and felt miserable. He felt that his father hated being Black, which he could not understand. He said, "I didn't understand it, because I was a Negro, and I liked Negroes very much!" ("The Big Sea").

As a young man, Hughes traveled to and lived in many places: New York, Europe, West Africa, and Paris. He published poetry during this time. By 1930, he settled in Harlem, New York and was a full-time writer with many best-selling poems and books. He loved Harlem and its unique artistic culture; he helped create a rich community there which is still going on today. He didn't write many short stories, but he did publish "Thank You, Ma'am" in 1958.

Because Hughes never married or had girlfriends, many people today believe he was gay, or homosexual. It was very difficult and dangerous to be gay during his lifetime, so most gay people, especially famous people, hid this part of their identity. Many of his poems express romantic admiration for men. His poems also use symbols that other gay writers used.

Hughes is still a popular and beloved poet. Learn more about his life and work here: https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langston_Hughes

Teenage Style

During most of American history, the only clear difference between children and adults was that children were smaller and needed to learn more. Kids were expected to begin working as soon as their parents decided they had learned enough. Farm kids would start to work at age 5 or 6, and the children of doctors or lawyers would probably complete college before starting their jobs. There was no idea that the teenage years, from 13-19, were special or important. That started to change in the 1940s.

After World War I was over, America's economy was expanding rapidly. New inventions like TV, cheap cars, records and radio affected everyone, from rich to poor. Many families had more money than ever before. By the 1950s, society began to expect that most teenagers would graduate from high school. It was also expected that they would have an "allowance:" their own money, given by their families. With this freedom and money, teenagers quickly created a new culture. The key elements of this teen culture were:

- **Music:** Local music from all over the US, especially music by Black artists, could be recorded and played on the radio for the first time. The new style called "rock-n-roll" was created. White artists, like Elvis Presley, had the most financial success, but both Black and white kids listened to this kind of music.
- **Fashion:** Just like today, specific types of clothing could signal what kind of music, movie or hobbies a teenager liked. Stylish clothes also proved that your family had enough money to give you **an allowance**, which made you more popular and confident.
- **Hobbies:** Since teens didn't have to work long hours at a job, they had time to create new dance styles, to race cars, to watch movies, and to play their own music.

Learn more about fashion, specifically blue suede shoes, here:

<http://www.rebeatmag.com/carl-perkins-elvis-blue-suede-shoes-story/>

Learn more about teen culture here: <https://www.history-of-rock.com/teenagers.htm>

After You Read:

Vocabulary

Match the word to its meaning as given in the story. Be careful – there are extra words.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. ____frail | A. to bend over |
| 2. ____presentable | B. a way that wrestlers hold on to each other |
| 3. ____stoop | C. looks good enough to be in society |
| 4. ____folks | D. steps from the street to the front door |
| 5. ____latch | E. grab, connect to |
| 6. ____half-nelson | F. sick |
| 7. ____barren | G. cannot have children |
| | H. a type of lock on a door or window |
| | I. thin and weak |
| | J. without life |
| | K. family |

Narrative Arc: Conflict

There are two conflicts in the story. What are they?

HINT: One is between two people. The other is between a group of people and the larger

Short-Answer Questions.

Answer completely - most answers will be 2 or 3 sentences. You may want to type your answers on a separate piece of paper.

1. What was the woman's reaction when the boy tried to snatch her purse?

2. **Paraphrase this short conversation - explain it in your words.**

The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?"

The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

3. On page 3, the woman finally turns Roger loose. "Roger looked at the door - looked at the woman - looked at the door - *and went to the sink.*" Why did the author choose to italicize this part of the text?

4. On page 3, Mrs. Jones says, "Maybe you haven't been to your supper either late as it be. Have you?" What does she do next? Why?

Study Guide Project

After reading the story several times and discussing all the given questions, create your own study guide. Please include the following sections.

1) Cultural Background.

Learn more about the author, Langston Hughes. When did he live? What race was he? How did that affect his life? What was important about the US at that time that would affect his life? Your “Cultural Background” section should answer these questions.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| a) Hughes was a slave as a child. | T | F |
| b) Hughes was also a poet. | T | F |
| c) Hughes was also a musician. | T | F |
| d) Black Americans had legal equality in the 1950s. | T | F |
| e) Hughes was famous during his lifetime. | T | F |
| f) Blue suede shoes were not stylish in the 1950s. | T | F |

2) Comprehension.

