

**ACADEMIC STUDIES**

**ENGLISH**

**Support Materials and Exercises  
for**

**IAU - READING COMPREHENSION  
PART C : THE SHORT STORY  
(INCLUDING MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FABLES)**



**SUMMER 1999**

**IAU READING COMPREHENSION  
PART C : THE SHORT STORY**

**ACADEMIC ENGLISH**

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## OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

1. recognize and read with understanding and enjoyment a variety of written genres.

TEACHING POINTS		Level	
Journalism	1	Parts of newspapers (e.g. editorial, features, hard news, etc.)	7
	2	Masthead	7
	3	Attention getters: headlines, placement, fonts, photos, colour	7
	4	Recognize fact and opinion (objective vs. subjective)	7
	5	Pyramid style of writing	7
	6	Writing leads (who, what, when, where, why, how)	7
	7	Parts of magazines: table of contents	7
	8	editorials	7
	9	feature stories	7
	10	columns	7
	11	ads and abbreviation, etc.	7
Short Story	1	Narrator: (point of view) 1st, 3rd limited, 3rd omniscient	7
	2		
	3	Plot: introduction, rising action, climax, denouement	7
	4	Character: central/minor; round /flat);methods of development	7
	5	Setting/mood	7
	6	Theme: central message or lesson	7
	7	Also myth, legend, fable	7
Poetry	1	Style: traditional & modern (free & blank verse)	8&9
	8		
	9	Types: ballad, limerick, narrative, sonnet, other	8&9
	2	Rhyme and rhythm (in general)	8&9

	0		
	2	Literary devices: simile, metaphor, personification	8&9
	1		
	2	alliteration, onomatopoeia	8&9
	2		
Non-fiction	2	define essay and prose; contrast with fiction	8
	3		
	2	Types: diary/journal, autobiography, biography, memoir, essay	8
	4		
Drama	2	Special Conventions: e.g. stage directions, dialogue/monologue,	9
	5		
	2	scenes and acts	9
	6		
	2	Plot, character, setting, theme in a one act play or modern play	9
	7		
Novel	2	Narrator: 1st, 3rd limited, 3rd omniscient	9
	8		
	2	Plot: introduction, rising action, climax, denouement	9
	9		
	3	Character: central, minor (round, flat)	9
	0		
	3	Setting/mood	9
	1		
	3	Theme: central message or lesson	9
	2		
Note: Continue to build the comprehension skills presented in BAU_ENG 3.1 -3.7.			

### **NOTE TO FACILITATORS AND LEARNERS:**

1. This module presents information and exercises to accompany the objectives of IAU-ENG 3.2 : READING COMPREHENSION.
2. Facilitators are free to use any support materials appropriate to their learners' needs.
3. Additional resource materials will probably be required for those wanting more information on this topic or for those needing more practice mastering certain areas. Reading materials can be drawn from any source and should be chosen to meet the individual interests and needs of each learner.
4. Alternate support materials may be appropriate. The Internet provides a wide variety of written materials, both the printed word and literature, at many reading levels.
5. Learners should participate in daily silent reading practice.
6. Learners should be encouraged to read all types of materials so they can develop their critical faculties for deciding which are examples of good writing, which deserve to be classified as literature, and which are unacceptable.
7. The purpose of reading literature is for more than investigating plot, character, setting or theme. Literature can be an invaluable tool for providing learners with writing models which they can emulate, often without conscious effort.
8. Reading widely is the basis for acquiring the broad general knowledge so important to future learning situations. It also provides a platform for discussions of life experiences, values, morality, decision-making, and many other topics useful to adult learners.
9. It is the learner's responsibility to search out additional reading materials to supplement the practice work included in this module by consulting with his/her facilitator.
10. Do **NOT** write in this module. Please make your notes and complete the exercises in your own notebooks so that other learners may also use these booklets.

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# THE SHORT STORY

The short story is a narrative which has the following characteristics:

1. It is short. The length is usually less than 15, 000 words; it can be read in one sitting.
2. It has unity. Short stories are so tightly organized that they can focus on only one defining moment in the life of one character, one event in time, one setting, or mood.
3. It is concise. No words are wasted; no incident is unimportant. Small details, which may seem trivial, all serve a purpose.

