Genre Study of the Fictional Short Story
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What is genre?
“Every piece of writing, every text we read, comes to us as both a text – the piece it is – and a kind of text – an instance of a genre. And what kind of thing it is puts some limits on what we expect to find there. Genre, an oft-overlooked cuing system in reading, constrains our prediction, lays down a track for our reading” (Bomer, 117).

Genre is a sophisticated system of classification that enables an audience to group and compare texts. Charles Cooper defines it as “a type or category of text” (24). It answers the question, “What sort of thing am I reading/writing?” Think of it as a template, or a recipe. Texts within a genre share defining features and demonstrate specific literary techniques. Genre knowledge sets the reader up with a list of expectations involving the text's purpose, audience and characteristics. Within broader genre categories are subgenres, (e.g. poetry/lyric poetry).

Where do genres come from? Who classifies genres and defines their characteristics? According to Cooper, texts are:
- Social, emerging naturally from “social interactions and the need to communicate” (25).
- Communal, enabling shared public discourse.
- Situational, developing from recurring “social situations that occur in family and community life, school or college, the professions, government, business, leisure, religion, politics – all of the countless occasions for interaction and communication, for conflict and cooperation” (25).
- Functional. Genres serve a purpose.
- Structured, composed of recognizable features.
- Stable.

In short, genres develop within a society over time, whenever there is a stable, repeated need to communicate.

Genre studies are rooted in a sense of community, audience, and purpose in writing. Genres are conventions that are “socially defined and socially learned” (Bomer, 119).

Teachers, Why Do a Genre Study in your Classroom?
Focusing Questions (Cooper, 27):
- Would genre knowledge enable teachers to give better assignments (or help students think through their own chosen projects) and respond more helpfully to students' drafts and revisions?
- Would genre knowledge enable students to be more thoughtful and critical readers of their own
and other students' work?
− Would genre-centered writing instruction complement or contravene expressivist, writing process, or whole language instruction?

In a recent survey of high school students conducted by SUNY Cortland graduate students, high-schoolers frequently complained that writing assignments were irrelevant and boring. The genre study approach to teaching seeks to change their outlook and provide kids with a more positive perspective on meaningful writing.

The importance of grounding genres in real life as opposed to teaching “genres of power,” is authenticity (Bomer, 118). If students have a clear sense of audience and purpose in writing, there's no need for them to ask, “Why are we learning this?” or, “Where do people use this in the real world?” In this hands-on approach, students seek out and find examples of genre in their own lives and community, making the subject material relevant and applicable. The genre approach to teaching aims to assign value to the literacy that is present in students' daily lives, not only to classroom-based assignments that have no recognizable application outside of academia, (e.g. the 5-paragraph essay).

Through discovery learning and group work, students and teachers build a classroom community that provides a safe environment for learning and risk taking. In this process, the teacher is a co-learner who leads by example and provides focusing questions that guide students to “learn how to learn” about genre (Bomer, 119). Rather than teaching information, we seek to teach our students skills that they can use both in school and outside the classroom.

Reading and writing are viewed as a linked process – we read not only for content, but also for writer's craft. Students develop their analytical and critical reading skills by examining models and then apply what they've learned to their writing. In their own pieces, kids are encouraged to generate their own ideas, using their personal experiences as a resource, and choose topics for their writing that interest them.

Addressing Standards:
A genre study of the fictional short story addresses the following NY State ELA Standards:

**Standard 1**: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.
As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

**Standard 2**: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.
Students will read and listen to oral, written, and electronically produced texts and performances, relate texts and performances to their own lives, and develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for self-expression and artistic creation.

**Standard 3**: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.
As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information and issues.

**Standard 4**: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.
Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their
understanding of people and their views.

The Genre Study in 8 Steps:
Charles Cooper outlines an effective genre study in eight steps, which focus on: modeling, critical reading and writing, group learning and discussion. His approach is supported by other renown educators, including Nancy Atwell, Randy Bomer, Mary Lynch-Kennedy and others. If possible, teachers should elect to teach genres that are easily recognized in local publications, and readily available to students.

A successful unit begins with 3-5 knock-your-socks-off examples – also known as models or touchstone texts – of a particular genre. Using critical reading skills, students and teacher work together to list the genre's basic features. Then, students look for textual examples individually and bring them in to share with the class. They use writers notebooks to brainstorm topics and begin their own drafts. Stage 5 begins with the formal assignment, which should be topically interesting to students or, if possible, allow students to choose their own topics. Additionally, the written assignment should specify its purpose, audience, and how it will be evaluated. Students should peer review their rough drafts before submitting them. In stage 6, students revise further. The teacher gives mini-lessons aimed at correcting common grammatical mistakes and on elements of craft. Finally, the class reflects on the overall unit and the writing process. In this teaching approach, assessment is primarily portfolio-based.

The Fictional Short Story as a Teachable Genre
One reason the fictional short story works well in a genre study is that students are already familiar with the genre and some of its characteristics. At the very least, they've been introduced to classic children's stories like Little Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks and the Three Bears. You can build on their prior experiences by introducing more advanced, knock-your-socks of models. Storytelling holds an intrinsic interest for many students, and your class study will benefit from having willing participants.

