The School of Education
Middle Grades Program

Language Arts Curriculum Unit
Fall – 2008

Grade Level: Sixth
Unit Title: Tall Tales and Short Stories
Student Name: Duncan Germain
Allotted Time: 15 days of 2 hour classes

Preface

This unit was prepared as part of a class, EDUC 563: *Teaching Language Arts in the Middle Grades* taught by Dr. Elise Barrett in the UNC-Chapel Hill Middle Grades Teacher Education Program. Planning for the unit began in the fall of 2008 as part of the content methods course that preceded student teaching in the spring of 2009.

The structure and contents of this unit reflect collaboration with Ms. Watson and Ms. Walton, both sixth-grade ELA and Social Studies teachers at Gravelly Hill Middle School, and Laura Castrodale, a fellow student and student teacher under the supervision of Ms. Walton. The students for whom the unit is designed are Ms. Watson's two sixth-grade classes.

Certain factors were taken into account in the planning of this unit. Firstly, neither Ms. Watson nor Ms. Walton are entirely sure of where their students will be in March of 2009. For this reason, the unit is designed to stand relatively alone, so that it will not be weakened or derailed should the class be at an unplanned point when it begins. Second, it contains a heavy emphasis on writing and process, as the earlier half of the year was spent almost entirely on reading and comprehension. Third, although the unit is primarily geared towards Language Arts, Ms. Watson is simultaneously the Social Studies teacher for the same groups of children; in fact, there is no officially mandated division between ELA and Social Studies during her two-hour blocks. For that reason, much of the unit is geared towards allowing the inclusion of lessons and discussions of Russia, Europe, and South America, the primary areas of study for sixth graders at Gravelly Hill. Finally, although both first and second block classes proceed at similar paces and are generally similarly successful at the same tasks, first block is an "inclusion" classroom with several students who will need assistance and differentiation.

Resources used for this unit of study include short stories gathered from collections and online, as well as samples written by myself and Ms. Castrodale. The laptops provided by the school may also be distributed on certain days for aid in research or publishing, and the large screen and LCD projector will be used for class lectures (the overhead projector will serve as a backup if technology fails). Finally, certain short video clips from popular television series may be included as demonstrations of short fiction, provided that regulations permit it and permission can be obtained from student parents.

Lessons included are original work. In the cases where resources or ideas are borrowed, the sources/authors are acknowledged.

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Rationale

The goal of this unit is to provide students a comprehensive overview of the genre of short fiction, including a range of lengths, styles, subjects, and cultures. Students will discuss and understand the literary characteristics of a short story, and will be able to critically read and evaluate them based on considerations of genre, tone, audience, and purpose. Furthermore, students will spend time developing their own short stories, and thus will leave the unit with a new skill in writing.

The North Carolina state curriculum, as outlined in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCoS) calls for instruction in the narration of expressive accounts, the exploration and understanding of expressive materials, the development of critical reading skills (including analysis), and the study of a wide range of genres and styles of literature. I have designed the unit with these goals in mind, and have identified specific objectives in conjunction with each individual lesson plan or assessment. In addition, the NCSCoS curriculum for Social Studies calls for an exploration of Europe and South America including Russia, and so several examples of fiction from these regions have been included to foster a sense of cohesion with parallel lessons outside of language arts.

The materials for this unit are intended to be diverse in multiple ways. I have selected texts that range from elementary to adult reading levels (the latter being intended primarily for read-alouds and well-scaffolded group discussion). The stories vary in length and complexity, making it possible to effectively differentiate for students of greater or lesser proficiency in reading and comprehension. They also cover a wide variety of topics, increasing the likelihood that each and every student will be interested and personally engaged with the material.

The unit is structured to gradually increase student independence in dealing with short fiction, beginning with multimedia examples and read-alouds and progressing through shared silent reading and small group work to individual choices and analyses. In terms of written work and assessment, the unit adheres to the "I do, we do, you do" approach. A major student goal of the unit is the production of a finished short story. Students will first observe a teacher-written example of a short story, along with explanations of its purpose and construction; subsequently, the class will compose a short story together with teacher guidance. Finally, I will guide students through the prewriting phase of their own work, which will be completed individually and edited and revised with peer input. This trend of deliberate scaffolding and sequentially lessened support is intended to further the goal of giving students the tools required to be strong and independent thinkers.

Concepts & Vocabulary

Ideally, by the end of the unit, students would understand all of the concepts and terms listed below in full. However, it is extremely unlikely that *every* concept will be thoroughly addressed, and thus those terms that are *most* important are specifically mentioned and included in the lesson plans themselves. It is also to be noted that none of these terms are unique to a unit on short stories; their meanings may be *modified* by an understanding that the work under discussion is a short story, but all terms are in use throughout discussion of literature. Often, then, a measure of students' understanding will center on whether they can describe how a short story differs from other forms of writing with respect to each term.

- ❖ Structure
  - ➢ Genre – the broad category to which a given work may be assigned, such as "fantasy," "historical fiction," or "mystery." The term genre also be used to describe wide hemispheres of written work, such as "fiction," "nonfiction," "poetry," and "drama," or to describe the major *focus* of a work:
    - ▪ Milieu story – a story that exists mainly to introduce readers to a particular world and describe or explore what makes it unique, such as many works of fantasy or a story about what it is like in a different culture.
    - ▪ Idea story – a story that centers around a specific problem or theme and explores and explains that theme. Examples include mystery stories, stories about racism or oppression, and caper stories where characters are trying to accomplish a single, simple goal.
    - ▪ Character story – a story that focuses on people and how they think or feel. Character stories deal with people and relationships in times of trouble or change and try to explain something about the *whys* and *hows* of human life. At the end of a character story, readers should feel like they "know" the main character as well as they know themselves.
    - ▪ Event story – a story in which the most important thing is what happens. Characters and setting and ideas all serve as plot devices in an event story … they are there only to move things along. Event stories are often exciting and fast-paced; many science fiction or action adventure stories are event stories.
  - ➢ Plot – the action of a work, also referred to as a storyline. Descriptions of plot include details about beginning, middle, and end, chronological listings of major events, and understanding of causes and effects.
    - ▪ Problem – the main source of conflict or motivation in a story. Problems come in many shapes and sizes … Romeo and Juliet's forbidden love is a problem, but so is the presence of the evil Empire in Star Wars. Generally, you can identify the problem because it becomes

clear early in the story, and when it is solved, the story ends. However, some kinds of stories may have more than one problem, or no problem at all.

- In Medias Res – A Greek term meaning "in the middle of things," describing how some stories begin in the thick of the action with past events explained only as needed while the plot progresses. Short stories are often written *in medias res* because they do not always have room for large amounts of background detail.
- Climax – the high point of action, in which the main problem of the story is resolved, for better or worse.
- Subplot – a secondary, less-important storyline that is related to the main idea, but may not necessarily focus on the same things or be resolved at the same time, e.g. a romantic backstory in the middle of an action adventure or a mystery. Subplots are rare in short stories because there is often little time for going beyond the central idea.

