

Writing (and Rewriting) the Rules of Short Story

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Introduction

As a high school English instructor, teaching short story is one of my favorite things to do in the classroom. Short stories offer several levels of appeal: they expose students to multiple authors, works, and time periods; they introduce important concepts such as irony, theme, conflict, and narrative arc; they often include helpful film adaptations; and, perhaps best of all, they're *short*. Most short stories can be read, discussed, and put aside in just one or two class meetings, eliminating the need to dwell on confusing language or plot details that frustrate students with longer reads, such as novels and plays.

But one might read these same arguments and wonder if we're selling the short story, well, short. I often asked myself this when I was teaching an admittedly brief unit (about two and a half to three weeks) that also explored poetry (William Blake's "A Poison Tree," et al). Pulling from a (no pun intended) short list of selections that included O. Henry's "Gift of the Magi," Liliana Heker's "The Stolen Party," and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado," we framed our work around the three common types of irony: situational, dramatic, and verbal. The unit worked well but served as more of a primer on short story rather than an analysis. Students "got" irony but missed some of the deeper elements of the genre.

To address this, I've crafted a simple set of rules we can apply to the short-story genre, detailed below. I then added further rules to fill out the list. This still left open some holes where students could plug in their own rules—observations they've made that aren't covered by the list. What rules might they come up with to add to the list? Do Mr. Pollock's rules hold up, or are there exceptions—stories that don't fit the mold? These are some of the questions I'd like to explore in my unit.

During seminar, we explored the history of storytelling. Key to this discussion was Noah Richler's BBC podcast, "A Short History of Story," which outlines the four main types of story:

It's possible to construct an evolution of story, and it looks like this: out of lists, we create meaning—the first family of stories—including creation myths and cautionary tales that serve to explain our place in the world, and how we should conduct ourselves in it. When one group comes into contact with another, epic stories, as well as the heroes that protect the society against hated rivals, come into being. Afterwards, when a society feels less threatened, comes the novel.¹

Since this unit is built around short stories and personal narratives, we don't make it as far as the novel (we tackle that in Unit 3: *To Kill a Mockingbird*.) So it helps to think of what we're attempting here as epics or hero stories. More appropriately, though, the students are discovering the wonders of storytelling—how it's done and why it's important. They may not walk away with anything as bold or grand as Joseph Campbell's monomyth. But they will grow and see things differently. Telling stories, *The Atlantic's* Julie Beck writes, "is a way of making sense of the world around us."²

Finally, there is the question of why we tell stories at all. Some of the early lessons from seminar could be applied here. I am thinking especially of how conflict drives a story. In a recent *New York Times* article, "How Do You Tell a Better Story in Sports?" Jay Caspian Kang writes that the NBA rivalry between Magic Johnson and Larry Bird in the 1980s not only gave viewers a narrative to consider on the court, but off it as well: "What mattered was that the choice you were supposed to make between them was laid out as simple-mindedly as possible."³ How much of our own lives do we project onto what we read, to fill in the spaces or confirm what we already know or feel?

Background

Hodgson Vo-Tech (HVT) is one of four vocational-technical high schools that make up the New Castle County Vo-Tech School District. Located in Newark, Delaware, just a few miles south of the University of Delaware, Hodgson Vo-Tech offers a wide selection of career paths tied to hands-on training and work experience. In order to graduate, students must complete the related coursework for their career area as well as perform satisfactorily in the traditional academic areas: science, social studies, math, and English. While many graduating seniors forgo college in lieu of their chosen career paths or other job opportunities, increasing numbers of students are pursuing post-secondary education.

As I did last year, this year I will again be teaching ELA in grades 9 (the focus for this unit) and 11, with class sizes typically around 25 students. This will be my fifth year at HVT and my sixth year overall as a classroom teacher. My experience thus far teaching English at HVT has proved rewarding and successful, but not without its challenges. Vo-tech students enjoy doing things—their career areas provide them with constant opportunity to move, explore, and shape the material. With this in mind, I believe maintaining student interest is key. In addition, I want my students to develop their critical thinking and look for meaning in stories—the kinds of lessons they can take with them long after they leave my classroom.

One interesting point about working at Hodgson is that despite a hands-on, real-world approach supplied by our career areas, there is no arts education at our school. "Arts education allows students to express themselves freely and to discover, explore and experiment" and gives students "a safe place to introspect and find personal meaning,"⁴ writes the blog *Education and Skills Today*, citing Stephan Vincent-Lancrin's and Ellen Winner's report *Art for Art's Sake? The Impact of Arts Education*. Research supports the implementation of arts education in schools as a way to impact academic subjects, such

as math and science. Harvard University professor Howard Gardner told *The Atlantic* in 2014: “An education devoid of arts, and artistic and humanistic endeavors, is a half-brained, empty kind of education.”⁵ Gardner is one of many leading educators who believe the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) model should be updated to STEAM (adding “A” for the arts).⁶ I believe my unit can fill at least part of this void by allowing students opportunities to make artistic connections across different pieces of literature, including their own work.