The short story is also of an ideal length to facilitate teaching about literature. Because of time constraints in the classroom, teaching longer works of fiction – such as the novel – can be impractical, if not impossible. To be certain, kids cannot be expected to practice writing a novel and assignments in that genre are therefore limited to literary analysis and criticism. A short story, on the other hand, can be inspiring to students and manageable, allowing you to teach reading and writing as a linked process.

Context: The following unit plan is designed for a 10th grade English class.

Focusing Questions:
- What important role does story telling play in society?
- What forms does it take?
- What are the characteristics of a Short Story?
- Why is story telling an effective means of communication?
- What is the relationship between Author and Narrator? Between Author and Audience?
- How does the author make use of literary techniques and to what effect?
- How does one set about writing a short story?

1. Reading Models
There are a lot of great short stories out there – for your unit, try to choose a range of stories that will be thematically interesting to students, that address your focusing questions about genre, and that exemplify a variety of genre-specific features. I use: Hawthorne's “The Birthmark,” Porter's “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,” “There Will Come Soft Rains,” by Bradbury, and a student story, “Do You Remember?” by Emily Sudbury. Student models represent an attainable goal – they communicate,
“if your peers can do this, so can you!”

In addition to the four touchstone texts listed above, I choose one or two models that push the boundaries of categorization – these rogue examples might be episodes of *The Twilight Zone* (many of which originated as short fiction,) and comics or graphic novels. These non-traditional text sets help my class decide what the genre *is* and what it *isn’t*. A list of exceptional short stories and supplementary texts is provided in Appendix A.

A good first example is “There Will Come Soft Rains,” by Ray Bradbury. It’s a futuristic story, in which setting is particularly important. Begin by reading aloud to the class. As Kittle quotes from Katie Ray, “Read aloud is the single most important tool we have in the teaching of writing. If students of any age don’t know what good writing sounds like – how it is different from speech – they will have trouble revising for sound. We must read aloud differently than we speak to our students and ask them to listen for how it is different. We must read their texts like art and immerse them in what good writing sounds like” (Kittle, 131). Reading stories aloud will help your class listen for and identify artistic language, dialogue, and voice. Encourage students to follow along with pen in hand, ready to mark striking words, sentences or passages. When you’ve finished reading, have students respond to the story by freewriting for a few minutes.

Another strategy: divide students into small groups. Have each group read a different story, discuss it, and list its features. Some good stories to use for this activity are “The Red Death,” by Edgar Allen Poe, Shirley Jackson’s, “The Lottery,” “The Use of Force,” by William Carlos Williams and “Hills Like White Elephants,” by Hemingway. These stories are all relatively short, approachable, and appropriate for high-schoolers.

Have students read independently as well. As they read, encourage them to mark up their stories – to circle things, highlight things, write comments in the margins, write question marks, write their responses, underline the main idea, and draw arrows connecting key paragraphs. This exercise generally improves reading comprehension. It's also a way for the teacher to know if kids are doing their assigned reading homework. You might walk around and check the students' markups and then give a check/check plus in your grade book for a completed assignment.

In her book, *Reading Like a Writer*, Francine Prose emphasizes that reading in and of itself is a form of education, a way in which students can study writer's craft. She says, “Though writers have learned from the masters in a formal, methodical way – taking a novel apart to see how many chapters in contained, how much time it covered, how [the author] handled pacing, tone, and point of view – the truth is that this sort of education more often involves a kind of osmosis” (3). By close-reading a touchstone text, students come to understand how a story is constructed, word by word, sentence by sentence. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, we hope that they *enjoy* what they read, and develop an appreciation for craftsmanship.

2.) Listing Features:

“Work with students, ask questions about the function of the genre, the social context, the author’s intentions, the effect the author wants to have on the reader...what the genre conventions reveal about the culture, community, and people. Examine the author’s craft and list the basic textual and formal features of the genre on an overhead or chalkboard” (Kennedy, 3).

Work together with students to draw up a list of the genre's features. Your class should be discussion based, work from models, and make productive use of small group work. As Cooper pointed out, genre is socially learned – therefore, it's important to allow students sufficient time to discuss stories and their characteristics with classmates. Prompt thought-provoking questions, such as: “What is the purpose of a story?” “Might any part of the story be true?” “What is the author trying to convey?” “How do people relate to one another?” “What writing strategies and techniques does the author make use of and how are they effective?”
Write down what students say. As a teacher, demonstrate synthesizing the class's scattered ideas into one, focused list that is “descriptive, not evaluative” (Cooper, 47). Fill in gaps. Guide the class discussion but let students arrive at conclusions themselves, modeling a discovery learning approach. In this method, the teacher is a co-learner, contributing to a sense of classroom community.