➢ Setting – the physical and social context of a story, including location, environment, time period, and culture.

➢ Viewpoint – the frame or position from which the story is told.
- Narrator – a "storyteller" or "voice" that relates the events of the story; the person doing the telling. Some narrators know things that characters in the story do not, and give additional details directly to the audience.
- First-person – the term for a story written using "I," "me," and "we," as though the author is talking directly to the reader.
- Third-person – the term for a story written using "he," "she," and "they," as though the author is telling about things that happened to other people.
- Omniscience – a word meaning "all-knowing." Narrators can be fully omniscient, in which case they know things about the past and the future and what is going on inside every character's head, or they can be partially omniscient, in which case they may know the past but not the future, or they may be able to see everything that's happening but not look inside character's thoughts, or they can be not omniscient at all.

➢ Audience – the person or persons reading the story. Audience can be complicated by the structure of a story – for example, if an entire story is written as a letter to a loved one, who is the audience – the loved one, or the reader? By considering who the author *intended* to read the story, and whether or not they fit into that category, readers can gain a deeper understanding for the meaning of a piece of writing and whether or not they agree with its message.

❖ Literary Devices and Terminology
➢ Agenda – the goal or purpose of a story within the context of who it was written for and why. For example, if an author wrote a story that makes

us feel sorry for animals being driven from their habitats and threatened with extinction, he or she could be said to have a pro-environmental agenda. Agenda is sometimes a negative term when it is used to describe a *hidden* purpose – for example, if someone wrote a story in which all of the bad guys were of a particular race or religion, but the author never came right out and admitted that the story was an attack on that group.

➢ Allegory – a story where events and people "stand for" or represent something deeper or beyond the story itself; a story with two meanings; an extended metaphor.

➢ Allusion – a reference to some other work, or to some time, place, person, or event in the real world.

➢ Archetype – a character or entity that is a perfect representative of a larger idea; a reference that makes sense and is recognizeable across cultures and genres. For example, the idea of a young warrior who goes on a journey to save his people is an archetype, as is the idea of a wicked stepmother … these things can appear in all kinds of stories for all kinds of reasons.

➢ Characterization – the way in which a story, author, or narrator tells us things about the people in the story. Characterization can be deep and complex, so that we know a lot about the character, or it can be simple and easy, such as when all we know about someone is their job, or a stereotype (e.g. the cranky old neighbor across the street). Characterization deals with motive, action, relationships, reputation, skills and abilities, desires and fears, and any other detail that lets us know "who a person is."

➢ Flashback – a literary device in which the action stops for a moment and the reader is taken back to an earlier time in a character's memory. Flashbacks are often used to give additional background and detail, or to explain events that were previously confusing.

➢ Foreshadowing – a technique where an author drops hints about what might happen in the future of the story.

➢ Hyperbole – a technique where an author deliberately exaggerates certain details or descriptions, either for comedic effect or as a commentary on some aspect of the story.

➢ Imagery – the use of vivid descriptive terms to let readers really visualize a setting, environment, or situation. Imagery can be direct, as with adjectives like "brilliant" or "terrifying," or it can use figurative language such as metaphor, simile, and analogy.

➢ Irony – when there is an implied discrepancy between the actual words said or written, and what those words mean or are intended to do. Irony may occur when an author says one thing but means another, or when the outcome of an event is different from what was expected in a humorous or predictably unpleasant way. *Dramatic irony* is a term for the tension that occurs when the reader knows something the characters do not, and thus the reader is interpreting events differently than the characters are.

➢ Figurative Language – language in which things are described by connecting them to other things.

- In *metaphors*, this connection is direct, e.g. "He was a lion of a man."
- In *similes*, the comparison is indirect and uses the words "like" or "as," e.g. "He was as brave as a lion."
- In *analogies,* one relationship is held up to explain another, e.g. "The enemy ran from him the way antelope run from a lion."

➢ Mood/Tone – the attitude that an author takes towards the subject of a story, or that a character takes towards other characters or situations. Mood is related to but not dependent on the subject of the story; for example, stories about tragedies like the Holocause often have a dark or solemn mood, but a story about a friend getting a minor injury could be told in both sad and amusing ways. Some examples of moods and tones are: serious, humorous, ironic, frightening, purposeful, satirical, or objective.

➢ Personification – giving human characteristics to a non-human thing, such as describing a hot desert sun as being merciless and cruel, or a room in a relative's house as being welcoming, friendly, and familiar.

➢ Satire – a kind of story in which the author mocks or ridicules some aspect of the story's subject, usually to criticize or bring about change. For example, someone might write a satire about a politician in which his or her bumblings are exaggerated in order to bring about change in the politician's actions.

North Carolina Standard Course of Study

Nearly every skill in the NCSCoS is intended to develop continuously across the middle grades. Some, such as reading comprehension, have been present since elementary school, while others, such as literary analysis, are essentially introduced for the first time. Middle grades students move along several continuum in their language arts education – from simple texts to complex ones, from narrative writing to descriptive, persuasive, analytical, and evaluatory, and from guided and cooperative to independent. Coming as this unit does in the early part of their middle grades experience, it will lean towards the beginning in all of these spectra, but will be geared towards helping them progress towards proficiency in every area.

Among the skills addressed by the unit are: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, drawing connections between different kinds of works, making inferences based upon text and context, making predictions and drawing conclusions, identifying and evaluating audience and purpose, identifying and evaluating major literary aspects of a work, understanding short fiction in relation to other kinds of writing, brainstorming, effectively organizing, effectively characterizing, effectively editing and revising, and effectively evaluating a peer-written work. The relevant goals and objectives from the NCSCoS addressed in this unit are as follows:

- ❖ Goal One
  - ➢ The learner will use language to express individual perspectives drawn from personal or related experience.
    - ▪ 1.01 – Narrate an expressive account (e.g. fictional) which uses a coherent organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; tells a story or establishes the significance of an event or events; uses remembered feelings and specific details; uses a range of appropriate strategies, e.g. dialogue, suspense, movement, gestures, expressions.
    - ▪ 1.02 – Explore expressive materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by monitoring comprehension for understanding, analyzing the works' characteristics, determining the effect of literary devices and strategies on the reader, making connections between works, self, and related topics, comparing and/or contrasting information, determining the main idea and/or significance of events, generating a learning log or journal, creating an artistic interpretation that connects self to the work, discussing print and non-print expressive works formally and informally.

❖ Goal Two
  ➢ The learner will explore and analyze information from a variety of sources.
    ▪ 2.01 – Explore informational materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by monitoring comprehension for understanding, studying the characteristics of informational works, restating and summarizing information, determining the importance and accuracy of information, making connections between works, self, and related information, comparing and/or contrasting information, drawing inferences and conclusions, and generating questions.