Learning Objectives

The goals of this unit are two-fold. The first is to have students examine the short stories we’ve read to see where the rules—detailed below—do (and perhaps don’t) apply. This is done in a paragraph-length response, where students pick one of the 10 rules and explain how one or more of the stories we’ve read exemplify this rule. The second goal is to have students apply one or more of the rules to their own writing. This is done through a personal-narrative prompt that either: a) details an event or an experience that’s made an impact on the student’s life and includes a “lesson” the student has learned as a result; or b) is about a person in the student’s life who has made an impact, such as a role model. In either approach, students are writing about themselves using a set of rules they’ve learned in the unit.

Content

Recently, and with help from curriculum revisions that went into effect this school year, I have branched out to include more short stories in our unit, as well as more analysis, while retaining the focus on irony. Incorporating other selections such as Saki’s “The Interlopers,” Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery,” Roald Dahl’s “Lamb to the Slaughter,” Ray Bradbury’s “All Summer in a Day,” and Ted Poston’s “Revolt of the Evil Fairies,” we split our time over two weeks so that two major themes evolve: **victimization** (where the main character in a short story is portrayed as a victim and appears helpless) and **revenge** (where the main character turns his or her victimization into revenge and fights back in some way). Not only are students exposed to more stories and writing styles, this method allows us to readily find irony and twist endings.

THEME: <i>Victimization</i>	THEME: <i>Revenge</i>
“The Lottery”	“Lamb to the Slaughter”
“All Summer in a Day”	“Revolt of the Evil Fairies”
“The Stolen Party”	“The Cask of Amontillado”

We read Saki’s “The Interlopers” as an introductory short story because it includes a rich view of the narrative arc, taught here via the classic Freytag Pyramid: exposition, rising action (with introduction of conflict), climax, falling action, and denouement. We also end the unit with Eugenia Collier’s “Marigolds” to segue into the unit that follows: a research project on life in the 1930s with the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Added to our discussions is what I've dubbed "Rules for Reading Short Stories." They are just that—simple rules to keep in mind to help students understand what they're reading and how short stories are constructed. We begin with three rules:

- 1. Think About the Title.** The title of a short story is designed with purpose and tells us much of what we need to keep in mind as we read. Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" is a perfect example. The word "lottery" comes with a positive connotation—something we want to win, a prize, money, etc. But Jackson's lottery is the opposite: the village's residents are relieved when *someone else's* name is chosen. This turns the word "lottery" from a positive to negative connotation and gives it a much darker meaning. Similarly, in Saki's "The Interlopers," explained further under Rule #3, the meaning of the story's title takes on a whole new twist once students arrive at the ending.

The same could be said of Poe's "Cask of Amontillado," although getting there is bit more difficult. The title's meaning reveals itself only after multiple readings and class discussions. It requires that students understand what a cask is (it's a barrel used to store wine), what amontillado is (amontillado is a rare wine), and that catacombs were once used to house both dead relatives and wine. (There is also the issue of setting the story during Carnival, which students initially mistake for our more modern celebration involving rides and cotton candy.) Once the story has been digested, however, one might see that "cask" looks a lot like "casket" and that the amontillado—which doesn't actually exist—is a symbol of revenge, the story's overarching theme. It's not an easy title, but it works.

- 2. Find a Way to Relate to the Plot or Characters.** This is perhaps the biggest stumbling block faced by students when reading a short story. In Bradbury's "All Summer in a Day," a girl is locked in a school closet while her classmates experience a once-in-seven-years phenomenon. *But Mr. Pollock, they say, I've never been locked in a closet. OK, I reply, relieved, but have you ever missed out on something?* Getting students to move from the literal to the metaphorical can be a challenge. In Roald Dahl's "Lamb to the Slaughter," a pregnant wife learns her husband is leaving her. Shocked and angry yet surprisingly clear-headed, the woman quickly murders him with a frozen piece of meat she had planned for dinner, then serves it to the responding police officers. Similarly, in Poe's classic "Cask of Amontillado," a man carries out a calculated murder on another who has committed an unspoken offense against him. The shared idea between these two stories is not murder, or that it's OK to take revenge. Rather, it's the exploration of madness (Is Montresor crazy for wanting to kill Fortunato, or is Fortunato's insult—something we as readers are not fully privy to in the story—so severe that Montresor was left with no choice?); sympathy (Mary's husband is leaving her while she is carrying his child); and questions such as: *Is revenge justified? When should we question the reliability of a narrator?*

- 3. Look for a Twist Ending!** The short story lends itself to that most contrived (but admittedly enjoyable) plot device: the twist ending. I love using “The Interlopers” here because its chilling realization, summed up in one word—“*Wolves...*”—leaves students thinking not only about the ending of the story, but also its title. The “interlopers” are not the imposing families each trying to take back land they believe is theirs. The true interlopers are the men themselves, encroaching on the animals’ territory.