A Fictional Story:
- Is generally between 1,000 and 5,000 words.
- Makes use of five key literary elements:
  - Setting – the author uses descriptive detail to explain where the story takes place
  - Plot is engaging, containing a conflict, a climax and a resolution.
  - Characterization – the story has characters that exhibit human characteristics and feelings, even if they're not human (e.g. an alien, a dinosaur).
  - Dialogue – the author uses creative language and gives his/her characters a unique voice
  - Point of View – the author presents a problem or conflict from multiple angles so that the reader can get a better idea of the complexity of the experience.

Teach these five elements in prepared mini-lessons. Focus on one key concept per class period. Prioritize the quality of student learning and understanding over the quantity of information they process. Ideally, each instructional mini-lesson takes up approximately 10-20 minutes of the total class time, and draws from one or more of the touchstone texts that feature it. Some examples of paired mini-lessons and texts are outlined in the chart below.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LITERARY ELEMENT</th>
<th>TEXTUAL MODELS (cited in Appendix A).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>“The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,” “Hills Like White Elephants”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>“There Will Come Soft Rains,”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot - (sequencing, conflict, climax)</td>
<td>“The Birthmark”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterization</td>
<td>“The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point of View</td>
<td>“Do You Remember?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, Hawthorne's “The Birthmark” prioritizes the characterization of its protagonist and his love, an angelic woman with a feather-shaped flaw on her otherwise perfect face. Having read the story together in class, I then have my students quickly describe each character in three words. I ask them to share their descriptions and write them on the board. Then, I give a short, formal lesson (about 15 minutes), on characterization, referencing specific passages in the text. I emphasize literary techniques that the author uses to develop his characters, particularly voice and dialogue.

At the conclusion of the mini-lesson, I show my class video clips and pictures of famous personalities: Michael Jackson, Marilynn Monroe with her skirt billowing up, Bugs Bunny lounging, eating a carrot, Bill Crosby, Roger Rabbit, James and the Giant Peach, etc. As a class, we discuss what makes these characters real, believable. What makes readers identify with bugs as a character, even though he's a rabbit? I point out that readers aren't expected to believe that there was once a boy who livid in a giant peach – rather, they should be made to believe that a real person might make the same choices, feel the same way.

Then, I have my students write down as many unique personalities and voices as they can think of in three minutes: their brother, Farmer Bill, T-bone, Lil Wayne. From the personalities I've showed them or from their own brainstorming, I instruct them to choose two characters. I then assign a mini-
write, (provided in Appendix C), in which they practice crafting dialogue, imitating voice, and using realistic dialogue. By completing this assignment, students will effectively have laced their analytic, close-reading of the touchstone text with actual writing.

Throughout your unit, intersperse close reading, analyzing models, and mini-lesson with short writing assignments, called mini-writes. These assignments should focus on a specific writing technique, such as dialogue or point of view. Sample mini-write assignments are given in Appendices B and C. Decide whether students will do their writing in class, for homework, or a little of both. These short assignments provide students with a toolbox of skills, techniques and writing styles – a resource that they’ll draw from later on in the unit when they attempt to write their own short stories.

### What is a story?

A story is a complete dramatic action – and in good stories, the characters are shown through the action and the action is controlled through the characters, and the result of this is meaning that derives from the whole presented experience.

– Flannery O’Conner

Fiction is truth's older sister.

– Rudyard Kipling

Big concepts are hard to grasp. Referencing the book Night, by Ellie Wiesel, John Gaughan says, “Statistics such as six million Jews murdered are too enormous to understand. [Students] need to understand the power of one, how one person's story can move them, help them empathize, even with something as unfathomable as the Holocaust” (90). As Gaughan explains, one function of a story is to illustrate a far-reaching, even universal idea or emotion through a diminutive approach.

Similarly, Nancy Atwell looks for plausibility in fiction: “plausibility means having the appearance of truth. In fiction we ask, does the plot ring true? Would the characters act and react this way in real life? Are there clear and compelling reasons for the characters to behave as they do? Are the circumstances of the story believable? Are there enough details to give the writing the texture of real life, to make is seem as if this is really happening?” (399). In the case of a fictional story, the audience is not expected to believe in spaceships, or that a boy lived in a giant peach. Rather, these fictional elements draw the readers interest while acting as a creative framework for the story's central idea or premise. Ask, “What is the author trying to communicate? What appears to be true?” What is communicated in a fictional story is often an abstraction, such as: how the main character feels, how societies/people tend to behave, or how the audience (the reader) reacts.

Encourage students to gain perspective by trying to relate to believable primary characters. Ask questions like, “Having read “The Use of Force,” by William Carlos Williams, what are your thoughts on hurting someone for their own good? Have you ever had to do that?” Throughout the unit, have students write entries in their writers' notebooks. Prompt responses with leading questions. In their writing, ask them to apply ideas and questions that they’ve found in short stories to their own lives. These notebooks will be used as a springboard for later writing.

Reinforce what a short story is and what a story isn't. A short story is a work of narrative fiction, fewer than 5,000 words written in prose, intended for readers. “A short story is not a biographical or autobiographical account, book-length, a persuasive essay or argument, or a performance piece.