❖ Goal Four
  ➢ The learner will use critical thinking skills and create criteria to evaluate print and non-print materials
    ▪ 4.01 – Determine the purpose of the author by monitoring comprehension for understanding, exploring any biased, apparent, or hidden messages, identifying emotional factors and/or propaganda techniques, identifying and exploring the underlying assumptions of the author, and analyzing the effects of the author's craft on the reader/viewer/listener.
    ▪ 4.02 – Analyze the communication and develop and apply appropriate criteria to evaluate the quality of the communication by using knowledge of the language structure and literary or media techniques, drawing conclusions based on evidence, reasons, or relevant information, and considering the implications, consequences, or impact of those conclusions.
    ▪ 4.03 – Recognize and develop the stance of a critic by considering alternative points of view or reasons, remaining fair-minded and open to other interpretations, and constructing a critical response/review of a work/topic.

❖ Goal Five
  ➢ The learner will respond to various literary genres using interpretive and evaluative processes
    ▪ 5.01 – Increase fluency, comprehension, and insight through a meaningful and comprehensive literacy program by using effective reading strategies to match the type of text, reading self-selected literature and other materials of individual interest, reading literature and other materials selected by the teacher, discussing literature in teacher-student conferences and small-group discussions, taking an active role in whole-class seminars, discussing and analyzing the effects on texts of literary devices, interpreting texts by explaining structural elements, investigating examples of distortion and stereotypes, recognizing underlying messages in order to identify themes within and across works, extending understanding by creating

products for different purposes, different audiences, and within different contexts, and exploring the relationships between and among characters, ideas, concepts, and experiences.
- 5.02 – Study the characteristics of literary genres of fiction, nonfiction, drama, and poetry through reading a variety of literature and other texts, interpreting what impact genre-specific characteristics have on the meaning of a work, exporing how the author's choice and use of a genre shapes the meaning of a literary work, and exploring what impact literary elements have on the meaning of a text (such as the influence of setting or the problem and its resolution)

- ❖ Goal Six
  - ➢ The learner will apply conventions of grammar and language usage
    - 6.01 - demonstrate an understanding of conventional written and spoken expression by using a variety of sentence types correctly, punctuating them properly, and avoiding fragments and run-ons; using appropriate subject-verb agreement and verb tense that are appropriate for the meaning of the sentence; demonstrating the different roles of the parts of speech in sentence construction; using pronouns correctly, including clear antecedents and correct case; using phrases and clauses correctly (e.g., prepositional phrases, appositives, dependent and independent clauses); determining the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words by using context clues, a dictionary, a glossary, a thesaurus, and/or structural analysis (roots, prefixes, suffixes) of words; extending vocabulary knowledge by learning and using new words; exploring the role and use of dialects and of standard English to appreciate appropriate usage in different contexts, and developing an awareness of language conventions and usage during oral presentations.
    - 6.02 – Identify and edit errors in spoken and written English by reviewing and using common spelling rules, applying common spelling patterns, and developing and mastering an individualized list of words that are commonly misspelled; applying proofreading symbols when editing; producing final drafts that demonstrate accurate spelling and the correct use of punctuation and capitalization; and developing an awareness of errors in everyday speech.

UNIT: TALL TALES AND SHORT STORIES

Duncan Germain, EDUC 563, 6th Grade Lesson Plan

Week:	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.
1	Introduction	Making a Long Story Short	Regional Fiction	Continuing with Regional Fiction	A Thousand Ideas In An Hour
2	An Idea is Not Enough: Intro to Assignment	In Medias Res: Getting Started with Writing	Social Studies & Catch-Up	Do We Want More? Evaluating Half-Stories	Unit Test on Short Stories & Analysis
3	Social Studies & Catch-Up	Writer's Workshop	Refreshing the Imagination	Publishing, Revising, Illustrating	Sharing the Short Stories

Lesson Log

*NOTE! This unit is to be taught simultaneously by myself and Ms. Laura Castrodale, and individual work by each of us has not yet been fully integrated. Thus, this lesson log, and the calendar preceeding it, are to be taken as current rough guides only, subject to modification. Together, we have compiled nine complete lesson plans – one introductory day and four other days each. Over the break and during the first few weeks of student teaching, we plan to meet with our cooperating teachers to finalize the combination of those two sets of four lessons, and to confirm our plans for the remaining six days of the unit.

Day 1 – Introduction

On this day, students will receive their first introduction to the unit, beginning with a 14-minute video clip of Spongebob Squarepants or Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide, played over the digital projector. If for any reason this presentation is deemed inappropriate, students will instead receive an introduction in the form of a short story read-aloud, most likely from a fable or familiar historical legend. The goal of this introduction is to get students thinking about what makes a short story a short story, so some format other than stapled pages is critical. Following the introduction, there will be a guided whole-class discussion on the important characteristics and features of a short story (including things such as *in medias res*, the use of simplified characters and plots, and the need for a strong central idea), after which the class will break up into small groups to read their own shorts and complete worksheets on those characteristics. The class will re-convene for a quick discussion of the shorts just read, and will continue on with another read-aloud (for a total of three shorts presented in this period – that is a lot, so care will be taken to make them all brief and interesting), followed by an introduction to the final assignment, the creation of the students' own stories. (Goals 4.01, 4.02, 4.03)

Day 2 – Making a Long Story Short

On this day, the whole class will participate in a group activity to turn a well-known long story into a short one. The goal of the activity will be to reinforce and use the concepts explained and discussed on the previous day about what "makes" a short story (as opposed to, for example, a five-page summary or synopsis). The class will select, from two or three teacher-provided examples, one long story with which most of them are familiar. It may be a popular film, or a novel that the class has read together such as the City of Ember. By the end of the activity, the teacher, typing on the digital projector with class guidance, will have generated a much shorter version of this longer work. Student homework will include shortening their own stories read in group work the day before – stories with which they are already familiar, and whose structure and merits

they have already discussed. They will turn these stories into one- or two-paragraph supershorts. (Goals 2.01, 5.02, 6.01)

Day 3 – Introduction to Regional Fiction

On this day, students will have read aloud to them a short story written by an author with a distinctive cultural twist, most likely one who is writing in a specific region of America such as an inner city or on a farm. There will be a discussion/lecture on how the context of the story affects its meaning and message, emphasizing critical thinking skills and utilizing knowledge from the first two days. Students will then break up into small groups to read teacher-selected regional fiction (such as a Russian story by Anton Chekov or a South American story by Jorge Luis Borges). The activities associated with these stories will lead into social studies work for the day on the regions under study, which may be cultural, economic, geographic, or holistic. (Goals 2.01, 4.01, 4.02, 4.03)

Day 4 – Continuing with Regional Fiction

Because the classroom is inclusive ELA and Social Studies and the previous three days were heavily ELA-oriented, this day will focus mainly on social studies lessons concerning the regions studied the day before. What ELA time there is will be spent in read-aloud, catch up from the previous days, or sharing and evaluating student homework supershorts. (Goals 1.01, 1.02, 2.01)