Not every short story has a twist ending, though. In fact, as we see in “All Summer in a Day,” “Revolt of the Evil Fairies,” and “The Cask of Amontillado,” some endings offer no surprise but reflection. In “All Summer,” Margot’s classmates simply unlock the door and let her out of the closet; we as readers knew all along that she was missing the once-in-seven-years sunshine, and we’re left considering the guilt the other students must be feeling having robbed Margot of the thing she wanted most. The narrator of “Evil Fairies” feels satisfied for having started a small riot and ruining the town’s annual stage production, even if nothing has truly changed. “They wouldn’t let me appear in the grand dramatic offering at all the next year,” he tells us at the end. “But I didn’t care. I couldn’t have been Prince Charming anyway.” For Montresor, the calculating (and possibly psychopathic) harbinger of revenge in Poe’s “Amontillado,” the end of a story is merely an opportunity to address signs of regret: “My heart grew sick,” he admits, before adding that it was “the dampness of the catacombs” ailing him, not guilt over murdering Fortunato.

Short stories provide readers with resolution. Even when we don’t like an ending or disagree with its purpose, we can at least be satisfied knowing how the story ends. And scouting for a twist ending—or any resolution at all—keeps students engaged throughout the reading. Coupled with a lesson on the three common types of irony, this is a rule that sticks.

These three rules move along a unit that is heavy on reading selections and tie together handfuls of stories that might otherwise be opened once and soon forgotten.

Below are the additional rules I add in the third and fourth weeks of our unit, once students have completed reading the list of short stories covered in the first two weeks.

- 4. Short stories use suspense for effect.** There is a scene in John Carpenter’s *Halloween* that works every time. It’s Oct. 31 in quiet Haddonfield. Laurie Strode (played by Jamie Lee Curtis, in her first role) is walking after school with two classmates. Wind sweeps leaves into the street. Plenty of daylight left. Lonely piano notes hang in the air. As she and her friends talk, Laurie notices a shadowy figure standing just beyond a nearby hedge. Alarmed, she mentions it to her best friend Annie, who brushes it off. Annie speeds up and looks around the hedge to show Laurie she’s being “ridiculous.” Alas, the figure is gone. Annie exits home, but Laurie is convinced she saw something. She looks back, still walking, to see if

the figure is there. Nothing. The music fades out. There's a pause. As Laurie spins around, she bumps smack into Sheriff Brackett, who delivers the film's most ironic line: "You know, it's Halloween. I guess everyone's entitled to one good scare, huh?"⁷ The bait-and-switch here is perfect: our attention was on the shadowy figure (who we know is Michael Meyers), but it's the *policeman we can't see* who provides the scare. Not a drop of blood spilled or a kitchen knife swung, yet it's moments like this that gives *Halloween* its reputation for being scary. When I show this scene to my students—9th-graders raised on a decade of gruesome *Saw* sequels and haunted-house shockers like *The Conjuring*—it's totally unexpected, and they shriek in unison. It's like being in a movie theater in 1978.

This is obviously a great example of suspense in storytelling. But we watch *Halloween*—we don't read it. Carpenter utilized eerie synthesizer scores and camera angles. How does this translate to reading stories? The short answer is through patience. Readers have to be patient as a story unfolds—they have to watch a group of friends walk down an empty street in broad daylight. A good story, in turn, is carefully considered through character development and detail, and is often edited and rewritten to achieve the right effect.

Saki builds suspense in "The Interlopers" by making us guess who will be first to rescue Georg and Ulrich—we are rooting for them to make it, now that they have put their feud behind them. Dahl, in "Lamb to the Slaughter," first paints six-months-pregnant Mary Maloney as doting and innocent, then slowly turns her into a villain as she gets away with her husband's murder.

Conversely, some stories have suspense, but it's not why they're good stories. In "Evil Fairies," we have an inkling something will come to a head at the grand dramatic offering, but the story's message about race is what ultimately matters. Poe's Montresor in "Amontillado" is simply a great, powerful character—we know all along what he plans to do, then he does it, then he gets away with it.

