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FABLES, PARABLES, SHORT STORIES--LITERATURE CURRICULUM I, TEACHER VERSION.

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PRESENTED HERE WAS A GUIDE FOR TEACHER USE IN A SEVENTH-GRADE LITERATURE CURRICULUM. BACKGROUND INFORMATION, ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS, AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS WERE INCLUDED FOR USE IN UNITS DEALING WITH FABLES, PARABLES, AND SHORT STORIES. AN ACCOMPANYING STUDY GUIDE WAS ALSO PREPARED FOR STUDENT USE (ED 010 137). (WN)

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

FABLES, PARABLES, SHORT STORIES

Literature Curriculum I
Teacher Version

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FABLES, PROVERBS, AND PARABLES

Literature Curriculum I

Teacher Version

FABLES, PROVERBS, and PARABLES

A. Fables:

In his Life of Gay, Dr. Johnson propose this definition of a fable:

"A narrative in which beings irrational and sometimes inanimate, are, for the purpose of moral instruction, feigned to act and speak with human interests and passions."

Jean de la Fontaine expressed it less prosaically:

"Fables in sooth are not what they appear;
Our moralists are mice, and such small deer.
We yawn at sermons, but we gladly turn
To moral tales, and so amused we learn."

The fable differs from the myth which is the spontaneous and and unconscious product of primitive fancy, and from the literary myth in which the story and moral are intermingled throughout. (Myths will be the subject of our next unit.) With the fable as we know it, the moral is indispensable. As la Fontaine puts it, a fable is composed of two parts, body and soul. The body is the story, the soul the morality. But in the primitive beast-fable, which preceded the Aesopean fable, the story is told simply for its own sake, as the fairy tales of "Little Red Riding Hood" or "Jack and the Beanstalk."

The fable is essentially a moral precept illustrated by a single example, and it is this focus which gives to the fable its unity and makes it a work of art.

Fables emerged from the primitive folk-lore of many peoples. In some instances they gained currency through oral collections first (by Aesop in Greece and Pilpay (or Bidpai) in India). When they were written down later, they continued to bear the collector's name rather than the scribe's. Because the fables from several areas seem to resemble each other (an Egyptian papyrus of about the year 1200 BC gives the fable of "The Lion and the Mouse" in its finished form) there are varying schools of thought regarding their source. The following conclusions as to the origin of the fables are generally accepted:

1. There was undoubtedly some transmission of the stories from land to land through adventurous story tellers. The introduction of eastern animals--the panther, the peacock, the ape--in the Greek fables would seem to substantiate this idea.

2. That the fables all originated with one people in one area (India has been thus designated by some) seems most unlikely. Certain infrequent resemblances between the fables of India and those of Greece, or between those of Greece and Egypt can certainly be explained by the fact that primitive peoples everywhere faced the same challenges of beast and environment and reacted with similar stories about them both. Witness the similarity in the myths of many lands also.

3. From prehistoric beginnings among men everywhere, then, it seems most likely that fables entered the literature of western man from two widely separated sources--Greece and India. That the Indian fables were models for the Greek ones is disproved by the fact that no fables in the former predate the fourth century BC while fables in the latter occur in writing as early as the eighth or seventh century BC.

4. In Greece, the fable was given wide-spread popularity in an oral collection by Aesop in the sixth century BC. The latter probably came from Samsos in Asia Minor, the country of the lion which appears so often in the fables. The first written collection was made by Demetrius about 300 BC, but the first extant collection was by Phaedrus during the reign of Augustus (27 BC -14 AD). Not later than the end of the second century AD, Babrius, a hellenized Roman, wrote some 140 versions of both Greek and Indian fables in Greek verse, the first verse versions. In 400 AD, the Roman Avianus composed forty-two fables in Latin verse. These two writers--Babrius and Avianus--were largely responsible for the transmission of Aesopic fables in verse form. However, much more comprehensive prose collections of unknown date and authorship exist. Preserved in over thirty manuscripts are more than 350 fables, believed by some not to have been written down before the ninth century AD.

   In their original form, the Greek fables were merely anecdotal. Gradually, since the summarizing sentence inspired a moral, these moralizing epilogues came to be a part of the fable. Some believe the addition of the epilogue came with the Oriental contribution--sort of a Greek or Roman version of "Confucius say..." no doubt. Others believe that the morals appeared with the adaptation of the fables to Christian teachings.

5. Sanskrit literature records the fables of India, stories which undoubtedly found their beginnings partially in the religious beliefs of these people. The concept of reincarnation, of persons returning to life in the form of animals, gave credence to the idea among the primitive Indians that beasts could talk. These fables remained oral for centuries because the oral tradition was considered the most refined medium of transmission in these reli-

gions, and still is to this day; committing to writing is a perversion if not a sacrilege. Therefore, it was considerably later than the written collection in Greece, that the oral collection of Pilpay or Bidpai (whose actual existence is questioned on the basis that his name means "court-scholar") in India was written down. However, translated first into Persian and then Arabic, these fables found their way into Greek and Roman collections, notably Babrius', and thence into European medieval literature.

6. From these two widely separated peoples and areas, then, the fable was transmitted to western culture, was enriched enormously during the middle ages, and culminated in the verse versions of La Fontaine in the seventeenth century. In more recent works, Kipling's Jungle Books represent the full expansion of creative powers within the genre. George Orwell's sophisticated book-length fable Animal Farm extends this stream of man's primal creative urge into modern times.

B. Parables and Proverbs:

A parable is a short allegory with one definite moral. It is rather difficult to differentiate between the parable and the fable. Neander draws this distinction: "In the fable, hum passions and actions are attributed to beasts; in the parable the lower creation is employed only to illustrate the higher life and never transgresses the laws of its kind."

There is an affinity between the fable and parable, and the proverb. A proverb is often a condensed fable, while many fables and parables are expanded proverbs. Perhaps the proverbs represent the crystallized experience of the Hebrew people. Certainly they are concise thoughts, beautifully expressed, but they grew out of the soil of human life, written by men seeking to meet the needs of their own time. The Bible is a great human document containing almost every type of book known to world literature: biography, letters, essays, poems, short stories to mention only a few. This is justification enough for including biblical selections in a study of literature.

Concepts and Skills

Although children may have had some experiences with fables, at least with the Pogo collections and comic strips and with the Uncle Remus stories, still the range of fable literature from Pilpay and Aesop to Walt Kelly, Joel Chandler Harris and George Orwell offers a delightful, appropriate, and substantial collection of works for seventh grade people for several reasons.

First, because fables imply a moral, these stories concern subjects not only concrete--animals, plants, places, things, people--but also abstract--values, ethics, morals. The fables thus offer the young student a very understandable fusion of both types of subjects. As stories of animals in their natural habitats, fulfilling their natural roles, the animal-characters are very real; however, as stories of animals which talk and sometimes react to situations like human beings, the stories are metamorphosed by this obvious trait into fiction.

Although fables and parables are storied in form, proverbs are not, thus affording an opportunity for comparison. The students may also compare prose and poetry versions of the same story, and contrast different styles of writing reflecting changes from one century to another. Through this process they will begin to catch a glimpse of the universality of certain basic ideas that transcend both geography and time.

Fables, proverbs, and parables also provide an excellent opportunity to discuss point of view. The attitudes of the writer toward his subject, toward his reader, and toward hisoown role come through very clearly, so that the average seventh grade student should have little difficulty in understanding this.

Although some of the fables might most aptly lend themselves to one of the above concepts, still these concepts should not be drawn off one by one, but the fables themselves should be individually explored for what each reveals. As an example of this technique, La Fontaine's and the thirteenth century version of the "milkmaid fable" are examined. Several other pairs of prose and verse versions are included and should be approached in the same way. Finally, it is hoped that a classroom set of the Aesopean fables in the Penguin paperback edition will be available to the students for further reading and discussion.

Questions for Discussion: Part I

1. Examine the fable in verse and fable in prose. What differences do you notice?

   a. How did your first sentence differ from the first sentence in Babrius's verse? -- Some students may have begun with the fox, others with the grapes; few, if any, will begin with the verb. Also. there will be no rhyme or rhythm in the students' versions.

   b. Notice the position of the subject in the first sentence of the verse form. Did you arrange your sentence this way when you wrote a prose story? How do the two sentences differ? See if you can find at least two kinds of differences.-- The

students will notice that the poem reverses the natural prose order of subject followed by verb, and that the verse has rhyme and rhythm.

c. Look at the last sentence in Babrius's verse. Do you know what kind of sentence it is? How many complete ideas does it express? Why is a semicolon used at the end of line 5? Why is a colon used at the end of line 7? -- The students will recognize that this is a compound-complex sentence, and that it expresses four complete ideas a) the grapes were ripe; b) it was useless for the fox to keep on jumping; c) the fox journeyed on; d) he soothed himself by saying the grapes were sour. A semicolon is used at the end of line 5 to separate main clauses having commas within the clauses. A colon is used at the end of line 7 to call special attention to what follows, in this case the fox's justification for going on without the grapes.

2. After looking closely at Babrius's sentences in verse and your own sentences in prose, can you find at least three ways in which the verse sentences differ from the prose sentences? -- 1. Prose has no pronounced rhythm. 2. Prose has no rhyme. 3. The order of subject and verb is often reversed in poetry.