Day 5 – A Thousand Ideas in an Hour

This day will begin with a brief quiz on the short stories from Day 3, the overall concepts related to short stories, or the social studies material from Day 4. Afterwards, the rest of this day will center on a brainstorming/outlining seminar activity from Orson Scott Card's book Characters and Viewpoint. It is essentially a method for turning raw ideas into plot and characterization through the use of teacher questioning, and is an excellent alternative to the more traditional brainstorm-organize-add-detail-and-write method. Over the course of the period, the students will generate enough ideas for at least two different short stories, and from those ideas the teacher will begin to model the actual writing process, creating an introductory paragraph for each short story. Following this activity will come the full explanation of the writing assignment and the passing out of a rubric and other guidelines. Students will be told to have their "idea nets" out over the weekend, looking for possible story topics, as prewriting and writing will take place in the next week. Students will also be asked to bring in some example of short fiction on Monday, whether it be a blog entry, a summary of a television episode, a comic book, or an actual short story from a magazine or collection. (Goals 1.01, 5.01, 5.02)

Day 6 – Intro to Long Short

This day will begin with an analysis of two teacher-written short stories, based off the Thousand Ideas results of Friday's class. The analysis will come in the form of some kind of class game, and thus can also serve a second purpose as an informal assessment. Students will have the advantage of seeing the teacher modeling for them, and will hopefully feel less pressured by their assignment. The day will then continue with a read-aloud of the first section of a longer, more complex short story pertaining to one of the geographic areas involved in the Social Studies explorations. A discussion will follow to assess comprehension of both the text, its context, and its literary qualities. Students will be assigned to bring two to four viable ideas for a short story to class the next day, and may also be assigned to read the second section of this short. (Goals 1.01, 1.02, 5.02)

Day 7 – Beginning to Write

This day will focus on getting the students started on their actual assignment. The day will begin with a share-and-discuss of some of the ideas proposed for short stories; likely, some will be discarded or modified in teachable moments and others may be used or modified as examples with potential. Those students with no ideas, or who feel their ideas are insufficient, will be encouraged to select from some of the ideas of their peers, or to imagine rewrites of favorite movies or bedtime stories, etc. Once it has been established that every student has a workable idea, the class will spend thirty minutes or so working on the beginnings of their stories (typing on laptops?), after which will come a pair-and-share session for students to swap ideas and comments on the work so far. The class will end with a read-aloud and discussion of the next section of the long short. (Goals 1.01, 4.01)

Day 8 – Social Studies and Catch-up

This day will serve to catch up on the long short and possibly conference with any students who are having difficulty getting started on their longer assignment. Once any ELA issues have been taken care of, the majority of the day may be spent on Social Studies work with the region involved in the long short. The students will be expected to have at least half of their short stories finished by the next day (two-page minimum?). (Goal 1.01)

Day 9 – Sharing Half-Stories

On this day, students will engage in a swap-and-read-aloud group activity in which every story is given to a brand-new reader to be read aloud. Within each group of four or five students, the four or five stories will be read and evaluated for effect when told in a voice OTHER than that of the author. Assessment for

the day will come in part from proficiency in reading aloud (mini-lessons on pacing and tone may be necessary as a result), and in part from peer evaluations of the potential of each story fragment. After the group activity, one story from each group will be volunteered to be read aloud by the teacher for whole-class feedback and a discussion on literary qualities and strategies. The day will end with a read-aloud and discussion of the next section of the long short, which the students will be asked to finish overnight for homework. They will also be asked to mark down their most or least favorite section for class the next day. (Goals 1.02, 2.01, 4.01, 4.02, 4.03)

Day 10 – Wrapping up Long Short

On this day, students will complete a thorough assessment (long quiz or short test length) on the longer short. Assessment will include evaluation of intended audience, purpose, voice, literary qualities, and simple enjoyment value, along with short essay questions on how and why the work succeeded and failed and a place for students to offer a rewrite of their most or least favorite section (open-book at the end of the test?). Any time left over will be devoted to a discussion of the work as a whole, and to Social Studies. Students will be expected to bring in a completed rough draft of their stories on Monday to hand in for teacher evaluation. (Goals 4.01, 4.02, 4.03, 5.01, 5.02)

Day 11 – Social Studies and Catch-up

Students will complete an activity on their region, and some time may be reserved for individual conferences or discussion of how the writing is going.

Day 12 – Workshopping the Writing

Students' drafts will be handed back with minimal teacher commentary geared mainly towards mechanics, as it is hoped that the peer evaluation workshop will address issues of literary device and entertainment value. The format for the student workshop has not yet been decided. (Goals 1.02, 4.01, 4.02, 4.03, 6.01, 6.02)

Day 13 – Refreshing the Imagination

This day will be devoted to another exploration of the various kinds of short stories. At least three will be shared with the class throughout the day – possibly a video clip, possibly fables or tall tales, etc. There may be some small group work, or the class may remain as a whole. In the second half of the period, the students will work together as a group to critique and perfect a teacher's

example of a near-final draft of the assignment. Students will be told to bring in their short stories completed the next day.

Day 14 – Using the computer

Students will spend this day entering their short stories into Word or Powerpoint and using the Internet (with careful teacher guidance) to hunt down images or other multimedia to enhance their story. At the end of the day, all stories will be saved for collection and "publication," and hard-copies will be printed for assessment.

Day 15 – Sharing the Stories

If possible, the stories will have been "published" overnight in a format that can be shared with the class. If this is not possible, however, the students will simply be given copies of their work to share aloud with the class, with multimedia and images projected using the large screen. Students will spend the second half of the class reading one story that they have not had any part in editing or critiquing, and will give that story a grade and feedback based upon effectiveness that will serve as 30% of the assignment's final grade (subject to teacher intervention for unfairness or a lack of attention and responsibility).

Resources

Primary resources for the unit will include the UNC SOE textbook <u>Teaching Language Arts in Middle Schools</u> and the NC DPI website that includes the NC Standard Course of Study.

The short stories used in class and discussion will be drawn from a wide variety of sources, including but not limited to the following collections:

> New Sudden Fiction: A Collection of Short Shorts
> Read All About It!: Great Read-Aloud Stories, Poems, and Newspaper
>   Pieces for Preteens and Teens
> Anton Chekhov's Short Stories
> Who Do You Think You Are?: Stories of Friends and Enemies
> No Easy Answers: Short Stories About Teenagers Making Tough Choices
> Sixteen: Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults
> Best Shorts: Favorite Stories for Sharing
> 13: Thirteen Stories That Capture the Agony and Ecstasy of Being Thirteen
> Ficciones: Short Stories by Jorge Luis Borges
> Little Worlds : A Collection of Short Stories for the Middle School
> Hey! Listen to This: Stories to Read Aloud

The primary resource for ideas in writing instruction and seminars are drawn from the following book:

Card, Orson S. <u>Characters and Viewpoint</u>. Writer's Digest Books: Cincinnati, Ohio, 1988.