These are questions that check: Did you read the story? Did you understand it? The correct answers to these questions can be found in the story itself. Example question types include:

- True/False, Yes/No
- Vocabulary - Highlight challenging words as you read
- Paraphrase or Gloss - Choose interesting sentences and explain them
- Setting - Time and Place
- Characters -Who is in the story? What do they look like?
- Summary - What happened? - Timeline or Time-Order List

3) Deeper Understanding

These are questions that check how deeply you understood the story. You should have 2 or 3 of these questions. Example question types include:

- Characterizations: What personalities do the characters have? Describe them, and support your descriptions.
- Motivation: Why did the characters do something?
- Inference: What did the characters do in their lives before we meet them in the story? How much money do the characters have? Why might that be?
- Predictions: What will happen later, after the end of the story?
- Compare: How are the characters different at the end of the story compared to the beginning? In other words, how did the characters change?
- Narrative Arc: What’s the conflict? The climax? The resolution?

Go back to older Study Guides for examples of how to write questions. Follow your instructor’s guidelines about how long your study guide should be. In general, you should have more “Comprehension” questions than “Deeper Understanding” questions.

Turn in two versions of your Study Guide: one with no answers, and one completely answered. You can also turn in a Study Guide with no answers, exchange with a classmate, and answer their Study Guide.

6. “The Open Window”

Before you read: Answer each with a short discussion. Use complete sentences.

1. If you were feeling extremely stressed out and you didn't have to work for a few months, what type of place would you go to relax?
2. What do you know about England in about the year 1900? Have you seen any movies set in this time period? Name them, if so.
3. In your culture, is it common to go visit a stranger? Is there ever a time you might you visit someone you've never met before? Explain.
4. Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not?
5. Do you remember the fable “The Boy Who Cried Wolf”? Discuss it with your classmates. Why did the boy call “Wolf” when there was no wolf?
6. Do you know anybody who did something similar in real life? Why did they do it?

Reading in Chunks

Listen to the story and add glosses.

Story

“My aunt will be down soon, Mr. Nuttel,”
said

a very self-possessed young lady
of fifteen;

“in the meantime

you must try and put up with me.”

Framton Nuttel tried to think
of the correct phrase

to flatter the niece of the moment
without

insulting the aunt that was to come.

Privately, he doubted

that these formal visits

on a series of total strangers

would really help

the nerve cure

which he was supposed to be undergoing.

...

“Do you know

many of the people round here?”

asked the niece,

when she had decided

that they had sat silently for long enough.

“Hardly a soul,” said Framton.

“My sister stayed here before,

though,

about four years ago,

and she gave me

letters of introduction

to some of the people here.”

He said this

in a tone of distinct regret.

Glosses and Notes

will be down = Her aunt is upstairs and isn't
ready yet, but she will join them in a few
minutes

self-possessed =

How old is she?

put up with =

correct phrase = polite words

niece of the moment = young lady with him

flatter = praise someone

aunt that was to come =

Privately =

series of total strangers = He has been
meeting a lot of new people

nerve cure = mental treatment

... = Ellipses mean some words are missing

hardly a soul =

letters of introduction =

distinct regret =

“Then you know
practically nothing
about my aunt?”
continued the self-possessed young lady.
“Only her name and address,”
admitted
the caller.
He was wondering
whether Mrs. Sappleton
was in the married or widowed state.
An undefinable something
about the room where they sat
seemed to suggest
masculine inhabitants.
“Her **great tragedy**
happened just three years ago,”
said the child;
“that would be
after your sister’s time.”

you know practically nothing =

the caller =

in the married or widowed state =

undefinable something =

masculine inhabitants =

great tragedy =

the child =

after your sister's time =

Meaning Check: What Happened?

Summarize as briefly as possible what has happened in the story so far.

Cultural Background

Some stories are set in a culture very different from the ones we know. Maybe they are set in the far past, or maybe they are set in a country with traditions and expectations that we don't know about. This can make characters' actions hard to understand.

“The Open Window” is set in the countryside of England, in about the year 1900. The characters are upper class. Here are a few facts about that time, place, and group of people that will help you understand the story.