3. Regardless of whether they are verse or prose fables, how many parts are there in a fable? What are they? What do you notice about the characters? -- There are two parts, a moral and a story that illustrates the moral. The characters are often animals such as the fox, or inanimate objects, such as the bunch of grapes.

Questions for Discussion: Part II

(Note to the teacher: Some of these questions you will wish to deal with orally--especially 1 and 2. Some of the exercises will be suitable only for faster students (3 and 5) although slower students would benefit from sharing their answers.)

1. Read again the comment made by the ox at the end of this story. Compare it with the comment made by the fox at the end of "The Fox and the Grapes."

   a. Why do you think the fox said that the grapes were sour? Was it a true statement? Who was he trying to convince? If a bystander had been watching the fox, what comment might he have made? -- There are many valid answers that the students might give. Encourage them to express their ideas. From the discussion should emerge that the fox was excusing his failure to himself by making the object of his striving seem not worth the effort. The

statement, obviously untrue, was a face-saving device to spare his vanity. A bystander would not have been convinced. He would probably think the fox a poor sport who could not take his defeat with good grace.

b. Was the statement made by the ox true? For whose benefit was it said? -- The students will probably agree that this is a true statement, made for the dog's benefit, although it probably fell on deaf ears. The dog probably felt he was entitled to a nap without interruption. Certainly, whatever the students may make him say, it will express a selfish point of view.

2. Although the characters in these fables are animals, both stories are pointing up human weaknesses.

a. What defect in character does the fox illustrate? -- He is vain, too proud to admit defeat, he lacks humility, he is dishonest with himself: these are a few things students might express.

b. What would you say about the dog's behavior? -- He is selfish, thoughtless, unkind, unsympathetic; some students might add that he is lazy and a troublemaker.

3. Of course we all know that human beings are far from perfect. From your own experiences at home, at school, with your friends, on vacation trips, or from what you see on television or read in newspapers, make a list of some weaknesses of human character. -- Of course the students' answers will vary, but they will probably include the following observations: People are selfish, thoughtless, destructive, unkind, vain, stupid, wasteful, miserly, greedy, unfeeling, cowardly, ignorant.

4. The first fable you read concerned a fox and a bunch of grapes. The second one was about an ox and a dog. Make a list of other possible subjects for a story. -- The students' answers will include many animals and inanimate objects, such as honey, apples, etc.

5. From the two lists you have written, make a selection for a story you might compose. Do you need both lists? -- The students by now should have discovered that they need a purpose for writing (the moral) as well as the characters to illustrate it.

6. Could you change the characters in this story? Some of you might like to rewrite the fable with different animals, and even with a different setting. Perhaps you'd like to rewrite it using

people instead of animals. In rewriting the fable, which kind of subject could you change and which must remain unchanged? -- The slower students who might find it too difficult to compose an original fable would enjoy changing this one. If necessary, help them to see that although the characters and setting might be changed, the moral would remain the same.

Questions for Discussion: Part III

1. Suppose the fable about the Lion and the Mouse had not come to Greece so Aesop could include it in his collection. Suppose it had just continued to be told in Africa until it was brought to America by slaves. Then suppose the fable had been brought West by earlier settlers from the South and had been retold here many times. What might the Old West version have been like? What animals might have been featured? What type of trap or snare might have been used? -- The animals might become a wild horse and a mouse, or a bear and a beaver, or any other typically western animals. Instead of a net, a rope might be involved, or a steel trap, or a barricade. Seventh grade students are often very imaginative.

2. Rewrite the fable in a completely different setting, either one of those suggested previously or another one of your own choice. -- What we are trying to get the student to understand is that in order to express a basic truth, a writer will illustrate it by using backgrounds and characters familiar to the people for whom he is writing.

Part IV

Explications

See Student Version, pp. 1-3 for copies of La Fontaine and thirteenth century versions of the fable. All but the La Fontaine verse fable are taken from Frederick Max Muller's "On the Migration of Fables" from the essay collection Chips from a German Workshop. La Fontaine credits Pilpay as his source for this fable and Muller has traced the verse version back to its original prose in the Sanskrit literature from India.

The Verse Version

A good place to begin would be the parts of the poem. Two leading questions which might be asked are "What is it a part of?" and "What are the parts of it?" (Students will recognize that the first part of the

poem tells the story, while the last part of the poem states a lesson or a moral, and this will suffice as a beginning.)

In examining the first part of the poem, the freshness and concreteness of the imagery might be pointed out (lines 3, 4, 20-21), and some of the poet's unusual use of words (the green grass "silvered" by the spilled milk; the maid "too late awake"; her predicament, left as she is with "an empty dream" and "her peace to make." Especially interesting is the suddeness of the climax here. Also worthy of comment is the very simple language of the first part of the poem (anecdote) contrasted with the more complex language of its second part (moral). For example, in lines 25-6, how subtly the anecdote is generalized with the one word "He"; how cleverly the point is made that what has happened to the milkmaid is not really as bad as what often happens to everyone (line 26); how empty are all dreams ("projects. . . still-form'd. . . for enjoyment") of this kind, which, because they lack substance ("baseless fabric") and action are as nothing ("melts in the air"); and finally, how effective is the conclusion that man's best way of life is not to trust such imaginings ("futurity").

With this kind of an analysis of the poem, the students can come to complete answers to the questions asked at the beginning of the lesson.

Vocabulary:

ridicule, beguile, baseless, futurity (Too many words at one time for these young learners is ineffective.)

The Prose Version

Students will have little trouble understanding the language in which the fable is written. Muller reaches back four hundred years to find it "in a thirteenth century Latin book intended to teach the principles of Christian morality by certain examples taken from ancient fables." It will be interesting to draw from the students the differences, first, in the mood of the anecdote, with its religious overtones, and then in the completely different type of moral which is drawn. In the prose version, the daydreams ("projects. . still-form'd. . . for enjoyment") are still there, yet the censure falls not on the dreams themselves but on the subject of the dreams--material gain as a source of happiness.

Vocabulary

worthy (medieval sense), folly, vanity, earthly.

See student version for additional fables which may be approached in much the same way as these verse and prose versions of "The Milkmaid" fable.

Questions for Discussion: Part IV

1. Compare the maids in the two versions.

   a. Of which one do you have the better picture? -- Ask the students to note the details that make La Fontaine's milkmaid come alive.

   b. Can you tell their circumstances? What clues do you find in each case? -- Both the milkmaid and the servant are poor, and both live in the country. The clues of course are the animals mentioned as representing wealth and the fact that both possess nothing at all, not even a hen.

   c. Which one's circumstances seem the more secure? Why? -- Obviously La Fontaine's milkmaid seems more secure, since her whole outlook is gay, and she is able to return home and make her peace. The serving girl seems much more desperate to many and escapes her present situation.

   d. What characteristic of the serving maid has La Fontaine dropped in his poem? -- The seriousness of purpose is missing in the milkmaid. She is not trying to accumulate wealth to catch a husband.

2. Compare the language in the two versions.

   a. Look carefully at several sentences in the verse. What characterizes these sentences? -- Students will notice that often the natural order of prose sentences has been reversed.

   b. How does La Fontaine's use of words in the verse differ from the use of words in the prose version? -- La Fontaine uses descriptive words that add life, color, and action to the story. The prose version is very pedestrian by comparison.

   c. What is the effect of the rhyme in the first version? Of the rhythm? What do these qualities add to the poetic version that the prose version lacks? -- The students will probably comment that the rhyme and rhythm add to the pleasure of listening to the story by giving it a light-hearted, bantering tone missing in the prose version.

3. Compare the two maids' reactions.

   a. What was the milkmaid doing when she tipped over the milk? What was the serving maid doing? -- Both were daydreaming about what they would do with the money received from selling the milk.

b. To which one was the accident the greater catastrophe? Which one do you think would suffer the more serious consequences? --The students will probably decide the serving girl would suffer the more serious consequences, especially since the story states "indeed, in her lifetime, she never had what she dreamed she would have." No mention is made of her returning home, as we are told the milkmaid does. Perhaps she even lost her job.

4. Account for the differences in the mood of the two versions.

a. How would you describe the mood of the first version? Of the second? What is lacking in the second and how do you account for its lack? -- The first version is somewhat playful and teasing in mood, poking fun at human folly that puts reliance in dreams for the future. The humor is missing in the second version which stresses not the folly of day-dreams themselves, but the evil of seeking happiness through material things.

b. Why are the consequences more severe in the second version? Why are the maid's circumstances made less fortunate? -- Because the mood drawn by the writer of the prose version is more serious than the other, the results of folly need to be emphasized more drastically.

5. Examine the epilogues in both versions.

a. What is the moral of the first version? -- "For man, the way of life is best, That trusts futurity the least."

b. What is the moral of the second? -- "The folly of vanity is that it seeks only earthly things."

c. What effect did each of these purposes of the writer have on the version it is affixed to? -- Try to lead the students to see that the purpose of the writer determined the tone or mood of the story.

6. On the basis of these discussions, decide how the writers of the versions were affected by the purpose of the version and how, in turn, this purpose controlled each writer's attitude toward his subject, toward his reader, and toward his own role as a storyteller. -- This last questions is really a means of summarizing what the students have learned so far.