Further short stories, as well as lesson plans, ideas, and activities, may be drawn from the following websites:

201 Short Stories by Anton Chekov – This website is a simple set of links to full-text transcripts of 201 shorts written by one of Russia's most famous authors.
> http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/ac/jr/index.htm

Classic Short Stories – This website contains a listing of classic literary short stories organized by author, including information about collections where the stories may be found and word count.
> http://www.classicshorts.com/bib.html

Some Ghostly Tales from South America – This website lists several short stories and other tales from South American authors on South American subjects and could be useful to find good works that tie in to Social Studies lessons.
> http://www.violetbooks.com/magic-realist.html

Russian Short Stories – This website lists and links to many of the most famous Russian short stories by Russia's renowned writers. Again, it could be a very useful resource for Social Studies tie-ins.

http://www.russianshortstories.com/

When the new wing broke away from the old mansion – This article from the Guardian in Great Britain reprints a short story by Jonathan Franzen, and also includes links to related articles and other shorts. Again, it could be useful for Social Studies tie-ins.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003/mar/25/fiction.originalwriting

Short Stories for Middle School Students – This website lists many collections and authors of short stories for easy use by teachers and students looking for something to read. Although it recommends dozens of books, it may not be needed given the collections already at hand, listed previously.

http://www.tempe.gov/youthlibrary/middleschool/msshortstories.htm

What if: The Seed of a Story – This website contains an entire, detailed lesson plan for teaching the writing of short fiction to middle grades students. Although it takes a different tack from the one I intend to use, it will be invaluable for providing concrete ideas and estimations of allotted time and student ability

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/dancin/resources/lesson_plan-l1.html

Writers' Window – This website is geared directly towards young writers, and contains published works, short stories by young writers, a writers' workshop page, discussion boards, and a place for students to share their own writing.

http://english.unitecnology.ac.nz/writers/home.html

Assessment

Nearly every lesson planned contains some type of formative assessment, whether formal or informal, written or otherwise. In addition, summative assessment will take place through quizzes and tests on a long short (or, alternately, on several short shorts), the grading of a final product (the students' own short stories), and through an evaluation of *student* evaluation of one another's work (i.e. in grading one another, did students refer to and use reasonably concepts taught throughout the unit).

Lesson 1:   Formative assessment only. Goal: determine the depth and complexity of student understanding of literary terminology taught throughout the year by asking them to apply that knowledge to analyzing the genre of short fiction.

Lesson 2:   Formative/Summative. Goal: gauge students' comprehension and retention of the previous day's lecture by having them guide the process of turning a long story into a short one. Distinguish between ability of the class working together and individual understanding with a homework assignment identical to work done in class.

Lesson 3:   Formative assessment only. Goal: assess students' ability to apply on their own concepts learned in Lessons 1 and 2.

Lesson 4:   Assessment unknown at present; major thrust of the day is Social Studies.

Lesson 5:   Formative assessment only. Goal: determine students' ability to generate creative and useable ideas for stories, as well as details, characterization, and plot twists.

Lesson 6:   Formative/Summative. Goal: gauge students' ability to use the tools of literary analysis in the context of a real piece of writing to which they already have a connection.

Lesson 7:   Formative assessment only. Goal: have every student leave the classroom with an idea for a short story, an introductory paragraph, and an informal critique from a peer.

Lesson 8:   Formative assessment only. Goal: identify and provide individual attention to students who have not mastered the concepts of literary analysis and the key characteristics of short fiction, with the aim of getting them up to speed in their own writing.

Lesson 9:   Formative/Summative. Goal: gauge students' ability to read fluently, as well as general class progress in terms of the specific assignment of writing a short story. Also gather concrete evidence of student proficiency in analysis and comprehension through written peer evaluations of story fragments.

Lesson 10:   Summative assessment only. Goal: determine whether or not students have successfully learned the methods of literary analysis

with regards to short stories, whether the chosen long short was successful in interesting students, and, through rewrite activities, whether students are themselves growing as creative writers.

Lesson 11: Assessment unknown at present; major thrust of the day is Social Studies. However, student drafts of short stories collected for first evaluation.

Lesson 12: Formative assessment only. Goal: guide students through the writing workshop process and evaluate their ability to effectively critique and improve one another's writing.

Lesson 13: Summative assessment only. Goal: have students thoroughly and successfully analyze a piece or pieces of short fiction with no teacher assistance.

Lesson 14: Formative assessment only. Goal: gauge students' ability to work with technology and to transfer their writing from one medium to another.

Lesson 15: Formative/Summative. Goal: have students effectively evaluate one another's writing using skills and concepts developed throughout the unit. Also, have each student leave having created a complete and interesting short story.

Sample Assessment #1: A Thousand Ideas In an Hour

Description: Students are guided towards the construction of a plot, setting, and cast of characters through focused teacher questioning. At the outset of the seminar, absolutely nothing is known about the story to be constructed; by its end, there is enough for a writer to begin work, or at least create a detailed plotline and descriptions of context. An example of how the seminar begins:

Do you want a story about a boy or a girl?
--*A boy! No, a girl!*
OK, then, we won't decide yet. How old is this person?
--*Ten! No, twelve!*
Twelve? Why twelve? What happens to you when you're twelve?
--*You can stay up later.*
Oh? What do you do when you stay up later?
--*Watch TV!*
--*The good shows!*
--*Scary shows! (Characters and Viewpoint, pp. 17-18)*

Because the seminar forces the story to develop linearly, a discussion must follow to turn the *idea* into an actual *story*, organizing ideas of structure, timing, tone, and audience.

Background: By this point in the unit, students have received a thorough grounding in the genre of short fiction, including exposure to multiple forms, direct

instruction in genre, structure, and literary qualities and devices, practice in "boiling down" longer and more complex stories, and exploration of stories and characters set in rich, culturally-oriented settings.

Points for evaluation:

1. Mechanics – every student contributes at least three times (log participation and call on specific students if necessary), contributions are appropriate and clear, students work together without unreasonable friction, and students give attention and enthusiasm to the seminar.
2. Creativity – while generating ideas, students avoid or eventually move past cliches and rehashes of other stories and make interesting choices for character, setting, and plot.
3. Entertainment value – students recognize that certain avenues or opportunities are better than others and lend themselves to more exciting or unique narratives, and make deliberate choices to pursue interesting topics
4. Structure – in the second half of the seminar, students give attention to questions of plot, length, and complexity, and eventually settle on an appropriate beginning and dramatic arc. Also, they decide upon an appropriate viewpoint, or weigh the benefits of multiple possibilities.
5. Genre/Style – in the second half of the seminar, students demonstrate an understanding of the differences between character, milieu, idea, and event stories, and effectively place their story within that framework.
6. Audience – in the second half of the seminar, students discuss various kinds of audiences and eventually settle on one or more possible choices that can make the story work.
7. Purpose – in the second half of the seminar, students demonstrate awareness of their own goal (to entertain, to inform, to terrify, to persuade) and begin to make decisions accordingly
8. Literary devices – in the second half of the seminar, students begin to add detail and develop ideas for possible devices and qualities that will aid with the purpose of the story.

Because it is early in the unit, and because nothing conclusive comes from the seminar in the form of written student work, much of the assessment from the day will be subjective and open-ended. I will have to take care to make specific observations of individual understanding, and to deliberately leave time for multiple mini-lessons and further explorations of any and all topics that might not have been fully understood from prior lessons.