England

In these years, England was a democracy (though only men could vote). Still, the king was considered the leader of the country and was loved and respected by most people. At this time, England had many **colonies** all over the world, which made them wealthy. India was one. A huge number of British men (and many women) went to India. They would stay for years, then return home. Almost every family had members who had spent time there. It was a time of peace for England, and the country felt confident and strong.

The Countryside

Most of England was countryside during this time. Most of the land was covered by villages, farms and small forests; there was no real wilderness, and most farmers had a comfortable life. A few upper-class people lived in almost every village or small town.

Upper Class England

If you have seen historic TV shows like “Downton Abbey,” you know something about how rich British people lived at this time. The people in our story are not that wealthy, but they are very comfortable and almost all their time is spent hosting other people or visiting other people. There were many complex social customs and rules for this lifestyle. One custom was the “letter of introduction.” A person would write this letter to a friend, asking them to welcome a third person as a guest. If you got a letter of introduction, it was expected that you would treat the new person as a friend. If somebody wrote a letter of introduction for you, it would be very rude not to use it.

“The Nerve Cure”

In these days, of course, people had all the same mental problems and issues that we have today. However, the treatment of these problems was very different. English people called all psychological problems in general “nerves,” and doctors would make all kinds of suggestions for “nerve cures.” Some patients might be advised to go rest in a small country town. Other people might be advised to go to the seaside and swim in the ocean. Other people were told to lie in their bed all day without seeing or speaking to anyone.

Vocabulary List 1:

You probably know these words. They are non-academic, ordinary English. For each word, QUICKLY try to identify the part of speech, then give a translation or a synonym

amusing	hungry for (metaphor)
apology	hunt
alert	intend
anniversary	illness
aunt	lose (your) nerve
avoid	meantime
calmly	masculine
cemetery	menfolk
coat	mess
coincidence	muddy
correct	niece
creatures	nerves
creepy	pack (of animals)
cure	phobia
cyclist	privately
duck (noun)	regret
diet	relief
dug (past tense, <i>dig</i>)	replace
dusk	shock
excitement	spaniel
extraordinary	specialty
formal	sympathetic
get on s.o.'s nerves [idiom]	tea
gesture at	tease
grave (noun)	tragedy, tragic
gravel	twilight
hostess	widow
horror, horrible	yawn

List 2:

You might not know these words. They are non-academic, ordinary English. Make any useful notes, but do NOT try to memorize these words.

briskly	dreadful	self-possessed
bog	flatter	shudder
break off (an action)	ghastly	straying past
bustle	hoarse	snap (v: an animal <i>snaps</i> its jaws)
cane	insult	snarl
chatter	marsh	sink, sank
chant	mope	sprint
collision	romance	treacherous
dazed	presently	twilight
delusion		

List 3:

These are academic words. You should learn these words and their word families.

adapted	physical	series	topic
distinct	recover	stress	undergo
mental			widespread

Glosses

Write your own gloss of each sentence. Don't focus on synonyms; instead, try to communicate the meaning behind the words. The first one is done as an example.

"My aunt will be down soon, Mr. Nuttel ... In the meantime you must try and put up with me."

My aunt isn't here but she's coming soon. Until she gets here
I'll talk with you.

Framton Nuttel tried to think of the correct phrase to **flatter** the niece of the moment without **insulting** the aunt that was to come.

He was wondering whether Mrs. Sappleton was in the married or widowed state.

Read the story several times – once is never enough for college.

After You Read

Setting:

Where and when does this story take place? What clues *in the story* make you think so? Write a quotation (a phrase is OK) from the story to support your guess.

Place: What room? Why?

What kind of town? Why?

What country? Why?

Time: What time of day? Why?

What season – spring, winter, etc? Why?

In the past, present or future? Why?

Plot

Remember: Plot is “what happens” in a story.

★ One easy way to explain a story is by **summarizing** “what happens” in the story. This is a natural thing for humans to do.

★ To summarize, you simply retell the story very briefly.

Leave out most description and focus on the major actions.

A. Summarize “The Open Window” in three or four sentences.

Timeline

- * A different, more abstract way to explain a story is by creating a **timeline** that puts the events in order.
- * A timeline must go from earliest to latest.