### 3. Gathering Texts

Ask students to bring in their favorite books and stories from home. Have them spend a day at the library looking for short stories. Recommend some online resources, such as Teen Ink; ask the librarian to set out several anthologies and suggest some good authors. If you want, provide students
with a list of some of your personal favorites. Have them choose a story to read independently. As they read it, have them complete a worksheet, similar to the one provided in Appendix D, which asks them to identify the story's plot, setting, point of view and main characters, as well as describing the use of dialogue. These are the same elements that they examined previously in the touchstone texts. The process of researching and choosing a story allows students to explore their own literary preferences and interests while introducing them to a variety of published texts that we won't have time to read and analyze as a class. You want your students to feel that they're effectively contributing material to their own learning.

4.) Inventing and Researching

After reading and responding to the bulk of the unit's textual models, students should begin thinking about their own story. Have them search entries in their writers' notebooks for potential topics and themes. Encourage them to freewrite frequently about their own responses, feelings, and life experiences. Tell them to write about moments that stick in their minds; subjects they never talk about; subjects they always talk about. Ask them to find some meaningful idea that they'd like to communicate to a larger audience. Having chosen one True thing – one question, feeling, paradox or revelation – have them write it down. Then, think how to frame it in an interesting way.

5.) Planning

Give students a formal, written assignment, adapted from the one provided in Appendix F. The assignment, to write a creative short story, should inspire students' interest and provide clear instructions. Give a time frame for the project and specify a due date for both the initial and final drafts. Include a rubric (Appendix G), and a checklist for students – ask, “does your story include each of the following genre-specific elements?” Providing students with your criteria for evaluation will help them plan and structure their piece, and give them a sense of your expectations for various aspects of their writing. In the assignment's directions, clearly state the story's audience and purpose. “A sense of audience – the knowledge that someone will read what they have written – is crucial to young writers. Kids write with purpose and passion when they know that people they care about reaching will read what they have to say. More importantly, through using writing to reach out to the world, students learn what writing is good for” (Atwell, 489). My students write fictional stories for a class anthology. Alternatively, you might also ask them to write for a literary magazine or submit to a writing contest.

As teacher and co-learner, write your own short story alongside students and show them what it looks like at each stage of the writing process. Give mini-lessons on writing – ask, “why do people write?” Discuss some choices a writer makes regarding his/her story's theme, hook, character development, conflict, pacing, point of view, dialogue and setting. Students will have practiced some of these in mini-writing assignments.

Stories can be constructed in different ways – some authors envision a place, and write about that; some build their piece around a character, or a relationship; still others, like Hemingway in “Hills Like White Elephants,” structure their story around its dialogue. You might advise some of your students to expand a mini-write assignment into a complete short story.

6.) Revising

Students should significantly revise their initial stories before submitting a final draft. Give them plenty of time to do so. Emphasize that writing is a process, and the most important step towards a complete, polished piece is revision.

Before students submit their first draft, have them complete a peer review. In class, students should read their partner's story and respond to it critically, referencing the rubric and the checklist that were provided in the written assignment. In a written response, they should praise aspects of the story that they particularly enjoyed and offer constructive suggestions for improvement. At the start of the
revision process, provide students with a model peer review, complete with criteria, a sample story, the reviewer's mark-ups, and a written response. An example is given in H. Students should submit their initial draft to you for comments, along with their completed peer review.

After reviewing the bulk of your students' work, design mini-lessons that focus on some of their common mistakes. “A teacher can often have the greatest long-term effect by presenting a preplanned lesson on using grammar effectively to express content and then teaching that same concept throughout the revising and editing processes” (Soven, 58). Some high-needs areas that you might consider teaching are: punctuation (particularly comma usage,) cutting the fat, adding detail, choosing active verbs, and subtlety in writing. After a lesson on concision, for example, have students circle all of the adverbs in their draft. Have them look for and underline repeating words and/or ideas. Make a list of over-used words and cliches to avoid, like, “busy as a bee,” “pretty as a picture,” “broken heart,” and “window of opportunity” (Navokavich, 193). Instruct students to cross out meaningless words and phrases that clutter their story. “Clutter is the laborious phrase which has pushed out the short word that means the same thing” (Zinssar, 14). Explain that the simplest, most accurate way to say something is usually the best.

After students have edited their stories, collect and publish your students' work, keeping in mind the importance of writing for an audience outside the classroom. You might consider displaying a class anthology at a parent's night, having an author's reading, publishing online on sites like Teen Ink, or having students submit their work to various writing contests.

7.) Reflecting

After publishing their original short stories, have students reflect on the unit and what they've learned in a journal entry. Have them respond to some of the following questions:

- How did you decide on a topic for your short story?
- How did you use various literary elements to develop your work?
- How did your characters develop in your writing?
- For you, what was the hardest part about writing a fictional story?
- Was the peer review helpful?
- Are you proud of your final draft? Why or why not?