<u>Sample Assessment #2: Peer Evaluation of Story Fragment</u>
Note: the following assessment is not in its final format, with graphics, etc.

Your Name: _____   Author's Name: _____

Story Title: _____

Please answer the following questions with 1-3 complete sentences each.

What do you know about the characters in this story so far?
_____
_____
_____
_____

What do you think this story is going to be about? Is it about a person, an event, a setting, or a big idea? What do you think happens next? How do you think it will end?
_____
_____
_____
_____

Do you think that you'll like this story? Why or why not? Does that mean it's a "good" or "bad" story, or are your reasons based on personal opinion?
_____
_____
_____
_____

What's another way that this story might have begun? Think about the things we've talked about as a class … *in medias res* versus beginning at the beginning, starting with flashbacks versus starting with action, etc. If this was YOUR story, what would you have done differently?
_____
_____
_____
_____

Note the following details. Don't forget, with only half a story, some of these might be guesses!

Person/Viewpoint _____   Mood/Tone _____

Genre/Focus _____   Intended Audience _____

Purpose/Goal _____

Literary Devices _____

Figurative Language _____

Differentiation

Because it is a primary focus of both the UNC School of Education Middle Grades Program and Gravelly Hill Middle School, this unit has been designed to incorporate multiple learning strategies to reach students of all levels, interests, and abilities. Lessons have been planned that allow for lecture, discussion, multimedia presentation, individual work, partner work, group work, whole-class work, verbal response, written response, silent reading, group reading, homework, in-seat work, and classroom movement. An effort has been made to keep these varying kinds of instruction balanced, so as to provide the greatest chance to play to each student's strengths. Furthermore, the centerpiece of the unit is the development and writing of a short story, which may be in any style or genre and may be of any reasonable length, from 4 handwritten (2 typed) pages onward. With the proper scaffolding, every student should find a topic or theme in which he or she has deep personal interest, and thus a strong motivation to succeed.

Much of the learning to be accomplished in the unit centers around analysis, response, and synthesis of new material. Therefore, each and every student should be capable of completing every assignment; there is no need for a separate and parallel curriculum. Instead, differentiation for students of varying ability and mastery will come in the form of modifications to assignments and instruction. Certain summative assessments that are intended to be essays or short answers may be reduced to short answers or multiple choice. Solo or silent reading assignments may be transformed to read-alouds and follow-alongs, or may be accompanied by notes or focusing questions; also, students who do not finish a particular class reading will be provided with copies to take home. Written assignments may be made easier through the provision of extra time or through relaxed length requirements. In addition, wherever information is presented on the board (such as notes or vocabulary terms), printed copies or prestructured outlines will be made available to the class as a whole. HOWEVER, in each case, differentiation will be evaluated for strict necessity and, wherever possible, changes to the actual assignments will take second-place to increased scaffolding and greater individual attention. As the goal of the unit is to make short fiction accessible to students both as reading material and as a creative outlet, it is imperative that no student be given second-rate exposure in an attempt to "make things easier."

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Lesson Title: *Shorter than you Think* / An Introduction to Short Fiction

Lesson Goal(s): Introduce students to the study of short fiction as a distinct area of language arts; activate prior knowledge of genre, literary qualities, and the tools of literary analysis; reveal some of the variety and depth of short fiction as its own genre; prepare students for individual work in analysis and writing.

Instructional Objective(s):
- To introduce the new unit and generate enthusiasm for the content.
- To provide students with three different examples of short fiction
- To introduce or reinforce the terminology that will be used in both analysis and construction of short fiction
- To provide students with an opportunity to start forming opinions on what fiction they like and what fiction they dislike

NCSCoS Standards:

❖ Goal Two
  ➢ The learner will explore and analyze information from a variety of sources.
    ▪ 2.01 – Explore informational materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by monitoring comprehension for understanding, studying the characteristics of informational works, restating and summarizing information, determining the importance and accuracy of information, making connections between works, self, and related information, comparing and/or contrasting information, drawing inferences and conclusions, and generating questions.

❖ Goal Four
  ➢ The learner will use critical thinking skills and create criteria to evaluate print and non-print materials
    ▪ 4.01 – Determine the purpose of the author by monitoring comprehension for understanding, exploring any biased, apparent, or hidden messages, identifying emotional factors and/or propaganda techniques, identifying and exploring the underlying assumptions of the author, and analyzing the effects of the author's craft on the reader/viewer/listener.

- 4.02 – Analyze the communication and develop and apply appropriate criteria to evaluate the quality of the communication by using knowledge of the language structure and literary or media techniques, drawing conclusions based on evidence, reasons, or relevant information, and considering the implications, consequences, or impact of those conclusions.
- 4.03 – Recognize and develop the stance of a critic by considering alternative points of view or reasons, remaining fair-minded and open to other interpretations, and constructing a critical response/review of a work/topic.

Materials/Preparation:
- Laptop equipped with cables to connect to screen, along with Episode 8 from Season 1 of Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide – School Elections.
- Posterboards or large sheets of paper, with the following labels at the top: Genre (Realistic Fiction, Historical Fiction, Sci-Fi/Fantasy, Mystery, Romance), Structure (Plot, Setting, Viewpoint, Character, Tone/Mood), Literary Qualities (Figurative Language, Foreshadowing, Symbolism, Imagery, Flashback, Dialogue), and Like It Or Not (Characters, Plot, Writing Style, Meaning/Message), as well as sticker sheets for individual students (four or five stickers per student for a total of at least 300).
- Copy of "Sucker" by Carson McCullers (1)
- Copies of "The Elephant's Child" by Rudyard Kipling (60)
- Copies of initial worksheet for The Elephant's Child (60)

Timeline of Activities:
- ❖ Introduction (10 min)
  - ➢ Five-minute warmup, as usual
  - ➢ Class agenda, getting students settled
- ❖ Ned's Declassified Clip & Discussion (20 minutes)
  - ➢ Show clip
  - ➢ Ask for brief student responses
- ❖ Introduce topic of short fiction (30 min)
  - ➢ Short fiction comes in many forms (e.g. from TV shows to fables)
  - ➢ It contains all the elements talked about all year (e.g. genre, character)
  - ➢ It has its own special characteristics, can you name some?
    - Simplified or abbreviated plot structure
    - Simplified characterization
    - One central idea
    - *In medias res*
    - Artistic structure
    - Different from summary
- ❖ Class Activity – Evaluating a Short Story (25 min)

- ➢ Introduce activity, students will place stickers on posters when they feel able to speak to a given topic (e.g., if a student recognizes a **flashback**, he or she will walk over to Literary Qualities and put a sticker under Flashback).
- ➢ Read "Sucker" by Carson McCullers
- ➢ Discuss student responses, allowing for volunteers to share thoughts, and reviewing any "blank" spaces on posters that might not be understood
- ❖ Partner work – The Elephant's Child (30 min)
  - ➢ Assign pairs or groups, pass out copies of story & worksheet
  - ➢ Walk around classroom observing and assisting
- ❖ Wrap-Up & Dismiss (5 min)
  - ➢ Assign unfinished worksheet as homework
  - ➢ Mention that final project is for students to write short stories of their own

Assessment: Mostly formative – do students recall prior work with literature? Are students able to intelligently discuss short fiction? What do posters reveal about current student understanding? Were students able to work productively reading and analyzing The Elephant's Child?