The short story is a newer form of literature than other genres, like drama, poetry, or novels. Edgar Allan Poe, who wrote his tales of horror in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is usually acknowledged as one of the first short story writers. Since then, many writers have chosen the genre to express their ideas. Each writer zeroes in on different elements of the story. Some emphasize theme, and use the short story to teach a moral or a lesson. Others create atmosphere in their stories, or develop character or setting. Obviously, this form of literature is quite flexible.

Just because short stories are short doesn't necessarily mean that they are easy to write. This genre packs a lot into a short format.

At this point, you should have read the unit on reading narratives which presented the basic elements of **plot, character, setting/mood, theme, and narrator**. The following notes explain how each of these features relate to the structure of a short story and suggest particular stories to read which illustrate these features.

## 1. CHARACTER

The number of characters in a short story is limited. There may be only one *main character* (protagonist). We usually meet this character at a crucial point in his life. Because short stories are *short*, there is no time to fully develop the character, so we may only come to know one or a few of his/her qualities. A skillful author can create a main character who is believable.

The other people in the short story are usually *minor characters* who tend to be flat and one-sided. However, these characters are there for definite reasons. Perhaps the writer uses them to highlight the main character's personality, to introduce complications to the plot, or to explain events the narrator could not see.. Remember that nothing is wasted in a short story. - no character or detail of plot is there without a reason.

Also remember the five ways that character can be developed. Short story writers effectively employ all of these methods to "round out" their characters.

### Exercise 1

Suggested short story to read for character. "Charles" by Shirley Jackson. If you cannot locate a copy of "Charles" (or other suggested stories in this unit), ask your instructor to help you find a short story that emphasizes the appropriate element.

1. Review the 5 ways of developing character and apply each to the character of Laurie in this short story. Discuss your answer with your instructor, and/or check the answers in the answer key.

### 2. PLOT

The short story has one main plot or series of events. There is no room for sub-plots (other story lines). The plot usually follows the structure of introduction, rising, action, climax, and dénouement. In the introduction, the main character(s) appear, and the setting is established. Then, we are plunged directly into the rising action, involving one main conflict, leading to the climax. If there is a dénouement, we find out what happens to the characters, but the excitement of the story has passed. Some of the best short stories end at the climax, leaving us wondering about the concluding details. A short story which ends with the climax is said to have an *open-ended plot*.

### Exercise 2

1. Typical plot structure: Read "The Movies Come to Gull Point" by Will R.



Bird. Divide the story into plot sections (introduction, rising action, climax, dénouement) to correspond to the diagram of plot structure.

2. Open-ended plot: Read “All Summer in a Day” by Ray Bradbury  
Follow the instructions for plot diagram in question # 1.

### 3. SETTING

Setting involves time and place. These can be stated directly or implied, through clues.

The short story usually covers a short time span, a few hours or one day. You should also look for clues to determine what year (era or even century) the story is set in. These clues can include details such as style of clothing, the way a character speaks, the absence of modern inventions, or the presence of futuristic devices.

To determine where a story is set, if it is not stated, use hints such as details of landscape, local customs, dialect (speech patterns of a certain region). It is unusual to have several settings in a short story because of its limited length.

### Exercise 3

1. Look again at the two short stories from Exercise 2, “The Movies Come to Gull Point” and “All Summer in a Day”.
  - a. What is the setting of each story?
  - b. Were the settings stated directly, or did you have to “investigate” a little to determine them?
  - c. If you had to search for clues, give some examples of the details you found (local colour).

#### 4. MOOD/ATMOSPHERE

The mood in a short story is created by a combination of details of setting, characters, and plot. When we finish reading, we can usually state whether the story was suspenseful or entertaining, gloomy or upbeat. One mood predominates; there is not time for changes in the story's atmosphere because of the limitations of length for this genre.