8.) Portfolio Assessment

At the end of the unit, students submit a final portfolio, which consists of: the student's two best mini-writes, a relevant journal entry (unabridged,) an initial draft, a critical peer review, a final draft, and his/her reflection. If they so choose, students can edit their mini-writes before re-submitting them for portfolio assessment. If they do so, they should include the original version, with my comments, along with the final drafts. Grades should be weighted as follows:

- Mini-writes: 15%
- Journal entry: 5%
- Initial draft: 20%
- Peer review: 25%
- Final draft: 30%
- Reflection: 5%

In line with Nancy Atwell, “Our goal in using portfolios is to collect evidence that documents what a student has worked on and produced and how he or she has grown. The portfolios are personal, but not idiosyncratic; representative, but not standardized” (302).

Assessment of Student Learning

Graded Assignments:

- Independent Reading Assignment
– Critical Lens/Writing About Literature Assignment (Optional)
– 4-5 graded mini-writes
– Original short story, draft
– Original short story, final
– Peer review
– Portfolio Compilation

Other Forms of Assessment:
– active participation and engagement in class discussions
– Participation = 10% of student’s grade each marking period
– contribution and productiveness of group work
– check/+/- for journal entries and freewriting. Student responses should be honest and
demonstrate that the student is thinking critically and generating original ideas. You should
write a short, written response to each entry, encouraging student/teacher dialogue.
– Check/+/- for mark-ups

After the Genre Study

After completing your short story unit, consider doing a follow-up unit on writing about
literature. If they have some experience with formal literary genres as 10th graders, they'll be better
prepared for the 11th grade Comprehensive Regents Exam. The short story is an ideal subject for
analytical writing and owing to its brevity, more practical from an instructional standpoint than the
novel. Having already read 3-5 touchstone stories in class, you and your students will have a variety of
topics and subject material to draw from. A sample analytical assignment is provided in the appendices

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APPENDIX A – Stories that Work Well in a Genre Study

Great Short Stories


Non-traditional Texts:


APPENDIX B – Mini-Write Assignment

CHARACTERIZATION

“If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing.”

− Hemingway

Due: Tuesday, Nov. 16th.

Directions:

Pretend you're somebody else. Anybody else! Someone who doesn't really exist. You're an imaginary character, different from your normal self in every possible way. A friend/coworker/family member forwards you an e-mail. It's a survey. The directions say: “I want to know more about you! Answer the following questions as honestly as possible. Then, forward this to all of your friends. If you forward it to 5-10 people, you'll have good luck for a year. Delete it and you'll have bad luck for 3 years.”

You fill it out. Remember, you're an imaginary character! Try to get in a stranger's head – think like him/her and respond like him/her. Please complete the survey on a separate sheet of paper so that you have sufficient space to respond to each question. Be creative!

Person who forwarded you this e-mail:
Your name:
Your nickname:
Age:
Sex:
Where do you live?
How long have you lived there?
Where were you born?
Job/School:
Physical feature you're most proud of:
Childhood fear:
Addiction or compulsion (e.g. smoking, germophobe, fidgeting):
Happiest memory:
Painful memory:
Earliest memory:
Family members that live nearby:
Person you miss the most:
Favorite smell:
Treasured possession:
First kiss:
Expression you use frequently (e.g. “Dog-gone,” “You don't even know!” “Bite me!”):
A secret:
A hated activity:
Favorite pastime:
Something they do when they think nobody's watching:
Favorite breakfast food:
Ambition:
Nemesis (if applicable):
Religion:
Current bank balance:
Pets:
Do you – or did you ever – collect anything? (e.g. stamps, baseball cards, Christmas ornaments):
Favorite actor or actress:
What type of movies do you enjoy?
What do you normally wear at home?
Favorite piece of clothing:
Favorite song:
Are you left or right handed?
Medical conditions and/or food allergies:
People you'll forward this message to:

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 20 points. You will receive a score of 1-5 points in each of the following categories:
- Realism and development of character.
- Thoroughness of responses.
- Detail
- Originality and Imagination.
APPENDIX C – Mini-Write Assignment

DIALOGUE:

Due: Friday, Nov. 19th

Directions:

− Review the list of famous characters and personalities that we compiled in class. Brainstorm any additional characters that you'd like to add to our list. Some examples are: Roger Rabbit, Lil Wayne, Bill Cosby, Elmer Fudd, Hamlet, Snookie, Stewie from Family Guy, Bart Simpson, Scooby Doo, and Darth Vader.
− Choose two characters that you're very familiar with who don't normally interact with one another. That is to say, you cannot choose Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd because both are featured characters on the same television show, “Looney Tunes.” You can choose Bugs Bunny and Roger Rabbit OR Bugs Bunny and Darth Vader.
− Imagine a meeting between the two characters that you've chosen. What might they say to one another? What topics of mutual interest might they discuss? Write a dialogue consisting of at least 5 exchanges. Be creative, but imitate the characters' real voices and personalities as much as possible. Pay careful attention to the following:
  a.) Voice – does the character have an accent? Use slang expressions? Swear frequently?
  b.) Commonly used expressions – “Eh, what's up Doc?”
  c.) Characterization

Example:
Darth Vader: The captain has informed me that the prisoner they brought on board this morning has proved most uncooperative. I will now deal with him myself. I sense a disturbance in the Force and I believe that he has much to tell us about the plans of the Rebel Alliance.
Bart Simpson: Who the heck are you? Hey, why do you wear that weird looking mask? It makes you look like a freak! Dude, if I fart on your mask, will you be able to smell it?