Suggested Activities

1. Introduce the fable with examples from contemporary life: The Pogo Peek-A-Book of Walt Kelly, especially "The Man from Suffern

on the Steppes" because it satirizes totalitarianism as does George Orwell's Animal Farm; Rudyard Kipling's "Mowgli's Brothers"; and Joel Chandler Harris's The Uncle Remus Stories all offer excellent introductions. Cub Scouts in the group will recognize in the Kipling story the prescribed pattern for Cub Scout den and pack meetings. (A teacher who has attended these den and pack meetings knows that what is prescribed is not always what is done. Kipling's pattern may come as somewhat of a shock to these young Boy Scouts.) A panel might discuss how a den meeting and a pack meeting follow the wolf pack gathering described in "Mowgli's Brothers." Undoubtedly they and some of their parents are Pogo fans and will have one or more of the Pogo books at home which they can bring and share with the rest of the students. The same will be true of the Uncle Remus Stories. Make every effort to relate the fable closely to their own experience and to contemporary life by reading aloud excerpts from their offerings. It is a living genre--indeed it seems to be increasingly lively!

2. Several of the fables contain conversation; students will enjoy dramatizing these fables. Assign a narrator and the character-animals for several of the Aesopean fables from the paperback edition; these "troupes" and their audiences will profit from their rewriting the fables into dramatic skits and acting them out.

3. With some classes teachers will want to explore the full range of "The Milkmaid" fable; with other classes the Arabic and Sanskrit versions most surely should be omitted.

4. Perhaps, with extremely slow classes, some of the verse versions with their more difficult vocabularies and compact imagery should be omitted.

5. With gifted groups, George Orwell's Animal Farm might be read and discussed, perhaps as a climax to the study of the fable.

6. In heterogeneous groups, Animal Farm might be assigned to fast learners and a panel discussion given by them for the rest of their classmates.

7. After students have read the first chapter it is hoped that they will want to read the rest of the Jungle Books, including some of the separate stories from Volume 2. Especially recommended is "The White Seal" for two reasons: first for the lovely "Seal Lullaby" with which the story opens and the said, seal national anthem "Lukkannon" with which the story ends; and second for its resemblance to Hans Christian Andersen's "The Ugly Duckling," which most of them will have read.

8. Students will also find embryonic fables in the fishing and hunting

experiences of their parents or grandparents. There is always the story of the "big one that got away" by out-witting the sportsman. Boys and girls alike will enjoy writing or telling these experiences, perhaps even creating imaginary conversations between the wily beast and the hunter.

9. Numerous excellent writing assignments will grow out of the study of fables. The teacher can devise writing assignments to correlate with the state of progress of the Composition Curriculum.

Questions for Discussion: Part V

See introductory remarks on proverbs and parables.

1. Do any of these sayings remind you of fables you have read? Which ones? -- Students will probably mention "The Fox and the Crow" (3), "The Ant and the Grasshopper" (4),"The Tree and the Reed" (1).

2. What do you notice about the way in which these sayings are written down? Why do most of them have a colon in the middle? -- Most of the statements are of equal length, containing a complete thought, balanced by the colon.

3. Say a few of them out loud. What do you notice about what comes before the colon and what comes after it? Do you think that putting two opposing ideas side by side adds to the effectiveness of the saying? -- The second statement often opposes the first. Most students will agree that the opposing balance of ideas is effective.

4. Sometimes the ideas are the same. Why do you think the writer still kept the same form of balanced sentence? -- Probably for aesthetic reasons. The rhythmic regularity is pleasing to the ear.

5. Do you think you could possibly say the same thing in fewer words? Does this compactness add to or detract from the force of the thought expressed? -- There are few, if any, wasted words in the proverbs and most students will recognize the force of this focus upon the ideas expressed.

Exercises

1. Think of some contrasting behavior, wise and foolish, in school life. Now see if you write a proverb about it.

2. Either take the proverb you have written, or choose one from the selection given in this lesson, and write a fable to illustrate it. -- While the resulting compositions will undoubtedly lack polish, the students will gain a better appreciation of the skill required to express ideas concisely, and tell a story with artistry.

Questions for Discussion: Part VI

The Parable of the Sower

1. Why do you think Jesus told this story? Do you think he had a purpose other than to entertain his listeners?

2. If there is a deeper meaning, what do you think it is? -- Students will probably say that Jesus' purpose was to explain his teaching to the people in terms they could understand. Have someone read Matthew 13:18-23 aloud, and then discuss it further if necessary.

3. What name would we perhaps give to "thorns." -- Briars, brambles, blackberry vines.

   Explain "brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." -- This is a way of measuring the yield of the crop. For each seed planted, thirty or sixty or hundred seeds were obtained.

4. In what way does this story resemble a fable? How is it different? -- Let the students answer the question if they can, but do not tell them yet. Fables usually use animals or inanimate objects to behave as humans, but parables do not attribute human characteristics to non-humans. Rather than being used to illustrate weaknesses of human character, they are used to explain teachings about "the kingdom of heaven," or other spiritual concepts.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

1. When Jesus asked the lawyer to answer his own question, whom do you think he identified as the neighbor in the story? -- The Samaritan.

2. What does that quotation "coals of fire" refer to? Do you think the lawyer would have seen a reference to the Proverbs in this story? -- It refers to a proverb printed in the student version. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat," etc. As a learned Jew, the lawyer would undoubtedly be very familiar with the scriptures.

3. Why do you think Jesus made the other characters in the story a priest and a Levite? (You may need to look up the exact meanings of these words as they apply to the Hebrews.) -- Priest: one authorized to offer sacrifices in Jewish rites. Levite: one designated to aid the priests in th care of the tabernacle, sacred vessels, and temple. A member of the tribe of Levi. These were the religious leaders of the Jews, expected, therefore, to set a standard of moral behavior. By using these people as characters in the story, Jesus emphasizes how far from what they preach the Jewish practice has become separated.

The Parable of the House Built Upon the Sand

1. Which proverbs do you think were saying the same things as this story? -- 6, 7, and 8 in the Student Version, Part V.

2. Which did you enjoy reading most, proverbs or parables? Why? -- Most students will enjoy the parables because they tell a story.

3. Now that you have read three parables, do you see any way in which parables differ from fables? -- By this time, most students will recognize that animals do not appear in parables, and that there is no stated moral.

4. Compare the form of this parable with the proverbs. Do you see any similarity? What effect does the repetition have upon the impression the story makes on the listener? Do you think it serves to heighten the contrast? -- The students will probably recognize the incomparable style of the King James Version --compactness, balanced sentences, almost poetic form. They undoubtedly will agree that the repetition, with slight variation, does indeed emphasize the contrast.

5. Compare the style of this parable with the other two you have read. In what way is it different? Would you say this is prose or poetry? Read this selection aloud and decide if it has rhythm. -- It differs from the other prose in that it has a definite form, and a decided rhythm, although it is not poetry.

The Parable of the Gold Pieces

1. This is a parable that a great many people find difficult to understand. Perhaps recognizing the reason for its telling will make it clearer. Read again the introduction to the parable. Now can you see what the story is saying? -- Students should understand that many of Jesus' followers expected him to stage a rebellion against Rome, and establish

an independent Jewish kingdom with himself as king. Jesus told this story to make them understand that there was a lot of work to be done before his kingdom would be established, and that many would have to labor patiently awaiting his return, for this was not the kind of kingdom they expected.

2. Read again the sentence toward the end of the selection: "I say to you that to everyone who has shall be given...." What is your reaction to that statement? Did you say, "That isn't fair"? What kind of students do you select to be your school officers? If they work hard, are they likely to be re-elected, perhaps to a more important position? What do you do about an officer who accepts the position, then doesn't do anything at all? -- At first reading some students may see this as giving more to rich, and taking away from the poor what little they have. After discussing the fact that officers who perform their duties faithfully are likely to be rewarded with greater responsibility, while those who do not even work at a minor office will be removed from office, perhaps they will be led to see that this parable stresses the use made of the amount given, rather than the amount itself.

3. Compare the style of this selection with the last parable you read. Which seems closer to the way you speak? What do you think is the main difference between the two styles of writing? -- Students will readily recognize this selection as modern prose. They will probably call the other "old fashioned," though some of them may comment upon the rhythmic beauty of the King James style with its balanced sentences.

Exercises and More Questions

1. Find and read some more parables. Here are some suggestions of stories you might enjoy:

The Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-32
The Parable of the Talents	Matthew 25:15-28
The Wise and Foolish Virgins	Matthew 25:1-10
The Lost Coin	Luke 15:8-10
The Lost Sheep	Luke 15:4-7

2. Find and read a fable in the Old Testament. Compare it with the other fables you have read.

Jotham's Fable of the Trees	Judges 9:6-21
Jehoash's Fable of the Cedar and the Thistle	II Kings 14:9

3. Skim through the Book of Proverbs or read some of those collected in Prose and Poetry of the Old Testament, edited by J. F. Fullington (Paperback--Crofts Classics).

4. Now that you have read several fables, proverbs, and parables, write a brief definition of each. List several ways in which they are the same. How do they differ? To what extent does the purpose of the writer have any bearing upon the form of the story? -- Not all students will be able to do these exercises. Question 4 could be discussed orally after some more able students have written the answers. Students' definitions will vary, but should be along the following general lines.

Fable: A story with a moral, usually with animals as the characters behaving in a human fashion.

Parable: A story told to illustrate an idea that is being taught, but unlike the fable, it does not use animals behaving as people.

