

## GRADE 10 SHORT STORY ELEMENTS

1. **Short Story:** a brief, fictional prose narrative having one main character, a single plot, a limited number of settings, and one main single event.
2. **Plot:** the organization of incidents within a story (the story line) has five major elements:
  - (a) **introduction:** beginning of the story, arouses interest, gives the setting, contains background information (exposition), introduces characters, establishes atmosphere or mood
  - (b) **rising action:** events before the climax during which conflicts are introduced, suspense is built up, begins with a complicating or initial incident
  - (c) **climax:** the highest point of emotional intensity, usually marks a turning point in the protagonist's fortunes  
Do not confuse climax with crisis. The climax is the major crisis, but other moments of intense conflict leading up to the climax are called crises.
  - (d) **denouement:** the 'unknotting' of the plot and conflict that follows the climax; often omitted in short stories in favour of a surprise ending
  - (e) **conclusion:** The final outcome, in short stories this is sometimes the climax, also a surprise ending
3. **Setting:** time, place, mood/atmosphere (includes initial circumstances)
4. **Characters:**

<b>protagonist</b>	-	main character
<b>antagonist</b>	-	major character or force that opposes the protagonist
<b>static</b>	-	character that does not change
<b>dynamic</b>	-	character that undergoes significant and lasting change
<b>round</b>	-	a realistic character with several sides to his /her personality
<b>flat</b>	-	a minor character who has only one apparent quality
<b>stereotype</b>	-	a fixed character whose qualities are highlighted to fit a certain pattern or type
<b>foil</b>	-	a character whose behavior, attitudes etc. contrast with those of the protagonist in order to help the reader understand the character motivation of the protagonist
5. **Conflict:** a struggle between opposing characters or forces, the three main types are:
  - (a) **character versus his/her environment** (nature, society, or circumstance)
  - (b) **character versus character** (physical, emotional or psychological)
  - (c) **character versus his/her self** (emotional or psychological inner conflict)
6. **Theme:** the central idea (message) of the story, represents the author's attitude toward some universal truth; usually implied, not stated in the story
7. **Purpose:** not the same as theme, main effect story is intended to achieve (to enlighten, to entertain, or to demonstrate something about life or human nature)
8. **Topic:** a general subject, usually stated in a word

## SHORT STORY TECHNIQUES

1. **Characterization:**
  - (a) through a character's own speech, thought, and actions
  - (b) through the response of other characters to a character's word/actions, appearance, etc. **indirect**
  - (c) through the author's description of a character's appearance, feeling/thoughts, actions. **direct**
2. **Epiphany:** a moment of significant insight and realization experienced by the protagonist
3. **Flashback:** A shift of plot from the present to the past to illustrate an important point or change in a character
4. **Foreshadowing:** a hint of what is to happen later, it prepares the reader for the climax
5. **Irony:** reveals concealed or contradictory meaning, three common forms are:
  - (a) **verbal:** when there is a contrast between what a character says and actually means
  - (b) **dramatic:** when the author shares information with the reader that a character does not have and then the character says or does something that is inappropriate or will have the opposite effect or reveals what the reader already knows is going to happen
  - (c) **situational:** when circumstances turn out differently than is expected or desired
6. **Point of View:** the perspective from which a story is told or seen, three common types are:
  - (a) **first person narrative:** the protagonist tells his/her own story directly to the reader in the first person "I"
  - (b) **limited omniscient narrative** (third person narrative): refers to the protagonist as "he" or "she" and shows only what one character thinks or feels from the perspective of someone "outside" of the story
  - (c) **omniscient narrative:** reveals the minds of all characters, a narrator who knows and tells all from the perspective of outside the story
7. **Satire:** the use of irony to ridicule an idea, person, or thing, usually to provoke change
8. **Suspense:** a feeling of anxiety and uncertainty experienced by the reader about the outcome of events (author uses elements and techniques such as atmosphere, unresolved crises, limited point of view, foreshadowing etc. to help create suspense)
9. **Symbolism:** the use of a character, object, event, or setting to stand for or represent something else (usually an abstract idea)

## TERMINOLOGY

### **complicating incident**

The incident that initiates a conflict is the complicating incident.

### **contrast (and juxtaposition)**

Contrast refers to overlap or mixing of situations, characters, settings, moods or points of view in order to clarify meaning, purpose, or characters or to heighten certain moods (especially humor, horror, and suspense). Juxtaposition refers to dramatic contrasts that are deliberately placed side by side within a story.

### **images**

Images are concrete details and figures of speech that help the reader to form vivid sense impressions of what is being described. Susan Kerlake, author of "Choices", created mood and a sense of setting, point of view, and character through descriptive passages such as the following: "She thought about lying on the pier, adjusting her body, her back, just so to fit the cracks in the wood, settling her bones so her weight was mostly on the muscles of her thighs and back. The hot sun having found her, stretched itself over her skin, then lay down on it, lapping, seeping through, sinking beneath. A web of heat. It took the edge off the light slap of water bumping into the piles." Images can also bring to life a character.

### **indeterminate ending**

A story ending which there is no clear outcome or result is called an indeterminate ending.

### **local color**

Local color is the use of specific regional detail to increase atmosphere and a sense of setting, thus heightening the reader's interest. Local color includes descriptions of locale, dress, and customs as well as and ways of thinking and feeling characteristic of people in that region.