Certain authors are known to favour one mood or another in their stories. Edgar Allan Poe is well-known as a writer of suspenseful horror stories filled with mysterious, dark characters. If you enjoy light, humourous stories, you may want to read Stephen Leacock's work.

#### Exercise 4

Read, "Hurry, Hurry!" by Ethel Wilson

1. What is the mood (atmosphere) of this story? Make a list of details from the story which contribute to creating this atmosphere.

#### 5. THEME

The theme of a story is the central idea. Short stories concentrate on one theme, usually some truth about human nature, which can be explicit (directly stated) or implicit (implied). A good way to think about *theme* is to ask yourself, "What lesson about human life is the author trying to teach me?"

The French writer, Guy de Maupassant, favoured stories which teach moral lessons which are fairly obvious to the reader. Sometimes the theme is more difficult to identify.

In contrast, stories written for entertainment don't always contain meaningful themes.

### Exercise 5

Read, “The Piece of String” by Guy de Maupassant.

1. What is the theme of this story? Explain your answer.

### 6. NARRATOR

Review the notes in the reading comprehension section on reading narratives to refresh your memory about 1<sup>st</sup> person, 3<sup>rd</sup> person limited, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient narrators. Writers carefully create the narrator who will tell their story so that the reader will understand the story in a particular way.

### Exercise 6

1. Who is the narrator in each of the short stories you have read so far? (“Charles”, “The Movies Come to Gull Point”, “All Summer in a Day”, “Hurry, Hurry!”, and “The Piece of String”)
2. What is the point of view of each of these narrators? (First person, third person, etc.)
3. What effect does this particular type of narrator have on the story and/or the reader’s understanding of it?

### TIPS FOR READING COMPREHENSION IN THE SHORT STORY

- ⇒ It will sometimes help you to understand a short story better if you take the time to find out about the author’s life and time period. Not only will you pick up interesting details, but you will also gain valuable knowledge of history which can only be to your benefit in all your studies. You may also find out what the writer cared about and how he thought about the world.

- ⇒ Pay attention to the title of the short story, which may offer insight into the theme or the writer’s intended focus in the story.
- ⇒ Because of the time and length restrictions in the short story, there is no wasted detail. Read carefully and make note of unusual details in the plot or characterization which may strike you as being odd or confusing. These details will undoubtedly be explained later in the story, and may serve as valuable clues to understanding or solving a mystery. Ask yourself leading questions about these clues. Why are they there? What significance do they have? For the same reason, be on the lookout for ideas and words that are repeated.
- ⇒ Don’t forget literary devices (explained in the Poetry Unit). Figures of speech add rich detail to descriptions in all prose, as well as in poetry. Watch for images that are repeated or that are related to each other in some way. The story “A Sound of Thunder” is an excellent example of effective use of literary devices.

### Exercise 7

1. As a final practice exercise for this module, reread the short story “What Redburn Saw” that is printed in the BAU module on Reading Comprehension. Write your own short notes (one or two sentences) that explain how each of the following terms relates to the story.
  - A) Type of Plot (including introduction, rising action, climax, dénouement, and suspense, conflict).
  - B) Characters
  - C) Setting/Mood/Atmosphere
  - D) Theme
  - E) Narrator
2. Although the events of this short story are not likely to happen in western society in our time, is the story and the writer’s message still relevant today?

## SHORT STORIES FOR FURTHER READING

There are literally thousands of good short stories. Some are well over a hundred years old but many more have been written in this century. Don't forget the Internet as a source of reading material. If you liked a certain story in this unit and want to read others by the same author, simply type the author's name into any Search Engine. From there you can find links to other sites and other stories. If you want to read a variety of stories, start by typing "short story" or "literature" and see where your search takes you.

The following is only a *partial* list of short stories you may want to read to help you understand this section. They are not listed in any particular order. Most have passed the test of time and are considered classics. In many cases, you can find the complete text of stories like these on the Internet. Simply download and print them when you need something to read.