Darth Vader: Enough of your insolence! Now, I have reason to believe that the Rebel Base has been relocated to your home planet, Earth. You will tell me the location of the Base.
Bart Simpson: Dude, are you calling me a rebel?

Darth Vader: Tell me! Are you associated with the Rebel Alliance?
Bart Simpson: Heck ya, I'm a rebel! Ask my 4th grade teacher – she'll tell you some STUFF!

Darth Vader: My patience grows thin. Maybe you'll talk more easily to this droid, which specializes in unique forms of torture.
Bart Simpson: Is that thing real? Man, they really let you torture people? That's totally rad! Hey, can you abduct my sister, Lisa? She's a rebel. In fact, she's the ringleader of the rebels! Now, can I help torture her?

Darth Vader: Your sister is a member of the Trade Federation? How interesting...
Bart Simpson: No, but she's in a band AND she just got a nose ring!

Evaluation: The assignment is worth 20 points. You will receive a score of 1-5 points in each of the following categories:
  − Character Choice
  − Degree to which the use of Language and Voice in your imagined dialogue is “in character.”
  − Relevance of topic/situation
  − Creativity
**APPENDIX D – Initial Independent Reading Assignment**

**Story:** __________________________
**By:** _____________________________

**Directions:** In a short paragraph, describe each of the following elements from your Independent Reading story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLOT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- What happens in the story?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What is the source of conflict in the story and how is it resolved?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- How does the author build tension, leading up to the story's climax?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SETTING</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Where does the story take place?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN CHARACTERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Who are the main characters in the story?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- How does the author describe them?</td>
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<td>- How do they typically speak and behave?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIALOGUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Describe how dialogue is used in this story</td>
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<tr>
<th>POINT OF VIEW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Who is telling the story?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Which character(s) are you persuaded to sympathize with?</td>
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APPENDIX E – Short Story Assignment

WRITE YOUR OWN SHORT STORY!

Directions: Write a fictional short story of at least 4 pages. The assignment should be double spaced, in 12pt. font, with 1” margins. Be as creative as possible! As the author, think structurally – what are you trying to communicate? What literary elements and techniques can you make use of to get your idea across in a unique and interesting way? Reference your journals and mini-write assignments for ideas and feel free to reuse any plots, characters, and other elements that you find there.

The final draft of your stories will be published in a class anthology, which will be displayed at the parent-teacher conference in January. Additionally, you will have the option of reading your story aloud at our class's Author's Night. The timeline for our short story project is as follows:

Rough Draft Due: Dec. 3rd
In-class peer review: Dec. 4th and 5th
Written Peer review submitted on: Dec. 8th
Revised Draft Due: Dec. 15th
Final Portfolio Due: Dec. 20th
Author's Night: Jan. 5th,

Make sure that your story includes the following features:
- Is between 1,000 and 5,000 words.
- Makes use of five key literary elements:
  - Setting – uses descriptive detail to explain where the story takes place
  - Plot is engaging, containing a conflict, a climax and a resolution.
  - Characterization – the story has characters that exhibit human characteristics and feelings, even if they're not human (e.g. an alien, a dinosaur).
  - Dialogue – uses creative language and gives characters a unique voice
  - Point of View – the author presents a problem or conflict from multiple angles so that the reader can get a better idea of the complexity of the experience.