- 5. Consider the author's life and career.** When we get to our final unit in 9th grade, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, part of the background students are taught is that in Elizabethan theatre, comedies were where none of the characters died and tragedies were where almost everyone died. Consider it the 1500s version of a plot spoiler. At the very least, audiences knew what they were getting into.

The idea still applies, roughly. A lot can be inferred about a story based on who wrote it, and vice versa. Poe had a difficult life: orphaned, heartbroken, alcoholic, destitute, early death. It's no wonder his stories explored the darker recesses of the human condition. Shirley Jackson "felt patronized in her role as a faculty wife and frozen out by the townspeople of North Bennington, [Vermont]"⁸—they inspired the cold citizens in "The Lottery"—as well as "oppressed by her husband," a fellow writer who openly cheated on her.⁹

But never judge a story by its author. Roald Dahl, a children’s author best known for giving us Willy Wonka, also had in him “Lamb to the Slaughter”—a tale of cold-blooded murder hardly suited for younger audiences.

- 6. There is often the use of irony or an ironic effect.** Nearly every story we read in this unit contains one or more types of irony. We define irony in the classroom as “when what is expected turns out to be different from what actually happens.” Our SpringBoard textbook gives us three further definitions: *verbal* irony, “when a speaker or narrator says one thing while meaning the opposite”; *situational* irony, “when an event contradicts the expectations of the characters or the reader”; and *dramatic* irony, “when the reader or audience knows more about circumstances or future events in the story than the characters within it”—in other words, when we know something the characters don’t.

“The Cask of Amontillado” is rich in all three types of irony. Appendix A is dedicated to the graphic organizer (filled in with teacher responses to assist struggling students) that we employ for an activity on finding irony in the story.

- 7. Short stories are believable but also require that we suspend our disbelief.** This is such an overlooked element of storytelling. We have to “let go” of certain plot contrivances in order to enjoy a story. (Otherwise, we’d never be able to watch a soap opera or professional wrestling.) Could Mary Maloney really get away with murder by feeding the evidence to the police officers investigating the case? No, but her weapon of choice—a frozen leg of lamb—makes total sense. Are we to believe life on Venus, as Bradbury presents it in “All Summer in a Day,” consists of nothing but rain—save for an hour of sunshine once every seven years? Not to mention that it’s inhabited by humans who speak English? Of course not. But Margot is a believable, and likeable, character, and we relate to her outsider nature. And speaking of victims, there is perhaps nothing more frustrating than seeing Tessie Hutchinson not fight back at the end of Jackson’s “Lottery.” And while Tessie doesn’t agree with the decision—“It isn’t fair, it isn’t right,” she can last be heard saying—she doesn’t do much to avoid her fate, either. She doesn’t run, or hide, or throw stones of her own. Doing so would undermine the integrity of the lottery process. It would say that the lottery *is* unfair. Tessie has no choice but to accept this cruel and unusual punishment, because it makes the town look normal, and therefore, believable.
- 8. Short stories follow a tight structure that includes the necessary plot elements.** One of the assignments in this unit is to have students create a series of digital storyboards for some of the stories we read using the Storyboard That website (<http://www.storyboardthat.com>). Students have a variety of options and layouts to choose from, and the idea that they are recreating a story in their own image is incredibly useful for reaching visual learners. It’s challenging as well: how do we tell a coherent story using a limited amount of tools, frames, etc.?

9. Consider what the story is trying to teach us. Do stories have an obligation to teach us something? Or is it enough that they're entertaining? Should they do both? One hopes the takeaway from "The Cask of Amontillado" is more entertaining than informative. Same goes for "The Lottery" and "Lamb to the Slaughter." But, as Neil Gaiman points out, "Fiction has two uses. Firstly, it's a gateway drug to reading. The drive to know what happens next, to want to turn the page, the need to keep going, even if it's hard, because someone's in trouble and you have to know how it's all going to end...that's a very real drive. And it forces you to learn new words, to think new thoughts, to keep going."¹⁰ The other thing fiction does, Gaiman argues, is "to build empathy."¹¹ The Evil Fairies in Poston's "Revolt of the Evil Fairies," denied desirable roles in the school play because of their darker complexion, have every right to be upset. We empathize with their feelings, and it takes Tessie Hutchinson's reaction in "The Lottery" a step or more further: it isn't fair; they have been singled out; they are justified in fighting back. Likewise, students often cite Rosaura, the protagonist in "The Stolen Party," as a relatable character because they empathize with her feelings of rejection at the end of the story. The story could also be making a point about socio-economic status: because Rosaura's mother works for Luciana's family, Rosaura is not considered a guest at the party, but rather, hired help.

