Analyzing Plot in Short Story Lesson Plan

Standards

1. **RL.9-10.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

2. **RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

3. **L.9-10.6** Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Procedures

This lesson should be done as you read or after you read a short story. It can be done as part of a whole class reading or done as an individual reading, depending on the skill level and knowledge of students.

1. Discuss plot.

2. Fill out the chart.

3. Discuss student discoveries with a small group and/or full class discussion.

4. Optional: Write a summary

Assessment

The chart is an excellent opportunity to practice and discuss the lesson’s stated objectives. In most cases it should be considered a formative assignment.
Authors often follow a similar plot structure in order to pull the reader along and to make stories more interesting. Fill in the graphic organizer with the appropriate events or elements. What do you think is the author’s message or theme?

Title: ____________________  Author: ____________________

Rising Action

Exposition

Climax

Resolution

Cast of Characters

Message or Theme
Symbolism in Short Stories Lesson Plan

1. **RL.9-10.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

2. **RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

3. **RL.9-10.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

4. **RL.11-12.3** Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
   
   If you choose to do the optional writing assignment:

5. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

6. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

7. **W.9-10.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Discussion Notes for Symbolism**

1. Symbolism allows people to communicate beyond the limits of language.

2. Humans use symbolism all the time. Words themselves are mere symbols for something else.

3. A **symbol** is a person, place, or object that stands for something beyond itself.

4. National, religious, and cultural symbols have standard interpretations as well as a personal significance for each individual. For example, the American flag symbolizes the United States of America. The personal significance, however, varies. A U.S. army veteran cherishes its meaning. A terrorist, on the other hand, finds it despicable. A green piece of paper with George Washington’s picture on it symbolizes one dollar. A billionaire considers it chump change. A beggar considers it an elusive treasure.

5. Symbols can be classified as Universal or Contextual. A symbol is universal when it is a symbol regardless of the context. A symbol is contextual when it’s a symbol in a certain context, such as a literary work.

**Procedures**

1. Discuss symbolism (see notes above)

2. As you read or after you read a short story, identify symbols and discuss them

3. Fill out symbolism chart (while reading or after reading; individually or in groups)

4. Discuss student findings

5. Optional: Write symbolism analysis (rubric included)
Symbol Chart

The title of this story is: __________________________________________

The author of this story is: _______________________________________

Writers often use symbols in the forms of people, places, things, and events. These symbols stand for both themselves and something beyond themselves. Fill out the graphic organizer below to gain a better understanding of how the author uses symbols to convey meaning in the story. First, copy a short passage from the story into the first column. Next, locate a key symbol from the passage and write it in the second column. Lastly, write the meaning of the symbol in the third column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage from story</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What is the overall message of the story?

________________________________________________________________________
### Symbolism Analysis Writing Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content/Analysis</strong></td>
<td>The writer analyzes and interprets the story’s symbols correctly and relates them to a theme in the story. The analysis goes beyond the superficial. The writer uses well-developed, relevant evidence to support his or her conclusions with intelligent, thought-provoking analysis.</td>
<td>The writer analyzes and interprets the story’s symbols correctly and relates them to a theme in the story. The analysis goes beyond the superficial. The writer uses evidence to support his or her conclusions but there may be an example or two of not relevant evidence or analysis.</td>
<td>The writer analyzes and interprets the story’s symbols correctly and relates them to a theme in the story. The writer uses evidence to support his or her conclusions but the analysis is shallow or the writer’s conviction is wishy-washy.</td>
<td>There is an attempt to analyze the story’s symbols correctly and relate them to the theme. There’s an attempt to use relevant evidence. There’s an attempt to analyze. Unfortunately, the attempts are mostly unsuccessful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>The essay looks like an essay. There is an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Each body paragraph contains a main idea that is supported in a logical manner using evidence and analysis/logic/insight.</td>
<td>The essay looks like an essay. There is an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Each body paragraph contains a main idea that is mostly supported in a logical manner using evidence and analysis/logic/insight.</td>
<td>The essay looks like an essay. There is an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Each body paragraph contains a main idea that is not supported in a logical manner using evidence and analysis/logic/insight.</td>
<td>The essay looks like an essay. There is an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td>All quotations are set up and formatted correctly.</td>
<td>All quotations are set up and formatted correctly.</td>
<td>All quotations are set up and formatted correctly.</td>
<td>All quotations are not set up and formatted correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
<td>There are no mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.</td>
<td>There are 1-2 mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.</td>
<td>There are 3-4 mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.</td>
<td>There are 5-6 mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyzing Style and Mood Short Story Lesson Plan

Standards

1. **RL.9-10.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

2. **RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

3. **L.9-10.5** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

4. **L.9-10.5a** Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.