After you finish your draft: Read your piece aloud, imagining that you're doing so for the first time. Pay attention to how it sounds and flows from one passage to another. Ask yourself, “Did I say everything I wanted to?” Make any changes that occur to you. Also, edit for correct grammar use and punctuation. Artistic language is OK.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>6 Extraordinary</th>
<th>5 Excellent</th>
<th>4 Good</th>
<th>3 Fair</th>
<th>2 Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong></td>
<td>The theme is subtly expressed through exceptional writing.</td>
<td>The theme is not clearly stated – rather, it is implied through quality writing.</td>
<td>The theme is clearly stated/obvious to the reader</td>
<td>The story's theme is somewhat clear OR is overstated.</td>
<td>The story's theme is vague or unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- poignancy and presentation of theme</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td>The story features life-like characters. Their depth and complexity of emotion is exhibited through the author's exemplary use of literary elements such as plot, dialogue, and descriptive detail.</td>
<td>The story features realistic, well-developed characters and invites the reader to identify with them.</td>
<td>The story contains believable, although somewhat simple characters that exhibit specific behavioral tendencies.</td>
<td>The story contains shallow characters that are somewhat believable but may exhibit occasional inconsistencies.</td>
<td>Characters' behavior is inconsistent or unbelievable. Reader has trouble understanding or identifying him/her.</td>
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<td>- realism of characters</td>
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<td>- level of complexity</td>
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<td>and problematization in characterization</td>
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<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>The story's conflict is layered with complex emotions and appeals to the reader from multiple perspectives. The author uses pacing to expertly manipulate the reader's emotional response. The reader is strongly affected by the story's resolution.</td>
<td>The author presents the story's conflict from multiple perspectives or angles, builds tension through effective pacing, and ultimately resolves it in an interesting or unexpected way.</td>
<td>The author, demonstrating appropriate pacing, sufficiently outlines a realistic source of conflict and resolves it.</td>
<td>The author introduces a source of conflict and attempts to resolve it, but the story feels rushed, digresses, and/or fails to demonstrate logical sequencing.</td>
<td>The author's source of conflict the premise is unrealistic, poorly explained, or partially resolved. Pacing is illogical, demonstrating structuring.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- presentation of conflict, climax and resolution within the story's plot</td>
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<tr>
<td>- effectiveness of pacing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Language Usage</strong></td>
<td>Exemplary use of literary elements as tools in crafting and developing the story; vivid detail makes places, people and objects seem real. The story is narrated in an exceptionally strong, unique voice that enthralls the reader.</td>
<td>Effectively uses appropriate literary elements to develop the story. The author uses descriptive detail to enliven the story. The story is narrated in a strong, engaging voice.</td>
<td>The story includes appropriate literary elements. The story benefits from the author's consistent voice, effective use of descriptive detail, and experimentation with elements of creative language.</td>
<td>The story incorporates basic literary elements, which contribute somewhat to the story's development. The author makes limited use of descriptive detail. The narrator's voice is consistent and mildly engaging.</td>
<td>The story incorporates a few literary elements. But they don't contribute to the story's development. The premise is unrealistic, poorly explained, or completely illogical. The structure is illogical, demonstrating structuring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- inclusion of appropriate literary elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>- use of descriptive detail</td>
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<tr>
<td>- use of creative language and voice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
<td>The author successfully breaks from traditional structure while meeting genre specifications.</td>
<td>The story demonstrates a great deal of creative effort and pushes the boundaries of traditional structure while maintaining genre specifications.</td>
<td>The story meets all genre specifications in an original and creative manner.</td>
<td>The story is somewhat creative and meets most genre specifications.</td>
<td>The piece meets genre specifications but exhibits very little creativity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- degree of risk-taking and creativity within genre specifications</td>
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Do You Remember?

*by Emily K., Sudbury*

June was you by the pool. The day we first met, remember? I thought you were just one of those brawny lifeguard guys – you know the type: pretend to be all sweet, save the little kid from drowning, then go out and get totally hammered at night. I paid no attention to you, thought you were one of the heartbreakers, the ones I couldn’t care less about. But you had that smile with the dimples, and you came over just to offer me a watermelon Jolly Rancher. My favorite flavor. How did you know? That’s when I knew you were different.

July. August. After work we’d spread ourselves out on the field and drown in the sun, laugh at all those stupid jokes that aren’t even funny anymore. Why did we laugh so much back then?

Your studio, an explosion of color with your paintings enclosing you like a corral. Sometimes they made me jealous, when you saw them more than you saw me, but I loved them all the same. I loved that one of the beautiful girl with the long black hair, the one who looked so sad, but you wouldn’t say who she was. You’d never say. I’ll never know. So many secrets locked up in that little box of yours. You were fun, but you were serious.

“I want to be painted like that,” I said, because the painting was so beautiful. And you said, “Okay. Let’s do it.”

I still have that painting of me, by the way. You can only see half my face in it. “Why is that?” I asked. You shrugged. Another secret.

September. October. I love October. And you loved it too. When the leaves dance on the sidewalk and twirl through the air, when the world bleeds orange and red, and the air is like your stepmom’s apple crisp. We breathed it in together. We stood on the hill and closed our eyes, stretched our arms and spun around like five-year-olds, forgetting there was a world below. We listened to the wind whisper our names.

October was when we took the train downtown. It was fun that day, I don’t remember why. We skipped school (that was when school didn’t matter) and we rode downtown with your easels and paper and chalk and pencils, and we were going to draw fall. We drew the houses and trees, little kids flying a kite in the park, a mother duck and her ducklings wading through a river, a man asleep on a park bench, a maple leaf crisper than your stepmom’s apple crisp.

And you said, “Fall is a bit sad.”

And I asked why, and you said, “I dunno. It means summer’s over. It’s like losing something you can’t have back, like love.”

And I said, “But summer always comes back, doesn’t it?” And you said maybe.
We raked up a pile of leaves with a stick. We made this really big pile, laughing and running around it, losing half the leaves ’cause we’d stuff them in each other’s hair and shirts. We held hands, almost afraid to jump, like little kids taking their first dive into the deep end. One, two, three, go! And we sank into the big orange bed together.

I remember your easel that I carved my initials into. I remember the dimples on your cheeks, the eyes that were always on me. Your worn-out copy of The Great Gatsby that you read to me sometimes, and your plaid red scarf. I have that scarf, by the way. I wish it still smelled like you.