10. And remember, rules have exceptions—there are times when they *don't* apply. Not every story discussed here will follow all the rules, and some stories, it could be argued, don't follow *any* of them. Rules, as they say, are sometimes meant to be broken, and what better place to break a rule than storytelling?

This also leaves the discussion open for rules we *haven't* covered. For instance, with the exception of Rule #2 ("Find a Way to Relate to the Plot or Characters"), there is nothing mentioned in our list about the way characters are developed. To address this, below are several more rules that have come up in class discussions. These rules address storytelling as a whole as students begin thinking about their own narratives to write.

Setting is important. At the beginning of this unit, as we review vocab terms and elements of plot, I offer that setting is purposeful. Writers include details relevant to setting, or leave them out, on purpose. Sometimes, as in "The Lottery," it's because we're supposed to think this story could take place anywhere. Other times, setting is specific because the events in the story could only take place there—"All Summer in a Day," for example.

Watching a film adaptation is helpful. Stories are visual: we see them unfold in our minds as we read; we think of how characters should look and act and how spaces are used. And that interpretation varies from reader to reader. Movie clips help visual learners grasp the material better, and can be stories in themselves—why a director chose to edit, add, change, or focus on particular details.

Re-read the story. Teachers love saying this; students hate hearing it. But it's true. Re-reading a story (or, if paired with the rule above, re-watching it) will shine light on missed details and allow students to begin peeling away the many layers a story has to offer.

Consider the point of view. What if "The Cask of Amontillado" was written from Fortunato's point of view? How would "The Stolen Party" read if told from Luciana's perspective? How does having a third-person narrator in "The Lottery" give the story a sense of detachment?

Good stories must show, not tell. Edgar Allan once said, "It appears evident ... that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting."¹² If it takes longer than this to read the work, "the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed."¹³ (Ever the melodramatic, Poe.) Details are necessary. But add too many and the story starts to feel like a list of things that happened. To that end, stories must consider length. When we move into narrative writing, I invite my students to think of writing their stories as if they are making a movie. Some movies are 90 minutes but fizzle out by the end; others are two and a half hours and leave us wanting more. Length is important, but keeping the reader's interest is more important.

Classroom Activities

As stated earlier, students will complete two assignments as part of this unit. The first is a paragraph-length response where students select one of the rules and explain how it aligns to one of the short stories we've read. Here, students may start with a story, then explain a rule they've seen. Or they may start with a rule, then explain how one of the stories exemplifies that rule.

For the second, bigger assignment, students take the idea of story "rules" and apply them to their own writing. What they come up with is part of the adventure of storytelling, but the prompt in Appendix C (abbreviated here) will guide their thinking:

Your story should detail an event or experience that has had a profound impact on your life. It could also be about a person who has had an impact on your life. Either way, you must set out to tell a "good" story based on what we've learned in this unit.

The benefits of writing about one's life have been well documented. On deeper levels, writing is a therapeutic way of working through traumatic events. But it also provides the opportunity to gain understanding and perspective on ordinary experiences that might now hold greater meaning. Today's high school freshmen have no shortage of ways to tell their stories—even if they aren't always reflective about them. Social-media platforms are abundant and round-the-clock accessible, allowing users to post, share, like, unlike, upload, and delete the details of their lives, as well as follow the lives (read:

stories) of others. But guiding all of these online interactions is the decision-making process: what we choose to share, highlight, or leave out entirely. “In the realm of narrative psychology, a person’s life story is not a Wikipedia biography of the facts and events of a life, but rather the way a person integrates those facts and events internally—picks them apart and weaves them back together to make meaning,”¹⁴ writes Julie Beck. The narrative “becomes a form of identity, in which the things someone chooses to include in the story... reflect and shape who she is.”¹⁵ Effective personal-narrative writing can take the spontaneity of social media several steps further, teaching both writer and reader something new. While high school freshmen may need much more time to tell their life stories—both in terms of being able to effectively write about past experiences as well as having experiences to write about at all—a singular, well-developed narrative is a start. “A life story doesn’t just say what happened,”¹⁶ Beck continues, “it says why it was important, what it means for who the person is, for who they’ll become, and for what happens next.”¹⁷