5. **L.9-10.5b** Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

6. **L.9-10.6** Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Procedures

This lesson should be done as you read or after you read a short story. It can be done as part of a whole class reading or done as an individual reading, depending on the skill level and knowledge of students.

1. Discuss style and mood
2. Fill out the chart.
3. Discuss student discoveries with a small group and/or full class discussion.

Assessment

The chart is an excellent opportunity to practice and discuss the lesson’s stated objectives. In most cases it should be considered a formative assignment.
Writing Styles

The title of this story is: __________________________________________

The author if this story is: _________________________________________

Writers sometimes use a distinct style in order to create a particular mood or “feel” for their stories. They often do this in order to enhance a theme or simply to create a more entertaining piece. Some writers use vivid imagery to create a strong setting. The chart below includes some elements that make up a writer’s style. Fill in the chart with examples from the story that you have just read. Then, describe how that particular element contributed to the story. Finally, describe the overall mood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element of Style</th>
<th>Example from the story</th>
<th>Effect on the story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diction: the writer’s choice of words.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√ Does the author use words with a negative or positive connotation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√ Does the author exaggerate certain things?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figures of Speech.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√ Does the author use figurative language?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√ Does the author draw any analogies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√ What senses are appealed to?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√ Does the author use vivid imagery?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the overall mood of the story?
The Hero’s Journey Lesson Plan

- **RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **RL.9-10.3** Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

**Procedures**

2. Take Notes
3. On the back of the notes/chart, choose a movie, short story or novel you’ve read as a class or that the class is familiar with and instruct students to trace the hero’s journey using the story’s main character.
4. Discuss

**Optional:** Watch the video clip first (it’s short). Then pass out the note-taking circle. Then watch the video again, pausing from time to time.

**Assessment:** You can collect the notes, if you wish, as a formative assignment. Have students take notes and take a quiz after a few days for a summative or formative assignment.
Directions: Label each of the 12 steps of the hero’s journey on this chart. Include number, titles (status quo, return, etc.), and definitions of each step. Also label the special world and ordinary world and include short definitions. The information for this chart comes from Matthew Winkler’s “What Makes a Hero?” on TedEd.

Answer Key for Notes and Quiz on The Hero’s Journey from Matthew Winkler’s “What Makes a Hero?” on TedEd.
1. The hero receives a mysterious challenge or call to adventure.
2. The hero nearly dies or dies in the crisis.
3. The hero faces his toughest test in the approach.
4. The hero faces many trials, or tests and challenges.
5. The hero requires assistance, usually from an older, wiser person.
6. The hero gains a treasure, usually knowledge or special power.
7. The hero’s new life is not the same as his old life.
8. The hero travels from his ordinary world to the special world in the departure.
Hero’s Journey

The protagonist in many short stories follows the pattern of the hero’s journey.

**Directions.** The steps of the hero’s journey are listed in the left column. In the right column provide an example for each step of the hero’s journey with a short explanation. Cite page numbers where appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps in the Journey</th>
<th>Example and Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call to Adventure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Departure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crisis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status Quo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Realism in Literature

Remember when you were a kid and had a crush on a hot cartoon character? Then you got older and had a crush on a movie star? Then you got older, had a crush on your best friend's girlfriend, stole her, married her, and had three kids? That's kind of how realism in literature developed.

ELA Common Core Standards Covered

Teaching Realism in Literature and instructing students to find aspects of Realism in the literature as they read cover the following ELA Common Core Standards. You can also knock out some Writing Common Core Standards as well with the lesson plans below.

- RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- W.9-10.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Procedures

1. Hand out notes/Take notes on Realism. Student-ready, teacher-ready notes are included.
2. Read the work and discuss it.
3. Annotate the work (optional). This can be done individually or in groups of 3-4.
4. Fill out chart. This can be done individually or in groups of 3-4, depending on the class.
5. Discuss findings.

Evaluation

1. The chart should be thoroughly completed with insights that go beyond the obvious.
2. Write a paragraph or essay (depending on the class) explaining how the work in question is an example of Realism and/or how it’s not an example of Realism. The specific assignment will be determined on how well the class understands the material.
3. Either assignment may be repeated until students demonstrate mastery.