- ⇒ "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant
- ⇒ "A Sound of Thunder" by Ray Bradbury
- ⇒ "There Will Come Soft Rains" by Ray Bradbury
- ⇒ "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson
- ⇒ "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" by Mark Twain
- ⇒ "The Emperor's New Clothes" by Hans Christian Anderson
- ⇒ "The Lady or the Tiger" by Frank Stockton
- ⇒ "The Sniper" by Liam O'Flaherty
- ⇒ "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry
- ⇒ "The Ransom of Red Chief" by O. Henry
- ⇒ "The Cop and the Anthem" by O. Henry
- ⇒ "My Financial Career" by Stephen Leacock
- ⇒ "The Sinking of the Mariposa Belle" by Stephen Leacock
- ⇒ "The Mariposa Bank Mystery" by Stephen Leacock
- ⇒ "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe
- ⇒ "The Pit and the Pendulum" by Edgar Allan Poe
- ⇒ "The Doll's House" by Katherine Mansfield
- ⇒ "The Hockey Shirt" by Roch Carrier
- ⇒ "Dance Me Outside" by W.P. Kinsella
- ⇒ "One Mile of Ice" by Hugh Garner (a New Brunswick setting)
- ⇒ "The Bully" by Gregory Clark

- ⇒ “Snow” by Frederick Philip Grove
- ⇒ “First Confession” by Frank O’Connor
- ⇒ “Just Lather”, That’s All” by Hernando Tellez

The following stories are challenging but worth the extra effort.

- ⇒ “To Build a Fire” by Jack London
- ⇒ “Thus I Refute Beelzy” by John Collier
- ⇒ “Shooting an Elephant” by George Orwell
- ⇒ “The Snob” by Morley Callaghan
- ⇒ “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” by James Thurber
- ⇒ “The Champion of the World” by Roald Dahl
- ⇒ “The Return” by Alistair MacLeod
- ⇒ “The Boat” by Alistair MacLeod (a maritime setting)

## MYTHS, LEGENDS, AND FABLES

Myths, legends and fables all have their roots in folklore - stories created by people to explain the natural world and human behaviour. Most were passed down orally before appearing in written form. In many ways, they can be considered as the forerunners of the short story.

**Myths** attempt to explain natural events to people, to try to make sense of things that happen in the world which seem unexplainable. We are most familiar with Greek, Roman and Norse myths, although every country has its own mythology. These stories provide a rationale, or reason, for our social customs, as well as set “rules” for the moral conduct of human beings. For example, the myth of Pandora’s box attempts to explain how evil became part of everyday life by telling the story of Pandora, a young woman, who had a box which she was forbidden to open. Eventually, she is tempted to open the box and when she does, all the evils of the world, which have been trapped safely inside the box, are set loose.

The main characters in Greek myths, which are the most common myths, are gods and goddesses who are greater than humans, immortal, but who often possess human emotions. Thus, these gods sometimes act out of envy, pride, and rage. The setting may be Heaven, Hell or Earth. Myths deal with many subjects or themes, including magic and the supernatural, the meaning of life and death, and insights into nature and human life. They offer interesting theories about the creation of the world.

**Legends** are handed down from the past also. They differ from myths in that their main characters are human beings, and the stories are more or less based on some historical fact or event, set on Earth. These events are usually exaggerated, and the humans have qualities and strengths that are above the ordinary. It is often difficult to draw the line between fact and fiction. The subjects of legends are many: war, adventure, heroes, dreams, quests, unusual accomplishments, and perhaps a bit of magic. Sometimes we refer to modern heroes as “legends” (such as Terry Fox).

The ancient Greek epic poem, *The Illiad*” tells the story of a ten year long war between the Greeks and the Trojans. In the end, the Greeks won by hiding their best fighting force inside a giant wooden horse (the Trojan horse) which they

left outside the gates of Troy, just before they pretended to sail away home. The Trojans were so curious about the wooden horse that they pulled it inside their city walls. When everyone was asleep, the Greeks crept out of their hiding place and opened the city gates to the rest of the Greek army who rapidly conquered the city of Troy. For several thousand years, people thought that this story was completely a myth, but archaeology has proven that such a city did exist and that it did meet a sudden death. There is often a grain of truth in a legend.