During seminar, we discussed how putting ourselves in the proverbial shoes of a character makes us feel for that character. Living through characters in stories enables us to “take on the emotions they are feeling,”¹⁸ says Gabe Bergado, writing about a 2013 Emory University study that analyzed the brains of fiction readers compared to those of non-readers. Researchers in the study “found heightened connectivity in the left temporal cortex, part of the brain typically associated with understanding language.”¹⁹ Similarly, Dr. Keith Oatley, a professor at the University of Toronto, discovered a link between reading fiction and increased empathy levels in a study published in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*. “What’s distinctive about humans is that we make social arrangements with other people,”²⁰ Oatley writes in his study. “Fiction can augment and help us understand our social experience.”²¹

These findings may be useful when it’s time for students to write their own stories. Simply put, those who read more might have more to say, or stronger ways to say it. Those who don’t consider themselves readers might find the idea of writing about themselves difficult. “Having encountered few worlds outside your own, you won’t extend as much effort contemplating how other people (whether real, imaginary, or historical) experience reality,”²² writes Tom Blunt, “nor will you be as willing to believe their claims about that experience—although you’ll certainly expect them to believe yours.”²³ Writing, then, is a two-way street: there must be a willing reader ready to accept your story.

Because this is a vo-tech setting, the suggestion was made during seminar to have students think of writing their stories as a project they’re building, assembling the “pieces” of an effective story and applying rules as they go. This could prove beneficial and will be introduced to the assignment. The suggestion will be made to include at least three rules from the list. Students will find themselves asking how the rules apply to their stories: *Does my title fit my story without saying too much? How do I pace my writing to incorporate suspense? Have I established enough setting? Too much setting? Does my story have a lesson, or is it simply entertaining?* Most important, they will learn about the

world around them, and help others to see it, too.

Appendix A

IRONY in POE'S "The CASK of AMONTILLADO" (POSSIBLE RESPONSES)

<p>☞ Situational irony occurs when the outcome of an event is the opposite of what we'd expect.</p> <p>EX: <i>Carnival, when the story takes place, is a time for celebration. However, the narrator is using carnival as a time to carry out a murder, which is the opposite of a celebration.</i></p>	<p>YOUR EXAMPLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Fortunato is dressed up like a clown, wearing a "parti-striped dress" and a "conical cap and bells," but truly is a fool for being set up.✓ Fortunato's name = "Fortunate," which means good things come your way; in reality, he will be dead soon. (*Also an example of dramatic & verbal irony)✓ Fort. makes fun of Mont. for not being a mason ("Then you are not of the brotherhood"); Mont. uses a trowel, which is a mason's tool, against him.
<p>☞ Dramatic irony occurs when the reader knows more about the story than the characters.</p> <p>EX: <i>Fortunato thinks Montresor is being a gracious host by offering him wine. What's really happening is Montresor wants Fortunato to be so drunk that he won't figure out the narrator's plans.</i></p>	<p>YOUR EXAMPLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Fort. is unaware of the danger he's in as he walks through the vault.✓ "I will not die of a cough," Fort. says (para 36). "True—true," Mont. replies. This is ironic because Fort. takes the thought of dying lightly—a cough is often not that serious—but he will actually die another way.✓ Fort. is led into Montresor's vault under the idea that he will find the rare wine, Amontillado. However, we know there is no wine, and Mont. is simply trying to trap Fort.
<p>☞ Verbal irony is where a character says one thing</p>	<p>YOUR EXAMPLE:</p>

<p>while meaning the opposite.</p> <p>EX: <i>At the end of Chunk 2, Fortunato proposes a toast to the dead in the catacombs (“I drink to the buried that repose around us.”) The narrator replies: “And I to your long life.” This is verbally ironic because the narrator actually plans to end Fortunato’s life.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “I shall not die of a cough” (Fortunato, para 36). Fort. will die another way. ✓ “Let us be gone,” Fortunato says in para 81. “Yes,” Montresor replies, “let us be gone!” (para 82) Fortunato thinks “gone” refers to leaving; Montresor’s idea of gone means dead. ✓ “For the love of God, Montresor!” Fortunato says in para 83. To which Montresor replies, “Yes, for the love of God!” Fort. is using the name of God to get Mont. to stop joking; Mont. is telling Fort. he will need God’s help to get out of this situation, or is maybe admitting to Fort. his reason for doing this.
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Appendix B
Plot Diagram Graphic Organizer

<p><i>Exposition</i></p>	<p>Text Evidence That Supports Your Findings:</p>
<p><i>Rising Action</i></p>	
<p><i>Climax</i></p>	

<i>Falling Action</i>	
<i>Denouement</i>	

Appendix C
Personal Narrative Writing Prompt

Now that we've read many short stories, explored how plot works, examined characters and their motivations, and come up with our own set of "rules" for how stories should be told, it's time for you to write your own story (called a "narrative").