What is Realism in Literature?
A break from Romanticism, Realism is any effort to portray life as it truly is. In the middle of the 19th century, kings and queens, warriors and knights, demonic cats, ghosts, sea creatures, and monsters gave way to farmers, merchants, lawyers, laborers, and bakers. Realism in literature was part of a wider movement in the arts to focus on ordinary people and events.

The following writers find themselves oft anthologized in high school and middle school texts:

- Ambrose Bierce
- Kate Chopin
- Stephen Crane
- W.E.B. DuBois
- Mary Wilkins Freeman
- Hamlin Garland
- Henry James
- Jack London
- Mark Twain
- Charles Dickens
- Emily Bronte
- George Eliot
- Oscar Wilde
- John Steinbeck

**Characteristics of Realistic Fiction**

These characteristics are dead giveaways that you’re reading realism:

- Realists take their subject matter from ordinary life. Realists were influenced by the spread of democracy in Europe and North America. Middle and lower class citizens were becoming increasingly important. Detailed settings became important as a means of establishing the realistic nature of main characters and places. Dialect became popular as did an emphasis on local color.

- Realists placed an emphasis on characters. As democracy spread, so did the importance of the individual. As individuals became more important in the “real” world, characters became more important in Realist literature. Character, not plot, is the essence of Realism.

- Realists concern themselves with ethical issues. As with all literature, the conflict often involves a moral dilemma faced by one of its participants. With Realism, this dilemma has to be portrayed accurately, honestly, and in detail. Realists avoid preachiness.
Realism in Literature

**Directions:** As you read “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County,” identify elements of Realism. In the left column, write the specific passage that exemplifies Realism. In the middle column, write which aspect of Realism it exemplifies. In the right column, write how the specific passage adds to the overall meaning of the work. Use your notes for help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Example</th>
<th>Element of Realism</th>
<th>Passage Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>“There was a feller here once by the name of Jim Smiley, in the winter of ’49 or maybe it was the spring of ’50 I don’t recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or the other is because I remember the big flume wasn’t finished when he first came to the camp; but any way...”</td>
<td>Dialect became popular as did an emphasis on local color. Realists placed an emphasis on characters.</td>
<td>Simon Wheeler speaks as one who actually lives in an old mining camp. Although the stories Simon Wheeler narrates are entertaining, they are primarily entertaining because of the manner in which Wheeler tells them.</td>
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<td>Simon Wheeler speaks as one who actually lives in an old mining camp. Although the stories Simon Wheeler narrates are entertaining, they are primarily entertaining because of the manner in which Wheeler tells them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the bar-room stove of the old, dilapidated tavern in the ancient mining camp of Angel's, and I noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance. He roused up and gave me good-day.”</td>
<td>Realists take their subject matter from ordinary life</td>
<td>Here we have an ordinary man in an ordinary mining camp telling a ridiculous story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solitry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it, and -take any side you please, as I was just telling you. If there was a horse-race, you'd find him flush, or you'd find him busted at the end of it; if there was a dog-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a cat-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a chicken-fight, he'd bet on it”</td>
<td>Realists placed an emphasis on characters.</td>
<td>There’s not a lot of plot in this story. Why is it still read, then? It’s the characters—Jim Smiley and the man who tells his tale, Simon Wheeler.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for himself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him, and he had genius I know it, because he hadn't had no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them circumstances, if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n, and the way it turned out.”</td>
<td>Character, not plot, is the essence of Realism.</td>
<td>In this passage, the character is a dog, a “genius dog” who wins every fight but one. It’s Wheeler’s reaction to this dog that strikes humor in the reader’s soul. It’s probably not a coincidence that the dog’s name is Andrew Jackson, famed for his appeal to the common man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the door I met the sociable Wheeler returning, and he button-holed me and recommenced: “Well, thish-yr Smiley had a yeller one-eyed cow that didn't have no tail, only jest a short stump like a bannanner, and “Oh! hang Smiley and his afflicted cow!” I muttered, good-naturedly, and bidding the old gentleman good-day, I departed.</td>
<td>Dialect became popular as did an emphasis on local color.</td>
<td>This final passage contrasts Wheeler’s manner of speech with the story’s narrator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For a complete list of lesson plans, check out the ELA Common Core Lesson Plans catalogue.

Teacher Ready. Student Ready.