Proverb: A brief epigrammatic saying containing a generally accepted truth.

Similarities

All are concerned with human conduct.
All try to inspire the highest kind of behavior.
All contain universal concepts of truth.

Differences

The differences are closely related to the purposes. The proverbs, intended to be direct forms of instruction, are brief didactic statements of crystallized wisdom. Fables avoid a direct attack upon the foibles of mankind by attributing to animals the follies of humanity. It is always easier to see the faults of another and the oblique approach makes a concession to our pride, which resents direct criticism. If the writer's purpose is merely to point out human weaknesses, the tone of the fable may be light and bantering. If the purpose is to make man aware of his sinful state, then the fable assumes a tone of greater gravity.

Parables are stories about realistic people behaving in predictable human ways. The settings are always familiar to the audience, and the story itself illustrates in concrete form a spiritual concept.

5. Try to write some proverbs of your own to illustrate the thought of Housman's "Loveliest of Trees" and of Russell's "The Price

of the Head." -- There will any number of results with which the teacher can deal in various ways. Take two or three and put them on the board and discuss which is best in terms of style, balance, vocabulary, and aptness of thought.

6. Could you call "Bishop Hatto" a fable? A parable? Why or why not? -- Answers will vary. They should see that it is probably not a fable because the rats don't act like people, they act like rats, even if they may be the spirits of the dead; and also because there is no clearly stated moral tag. A pretty good case could be made for calling it a parable, but they should see that the idea in the poem is not capable of a clear statement and based on an allegorical one-for-one equivalence with the incidents of the poem, in the same way that a true parable is.

Lit/I/TV/ShSt

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

THE SHORT STORY

Literature Curriculum I

Teacher Version

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A Brief Introduction to the Short Story as a Literary Form

The modern concept of the short story as a distinct literary form is relatively new. It probably grew out of the demands of the newspapers and magazines that enjoyed such phenomenal growth during the early part of the nineteenth century.

There is nothing new about the short narrative or tale. Imaginative tale-telling was a tradition in ancient Egypt, it flourished in ancient Greek literature, and the Old Testament is full of dramatic stories such as Ruth and Jonah. Chaucer's Canterbury Tales are representative of the medieval English short story which was replaced by the Renaissance "novella" and the Elizabethan Romance. In fact, the vigorous growth of the short story through the ages has been characterized by a rich variety of forms and techniques.

The modern short story continues to grow and change. It is too flexible to be made to fit into any rigid mold, although the subject and the manner of telling set it apart from other kinds of writing. It deals with broader human truths than the essay, it goes beyond narrative prose in that it seeks to interpret life; unlike the sketch it is a complete organized presentation of life, but it is on a smaller scale than the novel.

The subject of a short story is a lesser unity taken from the total unity of life. Although it is only part of a whole, it is still complete in itself. It is this, rather than the length of the work, that determines its classification as a short story. In common with all stories, it must have a beginning, a middle, and an end in order to satisfy the need for a completed action. This in turn determines the form which such a subject demands. Depending upon the purpose of the author, the emphasis may be placed on a character, or a plot, or a theme. The point of view of the author will determine the style of the narrative.

In general, the focus of the story will be through the consciousness of a chief actor who is faced with a critical situation. The beginning of the story furnishes the setting and mood against which the chief actor reacts to the crisis. Suspense is created through the reader's uncertainty about his ability to solve this problem. The function of the main body of the story is to show the chief actor's basic characteristic in action, for the solution to his problem will be governed by the type of person he is, and the ending will grow out of his decision at the climax.

No writer, date, or even country can be singled out as the beginning point of the modern short story. It developed among a group of nineteenth century writers who appeared within about fifteen years of each other in Germany, America, Russia, and France. E. T. W. Hoffmann, the brothers Grimm, and Johann Ludwig Tieck were writing in Germany

at the same time Washington Irving and his younger American contemporaries Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allen Poe were publishing in England and America. In Russia, Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol turned to short story writing, while in France, Prosper Merimee, Honore de Balzac, and Theophile Gautier were experimenting with short story techniques. All these early nineteenth century writers differed from each other in their approaches to story technique and content, but all recognized the short story as a distinct form of literature.

Poe was the first to formulate a complete theory of short story writing, and to work it out with great artistry in such stories as The Fall of the House of Usher and The Cask of Amontillado, but Irving and Hawthorne also played major roles in the development of the American short story.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Guy de Maupassant and Alphonse Daudet in France continued Merimee's tradition of the writer remaining impersonal and objective. In Russia, Turgenev shaped his stories from the starting point of the character, unlike Poe who first decided on the effect he wanted, then shaped his action and characters accordingly.

In the United States, three major developments occurred as the short story grew in popularity. Following the Civil War, the "local color" story, which stressed oddities of regional life and character, sprang up in every section of the country. Bret Harte and Mark Twain wrote in the West, Harriet Beecher Stowe in the East, and Joel Chandler Harris in the South, to name but a few. At the same time, the realistic short story, already established in Russia and France, began to be developed by such writers as William Dean Howells, Henry James, and Hamlin Garland. Like Turgenev, these writers believed that action flowed from character, and they wanted to show life as it appeared to them, although they were more concerned with fiction as an art than as a mirror to reflect real life. At the same time, Stephen Crane, and a little later Theodore Dreiser, introduced Naturalism into the short story.

Finally, the popular story of plot and effect became dominant during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The fast growing periodical market and the success of Poe gave it impetus, until it reached a climax in the works of O. Henry, a master of the surprise ending.

A general change occurred in the short story during the first quarter of the twentieth century. There was a sharp rebellion against the stereotyped story of effect, and a movement toward a more natural, more individualized story method. Writers as different from each other as James Joyce, Thomas Mann, Sherwood Anderson, Katherine Anne Porter, and Eudora Welty adopted the viewpoint of Chekhov that the modern world

is a very complex place in which the search for right answers is futile, for ultimately the issue comes down to the individual. A few writers like John O'Hara and William Saroyan have adopted an almost plotless concept of story technique, while others like William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway have demonstrated that the short story still has depth, power, and artistry as a literary form.

The stories we will study in this unit reflect some of these differences, although our study will center upon each work for its own literary merit.

THE SHORT STORY

PART ONE: RIP VAN WINKLE
by Washington Irving

AUTHOR

Washington Irving, who just missed being a colonial, having been born six years after the Revolutionary War ended, was the first American writer of importance. He made a good many English authors of repute raise an eyebrow and take a second look at American literature. Dickens, Scott, and Byron admired him. In his own country "hotels, steamboats, public squares, wagons, and cigars were named after him, as well as a spring in Oklahoma and a cliff in New Jersey.... When he died, New York closed down to honor him as if he had been some leading politician."[1] Such fame good writers seldom enjoy, at least not in their lifetime. Was Irving a great writer as well as a prolific one?

Most critics will agree that "Rip Van Winkle," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," "The Devil and Tom Walker," and certain essays such as "Westminster Abbey" deserve the acclaim they won in their author's day. Social and political satire Irving enjoyed, but he was essentially a romanticist. It was as a romanticist, reveling in the legends of old New York, that we see him in "Rip Van Winkle," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and "The Spectre Bridegroom." It is in these tales that we find that special quality of style and mind that are so characteristic of Irving and have so endeared him to English-reading people. Gentle satire, drollery, geniality, and grace pervade these tales and lend them a certain polished charm that is an Irving trademark. In this story the student encounters a quiet, relaxed, and conversational style. The plot becomes subordinate to the manner of telling. Irving brought something special to the short

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[1] Edward Wagenknecht, Washington Irving: Moderation Displayed. (New York, 1962), p. 167

story: a polished, leisurely charm it would not recapture soon. In summing up Washington Irving's contribution to the short story and to American letters in general, one critic has put it:

> (For selection beginning "...if you must have death in the afternoon..." and ending "when we speak of civilization." see Edward Wagenknecht's Washington Irving: Moderation Displayed, (New York, 1962), p. 189)

EXPLICATION

The lean and tattered old gentleman, dozing peacefully beneath a tree, flagon and gun at side, has become almost as real to us as some of our historical figures. The very name Rip Van Winkle is likely to call forth to a nostalgic reader a pleasant memory of unhurried, sleepy afternoons, of an age uncluttered with confusion and speed. Rip has somehow come to be symbolic of the very qualities that his creator possessed so abundantly. This is hardly an accident, nor yet a happy coincidence, for Irving's special talent was to imprint his tales and legends with his own personality. Rip Van Winkle may be a short story in one sense of the word, but it actually has more characteristics of the sketch. Its leisurely development and attention to local color make it akin to the informal essay.

Such plot as there is came from German sources and was transplanted, as it were, to the New World. The story that Irving drew Rip from is Ottmar's "Peter Klaus." He made the knights into ghosts of Hendrik Hudson and his crew; he turned the central figure, Rip, into a localized character, filled in his personal background, and told what occurred when Rip awakened and returned to his village.[2]

The sleep-motif in this tale reaches far back in time and is found in many legends throughout the world. For example, there is the classical story concerning Epimenides, who entered a cave at noon to escape the heat of day, having left his flocks unguarded. He slept there for fifty-seven years.[3]

Such then is the semblance of plot upon which "Rip Van Winkle" is built. The student who reads Irving for the first time needs to be aware that this is a tale that he is to enjoy; there is no streamlined action or deft plot. The mood is established in the first paragraph as Irving describes

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[2] Charles Dudley Warner, Studies of Irving (New York, 1880), p. 47.