Your story should be at least 2 pages, double-spaced, and detail an event or experience that has had a profound impact on your life. It could also be about a person who has had

an impact on your life. Either way, you must set out to tell a "good" story based on what we've learned in this unit.

Appendix D

Standards Addressed

This curriculum unit is aligned to the Delaware Common Core State Standards for Reading: Literature in grade band 9 to 10. Emphasis is placed on determining the meanings of words and phrases used in the texts and drawing inferences from the texts. Students will analyze how complex characters develop and advance the plots of stories. They will also analyze how an author structures a text and the events within it. Most important, students will write their own narratives, choosing which details and events to include; use narrative techniques such as pacing and reflection; and make their narratives a coherent whole.

Sample Essential Questions

**At Hodgson, our essential questions are designed to drive our lessons and must be posted in the classroom*

- √ What is a short story, and why is it important?
- √ What are the elements of a short story, and how do they work together?
- √ What can short story teach us about irony?
- √ How are several types of irony used in a single short story?
- √ How do we see the theme of victimization transition into revenge?
- √ How can I use the "rules" to write my own story?

Annotated Bibliography

"Arts Education in Innovation-Driven Societies." *Education and Skills Today* (blog), June 17, 2013. <http://oecdeducationtoday.blogspot.com/2013/06/arts-education-in-innovation-driven.html>.

Details the role of arts education in critical thinking as well as fundamental skills, such as writing and math, via the findings of Ellen Winner, Thalia R. Goldstein, and Stephan Vincent-Lancrin in their report *Art for Art's Sake? The Impact of Arts Education*.

Beck, Julie. "Life's Stories." *The Atlantic*. Accessed December 18, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/08/life-stories-narrative-psychology-redemption-mental-health/400796/>.

An examination of how people see their lives as "stories" and structure them accordingly.

Bergado, Gabe. "Science Shows Something Surprising About People Who Still Read Fiction." *Arts.Mic*. Accessed December 18, 2016. <https://mic.com/articles/104702/science-shows-something-surprising-about-people-who-love->

reading-fiction#.P4QnvqISg.

A summary of a 2013 Emory University study on the relationship between reading and empathy.

Blunt, Tom. "This Is How Literary Fiction Teaches Us to Be Human." *Signature*.

Accessed December 28, 2016. <http://www.signature-reads.com/2016/09/this-is-how-literary-fiction-teaches-us-to-be-human/?ref=PRH558846040332&aid=randohouseinc22769-20&linkid=PRH558846040332>.

A summary of findings that explore the link between fiction and empathy. The emphasis here is on how literature is more than just "entertainment."

Gaiman, Neil. "Why Our Future Depends on Libraries, Reading and Daydreaming."

The Guardian. Accessed Nov. 28, 2106. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/15/neil-gaiman-future-libraries-reading-daydreaming>.

An edited version of the science-fiction writer's 2014 lecture arguing for increased access to books and libraries.

Halloween. Directed by John Carpenter. USA: Compass International Pictures, 1978.

Starring Jamie Lee Curtis as Laurie Strode and Charles Cyphers as Sheriff Leigh Brackett. Carpenter's "walking home" scene is a perfect example of suspenseful storytelling.

Heller, Zoe. "Haunted Houses." *The New Yorker*. October 17, 2016: 90-3.

A look at the life and work of Shirley Jackson, author of "The Lottery" and other stories.

Kang, Jay Caspian. "How Do You Tell a Better Story in Sports?" *The New York Times Magazine*. Accessed August 20, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/21/magazine/how-do-you-tell-a-better-story-in-sports.html>.

A reaction to how narratives drive the field of sportswriting, from the Magic-Bird feud of the 1980s to recent NBA negotiations.

Pederson, Traci. "Reading Fiction May Boost Empathy." *Psych Central*. Accessed

December 18, 2016. <http://psychcentral.com/news/2016/07/20/reading-fiction-boosts-empathy/107399.html>.

More on how reading fiction can strengthen empathy levels.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Philosophy of Composition." Accessed December 18, 2016.

<http://www.eapoe.org/works/essays/philcomp.htm>.

Poe's essay on effective writing, originally published in *Graham's Magazine* in April 1846. Specifically, Poe outlines how he wrote "The Raven."

Richler, Noah. "A Short History of Story." *BBC World Service*. Podcast audio,

November 11, 2011.

A detailed history of storytelling that outlines the four main types of stories: lists, myths, epics, and novels.

“What Letter Should We Add to STEM?” *The Atlantic*. Accessed November 28, 2016.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/381238/what-letter-should-we-add-to-stem/>.

Renowned educators are asked their thoughts about the STEM model, and which letter might be added. (Spoiler: it’s “A,” for the arts, which spells STEAM.)