**Fables** are folk tales with a definite moral, which is often stated at the end of the story. The characters are usually animals (sometimes objects) with human qualities; more rarely, people appear in fables. The most well-known fables are those written by Aesop, a Greek slave.

### Exercise 1

Find one or two examples each of myths, legends, and fables. Compare these stories by making a chart with headings such as

- characters
- setting
- subject, theme or moral
- origin (if known)
- short plot summary

Examples to look for:

(The Internet is a good place to start. One good site is based on the book *Bullfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable or Stories of Gods and Heroes* by Thomas Bullfinch)

Myth:        Prometheus  
                  Persephone  
                  Glaucus and Scylla  
                  Pandora  
                  Galatea  
                  Zeus, Hera  
                  Neptune  
                  Venus and Adonis



Legend: Robin Hood  
King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table  
Native legends such as Glooscap, Qu'Appelle Valley  
Paul Bunyon

Fables: Aesop's fables: The Fox and the Grapes  
The Dog and the Shadow  
The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing  
The Miser and His Gold  
The Fox and the Crow  
The Ant and the Grasshopper  
The Fox and the Stork

## PRE-TEST

Choose a short story from the list in this unit, or ask your instructor for one.

Answer the following questions about the story, and then discuss the answers with your instructor.

1. Narrator: Who is the narrator of the story, or from which point of view is the story told?
2. Character: Who is the main character in the story? Which of the methods of developing character are used to present this character? (Give examples of the character's personality and show how the writer has presented that trait in the story.)
3. Character: Choose any minor (flat) character in this story. What is the purpose of this character? What does he/she add to the story?
4. Plot: Does the plot follow the typical structure of introduction, rising action, climax, denouement, or it is open-ended? Support your answer with quotes from the story. Divide the events of the story into the steps or stages of plot mentioned.
5. Setting and mood: What is the setting (time and place) of the story? Is it stated or implied? If implied, what clues did you use to determine the setting? Are there examples of local colour in your story? What actual length of time is covered in the story (hours, days)? What word would you use to describe the mood of the story? What are some details which contribute to this mood?
6. Theme: Here comes the big question: What is the theme of the story? Is the theme explicit (stated) or implicit (implied)? If the theme is implicit, present reasons and examples to support your opinion about it.

## ANSWER KEY TO EXERCISES

### Exercise 1

1. What the character says

Laurie, the five-year-old boy in “Charles” speaks as a typical child of his age would. He exaggerates, he shouts, he tells his father nonsense jokes, and he swears to get attention. He strings his sentences together: “Charles wanted to colour with green crayons so he hit the teacher and she spanked him and said nobody play with Charles but everybody did.”

2. What the character does or how he behaves.

By the time you have finished the story, you have probably realized that Laurie is Charles. If we are to believe everything Laurie says, or even half of it, then this little boy seems to have a split personality. He is capable of behaving, but when he misbehaves, he does it with style! We can speculate that he “acts up” to get attention, or because he is having trouble adjusting to his new life in kindergarten.

- 3, 4. What other characters say about him; how other characters react to him.

Laurie’s teacher may be the only one who sees both sides of his personality: the little helper and the little devil. Laurie’s parents only see their darling boy. They are shocked by the stories of Charles’ behaviour, and they’re even afraid that Charles may be a bad influence on Laurie. It is humorous to observe their shocked reactions, because they are so innocent of the truth.

5. What the narrator and /or writer thinks of the character

This story is told in the first person from the point of view of Laurie’s mother. She is the narrator. Mother believes everything her son tells her, so her point of view is unreliable; she doesn’t see the truth about her son, even when he is “fresh” or disrespectful.

On the other hand, if you read carefully between the lines, you may detect the

attitudes of the author towards her character. She is also charmed by Laurie/Charles, but she is capable of seeing the truth about him.