[3] Ibid.

the Catskills. The blue and brooding Catskills, with grey mists over their summits--these "fairy mountains"--cast long shadows over the tale to come. The situation is put forth at the same time; the chief character is introduced in the third paragraph. Rip, gentle and good-natured, is beset by domestic problems; he is "blessed" with a termagant wife. The fellow is portrayed sympathetically by Irving and in spite of his shortcomings the reader feels no contempt for easy-going Rip. It is his industrious wife that we dislike. With wry humor Irving describes the dog Wolfe, Rip's "sole domestic adherent", as "a courageous animal, but what courage can withstand the besetting terrors of a woman's tongue?" We see poor Rip, at peace with his world, routed out by an unsympathetic wife, driven into the woods, gun in hand and dog at side, to encounter the spirits that haunt the Catskills, or, if you like, to discover for himself "humanity's endless dream of being delivered from the tyranny of time."[5]

It is possible to see Rip's retreat into the mountains as escape from the intolerable pressures of civilization, or to visualize the mountains themselves as the Great Unknown. His escape into the land of dreams can be viewed as a retreat from reality--a psychological withdrawal from the unbearable. He returns to reality, it will be recalled, only when the good Dame is gone. However, such readings as suggested above are largely without merit. "Rip Van Winkle" is not a philosophical tale, nor a deep revelation of character, nor yet a story profoundly illuminating man's mind in retreat. It is the graceful retelling of an old German legend, rewrought from a series of sketchy episodes into a unity; it is a pleasant story dealing with the supernatural legends of the Hudson River country. If we accept the story as such, we can, if we choose, think of Rip as a personification of a universal longing for peace. As such a story it will continue to survive as a fragment of universal human experience.

Finally, the point of view should be considered. It is, of course, told in the third person. Yet in "Rip," Irving has projected himself into the story in spite of this. In his descriptions of the village, the townspeople, and of Rip we feel the author's almost visible presence. He does not let us forget we are seeing this through his eyes. As the story begins, it is Irving we hear talking. His comments on Rip and his wife direct our sympathies as we read. Irving emerges as a genial host, beguiling his guests with an hour of pleasant entertainment.

DISCUSSION: Some Suggestions

1. Irving sometimes projects himself into this story through certain

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[5] Wagenknecht, p. 189.

comments--not overtly but indirectly. Have the students point out such passages. This should lead, obviously, to a consideration of point of view. We see Rip through the author's eyes. How does Irving feel about Rip? Is he sympathetic? Who is telling the story of Rip Van Winkle? Could Rip have told this story? Can the students think of any changes that would be necessary if it were put into first person? -- See explication. The students will probably see how limiting the first person narration would be. Many of Irving's delightful comments would be lost, along with all the insights an omniscient observer is free to reveal to the reader.

2. This piece of storied prose fits, as do all narratives, into the beginning, middle, end pattern. Ask the students to suggest which incidents should be placed under each heading. -- The first two paragraphs establish the mood and the setting. Terms like "magical hues" and "fairy mountains" prepare the reader for supernatural encounters, while "a hood of gray vapors" suggests events shrouded in mystery. The next twelve paragraphs introduce Rip Van Winkle to the reader, give an unusually detailed account of his character and circumstances, and establish his place in the community. The main body of the story does not begin until paragraph 13, when Rip sets out to shoot squirrels. The climax is reached when Rip returns home with his daughter. The remaining three paragraphs being the story to a leisurely conclusion.

3. Irving devotes a good bit of time and space to the setting. Ask the students what is accomplished in the setting. Would they like the story better if it began with action? Would not this change the delicate mood created in this story? What incident would they choose as the beginning? -- See explication, and (2) above.

4. Explain who the "historian" Knickerbocker was. What did Irving achieve through the use of this elaborate hoax? -- Knickerbocker was an historian created by Irving to add to his tale.

5. Rip is a fictional character but Irving created him so well we often think of him as a "real" historical person. What other fictional characters have, through the magic of literature, achieved a "real" existence? -- Paul Bunyan, Cinderella, Prometheus, Ichabod Crane, the "Man Without A Country" or any of several others will serve to illustrate the reality of fictional characters. This might lead to a profitable discussion of why fictional people seem real. They live in the imagination and are not subject to the ravages of time. They often are symbolical of important ideas.

6. Do the students feel that Rip wanted to escape from his wife? Did he really "see" Hendrik Hudson or was this a vision--wishful thinking? If the latter idea is accepted by someone, ask him to explain

why Rip slept for twenty years. Will any explanation except a supernatural one clarify this? -- See explication.

STUDY QUESTIONS

The students' study questions deal mainly with factual points that consultation with the text can answer. There may be some disagreement about the answer to question 10. Any of the clues given may be the one that arouses suspicion: the rusty gun, the missing dog, Rip's stiff joints, the mountain stream where the gully had been, the thickets and vines that obscured the path, the disappearance of the opening to the amphitheater. In question 21 most students will agree that the ending completes the circle, bringing the reader back again to the mood of the starting point. There is no explanation of the supernatural, but it has been so skillfully woven into the fabric of mundane detail that we have been tricked into suspending our disbelief while the story worked its spell on us.

1. What details did Irving give about Rip Van Winkle? about Dame Van Winkle?

2. What was Rip's greatest failing?

3. Why did people like Rip in spite of this?

4. Do you think the author is sympathetic to Rip? Do you think he wants us to like or dislike him? Try to find a few phrases that will prove your point.

5. Describe the dog Wolfe. What did he and Rip have in common?

6. When his wife's tongue grew too sharp, what activity gave Rip some pleasure?

7. Find the passage that describes the mountain glen where Rip met Hendrik Hudson. What words and phrases are used by the author to create a feeling of loneliness and uneasiness?

8. When Rip arrives in the glen, how does Wolfe react to the sound of voices?

9. What was strange about the clothes the group of strangers were wearing? What seemed particularly odd about their behavior? What caused Rip to fall asleep?

10. When did you first suspect that Rip had been asleep much longer than one night?

11. What were some of the things that bothered Rip when he first awoke?

12. When he arrived in the village, how did he find it changed?

13. What change had come to the King George Inn?

14. What conversational topics especially perplexed Rip? Why?

15. Why was Rip called a "Tory?" Why had this term become a distasteful thing to the community?

16. What had happened to his friends Nicholas Vedder and Brom Dutcher? To Van Brummel?

17. Rip's confusion was compounded when his son was pointed out to him. Why?

18. Rip revealed his identity to his daughter after hearing her version of his disappearance. What bit of information did she reveal that helped Rip in his revelations?

19. Do you think he would have told who he was if this information (see above) had not been forthcoming?

20. What incident helped the community to accept Rip's story? According to Peter Vanderdonk, who were the strangers Rip had encountered?

21. How did the story end? Read the last paragraph again. Do you think it is a good ending?

SUGGESTED EXERCISES

Imagine that a person went to sleep in January, 1944, and awakened in January, 1964. Make a list of all the things he might find strange. Is the list as long as the one poor Rip had to contend with?

Do you think Washington Irving wrote this story to show us what trouble men get into who are lazy and who do not obey their wives? If not, what do you think is the purpose of the story? State it in one sentence.

Next you will read London's "To Build a Fire." As you do, think how the two stories differ. Which has the most action? Which gets into the main story more rapidly? Try to find other important ways these stories differ.

COMPOSITION

A paragraph designed to help the students become more careful observers might be worthwhile, provided there is time.

Have them, first of all, read again some of the best descriptive passages. (These abound throughout; the opening paragraph, the paragraph describing the glen, and the ones describing the village.) Then ask them to write a short paragraph (perhaps ten sentences) in which they carefully describe a commonplace object familiar to all. (The cafeteria at lunch, the halls during noon, a classroom, or a scene from a classroom window might be suggested.) In this simple exercise, it would not be necessary to point out the values of contrast and comparison, but it might be helpful. It would be quite enough to let the students learn to put into words the simple, commonplace things around them. The best ones could be read aloud, and perhaps it would be a good idea to let the class improve some poor ones.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

Superior students might try to recreate some local legend they have heard. They should understand that they may take an idea, as Irving did, and create a story, adding to it and changing it to fit their purpose. Most students know a number of Pacific Northwest legends, tall tales, and yarns.

RECORDINGS

"Rip Van Winkle," read by Paul Sparer, is available. On the other side of this record (Lexington Records, Pleasantville, N. Y.) is "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and some selected readings from Knickerbocker's History of New York.

Also, the story is dramatized on a Decca recording. It has been adapted and directed by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. The musical score has been composed and directed by Wilbur Hatch, with Walter Huston and a supporting cast.

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A survey of the life and times of Irving; Chapters IX and X deal specifically with the author.

Canby, Henry S. Classic Americans: A Study of Eminent American Writers from Irving to Whitman. New York: 1959.

On page 89 are some perceptive comments about "Rip Van Winkle." The entire section on Irving is worthwhile.

Wagenknecht, Edward. Washington Irvng: Moderation Displayed. New York: 1962.
A very good discussion of Irving's work, including some comments on "Rip Van Winkle." pp. 167-213.

THE SHORT STORY

PART TWO: TO BUILD A FIRE

by Jack London

The Text of the story will be found in The Call of the Wild and Selected Stories (Signet Classic CD20), which is also being used in the eighth grade for the novel. Your school should have a class set of these books available for your use. Page numbers refer to this edition.

INTRODUCTION

There are several reasons for selecting this story as the second one to be read in our unit of study on the short story. It is one of literary merit that appeals to seventh grade youngsters, and it affords a satisfying introduction to an author whose work most of them will encounter next year when they read Jack London's novel The Call of the Wild. It is also quite consistent in form with the typical American short story as it developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It lends itself beautifully to an application of our governing triad of Subject, Form, and Point of View, and serves as a model to contrast with the earlier type of story represented by "Rip Van Winkle."

AUTHOR

A man with little formal education, Jack London was profoundly influenced by his own richly varied experiences of living (see Student Version). The writings of such men as Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Darwin, and Rudyard Kipling made a deep impression on him, and these influences are evident in his writing. His concern with primitive instinct, the struggle of the individual, nature's brutality, and survival of the fittest are all to be found in "To Build a Fire." These elements in his stories both shocked and thrilled his readers, and helped make him one of the most popular writers of his day.

EXPLICATION

In common with most short stories, "To Build a Fire" presents a unity of time, place, and action focused through a main character to create a single impression upon the mind of the reader. Although the short story shows no character development, we are presented with quite

a clear picture of the kind of person the chief actor is. We know that he is unimaginative, "not much given to thinking, alert in the things of life, not the significances." We also know that he is insensitive, and perhaps for this reason, cruel to his dog. Unaware of the nature of his adversary, he demonstrates the overconfidence of a greenhorn in the Klondike by ignoring the warnings of older, more experienced men and setting out, alone and unprepared, on his hazardous and fatal journey. That he remains unnamed serves to emphasize the impersonality of nature, who is no respecter of persons. It also establishes the chief character as the representative of universal man in his eternal battle against the forces of his environment.

The scene is set in the introduction. The very first paragraph contains foreshadowing of tragedy through the connotation of such words as "intangible pall" and subtle gloom." Through the use of incremental repetition and minute detail, the author establishes a feeling of the relentless, all-pervading supremacy of the cold. The conflict between the man and the elements becomes immediately apparent.

Early in the story, the author skillfully plants a question in the reader's mind. By telling us that the mystery, strangeness, and weirdness of the dark, arctic cold made no impression on the man, and that he was not only a newcomer, but one without imagination, we begin to wonder how he will fare in this alien land. As the story progresses, this question grows, and the author systematically adds to the suspense as each separate incident unfolds. We begin to have serious doubts about the man's ability to be the victor in this conflict when he tries to eat without first building a fire to thaw out. When he begins to experience the first gnawing of fear, we wonder how adequately he will face the situation. The fire is built, all turns out well, and we think perhaps he will make it after all. But the suspense builds up again as he faces new dangers, reaching a climax when he puts his foot through the snow to a hidden spring below, and it freezes immediately. The uncertainty about the man's ability to solve this problem of survival creates more suspense as his fate hangs in the balance.

Throughout the body of the story, the predicament of the man is set in sharp contrast against the security of the dog, who instinctively knows the dangers of the cold, and is protected by the inherited wisdom of his breed. So by the use of contrast and conflict, London builds the suspense.

We know for a certainty that the man will die when he makes his last and fatal mistake by starting his fire under a tree. He has sealed his own fate by his unimaginative inexperience. The ending now becomes inevitable, although the author allows us to experience, through the man, the false hope of survival, thus maintaining suspense until the last two paragraphs. When the man finally accepts the fact of his death, the story

moves swiftly to an artistic conclusion.

Although the story is written in the third person, the presence of the author is felt throughout as he injects his attitudes, and directs the reader's attention to this theme--man's continuing struggle for survival as an individual against the impersonal forces of brutal nature.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The study questions in the student's manual have been planned around an examination of the work as a whole, using the approaches of Subject, Form, and Point of View, although they are not labeled as such. By seeking the answers to these questions, and discussing them in class, the students, we hope, may be led to a better understanding of the short story as a literary form, and an appreciation of the writer's artistry in creating a vicarious experience for his readers.

Not all the students will be able to answer all the questions, but enough deal with factual points of interest so that slower students will be able to participate successfully, while quicker students will find some of the thought-provoking questions stimulating.

For your convenience, the questions are duplicated here, along with brief guides for checking answers, although some questions have no one answer that is absolutely right.

You might introduce the story by asking for comments on the title, and what student think the story might be about. After they have read the story, have them discuss the significance of the title, and see how the story matched their expectations.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Since the study questions will be used as a basis for discussion, and since they refer to the text, we have not felt it necessary to indicate degree of difficulty. The teacher can guide the discussion so that all members of the class participate.

1. What type of short story is this? -- Most of the students will agree that it is a suspense story.

2. What did you decide about the appropriateness of the title? --Answers of course will vary, but probably many will see irony in the life of a man depending upon a simple operation like building a fire. Some may comment on the contrast of of fire and ice, or even on the irony of this man's hell being a frozen one (cf. Milton's "Paradise Lost"--"...cold performs the effect of fire.")

3. What kind of person do you feel the man to be? Do you think the author is sympathetic to him? Find evidence in the text upon which you based your opinion.--- Lacking imagination (p. 143, top of page). Insensitive--lack of understanding of dog's behavior (p. 144, middle paragraph). Lacking in perception--"It certainly is cold" (often repeated) seems to be the limit of his observation (pp. 142-245; p. 147, bottom of page). Cruel--poor relationship between man and dog(p. 148, middle paragraph; p. 146, last paragraph). Brutal in his fear (p. 154, last two paragraphs). A coward (last paragraph, p. 155; last paragraph, p. 156). Even in his acceptance of death--like taking an anesthetic (p. 157, first paragraph). Ignorant of the ways of survival (p. 143, top of page; p. 147, middle paragraph--forgot to light fire; p. 151, top line).

4. Why do you think the author did not give a name to the man? --See explication.

5. Is this story just about a man who fails to survive the cruel cold of the Arctic, or do you think there is another subject at a deeper level? If so, what would you say it is? -- See explication.

6. How does the author get across to the reader just how very cold it is? Find examples in the text. -- Repetition and accumulation of detail. Numerous examples, pp. 142-145. Also, see explication.

7. You will notice that Jack London uses descriptive detail almost as much as Washington Irving did in "Rip Van Winkle." Do you notice any difference in the way it is used? -- All the detail used by Jack London focuses on one thing only--the bitter cold.

8. At what point in the story were you sure the man wasn't going to make it? Did you have any doubts earlier than this about his ability to outwit the extreme cold? What hints were you given by the author that he might fail? -- See explication.

9. Often a writer will insert "signs" in his story that point toward the direction the action will take. You may not notice these as you read a story for the first time, but looking back, you will recognize them as <u>foreshadowings</u> of things to come. Can you find any such details in this story? -- See explication.

10. We usually think of a dog as being "man's best friend." Is that the role of the dog in this story? If not, why do you think the author included the dog in the story? -- See explication.

11. How do you think the author feels about the dog? And about the

man? In what way does he compare them? In the conflict between man and nature in this story, which side is the dog on? --See explication.

12. Although this story doesn't have as many things happening in it as "Rip Van Winkle," you will notice that it still follows the usual narrative pattern of having a beginning, a middle, and an end. Can you identify the three parts in the story? Where does most of the action happen? What does the writer do in the beginning? What is the importance of the end? -- See explication.

13. Did you notice that there is absolutely no dialogue in this story, except for the last words spoken aloud by the dying man? Do you suppose the author had a purpose for this? -- Everything that is not necessary for creating a single effect has been omitted. Lack of conversation (like lack of a name for the man) emphasizes the impersonal forces against which man must struggle in a futile effort to preserve his identity as an individual. There is irony in the final utterance, because there is no one there to listen to it. The fact that the man never speaks to the dog places the animal in conflict against the man also.

14. How did you feel as you read the story? Do you suppose the author deliberately put his story together in a way that would make you feel the suspense? Looking back over the story, can you see how he achieved this purpose? -- See explication.

SUGGESTED EXERCISES (See Student Version.)

Some students might find the first two exercises difficult, but the other two should be suitable for all levels. Question 4 may require some explanation of metaphor and simile with illustrations at the chalk board.

VOCABULARY (See Student Version.)

COMPOSITION (See Student Version.)

Topic 1 will be suitable only for above average students, although average students should be able to do the first part of listing, and then compose orally with the teacher's assistance.

Topic 2 is expository writing, and should be suitable for all except the very slowest students.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Other short stories of Jack London have been collected in various anthologies. To give practice in using the facilities of the library, several students could be assigned the task of finding those available in the school library, and making a list of story titles, and where each can be found. It is to be hoped, of course, that some students will read them.

2. Superior students might find other works by the same author, and read one. A few suggested titles? The Sea Wolf (1904); White Fang (1905); Smoke Bellew (1911); The Valley of the Moon (1913).

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THE SHORT STORY

PART THREE: THE TELL-TALE HEART
by Edgar Allen Poe

AUTHOR

Although earlier writers, Irving for example, recognized that the short story was a distinct form of literature requiring "nicety of execution," the leisurely pace of "Rip Van Winkle" lacked the dramatic tension of stories by such later writers as Hawthorne and Poe. The credit for formulating a set of principles governing short-story writing belongs to Edgar Allen Poe. In a review of Hawthorne's "Twice Told Tales," published in Graham's Magazine in 1842, he specified these requirements:

1. The story must aim at one predetermined effect;
2. it must rigorously exclude everything which does not contribute to that effect and thus possess complete unity;

3. it must be short, but not so short that the "pre-established design" cannot be realized.

Subordinating everything to totality of effect is too restrictive for many writers, but it worked for Poe. His terror stories were written according to a carefully worked out psychological method, and all his stories reflect his analytical skill, with the emphasis on character as much as on action. Many critics find Poe's methods and effects too obviously contrived, but he artistically fused them into a unity of tone, structure, and movement.

EXPLICATION

The subject of this story is insane fear, dramatically treated by the author through the use of first person narrative. By narrowing the focus of the story so that the action is seen through the character of the insane man himself, we are given a shocking glimpse into the warped and tortured mind of a murderer, driven by abnormal fear to the planning and execution of a hideous crime.

The opening sentence establishes the tone of the story. The murderer is speaking, trying to prove that he is not mad, although the reader is quickly made aware of his insanity. The emphasis upon his acute hearing ("I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell.") foreshadows the end of the story.

By careful use of metaphor and simile, and words and phrases with connotations of unperceived death, such as "the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow," the author builds a mood of fear, each detail adding to the suspense. The action takes place at midnight, and is repeated nightly for several days until finally the "vulture eye" is open, and the crime is committed after the fear has mounted for an unendurable pitch. The horror of the murder is accented by the complete lack of remorse, or for that matter, of feeling of any kind, except satisfaction at the thought of his cunning, as the murderer recounts with detached calmness the details of disposing of the body. The "evil eye" had been extinguished, so "what had I now to fear?" the murderer asks himself as he opens the door to the investigating officers.

Once again the suspense mounts as fear builds up, beginning with a ringing in the ears of the narrator, increasing to a "low, dull, quick sound -- much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton," a repetition of his experience just before he murdered the old man. In his agony of terror, he confesses the crime, for he believes it to be "the beating of his hideous heart."

The story ends abruptly, with his shouted confession "tear up the planks! here, here!" Anything added after this would have spoiled the dramatic effect of the climax toward which everything in the story has

been directed.

STUDY QUESTIONS

To avoid obvious progression of difficulty, we have jumbled the questions in this exercise. Questions 1, 2, and 8 are probably the easiest; numbers 3, 6, 7, 9, and 10 are probably in the middle range: and numbers 4 and 5 the most difficult.

1. What type of story would you call "The Tell-Tale Heart"? --Some students will probably call it a murder mystery, which it really is not, although most will see it as a horror story.

2. Why do you think Poe chose this title? Is it a good one? Why or why not? -- All students have experienced at some time the exaggerated heart beat of fear. They will appreciate the symbolic nature of the title which attempts to give substance to an intangible experience.

3. You will notice that the story is written in the first person. Is the speaker the author? Why do you suppose Poe chose to write the story this way instead of the more usual third person omniscient point of view? -- Be sure that the students understand the speaker is a character created by the author, and is not the author himself. The first person point of view heightens the effect of horror as we are permitted an intimate glimpse into the motives and abnormalities of an insnae mind, thus involving the reader more intimatel y in the study of insanity.

4. What is the story about? When you read "To Build a Fire," you discussed the subject on two levels -- the actual facts of the story and something on a deeper level that the author was trying to say. Does this story also have subjects on two levels? What are they? -- The story is about a murder committed by an insane man, but it is also about insanity itself, and the tormented fears of the insane. The students should see that the choic e of point of view causes us to focus moreon the man's mind than on his act.

5. In the last story you read, you thought about the author's purpose, and how the form of the story took shape as it tried to achieve that purpose. What do you think is the author's purpose in "The Tell-Tale Heart"? How has his purpose helped shape the story? -- The students should see that everything has been carefully subordinated to Poe's main purpose of dramatizing insanity.

6. What is the name of the old man? Of the speaker in the story? How old was the speaker? What did he look like? What can

your answers to all these questions tell you about Poe's purposes? -- This question could serve as a good basis for comparison with the Irving story. Here all unnecessary detail has been omitted, as it would detract from the powerful impact of the concentrated unity of the tale.

7. What does the first paragraph tell you? Why is this important? What kind of mood does it create? -- The opening paragraph establishes the insanity of the speaker, and creates the mood of fear which the writer builds upon throughout the story.

8. Is there any conversation in this story? To whom is the speaker talking? -- There is no conversation in the story, except as it is reported by the narrator. We do not know to whom he is speaking, although it is clear he is trying to deny his madness (not the murder).

9. What happened to the murderer? Why did the story end so abruptly? Do you think it would have been better if you had been told more about what happened later? Why or why not? -- We do not know what happened to the murderer. Anything added after the climax would have weakened the dramatic effect of the story.

10. Explain the "Evil Eye." Why did the speaker call it the "eye of a vulture?" Do you think the old man was evil? -- Probably the old man had a cataract, but it aroused an abnormal response in the speaker, and to him it became an evil symbol that must be destroyed. We are told nothing wrong of the old man. Indeed, we are told the narrator loved him.

SUGGESTED EXERCISES (See Student Version.)

These exercises will require a close reading of the text. The last one will give practice in the use of the card catalogue, and in the writing of a bibliography.

VOCABULARY (See Student Version.)

COMPOSITION (See Student Version.)

Only the better students will be able to do (2). (1) is an assignment most students can do effectively.

THE SHORT STORY

PART FOUR: THE RED PONY

by John Steinbeck

AUTHOR

John Steinbeck won critical acclaim with his first novel, Tortilla Flat, published in 1935. Of Mice and Men followed. A good many critics found the violence--both of action and language--repugnant. He was tagged a realist, and with the advent of Grapes of Wrath, the tags changed to socialist, Communist,and agitator. His characters (the famous Ma of Grapes of Wrath, Lennie of Mice and Men, the amoral group in Tortilla Flat) were denounced by many as mere caricatures.

It seems strange (looking back from our comfortable vantage point two decades later) that so few recognized Steinbeck as a sentimentalist, a romanticist, and an idealist. Out of a somewhat uneven body of work there emerged in the thirties and forties a considerable amount of prose that had a quality of warmth and understanding unique to the author. The Long Valley, Pastures of Heaven, and The Red Pony contained an almost lyrical strain; compassion emerged in Grapes of Wrath and Of Mice and Men.

The furor gradually subsided and critical acclaim followed. The acclaim waned, it is true, as the years passed,and when the Nobel Prize came unexpectedly to Steinbeck in 1962, a good many critics fidgeted uneasily. What worthwhile books, they demanded, had Steinbeck written recently? Such literary stalwarts are doubtless right in pointing out that Steinbeck's fame rests upon his earlier work. It has a vigor, an anger, and a power missing from much of his later work. His novels are full of symbolism and are saturated with a reverence for life. Steinbeck, quite simply, likes people and writes of them with understanding and with compassion. The best of his work is imbued with these qualities; the best of his stories are remarkable revelations of human experience. The simplicity of his style the clarity and vigor of the prose in The Red Pony are characteristic of Steinbeck.

EXPLICATION

The Red Pony is about concrete things--a boy and a horse; it is about a boy's feelings, too--a child's love and a child's grief. Steinbeck has written with sensitivity and compassion of the boy Jody, a ten year old caught in the relentless tide of life and death.

The novel has three parts--three chapters, really: the first, entitled "The Gift" tells of Jody's love for the red pony and of the pony's death; the second, the "Great Mountains," reveals another aspect of life and

death in the aging paisano who has come home to die; the third portion, "The Leader of the People," shows Jody learning about the loneliness of the old. We are concerned only with the first part, "The Gift," here.

The students will readily understand the subject. Jody and Gabilan will strike a responsive chord at once. The tangible aspects of the story will engross and hold; an awareness of the importance of the intangibles cannot fail to become apparent as the student reads, for Steinbeck has, with consummate skill, woven the abstract into the concrete, and suddenly the reader is enmeshed not only with a boy and a horse, a ranch, and lazy summer days, but also with the love, fear, pain, and the knowledge--so painful when first encountered and no less so when last met--the knowledge of the inevitability of death and of the futility of protest. The student will become involved with sense and spirit here, although the symbolism need not concern him; the point of the story is fully realized without resort to it.

Aside from Subject, "The Gift" lends itself admirably to a study of form also. In Steinbeck's hands the short story is not primarily the technical masterpiece of effect that Poe made it, nor is it the rambling, episodic story-sketch of Washington Irving. It becomes, instead, a revelation of character. People interest Steinbeck. Here in The Red Pony, as elsewhere, people dominate the story. The opening lines are given over to a description of Billy Buck, of Jody, and of the family. The second portion of the story is concerned with the gift of the pony and the pride and love the boy feels. The third portion, containing the climax, deals with the pony's illness and his battle for life, and the conclusion is the grim scene where, blind with impotent rage, the boy strangles the vulture.

Subject and Form emerge than as dependent, one upon the other. Point of View, the way in which the author presents his people to us, and his attitude toward them, is also an important consideration, especially in this story, for it, as in many of Steinbeck's stories, is basically a revelation of character. The author's sympathetic understanding and liking for people emerge as strongly in The Red Pony as in his other work.