Attachments:
- • Worksheet for The Elephant's Child

LESSON 1 - NOTES TO SELF

Block 1	What worked: What didn't work:
Block 2	What worked: What didn't work:

The Elephant's Child
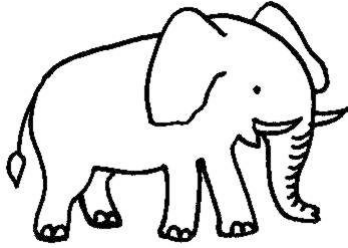
Name:_____

Date:_____

Subject:_____

Questions While You Read:

1. Who is the main character of this story? _____

2. Who are some of the other characters? _____

3. What genre is this story? _____

4. Who is the audience for this story? _____

5. Is this story written in first person (I, me) or third person (he, they)?

    _____

6. What is the main character trait of the Elephant's Child? In other words, what do we see him doing the most? _____

    _____

7. What is the main "problem" of the story? In other words, why does the Elephant's Child end up going on a journey? What does he want?

    _____

    _____

8. Do you see any examples of great description or imagery? Figurative language? Flashbacks or foreshadowing? _____

    _____

    _____

Questions For After You've Read:

1. What kind of moral or message do you think the author was trying to get across? Do you think he wrote this story for a purpose, or just to be entertaining?

2. Is this story more about the Milieu (the time and place and setting), the Character (how one person deals with what's going on around him or her), the Events (a bunch of exciting and interesting things happening one after another), or an Idea (one central theme or problem)? Use a couple of sentences to explain your answer.

3. Do you think this was a good story? Why or why not? If you liked it, share two of your favorite parts. If you didn't like it at all, tell us about at least two things that you would have changed if it was your story.

Lesson Title: An Idea is Not Enough

Lesson Goal(s): Provide each student with a solid, sensible framework for fleshing out a story idea.

Instructional Objective(s):
- To have students think critically about the elements of a successful story (characterization, milieu, plot, etc.)
- To have students evaluate ideas for realism and completeness
- To have students practice drawing on personal experience when generating a creative work

NCSCoS Standards:

❖ Goal One
  ➢ The learner will use language to express individual perspectives drawn from personal or related experience.
    ▪ 1.01 – Narrate an expressive account (e.g. fictional) which uses a coherent organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; tells a story or establishes the significance of an event or events; uses remembered feelings and specific details; uses a range of appropriate strategies, e.g. dialogue, suspense, movement, gestures, expressions.

Materials/Preparation:
- Dry Erase Board/Overhead sheet and markers
- Paper and pencils for every student
- Copies of The Question Sheet for each student (60)
- Dry erase markers for students (40) ((For The Question Sheet))
- Spare stories for less-responsible kids

Timeline of Activities:
❖ Introduction (10 min)
  ➢ Five-minute warmup, as usual
  ➢ Class agenda, getting students settled
❖ Share and Discuss Student Ideas (10 minutes)
  ➢ Find out if any students have any ideas at all, write on board

- ➢ Garner peer reactions, discuss merits of the ideas, relative completeness
- ❖ The Seed of an Idea – Saving the World (30 minutes)
  - ➢ Present the beginning of the idea – I want to write a story about a person who is trying to save the world.
  - ➢ Level One Questions to Consider
    - ▪ Saving the world from what?
      - • War, disease, aliens, global warming, evil genius, sin
    - ▪ What can you do to save the world from these things?
      - • Secret agent, fight back, do a little bit at a time, spread wisdom
    - ▪ What kind of person does that sort of thing?
      - • Is the character young, old, happy, unhappy, etc.
  - ➢ Settle on one idea, based on class enthusiasm
  - ➢ Level Two Questions to Consider
    - ▪ Who MUST be there?
      - • World-saver, victims, onlookers, villains, helpers
    - ▪ Who MIGHT be there?
      - • Parents, friends, bullies, wise ones, other aliens
    - ▪ Who HAS BEEN there?
      - • People who saved the world before
    - ▪ What is the most important place?
      - • Your house, villain's lair, war zone, hospital, White House
    - ▪ What other places are important?
      - • Places where people work, eat, somebody's treehouse, car or plane
    - ▪ Does the grand setting matter?
      - • America or not, fantasy or not, specific city or The City
  - ➢ Level Three Questions to Consider
    - ▪ Why does your main character care?
    - ▪ Why do the other characters care?
    - ▪ What can the characters do?
    - ▪ What can go wrong?
    - ▪ What will they do in response to that? (Remember Friday's class!)
- ❖ Wrap up activity, transition, stretch break (5 minutes)
- ❖ Silent Reading of short fiction brought from home, students may draw from a class set if they forgot or did not bring any (20 minutes)
- ❖ Analysis of Teacher's Story based off Friday session (30 minutes)
  - ➢ Teacher read-aloud, half of the story
  - ➢ Students taking notes, looking for literary techniques & terms
  - ➢ Brief discussion to share what students found, formative assessment
  - ➢ Ask the students to guess what happens next, write for five minutes
  - ➢ Brief sharing, around the room
- ❖ Return to student ideas from beginning of class, ask some of the questions from first activity (until end of period). Possibly turn over to students entirely, as a sort of test of their grasp of the ideas?

Assessment: Formative – did students bring stories from home? Are they participating in discussion? Do they understand the concept of fleshing out an idea? Are they on-task reading? Are they understanding the process of analysis and carrying it out effectively?

Attachments:
  • The Question Sheet

LESSON 6 - NOTES TO SELF

Block 1	What worked:
	What didn't work:
Block 2	What worked:
	What didn't work:

MY BIG IDEA:

Setting Questions
- Where COULD this happen? Where COULDN'T this happen?

- What is the MOST IMPORTANT PLACE in the story, and what's SPECIAL about that place?

Character Questions
- Who is your MAIN character? What makes him/her SPECIAL?

- Who else MUST be there? Who else MIGHT be there?

- Who BENEFITS or SUFFERS because of what's happening?

Plot Questions
- What's the MOST IMPORTANT MOMENT in the story?

- What ELSE has to happen, for that to make SENSE?

- What can GO WRONG? What can your characters DO about that?

- What makes your story DIFFERENT from any story you've ever heard or told before?

7

Lesson Title: *In Medias Res* / Getting Started Writing

Lesson Goal(s): Have each student walk away with a viable story idea and a solid beginning in the form of an outline and an introductory paragraph.