## Exercise 2

### 1. “The Movies Come To Gull Point”

Introduction (from the beginning of the story until the men head out in their boat)

The four main characters are introduced - Matthew, Ben, Simon, and Berry. We are not told directly when the story takes place; but we can use clues to make an assumption. (See Setting in Exercise 3) The characters decide to go to Gull Point, six miles away from Granny Cove across water and ice floes, to watch their first “moving picture”. We are also introduced to the situation which may become their conflict: since the ice is just beginning to break up, it is a risky time to travel on the open sea.

Rising Action (from the time the men set out in the boat until the men actually see the movie)

The conflict in this story is man against nature, the force of the sea and the ice. Notice how suspense is created by the mention of the ice floes grinding together, and by Simon commenting that the weather looks fine at the moment, but “it’s comin’ tonight.” This is an example of foreshadowing. The four men endure a dangerous journey, almost losing their lives, in order to reach Gull Point. It would seem to most readers that the climax of the plot would come during the high point of action. To the main characters, though, the main goal of the journey has not been reached. They recover from their ordeal and barely arrive at the movie on time.

Climax (seeing the movie, until the projector breaks down)

Dénouement (preparing to go home and the journey home)

The men have another rough trip to reach home, just in time to start work again. They all agree that making movies is not worth the risks taken during the filming. “It’s for nothin’ but pleasin’...”

The entire time span of the plot would be roughly 12 hours.

## 2. “All Summer in a Day”

Introduction (from the beginning of the story to the point where Margot’s poem is discussed).

Background information is supplied. The setting is Venus, obviously in the future, since people from Earth are living there. We learn that Margot is different because she remembers seeing the sun, and the other children do not. There is a flashback to the day before, when the children wrote stories and poems about the sun

Rising Action (from the bullying of the children to the sun rising)

There is conflict between Margot and her classmates. They bully and torment her because she is different from them. Finally, they lock her in the closet just before the sun comes out.

Climax (the sun comes out)

Dénouement

After the sun has gone and the hated rain returns, the children realize, with guilt, that they have locked Margot away. They know how delicate she is, how she had screamed and fought when they had locked her in. The story ends just as they open the closet door. We are left to imagine what has happened to Margot; thus, the plot is considered open-ended. Every loose end is not neatly tied up.

The entire time span of the plot is only a few hours.

Note: Some readers might consider the climax to be at the point where Margot is let out of the closet, and that every event leading up to this is in rising action. In that case, there is no dénouement. There is nothing wrong with this interpretation. The beauty of literature is that it is open to interpretation of the reader. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, if you can give convincing reasons why you understand a story in a particular way.

### Exercise 3

#### 1. Setting in “The Movies Come to Gull Point”

Time: The actual time span of the story is about half a day. The time period would be the early 1900's because the “moving pictures” were a new sensation. You could argue that the story may be later than the early 1900's because remote areas such as Newfoundland would not necessarily be up-to-date on the latest craze.

Place: Most likely Newfoundland. The villages mentioned are Granny Cove and Gull Point.

There are many clues to indicate a setting in the Atlantic Provinces: fishing and pulp cutting for a living; the dialect and vocabulary of the men; the ocean setting; and the obvious isolation from the rest of the world.

#### 2. Setting in “All Summer in a Day”

Time: the future. The time span of the story is a few hours.

Place: the planet Venus

The place is stated directly in the story. The time we can deduce from clues (People don't live on Venus now; details are added about the constant rain, space travel from Earth, etc.)

### Exercise 4

The mood in “Hurry, Hurry!” can be described as suspenseful and foreboding. (Foreboding: threatening; a dark sense of impending evil). Many details in setting contribute to this impression:

- the fog, the wind
- the stubble field and salt marshes
- “marshy blackish sand”
- “bare twisted bushes”
- the narrow path on the dyke

The sight of the wounded hawk is strange and disturbing to Miriam, the protagonist. She feels pity for it, knowing it must die a slow death, but she knows the bird is dangerous and cannot be helped. The details of the hawk's appearance and behaviour add to the threatening atmosphere of the story:

“Intent gaze”

“sharp beak and tearing claws”

“The hawk made Miriam feel uneasy.”

After the strange hawk, Miriam meets the strange man. There is a sense of urgency about this meeting, although we don't yet know why the situation is urgent.