“No?” said Mrs. Sappleton,
in a voice
which only
avoided a yawn
at the last moment.
Then she suddenly
brightened into alert attention -
but not
to what Framton was saying.
“Here they are at last!”
she cried.
“Just in time for tea,
~~and don't they look~~
as if
they were muddy
up to the eyes!”
Framton shivered slightly
and turned towards the niece
with a look **intended**
to show his **sympathy**.
The child was staring out
through the open window
with a **dazed horror**
in her eyes.
In a chill shock of nameless fear
Framton swung round in his seat
and looked
in the same direction.
In the **deepening** twilight
three figures
were walking across the lawn
towards the window.

B. Write a timeline for “The Open Window” here.

Reading in Chunks

Re-read this part of the story aloud, or listen to your instructor read. Add glosses.

Story

Glosses

Framton is boring to her. She's
trying not to yawn

she brightened =

Just in time for tea = English people
ate a light early dinner called tea.
They are in time to eat

They look dirty

intended to show his sympathy =

a dazed horror =

to swing round:

deepening twilight =

figures =

<p>They all carried guns under their arms, and one of them had a white coat hung over his shoulders.</p> <p>A tired brown spaniel kept close at their heels.</p> <p>Noiselessly they neared the house, and then a hoarse young voice chanted out of the dusk: “I said, Bertie, why do you bound?”</p>	<p>spaniel kept close to their heels =</p> <p>chanted out of the dusk =</p>
--	---

* * *

<p>“It was probably the spaniel,” said the niece calmly; “he told me he had a phobia of dogs. He was once chased into a cemetery somewhere in India by a pack of wild dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and snapping just above him. It would make anyone lose their nerve.”</p> <p>Romance at short notice was her specialty.</p>	<p>Why is she calm?</p> <p>had a phobia = (Is this true?)</p> <p>the creatures =</p> <p>lose their nerve =</p> <p>Romance = Creative lies at short notice =</p>
--	---

Glosses

Write your own gloss of each sentence. Don't focus on synonyms; instead, try to communicate the meaning of each sentence.

In crossing the **marsh** to their favorite hunting place, they were all three **engulfed** in a **treacherous** piece of **bog**.

[H]er youngest brother [was] singing "Bertie, why do you bound?" as he always did to tease her, because she said it got on her nerves.

"All my doctors agree that I need a complete rest, with no mental excitement, and to avoid all stressful physical exercise," announced Framton.

[He] shared the widespread **delusion** that total strangers **are hungry for** the smallest details of one's **ailments**, their causes and cures.

Comprehension

After you've read the story a few times, answer these questions. Try to answer in complete sentences.

1. Why is Framton Nuttel in this small countryside town?
2. Why did Frampton visit Mrs. Sappleton?
3. What is the relationship between Mrs. Sappleton and Vera?
4. Did Mr. Sappleton really die by drowning?
5. Who is the young man who sings "Bertie, why do you bound"? Why does he sing this song?
6. What did Frampton do when he saw the men returning after hunting?
7. Do you think Vera has an interesting life? Why?
8. **Why** do you think Vera told Frampton the story about the men drowning? **Why** did she tell her family the story about Frampton getting chased by wild dogs?

Characters

Main characters are the people who speak and affect the story the most. For each main character – there are three – give the person’s name, a few facts, and some descriptive words. One is done as an example. It’s OK to make guesses! You can use words like “maybe” and “probably.” Caution: Avoid copying directly from the story.

Name: Framton Nuttel	Name: Vera	Name: Mrs. Sappleton
<p>This person is: (Physical description)</p> <p>A man Middle-aged/ Not young Not healthy Has a sister Maybe not married Probably a little rich</p>		
<p>Their personality is: (Characterization)</p> <p>Shy Nervous Easily scared Maybe selfish Not brave Socially awkward, weird</p>		

Characterization

“Characterization” means the way the author shows the personality of each character. Look for actions, not just adjectives!

Look back at the “Characters” exercise. Choose one “personality” quality that you wrote for each person. Copy it here. First, explain your thinking: in your own words, why do you feel this describes the person? Then, write a quote from the story that supports your choice. Include quotation marks.

Example:

Character & Personality Trait:	Why?	Supporting Quote:
Framton is probably a little rich	He can go on a long vacation and he can have a “nerve cure.” Also, he wears a hat and carries a cane, and I think rich men did this in the past	“Framton grabbed wildly at his cane and hat...”

Character & Personality Trait:	Why?	Supporting Quote:

Character & Personality Trait:	Why?	Supporting Quote: