

Teaching the Short Story

Teacher's Packet

A KET professional development workshop for educators approved for Professional Development Training by the Kentucky Department of Education.

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Teaching the Short Story

Overview of the Seminar

Targeted Audience: Secondary English teachers

Teaching the Short Story provides participants with a detailed approach to teaching students to write short stories. Specifically, presenter Dewey Hensley explores methods for generating ideas and characters, character development, setting up conflicts, plotting, creating leads, establishing point of view, and revision.

About This Teacher Packet

This packet includes a brief agenda for the program, biographies of the host and presenter, and materials related to the seminar topic. The table of contents on page 3 supplies further details.

Series Format

This program was recorded in KET's studios. All information needed for participation is included on the videotape or in this packet.

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About the Seminar Host and Presenter

Hosting the seminar is **Starr Lewis**, who was recently named associate commissioner for the Office of Academic and Professional Development at the Kentucky Department of Education. Before becoming associate commissioner, Starr served as branch manager for the humanities and as director of the Kentucky Writing Program. She has also served as a writing portfolio consultant for the Department of Education and as a regional writing resource teacher. Starr's background includes 17 years of experience teaching high school English and psychology in Bullitt County, Kentucky. She has a degree in secondary education from the University of Kentucky and a master's in education from the University of Louisville.

Dewey Hensley teaches English at South Oldham High School in Crestwood, Kentucky and has recently been named a Highly Skilled Educator by the Kentucky Department of Education. Before coming to South Oldham, Dewey taught English and served as head basketball coach at Eminence High School. He also taught at Fairdale High School in Louisville. His other professional activities have included serving as associate director of the Louisville Writing Project, conducting training sessions for the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, and serving as a table leader for portfolio analysis and as on-demand writing test writer for the Kentucky Department of Education. Dewey has a B.A. in English and philosophy from Berea College and a master's in English from the University of Louisville.

Professional Development Credit

Stage of Participant Development: Practice/Application

The Kentucky Department of Education has approved all KET Star Channels Seminars for professional development credit if schools or districts choose to include them in their professional development plans. Districts or schools may choose to include preparation and/or follow-up time as part of professional development. For example, if a teacher participates in one 90-minute program and spends an additional 30 minutes in related activities, he or she could be awarded a total of two hours professional development credit.

Individual teachers who wish to use these videotapes for professional development credit should check with their school professional development chair or with their district professional development coordinator.

Professional development can also be used to satisfy requirements for the fifth year program. Contact your local university or the Division of Teacher Education and Certification at 502-564-4606 for more information.

Seminar Agenda

Welcome and introduction

Starr Lewis, Host

Layered approach to teaching the short story

Dewey Hensley, Presenter

Using observations to reveal character

- Writer's Notebook
- Novels
- Read-alouds
- Children's literature

Synthesizing observations into a character

- Draw
- Write eight ways
- Realize the character may change

Focusing on conflict—“Dipping the Character in Paint”

- Traditional conflicts
- Sources of ideas for conflicts

Three ways to develop plot or map

- Plot line
- Character wheel
- Story hill

Leads and point of view

- *True Story of the Three Little Pigs*
- Sample leads

Focused revision

- Asterisk method
- Response groups
- Questionnaire

Using reading groups to provide feedback for climactic moment

Realizing the difficulty of short story writing

Concluding remarks

Starr Lewis

Materials Needed for Participation in This Seminar

- Pencil or pen
- Paper
- Copy of this packet

A Short Story Should Include . . .

- **setting details woven into the text**
- **development of at least one character through the character's words, thoughts, and actions and through the words of other characters and/or the writer**
- **a problem/conflict which is developed as the story (plot) progresses**
- **a resolution of that problem/conflict (climax)**
- **a conclusion (what happens after climax)**
- **snapshots (things for the reader to visualize)**
- **thoughtshots (characters' thoughts)**
- **dialogue (optional)**

The Writer's Notebook: Your Treasure Chest of Ideas Created by Dewey Hensley, South Oldham High School

*We forget all too soon the things we thought we could never forget.
We forget the loves and betrayals alike, forget what we whispered and what we screamed,
we forget who we really are.*

Joan Didion (a writer)

While your **Writer's Notebook** may look like no more than blank pages right now, by the end of this class you will view it quite differently. It will be filled with ideas you have had, things you have felt, arguments won and lost. Memories. Answers. Questions. Lessons tried. Lessons learned. Facts. Fictions. Poems. Stories. Real world writings. Lists. Colors. Articles. Drawings. Notes. It will be a treasure chest of ideas that you can turn to when you need inspiration or just something to get the teacher off your back.

The **Writer's Notebook** is a safe place for you to try things we do in class and to keep up with ideas you have in class. You would be amazed at how many people keep a writer's notebook. Certainly famous writers keep them; they don't bother with diaries, they want a place where they can put ideas while they are fresh in their minds. Song writers keep 'em as well. If you look at the lyrics of Pearl Jam and Nine Inch Nails to Pink Floyd, you often see them written down as if they were written in a notebook. But not only those people. Some business leaders and doctors and lawyers keep writer's notebooks as a place to put down what is on their minds. The point is this. You can try things in your writer's notebook that won't be graded on anything but effort. You don't have to worry about failing; the only way you can fail in the writer's notebook is not to write in it at all. Take risks; write what is on your mind. Take risks; try the writer's notebook exercises we do as mini lessons. From these things come your most important words and writing pieces. The writer's notebook writing is known as **expressive writing** because it is the place where you express yourself **in a school setting**. Be wise; don't put things in the notebook that are inappropriate for school.

Class Use of Writer's Notebook: Tips to Remember

- Write the entire time allotted. Don't waste time.
- Don't talk during writer's notebook time; the teachers and others are trying to write and you disturb them.
- "I left it at home" doesn't work; if you left your writer's notebook at home, don't let us find out.
- You will be asked to share your notebook ideas sometimes; sometimes you will just tell about what you wrote, other times you will read it aloud.
- Usually you will write what you want. If what you have written is too personal, you can pass on the reading aloud. But the next time we read aloud in class you will be **expected** to share.
- **If you miss class, make up the entry on your own.**
- Make sure I can read your name on the front cover.
- I want you to write what is on your mind, but remember this is still school. Don't use curse words unless they are used in a way that is completely appropriate. **Curse words don't make you grown up; they only show you lack vocabulary to express yourself.**

What Kinds of Things Go in a Writer's Notebook?

The big question is always “What can I write about in my writer’s notebook?” In many ways, the better question is what can’t go in your notebook. The only things I really **don’t** want to see are homework assignments from other classes and diary-type entries. There are many things you may put into your notebook as entries.

Write about what moves you
Write what makes you cry
If you can, think of something funny
Words you like
Conversations you have had or heard somewhere
Paint a character with words
Write a letter you send
Write a letter you would never send
Play the “What if” game
Make a list of things
Count your blessings
Start a novel
Copy down poetic lines you have heard
Write a movie review
Revisit a favorite place
Paste in an article that made you think
Put in pressed flowers someone gave you
Draw a cartoon and explain it
Write a problem
Write a poem
Write a lead to an editorial
Write down a dream you had and don’t ever want to forget
Who are your real friends
Try an exercise from English class
Copy a poem
Write down great lines from the book you are reading
Tape in an object
Describe your dream car; use it in a story
What do you think people think of you?
Write down questions you have about anything
Write about other things in your writer’s notebook
Eat a peach
Taste the wind
Hear voices of people you have never met but are sure you know
Plan something
Draw and explain an invention
Be a smart aleck
Find out who you really are
Write about an issue important to you
Write a song
Write about angels . . .

Eight Ways to Reveal Character by Dewey Hensley

Actions

As Kevin moved down the street his feet made a steady echo sound against the pavement. He whistled despite the loud rumble of the traffic and the car horns. When someone yelled out the window of his or her car to watch where he was going, he just waved back like he was watching a best friend heading home. He passed by the garbage on the sidewalk and the old woman pushing the shopping cart filled with newspaper, and continued to smile as he headed toward Cindy's house. Nothing could erase that smile from his face, not even the coldness of the streets he called home.

Dialogue

"I ain't gonna leave you here, Ma'am . . . not with you needin' help and all," Jimmy said as he walked back to his truck to get the jack. "I'd help anybody who needed it; my momma taught me better'en to just leave people. The good Lord'll make it up to me."

"I don't know . . .," Linda stuttered. She had barely rolled down her window to hear Jimmy when he had left his pick-up truck and offered help. "You know what they say about your kind . . ."

Physical Description

Other guys walking through the hallway were taller and even more handsome, but there was something about Billy Belaire. His arms swung loose at his side and his dark hair was long and pulled back behind his head, held by a rubber band. The dark jacket he wore was straight out of the local thrift shop, she could tell, but the way he wore it suggested a sense of pride, or at least a lack of caring what others thought about him.

Idiosyncracies

Junior tapped his fingertips against the table and looked at his watch constantly. His leg bounced up and down and he gulped the hot coffee as if it would hurry up his friend's arrival.

Objects/Possessions

Michael touched the locket around his neck and rolled it between his fingers. His mother had given him that locket, with her picture inside, when he had left to live with his father. What would she think of him now?

Reactions

Tony's words stung Laura. It wasn't what she expected to hear. They had been dating for over a month now, how could he do this to her? How could he break her heart? All three of their dates had been fun; he had said so himself.

As Tony watched the floodgate of her eyes begin to open he looked at his watch. *Jeez, I hope I can make it to the gym on time.*

Eight Ways to Reveal Character (continued)

Thoughts

He began to remember when he was a freshman in high school. The seniors really thought they were something back then, always trying to play their little pranks on the ninth graders. He knew at that moment he couldn't be one of those kinds of people. He walked over to Jeff and Larry to tell them it was time to stop.

Background Information

Miles knew what it meant to be alone. When he was a child growing up his father had been in the military. They had traveled from Florida, to Georgia, to California, to Kentucky. He had rarely had a friend for very long. By the leap from California he had already decided having friends was a risk; the fewer the friends, the easier it was to leave. This philosophy had made him a real outsider at Glenview High School. In the six months he had been there he had not really made a single friend but as he stood there staring at Sheila, he realized that just might have to change.

“Dipping a Character in Paint”

Four Notebook Entries to Get a Writer Started

Created by Dewey Hensley, South Oldham High School

The best fiction centers around realistic, multi-dimensional characters (traditionally called **round** or **dynamic characters**). Most writers rely upon their own knowledge and observations of people to create real characters for their fiction. These four types of notebook entries can provide writers the raw materials to build a character.

Entry 1: Who is the most peculiar, colorful, or unique person you know? Describe this person in detail without using a name; try to capture all the little things the person does, says, believes that makes him or her different. Also tell how the person looks, what he or she wears, and even how others think about the person.

Entry 2: What are your “idiosyncracies”? Idiosyncracies are little mannerisms (things we do unconsciously) that make us the way we are. Hensley puts his fingers together like a spider doing push-ups on a mirror; Mrs. Anderson hums softly while walking around the room and runs her fingers through her hair whenever Hensley says something stupid. What are some of your idiosyncracies? Be specific; take time to reflect upon yourself.

***DECODE:** What is the “ID” in psychology? It is part of the unconscious mind that is “instinct”; it pushes us toward doing what we want for fun and pleasure. EGO is the reasonable, thinking part of a person that reacts to the outside world. SUPEREGO mediates between the ID and the EGO; it is part unconscious and part conscious.

Entry #3: Take 10 minutes to observe someone outside this classroom. Then, in your writer’s notebook, write down every detail you can about this person. Draw a portrait of the person in words. How does this person look? What are his or her idiosyncracies? (If you don’t see any very clearly, *predict* what they might be.) What is the person’s history? If you don’t know anything about the person, then create a history. What does the person smell like? Can you come up with a simile or metaphor about this person?

Entry #4: Extended entry . . . Take time to use the observation entries you have already done: the class discussions and books we have done in class; and your own observations to create a character. Remember, you can draw on your previous entries to create this character. Provide this “person” with a . . .

- Name
- Physical description
- List of objects that tell about him or her
- List of idiosyncracies he or she exhibits when certain things happen (when he or she is sad, scared, challenged, etc.)
- History: where has this person been; what things have happened that really make this person who he or she is

**“Dipping a Character in Paint”:
A Layered Approach to Creating a Short Story
Through Character and Conflict
Created by Dewey Hensley, South Oldham High School**

While it is possible to help students create a short story through a linear approach (i.e., plot, character, details, then draft), this method does not leave learners with the independence they need and the “tools” they need to do this over and over again. That is why this “layered approach” is an effective way to teach students how to write fiction.

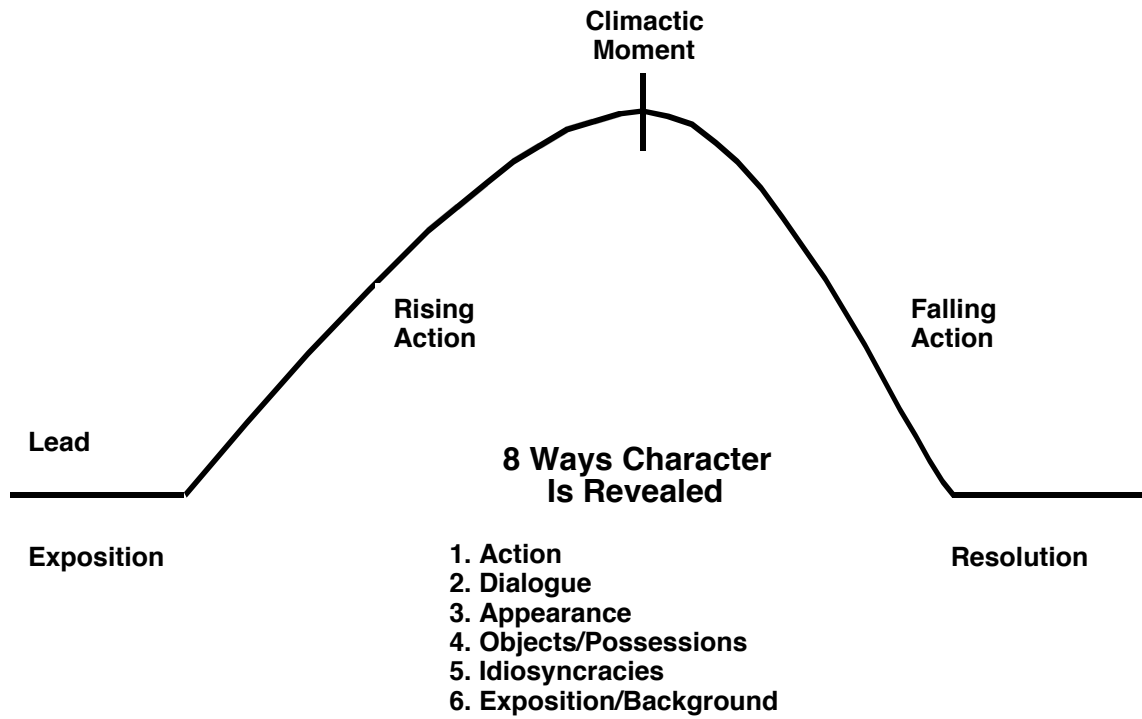
Different Layers of Teaching Fiction

1. Reading workshop as models
2. Children’s literature to illustrate character traits
3. Children’s literature to illustrate important literary elements
4. Using the development of a realistic character as a way to start the story
5. Using the writer’s notebook to gather ideas
6. Reliance upon the active reading skills to practice
7. Using mini lessons to “safe practice” the craft
8. Using the writer’s notebook to practice the lesson
9. Applying mini lessons to the actual work of fiction
10. Revisits to lessons involving poetic language
11. Grammar lessons
12. Adolescent novels to practice active reading skills
13. Adolescent novels to support craft lessons
14. The writing process with conferencing and revision

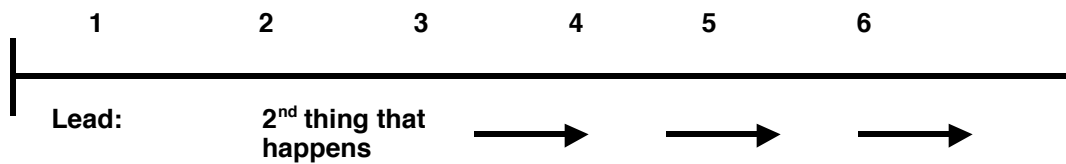
This is not a step-by-step approach; rather, it is a simultaneous application of all these things to get the students to understand fiction and the things needed to create good fiction.

Story Hill

Similes Metaphors Personification Images/Sensory Details



Option 2:



Mini Lesson: The Climactic Moment

Lesson Created by Dewey Hensley

Which of the following two climactic moments works best?

Climactic Moment A

Ben walked into the room and stared at Mr. Hensley. He walked back to his seat and sat there with nothing in his hands and thought about how Hensley had better leave him alone today. Just as his friend Anthony had said earlier, there was little chance Hensley would leave anyone alone.

As soon as Mr. Hensley called for the writer's notebooks to come out, Ben knew there was going to be trouble. He sat there wondering if Hensley noticed if he had it or not. Suddenly Hensley said his name. Ben just sat there and told Hensley he didn't have his materials. The teacher became very angry and began to spit out words. "Get out of here if you don't have your stuff!"

Ben stood up slowly and walked to the front of the room. As he passed Hensley, the teacher said, "You had better get a new attitude, kid." Suddenly all the anger that had built up from the day spilled out of Ben. He pushed the teacher backwards and Hensley fell on the floor.

As Ben moved toward the door, tears rolled down his face. He could hear Hensley's loud voice "You did it now, Ben . . ."

Ben slammed the door as he left.

As Ben drove down Pacific Highway, he thought about that day when he came unglued. He thought about Tony, his mom, the hallways at school. He wondered now what was right or wrong and if he had screwed up his life as bad as he thought. When he stared at the ocean beating against the shore, he knew life would be different for him now and he wondered if people can really make it right when you take the wrong path.

Climactic Moment B

Ben erupted through the door. As he walked to the back of the room, he stared at Hensley with the contempt a dead man walking has for his executioner. When he fell into the seat at the back of the classroom, he watched Hensley moving around the front of the room. The teacher's beady eyes seemed to follow everyone as they crowded into the classroom. Just like Anthony had said earlier, everyone hated Hensley and his aggressive ways. He was always picking on kids for no reason. With everything that had happened to him that day, Ben just hoped Hensley had the good sense to leave him alone. As he sat there, Ben's muscles tightened. "Please don't say 'get out your writer's notebooks' again today."

"Get out your writer's notebooks," Hensley's voice boomed. He sounded like a broken jukebox always playing the same warped record day after day. Hensley stood before the 25 students. Ben could see his round figure and the way he always clapped his hands together at the beginning of class as if he were a band director. Ben lowered his eyes, hoping that if he didn't

see Hensley, perhaps Hensley would not see him. Suddenly Ben's silence was shattered. "I said, Ben, where is your notebook?"

Ben heard his mom's words echo from the morning. "What are you gonna do with yourself, Ben?" He heard the sound of the hallway and the birds singing outside the window. He heard the rumble of his car's motor. He saw flashes of the western sky.

"I don't have it." Ben's words caused most of the class to take a deep breath. Anthony looked across the room and began to mouth the words, "No, Ben . . . don't." But it was too late. Ben was ready to break the chains that had held him in place. "I said I don't have it," Ben continued, "because it is a pile of crap. You always make us do this junk for no reason. I am tired of it and I am tired of you."

Like spectators at a tennis match, the students turned their heads to stare at the teacher. He stood there, the copy of *Weetzie Bat* slowly slipping between his fingers. A large vein rose on his temple and his brow wrinkled like a mountain range spread across the globe the students looked at in Geography. He shuffled back on his heels and his eyes narrowed. He shot laser beams across the room at Ben. "What did you say, young man?" The spectators turned.

"I said you, this writer's notebook, this class . . . hell, this entire school, are full of crap!!!!" Ben's voice had turned into a low squeal, but his face had grown older, like stone rubbed raw by years of wind and rain.

"Get out," Hensley responded. He could barely contain the rage inside him. The class stopped watching and began to lower their heads. When Ben did not move immediately, Hensley repeated himself. Ben thought to himself it was typical for Hensley to repeat himself.

Ben stood up and began to navigate through the row of chairs. The cuffs of his worn khakis scraped against the carpeted floor as he made his way toward the front of the room. His head was up but his eyes were lowered. As he passed by Tony, he touched him on the shoulder. Tony lowered his head onto the desk. When Ben moved closer to Hensley, the teacher reached out and wrapped his hand around Ben's arm.

"Really smart, Ben . . . you are just like the rest of 'em."

All of the day's events rushed through Ben's veins. Almost like a reflex, he struck out. He shook Hensley's hand away with one arm and brought his elbow up quickly, catching Hensley square on the jaw. The thud rang out across the room like a bass drum. One person in the class gasped; another whistled and the others just sat there. Hensley raised his arm to protect his face. Ben brought his other hand hard into the teacher's stomach. Breath drained from the teacher and he fell backwards onto the blue carpet.

Ben stared down at the teacher and the reality of what he had just done began to set in. He turned and began to walk toward the door. Everyone stared at him. He walked to the door and for good measure, he slammed it as he exited into a world much different from the one he had been in before.

Open Response Test English

Open Response Tests test your ability to think on high levels and apply your knowledge to a task or a question. There are several things you need to do to be successful on **Open Response**.

1. **Dissect** the question; **know what it is asking you to do**.
2. Use a **prewriting** technique like the **Four Column Method** to plan your answer.
3. Write your answer completely; don't worry about polishing it because it is not a final draft or a publishable piece of writing.
4. Make certain you answer every part of the question.
5. Take time to look over your answer and add anything you may have forgotten.

The Question

The plots of novels are almost always built around conflict. Over the past two weeks, you have had the opportunity to read your book and *Witch Baby*. **Compare** and **contrast** the conflicts in your book and in *Witch Baby*. **Identify** these conflicts. Which is more realistic? Make certain you provide the title of your book and refer to specific scenes.

You can do prewriting below, but answer your question on your own paper . . . remember there are three options here I have taught you:

Venn Diagram
Compare/Contrast Chart
Four Column Method

Student Name: _____

Reading Test: Climactic Moments and Resolutions

When we discussed short stories we talked about how most novels have a climactic moment and a resolution to the story. We said the **climactic moment** is the point where the conflict comes to a head at the end of the book; it is the moment of truth for the characters. We also said the **resolution** is how everything ends up for all the characters in the book. In as much detail as possible, **describe** the **climactic moment** of your novel. Then, explain how everything is resolved for the characters in the book. In other words, **tell** what happens to each of the characters in the story.

Title of Your Book: _____

Answer

Short Story Leads: Hooking the Reader

Begin a story in the middle of a conversation.

“If you don’t put that away right now, you and I are gonna have problems,” Carla snarled as Janet scribbled in her writer’s notebook. Janet stared at her round face, squinting eyes, and muscular arms crossed in front of her chest for just a second, snarled right back at her, and continued to write furiously. All the other students around the playground were quiet.

“Just who do you think you are?” Mrs. Fleming asked as April slammed her notebook on the desk.

Begin with a description:

Millie’s face turned red when she entered the room. Stapled on the walls all around were pictures of her. There she was holding the first place trophy high above her head after her team won the state basketball tournament. Above the dresser was a poster-size photograph of her eighth grade graduation; she was standing proudly at the podium delivering her class president’s speech. To the left of the door was a collage of all her school pictures dating back to first grade, her gap-toothed smile framed by her dark face and tangled brown hair. How had someone she had never seen before created such a monument in her honor?

Jason’s house was a lot like a museum. There were pretty, breakable objects everywhere and you weren’t allowed to touch a thing.

Begin with background information (exposition):

Kevin was accustomed to being first. Since he had started track, a sixth grader on the high school team, he had always been a champion.

As long as she could remember, Dimein’s name had always been mispronounced by the teacher on the first day of school.

Begin with a peek into a character’s mind:

Not this time, you won’t, I thought as I stood there staring into my father’s eyes. I picked up the basketball and began to dribble with my left hand.

How could things have gone so wrong? I asked myself, as I looked out over a sea of laughing faces.

Start with a simile, metaphor, hyperbole, or pun:

They murdered him. (*The Chocolate War*)

Start with a startling statement:

When I was little, I would think of ways to kill my daddy. (*Ellen Foster*)

Start with a question:

What would you do if you were standing in the mall one day minding your own business, when suddenly, the girl who you knew you would spend your whole life with . . . the girl who makes your heart beat like the drumming in Metallica’s best songs . . . the woman whose fingers

could crush you like a bug or hold you like a delicate flower . . . walks by? What would you do if you had never seen her before and did not even know her name? You would do what I did, turn red in the face and tell your posse to quit starin’.

Have you ever eaten one of those sugar-coated pieces of fried dough at the fair? I think they’re called *elephant ears* or some such.

Begin with a quote from a song, movie, famous person or book:

David stared at the poster through the store window. It was a sketch of a man. “Nothing can be loved or hated until it is first understood” was written below the picture, with the name Leonardo DaVinci. If only his parents would follow that DaVinci’s advice.

“*It’s the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine.*” Kevin spun in circles as he listened to his older brother’s old R.E.M. record in the basement. In a time like this, the lyrics seemed particularly suitable.

Leads

“Dewey’s Day at the Campground”

Dewey has been attempting to write the story of an exciting event that happened when he went camping. Look at the leads below and tell which one would engage you at the start making you want to continue reading the piece.

1. Hi. My name is Dewey and I am going to tell you about the time I went camping and had a big adventure.

2. It was a warm day outside when I went camping. The sun was shining brightly and I knew it was going to be a wonderful, wonderful day.

3. That morning I got up and began to get ready for my trip. I put all the sandwiches and drinks in the cooler and got out my maps. I loaded up the back of my pick-up truck and said goodbye to all my girlfriends. This trip was something I had looked forward to for a long time; a chance to get away from everything.

4. “Hello,” I said, as I walked up to the forest ranger. She was standing beside the standard issue red Jeep Cherokee; her blonde hair fell like a waterfall down her shoulders. As she turned, her eyes twinkled like sunlight across an aqua stream.

5. “Take a picture,” she said. “It will last longer.”

6. I could hear the deep, rolling growl as the hulking figure moved around the campsite, his silhouette blocking out the glow of the fire. My heart was beating so loudly I was afraid the massive creature wreaking havoc outside my tent could hear every thump. Suddenly, the giant bear shadow stopped moving and turned to face my tent; as I sat there, my breathing shallow, I began to wonder if this camping trip was such a good idea after all.
It had all started with a fluke. I heard a report on National Public Radio about John Starks, a man who had hiked the entire 1600 miles of the Appalachian Trail alone . . .

Response Group Grade Sheet
Created by Dewey Hensley, South Oldham High School

Each response group is worth **15 points**.

#1 _____ #2 _____ #3 _____

Position _____

Attention _____

Responds _____

On Task _____

Has Paper _____

Total Points:

Short Story Conference Form

1. Does the lead engage the reader? (Audience awareness)

2. Can you find evidence of these things? (Idea development)

- Similes
- Metaphors
- Word pictures
- Mind pictures
- Sensory details
- Climactic moment
- Clincher

3. Is the story organized so you can follow it? Where do you get confused?

Problem Words and Sentences

Short Story Questionnaire

Student Name: _____

Over the past few weeks you have had the chance to examine numerous things that can make a short story effective. You have created characters and “dipped the character in paint.” We have done all these things as part of your preparation:

8 Ways to Reveal Character

Round/Dynamic Characters vs. Flat/Static Characters

Protagonist

Good Leads

Conflicts

Background Information (Exposition)

Point of View

Vivid Verbs

Exploding a Moment

Snapshots

Thoughtshots

Similes and Metaphors

Sensory Details

Concrete Writing

Climactic Moment

Reflective Endings

Story Hill (also plot line, character wheel, plot brainstorm)

Answer the following questions . . . the easier they are to answer, the better your short story must be.

Questions to Answer or Issues to Consider

1. Have you created a **round/dynamic character** to serve as your **protagonist**? Explain how your protagonist is “well-rounded”; how do they “change” in the story?

2. Discuss at least **three ways** you have revealed your character. Does your character seem realistic because you are “showing” them or do you “tell” your character to the reader?

3. What kinds of **conflicts** appear in your short story?

4. What is the **point of view** of your short story? Pick out three **vivid verbs** you use to show your story.

5. Draw a **story hill** on the back just like the one on the board and use it to briefly tell the plot of your story. Does your story seem really organized?

6. Do you slow down your **climactic moment** and describe it with such detail that it comes to life? Are there more details you could add to your climactic moment?

7. Write out two examples of **similes** or **metaphors** you use in your story.

8. Describe one place in your story where you use a **snapshot** or a **thoughtshot**.

9. Does your story start out right in the action? In other words, does the **lead** hook the reader?

10. Does the ending of your story tie everything together or have some sense of reflection that leaves the reader thinking about your story?

11. What is the title of your short story? Does it hook the reader or is it a very general title that is a cliché?

If you had trouble answering these questions, then your short story could possibly be missing some important ingredients to make it successful. Figure out if there are things you could do to add these things to your story.

The Snapshot: SHOWING Pictures in Your Writing

A **snapshot** is one way a writer can **develop an idea** in a piece of writing. It is showing the reader a “photograph” of the scene. It involves the writer taking time to show the picture through **sensory details, concrete words, and poetic language** (similes, for example).

Example #1

(an excerpt from page two of a memoir about my mother)

I caught the basketball as it ricocheted off the table sending glass flying all through the room. The crash was so loud it was like two cars colliding. Suddenly, my mother swooped in from the kitchen. She stood there and looked around the room. **The white pieces of her favorite lamp were strewn all across the unfinished, wooden floor. The lamp shade had fallen onto my youngest brother’s head; he stood there wearing it like a giant sombrero pulled down over his eyes. He was very still, but I was certain I could hear his small whimpers echoing inside the shade. His blue UK tee shirt was wrinkled and faded. To her right she could see the electric cord stretched across the cheap brown table; large red chunks of ceramic clung to the wire. The black cord was like a noose swinging back and forth with the bulb dangling at its end.**

I watched my mother’s eyes slowly survey the entire room until her glare rested on me. **The orange basketball I held in my hands was too small to hide behind but way too large to make disappear. I held it in front of me like a big sign saying, “Why yes, I’m guilty.” The red University of Louisville sweatshirt was too small so my belly button peaked out from the gap between my shirt and jeans. The buzz cut made my head resemble a large thumb and my slumping shoulders left me standing there like a question mark. I swallowed hard and began to click through the Rolodex of excuses filed away in my nine-year-old brain . . .**

.

Example #2

The lamp fell and broke into a million pieces. My mother walked into the room and surveyed the damage. She looked all around and could see the big mess my brother and I had made. I knew I was in trouble.

Mini Lesson Using the Snapshot

Snapshot: A picture in words; you show details to readers so they can see the entire scene.

Instructions: Read the following passage. It is clearly an example of Mr. Hensley's poor writing skills. Obviously in each of the paragraphs, he is "telling" rather than "showing" the scene. Please rewrite one of the passages in your own words so that you are creating a snapshot in the mind of the reader.

Passages:

1. Paul walked into the large, scary room. He stopped; his breath seemed to escape him. He saw the entire scene. It was filled with death and destruction. It was a haunted house, no doubt.
2. The policeman knew trouble was awaiting him. He kicked open the door and burst into the room. He saw a bunch of people waiting behind the door and they were surprised. He arrested all of them.
3. Janie's room was just the way she had pictured it. When Susie walked into her best friend's room she saw a lot of neat stuff. It was just like her friend.

Your Rewrite:

Examples of Snapshots and Thoughtshots

Snapshot

Stan walked back onto the court. Coach Allen's words echoed in his ears, "Give Paul the ball and clear out of the way. He can hit it." And coach was right. Paul was the star and everyone in the gymnasium knew it. Paul was a tall, muscular kid, the same age as Stan, with short brown hair and broad shoulders. Ever since elementary school Junior League basketball, he had been the center of attention; he was Mr. Clutch, Mr. Superstar . . . Mr. Perfect. In many ways, Stan was glad Paul was the hero, but in one way he just wished that Coach had the same confidence in him. But, with only eleven seconds left in the game and the SOHS Dragons down by one point on their own floor, the game would be in Paul's hands. And most likely, he would be a hero again.

The play started out just like it was designed. Kevin, the point guard, broke hard off a screen toward the sideline. Jesse, the team's center, inbounded the ball to him and made a cut to the low post. Stan's job was to set a weak side screen for Paul and roll to the wing on the weak side of the floor while the ball was being brought in bounds. As soon as he had heard Jesse yell "Break" before tossing the ball to Kevin, he had made his move. He caught Paul's defender not looking and screened him really hard; he could tell he had actually surprised him by the player's groan. After the screen he rolled to the open area of the floor and looked to see if the man covering him would follow. That's when he saw it. **Number 22, the tall, blonde haired forward with droopy shorts who had been guarding him did not follow at all; instead, he bumped Paul and stayed right with him. Number 44, the player Stan had just screened, rushed up by Paul as well. Both players hovered around Paul, their hands attached to him like they were glued onto the uniform. The Wildcats had a game plan; they were not going to allow Paul to get the ball. Stan looked out at the top of the key. Kevin was holding the ball over his head, obviously looking to pass the ball to Paul. Paul attempted to speed up and move away from the defenders, but they were with him. His face revealed his frustration as he showed his hands to receive the pass; however, 44 rushed up into the passing lane, his arm extended, making it impossible for Paul to receive the pass. Then Stan looked into Kevin's face. He could see his teammate's red hair falling down over his sweat-covered face; and he could see his eyes staring directly at him like he was trying to make a difficult decision.** Should he give the ball to Stan?

Thoughtshots: A Peek Into a Character's Mind

A **thoughtshot** is a concrete way to reveal to the reader what a character is thinking. It can be an important way to reveal personality, motivation, and even information to the reader. It serves to make the actors in a story or personal narrative realistic by **showing** what they are thinking. It is yet another way to “show, don’t tell.”

Example #1

As soon as I walked into the room I began to flip through the memory book in my mind. **I could remember playing rummy with her on that old, rickety table. I always knew she was cheating, but I never said anything. I could recall the way she would make peanut butter and syrup sandwiches for me, always careful to cut them in small triangles. I could even remember her sitting on the old sofa, grilling me about my girlfriend when I came home from college. She always wanted what was best for me; and standing there in the room where she spent the last months of her life, I realized just how selfish I had been. I had allowed my life to become so hectic, so lost in a barrage of wild friends, ATM access codes and career advancements that I had not been there when she needed me the most. I guess, unfortunately, I had always wanted what was best for me too.** I walked through the living room toward the back bedrooms to get a box of books from my old room.

Example #2

I walked into the room and began to feel terrible. All I could think about was how I had not come to visit her enough when she was sick. I went back into the bedroom area to get an old box of books.

Ping Pong Dialogue vs. Descriptive Dialogue

Ping Pong Dialogue

“Did you see that?” Tony asked excitedly.

“I sure did,” Janet replied quickly.

“I have never seen anything like that before,” Tony firmly said.

Janet responded, “Me either. What do you think we ought to do?”

“The first thing we should do is get our butts out of here!” he yelled.

“I agree with that.”

They took off in the car back toward the town away from the lights they had just seen.

Descriptive Dialogue

“Did you see that?” Tony yelled as he slammed on the brakes of his Mercury. Janet was nearly thrown into the windshield, but Tony’s strong hand against her sleeve held her back. The bright lights from the night sky lit up the car like a neon sign.

“How could I miss it?” she stuttered. Both of them stared out the window toward the hillside. Covered Bridge Road was mostly farmland and hills; it wound like a black ribbon from Prospect to Crestwood. Few cars ever traveled it, especially at night. Now, with bright lights hovering mysteriously over the hill and the car, it was as bright as daylight. Every crook and crevice of the road was illuminated.

Tony pulled Janet across the seat closer to him. She could smell his aftershave and feel the vinyl of his varsity basketball jacket against her bare arms.

“I have never seen anything like that before,” he whispered.

“Me either,” she replied. Her voice was high pitched from fear. “What do you think we ought to do?”

Suddenly Tony grabbed the gearshift next to her leg. “The first thing we are going to do is get our butts out of here!”

Janet agreed. Tony quickly shifted into reverse and the car began to move backwards. Janet could smell the burning rubber of the tires as Tony turned the car around and headed back toward town.

“You Talkin’ to Me?” What Are the Rules for Quotation Marks?

Use quotation marks to show the exact words of a character.

“I don’t know when he will be back,” Jeff said as he stared down at Cindy’s feet. She bent down slightly to catch his eyes. “Yes, you do, Jeff. Don’t you lie to me.”

New speaker means new paragraph.

I knew about Frankie and all the trouble he had at Glendale. He had spent more time in detention than Algebra class. “So, Frankie, are you trying to be the valedictorian or what?” I whispered to him as he sat there in the library staring intently at a book of poetry. He did not reply at first. He just remained focused. I stood up and shook my head. “You sure are different than what I expected,” I said.

“People change,” he said. “Maybe you should think about it.”

“Yeah, right,” I mumbled as I made my way toward the library doors.

Quotation marks stop when the direct words stop. They start up again when the direct quote begins again.

“I can’t tell you,” Paula whispered, “because this could be really dangerous.”

Punctuation goes inside the quotation marks in dialogue.

She growled across the room, “Shut up.”

Don’t use quotation marks with indirect quotes.

William said he wanted to stop the violence, but he was too late.

Other times to use quotation marks . . .

To place emphasis on a word or phrase: Johnny was too “uptown” for the rest of us.

To indicate a short story title or title of a poem, song, or chapter:

“Feedsack”

“To an Athlete Dying Young”

“Stowawitch”

The name of the book or cd these came from would be underlined or italicized.

Quotation Marks Quiz

Properly punctuate the following sentences:

Paul said he wasn't sorry for getting his girlfriend a box of kleenex for Valentine's Day.

Don't worry, Jimmy said. He stood there waiting for Jenny to say she was all right.

Frankie said, I am proud of you. Thank you for the kind words, Cindy replied.

Connie says she is a great volleyball player Bill said So let's get her on our team.

Carl said he was in a bad mood. What's the reason Jimmy asked.

Rewrite the following Ping Pong Dialogue into Descriptive Dialogue. Punctuate it correctly.

I think the Dolphins are the best team ever. Mr. Eckels said.

I disagree with you Pete replied angrily. Don't mess with the Dolphins Eckels responded.

Pete said he would punch him if he didn't shut up.

Bring it on, Eckels said. His face looked really mad.

They began to fight. Eckels made Pete cry. He said he was sorry, and they became friends again.

Quotation Marks Quiz *SAMPLE RESPONSE*

Properly punctuate the following sentences:

1. Paul said he wasn't sorry for getting his girlfriend a box of kleenex for Valentine's Day.
2. "Don't worry," Jimmy said. He stood there waiting for Jenny to say she was all right.
3. Frankie said, "I am proud of you."
"Thank you for the kind words," Cindy replied.
4. "Connie says she is a great volleyball player."
Bill said, "So let's get her on our team."
5. Carl said he was in a bad mood. "What's the reason?" Jimmy asked.

Rewrite the following Ping Pong Dialogue into Descriptive Dialogue. Punctuate it correctly.

"I think the Dolphins are the best team ever," Mr. Eckels said. He sat there at the lunch table with his fork pointed at Pete's chest. The two had argued this point every day since the start of football season.

"I disagree with you!" Pete shouted, his face transformed into a mask of anger. His Cleveland Browns sweatshirt seemed to glow brown and orange in the lights of the lunch room.

Eckels responded with a growl. "Don't mess with the Dolphins."

Pete stood up from his seat. His fists were clinched and the muscles in his neck were strained. "If you don't shut up talkin' about how good the Dolphins are, I am going to punch you." He leaned over the table toward Eckels. He looked like a tiger ready to pounce.

"Bring it on," Eckels snarled.

Pete leaped toward the teacher, but Eckels was ready. He caught the 104-pound kid in midair and pinned him to the table.

Everything stopped. Eckels stood there over Pete holding him down. Both of them looked at each other closely. Eckels thought about how silly violence is. Pete immediately realized just how dumb arguing over two losing football teams can be.

Suddenly Pete and Eckels both started laughing loudly. Eckels helped him up and they slapped high fives. In that moment both of them said they were sorry and it would never happen again.

Editing Quiz

Student name _____

Date _____

Edit the passage below for these things:

Comma mistakes

Problem words

End-line punctuation

Any other editing mistakes you find

Circle all mistakes and correct them by adding the punctuation or rewriting the problem section or word correctly below the line so anyone reading this will know you are correcting the mistake. To get full credit you must circle *and* correct the mistake.

Passing

It was Saturday September 10 1999 when the shot heard around the world sounded.

Billy was sitting in the kitchen eating a sandwich bigger than his head when his Dad yelled at him from outside “Are you going too play, or just sit their like your too weak to shoot some hoops.”

Bill continued to eat but his dad’s words had begun to sting him.

Hear he was, a junior on the boy’s basketball team at his school, and he still couldn’t beat his father at a game of one on one.

His Dad was always taunting him, to.

He couldn’t get threw a summer day without his dad a former high school player himself challenging him to a game of basketball.

Their garage and driveway was just like Rupp Arena sometimes.

“Billy you have to except it I am just better than you” his dad would say after pounding him on the court.

The real problem why his dad would never quite the trashing talk was Billy had never beaten him in a game.

There games were legendary in the neighborhood.

People would come around to see who would win and they would just yell and scream the entire time.

Some of them yelled for Billy and some of the older folks screamed for his dad.

Billy was taller faster quicker and in better shape than his father but he still couldn't hit the big shot to beat him.

As he sat there at the large round wooden table Billy said "I now I can beat him this time. I am better, and stronger."

He put down his sandwich wiped his mouth and he headed out the door toward the driveway.

When he stepped outside the door he could here the ball bouncing on the pavement.

"It is about time" his dad laughed.

"Your ready too play and I ready to kick you're butt".

Billy watched as his father stepped back and lifted the ball up above his head.

His dad had always been a fit man so it was no surprise when he leaped into the air and let the ball fly toward the basket.

It went threw the basket which was perfectly placed above the garage door and it fell to the white driveway with a echoing thud.

Paul Billy's friend and next door neighbor immediately came running from across the street.

Billy could tell others would here them playing and make there way over.

It wouldn't effect him this time.

He new he would beat his dad for the first time on this warm windy September night.

"We are losing are sunlight Buddyboy" his dad said. "We had better get started." He threw the ball hard into Billy's hands. "Your first."

Billy took the pass and stared at his father there in front of him.

He was dressed in his usual baggy white University of Kentucky tee shirt.

His blue basketball shorts were clinging to his thin frame.

His father was hunched over in a defensive position.

His eyes were focused on Billy's New York Knicks basketball jersey and he had his hands stretched out like wings.

They began to play.

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