It is Steinbeck we hear as the story opens with the description of Billy Buck. Later, we follow much of the story as Jody feels and sees it. The author, however, shifts the point of view from character to character, thereby giving us a feeling of personalities that might otherwise be missing. For example, we see through the eyes of Jody's mother when she comes to find her son admiring his pony.

> "She was angry when she came, but when she looked in at the pony and at Jody working over him, she felt a curious pride rise up in her."

Although the point of view shifts occasionally, the feeling that the author is there, outside his characters, looking at them with objectivity and understanding, is strong, and adds to the sense of continuity that so strongly emerges from the story.

One further point needs to be analyzed. A considerable amount of the success of this story--as well as other Steinbeck stories--depends upon the revealing bits of dialogue that occur. When Jody's father says, sternly, to his son, "A horse isn't any lap dog kind of thing," we understand his contempt for weakness and sickness. In like manner, Jody's mother begins to emerge from a "flat" character into a complex one when she stands uncertainly looking after her son as he hurries to his sick pony. "He will be all right." We know so much about her from her few remarks--her tenderness and her love for her son as well as her strength are revealed.

While there is no doubt that there is a good deal of symbolism in this story, it is not necessary to undertake a study of it. Suffice it to say that certain foreshadowings in the story point to the grim climax and conclusion. Jody, walking up the hill on a sunny morning, looks up and sees two black buzzards floating in the blue haze.

> "Over the hillside...(they) sailed low to the ground and their shadows slipped smoothly and quickly ahead of them. Some animal had died in the vicinity. Jody knew it....The buzzards overlooked nothing. Jody hated them as all decent things hate them..."

Here a sensitive reader will feel the first foreboding--felt more than understood--that the black shadows cast by the carrion-eaters is somehow a portent of things to come.

Thus "The Gift" from "The Red Pony" offers many enriching experiences, and probably the most important is a realization of the warmth and tenderness with which Steinbeck has created these people. The student who reads this story will understand the difference between a fictional character of depth and one of the empty line drawings he faces in the gay little tales of sports and adventure he usually finds incorporated in his literature texts. The difference could never have been made as plain to him by exercises, words, or lengthy lectures. All of us grow a little when we share a worthwhile literary experience, and a seventh grader is no exception.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

This selection is rather long for class reading. Since it is not especially difficult, it would probably be wise to ask the students to read

it outside class. (For slow groups, however, class reading would be essential.)

After the reading of the story, the most important activity to undertake would be a discussion of the story. Through a careful question and answer session, students can soon grasp the essential qualities of the story, and--this is the most important--will feel they have discovered these things themselves.

The following are suggestions for carring out such a discussion.

To begin with, a discussion of Form would be helpful. Ask the students to arrange the incidents into a beginning, a middle, and an end pattern. Steinbeck is not as concerned with a tight plot as some authors; in his hands the story becomes more a revelation of human experience than a technical performance. Still, there is craftsmanship here. The first portion of the story (ending with Jody's going to sleep without learning what he was to receive) covers one day. Here we are introduced to all the characters--each begins to emerge as a person. Setting is established--a ranch near Salinas, California. The story opens with a description of Billy Buck, one of the characters Steinbeck is obviously most sympathetic to. The boy Jody is described as well.

After the introduction which sets the stage and creates suspense, the story progresses through (1) the gift of the pony (2) the pride of ownership and love of the child for the pony (3) the illness of the animal (4) the pony's escape and death. The conclusion, with Jody grimly fighting the vultures, symbols of death, closes the story. These incidents, strung like beads on a strand, are used by the author for important disclosures of character.

Steinbeck uses many details to establish how important Gabilan is to Jody. Ask the students to point out incidents and read passages that show the love the boy had for the colt.

Questions (about form) that might be directed to the students are as follows:

At which point in the story do you feel the most suspense? Is it the first time the sick pony gets out? Is it during Billy Buck's operation on Gabilan? Or is it when Jody follows the red pony's tracks for the last time? Just when did you decide this story wasn't going to have a happy ending? Is there anything early in the story that may foreshadow the conclusion? (Point out that in the introduction, during Jody's walk to the hill, he sees buzzards circling overhead: "The buzzards overlooked nothing. Jody hated them as all decent things hate them, but they could not be hurt because they made away with carrion.") Ask if they think this was inserted by the author for a purpose. If so, what purpose?

All three people in the story are clearly revealed during the pony's illness and death. This can lead to a discussion of Subject. This story is about people--about a boy who learns something about life and death. Ask the students to select the things about Jody they feel to be of the most importance.

Have them re-read the description of Jody beginning with "He was only a little boy, ten years old, with hair like dusty yellow grass and with shy, polite gray eyes---." What other important things do we learn about Jody as the story progresses? (Mention the passages that tell about his feelings toward his father, toward Billy Buck, toward the animals on the ranch.) Next, read to the students the description of Billy Buck, which opens the story. Then ask the students to select some things Billy says (or does) that reveal what sort of person he is. (He is the typical Steinbeck character; he is man as Steinbeck sees him, hard-working, humble, generous, kind, idealistic, accepting but not approving of the cruelty of life. While this is not necessary for the students to know, it would be well to see they recognize Billy as an important character.)

Point out that Jody seemed to think Billy was infallible. When did Jody finally realize there was no hope for his pony?

What sort of person was Carl Tifflin? (Read passages concerning his gifts to Jody having strings attached, his remark about horses not being lap dogs, his clumsy attempts to divert Jody's thoughts when the horse was ill, his actions at the end of the story.) Ask students if they feel he is covered up his real feelings sometimes. Ask for examples. (His embarrassment when Jody was first shown the pony is one example.)

What point of view do we have in this story? Do you think it would be effective in the first person? Could we know as much about Carl Tifflin and Billy Buck if the author had used first person? How could we have learned about them if Jody had told the story? What is the author's attitude toward the people in the story? Did he approve of Billy? Jody? Carl? Do you think Steinbeck felt it was Jody's fault the pony became ill? Was it Carl Tifflin's fault? Or no one's?

This story has some obvious symbols (see Explication). While such need not enter into the discussion, questions can be asked regarding some things in the story.

1. Why did Jody name his pony Gabilan?

2. Why did Jody kill the buzzard when he knew it had not killed his pony? Do you think he felt the buzzard represented the indifferent way Fate or Luck treats us sometimes? (Read the passage about the buzzard's impersonal eyes.)

3. Do you think Gabilan would have recovered if he hadn't got out? Can you prove your answer in some way?

4. Do you think this was the right ending for the story? Would the story seem as realistic if the ending had been a happy one? Is finding out that there are many disappointments and some unhappiness we can not avoid in life an important part of growing up?

STUDY QUESTIONS

A list of the study questions is included here for your convenience. The answers to the questions are readily found in reading the story, and so there is no need to offer suggested answers here.

1. What clues do we have as to Billy's age?

2. Why do you think Jody smashed the green muskmelon when he knew it "was a bad thing to do"?

3. Why did most of Carl Tifflin's gifts to his son carry restrictions? Do you think this was "good discipline"?

4. Why is the repeated event of owls hunting mice mentioned in the story?

5. Why did Jody's father leave the barn hurriedly after showing the colt to his son?

6. When Jody said he was going to name his colt Gabilan Mountains, Billy knew how he felt. How did he feel? How do you know?

7. How did the horse make Jody different in the eyes of his friends?

8. When Jody went out in the early morning to care for his horse "in the gray quiet mornings when the land and the brush and the houses and the trees were silver-gray and black like a photograph negative," he walked "past the sleeping stones and the sleeping cypress tree." Here the author uses comparisons in order to make the scene clear to us. Discuss these figures of speech with your teacher and then find several more in the story.

9. Why did Billy believe Jody should talk to his colt? Why did Jody listen with respect to Billy Buck's advice?

10. How did Jody believe one could judge whether a horse was a "fine spirited beast" or not?

11. How could Jody tell what Gabilan felt about things?

12. What kept Gabilan from being <u>too</u> perfect?

13. Why did Carl object to his son teaching Gabilan tricks? Do you think a horse loses dignity if it is taught to perform just for the amusement of people?

14. How did you feel about "force-breaking" Gabilan?

15. Why did Jody rejoice when Gabilan fought the bridle?

16. What secret fear began to torture Jody when the day for riding the colt approached?

17. Find several ways the author describes the approach of winter. ("The cut ends of the stubble turned black with mildew," "dry oak leaves drifted down," etc.)

18. Why did Jody hope a heavy rain would not come until after Thanksgiving?

19. "Carl Tifflin hated weakness and sickness, and he held a violent contempt for helplessness." Do you think the author agrees with this? If not, why doesn't he say so?

20. Find a sentence that helps us understand how Jody's mother felt about the pony's illness.

21. What action of Carl's shows he had a softer heart than he would admit?

22. The name "Gabilan" means "hawk." When Jody goes to see about his sick pet, he sees overhead "a hawk flying so high that it caught the sun on its breast and shone like a spark. Two blackbirds were driving him down the sky, glittering as they attacked their enemy." Why does Steinbeck put this detail in?

23. Why do you think Jody felt he had to kill the buzzard even though he knew the buzzard had not killed the pony?

<u>SUGGESTED EXERCISES</u> (See Student Version.)

<u>COMPOSITION</u> (See Student Version.)