### **motivation**

This is what causes a character to do what he or she does. Circumstances and temperate usually determine a character's actions. Characters must have sufficient and plausible motivation in order for a reader to find the story realistic or effective.

### **predicament**

This is a position or situation that is difficult to get out of or that presents a problem too difficult to solve.

### **stream-of-consciousness**

A modern technique for depicting thought and feelings of a character is an apparent natural way without logic or interruption is the stream-of-consciousness technique. The author using stream-of-consciousness deliberately includes important details relevant to plot, character, and theme.

### **vicarious experience**

The feeling a reader has when emotionally and imaginatively involved in a story is a vicarious experience. He or she imaginatively experiences and shares some of the same things as the characters in the story. The effects of stories such as "Choices" depends on how much the reader identifies with the protagonists' experiences.

**English 10**  
**Short Stories - Group Study**

Selections:

Inside Stories II

"To Set Our House in Order"	Margaret Laurence	p. 240
"The Tell-Tale Heart"	Edgar Allan Poe	p. 56
"The Possibility of Evil"	Shirley Jackson	p. 211

The stories listed above concern manipulation and control. Read each selection carefully on your own. After reading each story, prepare the following work in your discussion groups:

Complete the short story element and technique charts for each of the stories

**"To Set Our House in Order"**                      Margaret Laurence

Do "Responding" questions #1-5

Explain how the setting contributes to the story's meaning.

In your view, is the story's ending happy, unhappy, or indeterminate. Explain.

**"The Tell-Tale Heart"**                                      Edgar Allan Poe

Do "Responding" questions #1-5.

What do the stalking of the old man and the post-murder details reveal about the narrator's character?

Poe is a master at creating atmosphere. What are some of the story details and images that would have a strong appeal to a modern audience?

**"The Possibility of Evil"**                                      Shirley Jackson

Do "Responding" questions #1-5.

What worries or problems did Miss Strangeworth address in her letters? Why were her letters so distressing to the recipients?

What effect has Miss Strangeworth's letter had on Linda Stewart's attitude towards others? What does Linda's reaction suggest about reasons some people become bitter and uncaring?

You will be expected to discuss your answers with the rest of the class.

Be prepared for a class discussion of the above work on \_\_\_\_\_ .







## Paragraph Assignments

### Loyalty and Betrayal

"Choices"

"Forgiveness in Families"

"The Clumsy One"

Choose one of the following topics and write a response in a minimum of one and a half to two pages in length, double spaced. Give your composition a title.

1. "Choices", "Forgiveness in Families", and "The Clumsy One" all deal with betrayal. Write about a time when you were disappointed or betrayed by someone you were close to.
2. "Forgiveness in Families" explores issues such as sibling rivalry, lifestyles, jealousy, conformity, and spiritual beliefs. Choose one issue and write about its importance in the story.
3. "The Clumsy One" is written from Danny's point of view. Choose a section of the story, such as the episode with the sawing, and rewrite it from David's point of view.

### Manipulation and Control

"To Set Our House in Order"

"The Tell-Tale Heart"

"The Possibility of Evil"

Choose one of the following topics and write a response in a minimum of one and a half to two pages in length, double spaced. Give your composition a title.

1. In "The Possibility of Evil" and "To Set Our House in Order" both include characters who manipulate other characters in the stories to act a certain way or to do a certain thing. Write an account of the different methods of manipulation used by the characters in both the stories.
2. The narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart" has an unhealthy obsession about the old man. Write an account about the idea that obsessions can be destructive. Support your opinion with evidence from the story.
3. For centuries philosophers have debated whether people are basically good or evil. The newspapers and other media publicize daily accounts of crime, leading some people to believe there is considerable evil in the world. Develop a paragraph that argues people are basically good.



**In the Name of Love**

"A Bolt of White Cloth"

"War"

Choose one of the following topics and write a response in a minimum of one and a half to two pages in length and double spaced. Give your composition a title.

1. Write an account in which you explain how the mysterious stranger in "A Bolt of White Cloth" first began his work as a pedlar of the cloth.
2. Describe an article or photograph that is part of one of your childhood memories. Tell the story linked to the item.

## **Short Stories Poster Assignment**

Design an artistic poster to promote the reading of one of the short stories studied in class. Strategically placed on the poster will be a 150 - 250 word multi-paragraph composition clarifying two aspects of the story:

1. the theme
2. the most important literary device (e.g. symbol, irony, point of view) used by the author to present this theme.

### **Criteria:**

- Size of poster: that of your desk top or larger
- illustrations, lettering, effective arrangement, and other eye-catching details
- appeal to curiosity and emotions
- well-chosen, colorful vocabulary
- significant quotations from the story
- 150-250 word written component
- well-developed and well-organized paragraph (introduction, body, conclusion)
- neatness

### **Date Due:**

### **Additional guidelines:**

**Theme** is the author's purpose. Why did the author write this story? Remember, theme makes a general comment about human values and experience. The theme is not usually stated by the author, but rather revealed by the events in the story.

**Symbol** is usually something (some concrete object or physical setting) that stands for some general idea. Symbols are often closely linked with theme because they often give a clue to the author's purpose.

When analyzing the symbols apparent in a short story, address these questions:

- a. What symbols has the author used in the story?
- b. What was his purpose in using a symbol? Specifically what do these details (symbols) add to the story?