It’s October again, and the leaves are still dancing and the geese are still singing their good-bye song, and the bullfrog doesn’t sing because the pond’s almost frozen over. I wore your scarf yesterday as I rode the train downtown. I crossed the street to the park where we made the bed of leaves, and I tried to remember exactly where it was. And fall feels a little sad this year, like losing love.

I’m waiting to see if the summer comes back.

APPENDIX H – Peer Review

Procedure:
Step 1 – Reading Aloud: You and your partner each have a copy of both stories. Listen while your partner reads his or her story aloud. Follow along with your pen in hand, marking up your copy of the draft.

Step 2 – Initial Reaction: In the space provided, write down your initial reaction to the story and any questions you have for the author. If you need more space, use the back of this sheet or attach a separate sheet of paper.

Step 3 – Discuss the Story: Read your initial response aloud to your partner. Then, discuss the story with him or her. Ask any questions that you might have about the characters, plot, setting, etc.

Step 3 – Close Reading: Read the story again, silently. Check if it has each of the features of a short story.

___ the story is of appropriate length

___ Makes use of five key literary elements:

   ___ Setting – the author uses descriptive detail to explain where the story takes place
   ___ Plot is engaging, containing a conflict, a climax and a resolution.
   ___ Characterization – the story has characters that exhibit human characteristics and feelings, even if they're not human (e.g. an alien, a dinosaur).
   ___ Dialogue – the author uses creative language and gives his/her characters a unique voice
___ Point of View – the author presents a problem or conflict from multiple angles so that the reader can get a better idea of the complexity of the experience.

___ Each paragraph or passage develops at least one aspect of the story.

Step 4: Questions: Respond to each of the following questions in a short paragraph. Your tone should be constructive and respectful. Attach another sheet of paper if you need more space.

– What did you like about the story?

– What questions do you have for the author?

– What literary elements are featured in the story? Are they used effectively?

Do you think the story long enough? Why or why not?

5.) In your own words, give the story's meaning or main idea.

6.) What improvements would you recommend?
Step 5 – Submit Your Peer Review: If you don't finish the peer review in class, complete it for homework. Submit this worksheet and your mark-ups to me by Monday, Dec. 8th.

Grading:
Evaluation of the Peer Review will be based on the thoroughness and helpfulness of your written comments and your productive use of class time. It should demonstrate your thorough understanding of the standard features and characteristics of a short story, as we've discussed them in class, and apply them to a close reading and in-depth analysis of your partner's story. The review is worth 25% of your final portfolio grade.
APPENDIX I – Writing About Literature Assignment

The Interpretive Essay

ASSIGNMENT:
Our class is compiling a series of analytical and interpretive essays to be published in a new anthology titled, Our Favorite Stories. Similar to the format of a Norton Anthology, our class book will feature a collection of published short stories that we've read in class: “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,” “There Will Come Soft Rains,” “The Birthmark,” and “Do You Remember?” Each story will be followed by a series of critical essays and commentaries, written by you and your classmates. Your audience is comprised of students and teachers who are interested in understanding more about literature.

Choose one of the stories listed above. In a short essay, identify and discuss the story's main source(s) of conflict, its climax and resolution. In particular, what literary elements and writing techniques does the author use to create a dramatic situation? Once introduced, how does the author develop the situation and build tension in his or her story? Make specific references to writer's craft and your response as a reader. Your essay should be 2-3 pages, double spaced, in 12 point font, with 1" margins.

In your introduction, name the story and author. Identify the main source of conflict and any relevant characters.

In your first main-body paragraph, describe the conflict from at least two perspectives. Are both positions believable? Are you persuaded to support one side more than the other? What techniques does the author use to invoke your response? You might consider his/her use of language, point of view, and characterization.

In your second main-body paragraph, discuss some techniques the author uses to build tension in the story, leading up to a climactic scene or moment. You might consider his/her treatment of plot, dialogue, and setting. Clearly identify the story's climax.

In your final main-body paragraph, describe how and when the conflict is resolved. Consider multiple perspectives. Decide whether you think the resolution is positive or negative and explain why you feel that way.

In your conclusion, offer further reflections on the resolution. Did the outcome surprise you? Did the “right side” come out on top? Were you satisfied with the ending? How did the resolution affect the story's mood? How might the author have ended it differently?

Your essay should:
___ be at least 2 pages
___ have an introduction, a conclusion and at least 3 main-body paragraphs
___ identify a story and author
___ identify the story's main source of conflict
___ describe a dramatic situation
___ present the conflict from multiple perspectives
___ analyze the author's use of various literary elements and writing techniques
___ describe how the author creates and builds tension
___ identify the story's climax
___ describe the resolution
___ offer your thoughts and reflections

REMEMBER TO PROOFREAD YOUR ESSAY FOR SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND GRAMMATICAL MISTAKES!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percent of Grade*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Friday, Jan. 14th</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rough Draft</td>
<td>Friday, Jan. 21st</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>Tuesday, Jan. 25th</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Draft</td>
<td>Monday, Jan. 31st</td>
<td>40%</td>
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</table>

* If you hand an assignment in late, your component grade will be reduced by 25% for each additional day.