Additional Resources

Selections of short stories from our 9th grade “Short Story & Narrative” unit: “The Interlopers” (Saki), “The Lottery” (Shirley Jackson), “All Summer in a Day” (Ray Bradbury), “The Stolen Party” (Liliana Heker), “Lamb to the Slaughter” (Roald Dahl), “Revolt of the Evil Fairies” (Ted Poston), “The Cask of Amontillado” (Edgar Allan Poe).

CollegeBoard. *SpringBoard English Language Arts Grade 9*. USA: 2014.

“Which Rock Star Will Historians of the Future Remember?” by Chuck Klosterman in *The New York Times Magazine*, May 23, 2016.

An excerpt from Klosterman’s recently published book, *But What If We’re Wrong? Thinking About the Present as If It Were the Past*. Klosterman’s ideas about narrative were very instructive during seminar and in the process of writing this unit.

Notes

- 1 Noah Richler, A Short History of Story, podcast audio, accessed December 19, 2016.
- 2 Julie Beck, "Life's Stories," *The Atlantic*, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/08/life-stories-narrative-psychology-redemption-mental-health/400796/>.
- 3 Jay Caspian Kang, "How Do You Tell a Better Story in Sports?" *The New York Times Magazine* online, accessed August 20, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/21/magazine/how-do-you-tell-a-better-story-in-sports.html>.
- 4 "Arts Education in Innovation-Driven Societies," *Education and Skills Today* (blog), June 17, 2013, <http://oecdeducationtoday.blogspot.com/2013/06/arts-education-in-innovation-driven.html>.
- 5 "What Letter Should We Add to STEM?" *The Atlantic*, accessed November 28, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/381238/what-letter-should-we-add-to-stem/>.
- 6 "What Letter Should We Add to STEM?" *The Atlantic*, accessed November 28, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/381238/what-letter-should-we-add-to-stem/>.
- 7 *Halloween*, directed by John Carpenter (USA: Compass International Pictures, 1978.)
- 8 Zoe Heller, "Haunted Houses," *The New Yorker*, October 17, 2016: 91.
- 9 Zoe Heller, "Haunted Houses," *The New Yorker*, October 17, 2016: 91.
- 10 Neil Gaiman, "Why Our Future Depends on Libraries, Reading and Daydreaming," *The Guardian*, accessed Nov. 28, 2106, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/15/neil-gaiman-future-libraries-reading-daydreaming>.
- 11 Neil Gaiman, "Why Our Future Depends on Libraries, Reading and Daydreaming," *The Guardian*, accessed Nov. 28, 2106, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/15/neil-gaiman-future-libraries-reading-daydreaming>.
- 12 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," accessed December 18, 2016, <http://www.eapoe.org/works/essays/philcomp.htm>.
- 13 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," accessed December 18, 2016, <http://www.eapoe.org/works/essays/philcomp.htm>.
- 14 Julie Beck, "Life's Stories," *The Atlantic*, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/08/life-stories-narrative-psychology-redemption-mental-health/400796/>.
- 15 Julie Beck, "Life's Stories," *The Atlantic*, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/08/life-stories-narrative-psychology-redemption-mental-health/400796/>.
- 16 Julie Beck, "Life's Stories," *The Atlantic*, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/08/life-stories-narrative-psychology-redemption-mental-health/400796/>.
- 17 Julie Beck, "Life's Stories," *The Atlantic*, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/08/life-stories-narrative-psychology-redemption-mental-health/400796/>.
- 18 Gabe Bergado, "Science Shows Something Surprising About People Who Still Read Fiction," *Arts.Mic*, accessed December 18, 2016, <https://mic.com/articles/104702/science-shows-something-surprising-about-people-who-love-reading-fiction#.P4QnvqISg>.
- 19 Gabe Bergado, "Science Shows Something Surprising About People Who Still Read

Fiction,” *Arts.Mic*, accessed December 18, 2016, <https://mic.com/articles/104702/science-shows-something-surprising-about-people-who-love-reading-fiction#.P4QnvqISg>.

20 Traci Pederson, “Reading Fiction May Boost Empathy,” *Psych Central*, accessed December 18, 2016, <http://psychcentral.com/news/2016/07/20/reading-fiction-boosts-empathy/107399.html>.

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23 Tom Blunt, “This Is How Literary Fiction Teaches Us to Be Human,” *Signature*, accessed December 28, 2016, <http://www.signature-reads.com/2016/09/this-is-how-literary-fiction-teaches-us-to-be-human/?ref=PRH558846040332&aid=randohouseinc22769-20&linkid=PRH558846040332>.