The vocabulary gives us the impression of events spinning out of control:

“startled”, “crowded”, “pushed”, “fled”, “bounding and hindering”, “stumbling”, “splashing”, and the word “hurry” repeated many times.

### **Exercise 5**

The theme can be stated in several ways, but the main message is that a person's reputation is a vital part of who they are, or who they think themselves to be. M. Hauchecorne is so crushed by being accused of thievery and dishonesty that he pines away and dies. The mind can overpower the body.

Some other aspects of human nature are revealed in the story; the rapid spread of gossip, the malicious cruelty of the people who are ready to accuse another of theft, the unwillingness to believe that the “thief” could possibly be innocent.

### **Exercise 6**

1. “Charles” The narrator is a character in the story, Laurie's mother. The story is told in the first person (“I”).
2. “The Movies Come to Gull Point” Third person omniscient narrator. This narrator is outside the story, standing back and recording events as they are observed. We are not made aware of the thoughts of the characters, unless they express their thoughts in dialogue.

3. “All Summer in a Day” Third person omniscient.
4. “Hurry, Hurry!” Third person limited for most of the story.  
We see events through the eyes of Miriam; we are aware of her thoughts also.

The last two paragraphs of the story have a different point of view. We are made aware of the murdered woman and of the actions of the man who killed her. Miriam does not see this. The point of view has shifted to third person omniscient.

5. “The Piece of String” Third person limited  
The thoughts and feelings of the main character are revealed to us.

## Exercise 7

### “What Redburn Saw”

1.  
The plot of “What Redburn Saw” is a traditional structure and begins by introducing a young man in a strange city who happens to wander through a rundown part of town. The complications of plot begin when he encounters a mother and her two daughters who are huddled in an inaccessible basement, and who are obviously starving to death. As the young man tries desperately to find them some help, the reader is introduced to the uncaring segments of society who are unwilling or unable to do anything about the situation. Suspense builds as the reader wonders whether the little family will die or how they can be saved. The climax is the dreadful moment when the Redburn (and the reader) realizes that Betsy Jennings is dead. The dénouement shows the speed with which society now deals with the problem and Redburn’s thoughts on the morality of a society which can allow this to happen as well as whether it was a kindness to give them food. The conflict in this short story is based on man versus society...and man versus himself.

Redburn is the main character, a young and inexperienced American sailor who finds himself in a strange city. He is sympathetic to the plight of those less fortunate than himself and has obviously been taught that “we are our brother’s keeper” and that we each have a responsibility for the welfare of those around us. Redburn has no money but he tries every way that he can think of to do something to help the



woman and her children....all to no avail.

The rest of the characters in the story are “flat characters” whose only purpose is to show the heartlessness of all segments of society towards the poor and wretched in their midst.

The story is set over a period of three days and is set probably in England during the 1800s. Redburn is in a strange city and is asked if he is a Yankee. As the characters speak English, this suggests England. The fact that the family are huddled in the basement of a cotton factory suggests that the time period is during the industrial revolution, sometime during the middle to late 1800s.

The atmosphere is dark and dreary. Every scene is full of shadows and a feeling of heaviness. Nowhere is there any mention of nature or sunlight. The story moves slowly and unalterably towards its tragic end.

The theme of the story is that charity and concern for others should be a large part of our everyday life. In other words, “I am my brother’s keeper”.

The author clearly shows that we, as members of society, should be aware “of the wants and woes of our fellowmen” and be prepared to give up some of our “own pleasures” to help reduce their suffering. When we live our lives without regard to the hardship of those around us, it is like holding a never-ending party on the graves of those less fortunate members of our society.

The author also uses the short story to ask a very difficult question, “If there is nothing we can do to reduce someone’s suffering in the long run, are we doing them any kindness to offer temporary relief from their problems.” or to put it another way, “Would it have been a greater kindness to have put them quickly out of their misery rather than let them suffer over many days?”

2.

Accept any reasonable answer.

## **FEEDBACK PROCESS**

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For feedback, please forward your comments to:

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