Instructional Objective(s):
- To have students discuss various story ideas' merits and weaknesses using the terminology of the unit
- To have students select ideas about which they are excited to write
- To have students thoughtfully weigh the different possibilities for beginning a story
- To have students create text that draws the reader in at the very beginning

NCSCoS Standards:

❖ Goal One
  ➢ The learner will use language to express individual perspectives drawn from personal or related experience.
    ▪ 1.01 – Narrate an expressive account (e.g. fictional) which uses a coherent organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; tells a story or establishes the significance of an event or events; uses remembered feelings and specific details; uses a range of appropriate strategies, e.g. dialogue, suspense, movement, gestures, expressions.

Materials/Preparation:
- Dry Erase Board/Overhead sheet and markers
- Paper and pencils for every student
- Copies of Timeline Outline for every student (60)

Timeline of Activities:
❖ Introduction (10 min)
  ➢ Five-minute warmup, as usual
  ➢ Class agenda, getting students settled
❖ Share and Discuss Student Ideas (20 min)
  ➢ Begin with sharing personal ideas
    ▪ Human being born and raised in heaven
    ▪ Big guy getting beat up in prison

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- Alien invasion on an alien planet
- Journal being passed back and forth between friends
- Kid on roof thinking about jumping across (stunts)
  - Call for student-generated ideas, write on board
  - Briefly talk about twisting or recombining or reinterpreting ideas to make them your own and make them unique (also, rewrites or extensions – mention Ender's Game chapter here)
- Discuss choosing an appropriate beginning (25 min)
  - Story Arc – two people were best friends, and then something came between them and they had a fight, and then they didn't speak to one another, and then they each made new friends who weren't as good, and then they tried to make up but some things went wrong, and then they finally did make up.
  - Discuss merits of starting in different places, using flashbacks, dialogue, hook openers, etc.
  - Display the beginnings to every story in class thus far, as well as possibly one or two others
- Outline sheets (15 minutes)
  - Pass out and explain sheets
  - Students write idea at top, name of characters, beginning, middle, and end of story, and two possible places to begin
  - Pair and Share with other students
- Writing (60 minutes)
  - Students may find comfortable work space but must work alone in silence
  - Teacher walks around room to assist

Assessment: Mostly formative – did students bring viable ideas? Do they understand what makes an idea viable? Do they understand that stories can be begun in different places, and can they conceive of different beginnings for their own stories? Are they capable of filling out an outline for their ideas? Do they have meaningful beginnings written for their stories?

Attachments:
- Outline for beginning a story

LESSON 7 - NOTES TO SELF

Block 1	What worked:
	What didn't work:
Block 2	What worked:
	What didn't work:

Finding The Beginning

Name: _____ Date: _____

MY BIG IDEA: _____

My Main Character(s): _____

_____

The VERY FIRST important event that matters to my story is:

_____

Another EARLY event is: _____

Some things that happen in the MIDDLE of my story are:

_____

_____

At the END of my story, these things happen:

_____

_____

I could begin my story _____

- To make that work, I need to _____

I could *also* begin my story _____

- To make that work, I need to _____

Duncan Germain
Unit: Short Stories and Tall Tales
Grade: 6th grade
Content Area: Language Arts
Length of Lesson: 120 Minutes

LESSON **9**

Lesson Title: Do We Want More?

Lesson Goal(s): Ensure that every student is well on his or her way to a successful short story.

Instructional Objective(s):
- To have students read aloud each other's stories, looking for issues in phrasing or coherence
- To have students sharpen and clarify their skills as critics on both literary and entertainment levels
- To provide useful feedback to each student on the direction of their stories

NCSCoS Standards:

❖ Goal One
  ➢ The learner will use language to express individual perspectives drawn from personal or related experience.
    ▪ 1.01 – Narrate an expressive account (e.g. fictional) which uses a coherent organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; tells a story or establishes the significance of an event or events; uses remembered feelings and specific details; uses a range of appropriate strategies, e.g. dialogue, suspense, movement, gestures, expressions.
    ▪ 1.02 – Explore expressive materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by monitoring comprehension for understanding, analyzing the works' characteristics, determining the effect of literary devices and strategies on the reader, making connections between works, self, and related topics, comparing and/or contrasting information, determining the main idea and/or significance of events, generating a learning log or journal, creating an artistic interpretation that connects self to the work, discussing print and non-print expressive works formally and informally.
❖ Goal Two
  ➢ The learner will explore and analyze information from a variety of sources.
    ▪ 2.01 – Explore informational materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by monitoring comprehension for understanding, studying the characteristics of informational works, restating and summarizing information, determining the importance and accuracy of information, making connections between works, self, and related information,

comparing and/or contrasting information, drawing inferences and conclusions, and generating questions.

- ❖ Goal Four
  - ➢ The learner will use critical thinking skills and create criteria to evaluate print and non-print materials
    - ▪ 4.01 – Determine the purpose of the author by monitoring comprehension for understanding, exploring any biased, apparent, or hidden messages, identifying emotional factors and/or propaganda techniques, identifying and exploring the underlying assumptions of the author, and analyzing the effects of the author's craft on the reader/viewer/listener.
    - ▪ 4.03 – Recognize and develop the stance of a critic by considering alternative points of view or reasons, remaining fair-minded and open to other interpretations, and constructing a critical response/review of a work/topic.

Materials/Preparation:
- • Dry Erase Board/Overhead sheet and markers
- • Paper and pencils for every student
- • Two copies of the Story Swap Sheet for each student (120)

Timeline of Activities:
- ❖ Introduction (10 min)
  - ➢ Five-minute warmup, as usual
  - ➢ Class agenda, getting students settled
- ❖ Pass out and explain rubric for Story Swap (10 minutes)
  - ➢ Each person must judge at least two other stories
  - ➢ Take note of things discussed in class
    - ▪ Has this person asked themselves The Questions?
    - ▪ Has this person utilized the literary techniques?
    - ▪ Has this person clearly organized, and is there a strong idea?
  - ➢ Each person must have three questions or ideas for each story
    - ▪ Is there anything confusing to you?
    - ▪ Is there anything you think could be better, and if so, how?
    - ▪ Are you interested to hear where the idea came from or how it ends?
  - ➢ Each person must also comment on the story aesthetically
    - ▪ Do you just not like it? If not, why not? If you do, what stands out?
    - ▪ What do you think of the style, viewpoint, tone? Be mature – consider these things separately from the story itself
    - ▪ What would you change? What would you keep?
    - ▪ Do you think you know what happens next?
  - ➢ Get into groups for Story Swap (45 minutes)
    - ▪ Groups of three people
    - ▪ Odd people out can work with other groups or with teacher
    - ▪ Those who do not have half a story yet will be separated to work on writing more, under supervision/with assistance

❖ Wrap Up and Discuss (15 minutes)
   ➢ Share general thoughts
   ➢ Share a volunteered half-story with the class and run through the worksheet as a group
❖ Writing more on personal stories (10 minutes)
   ➢ Each student must write down new ideas, or just continue writing or outlining a bit silently
❖ Read Roald Dahl's "The Minpins" until the end of class

Assessment: Take up completed worksheets on half-stories and organize them by story. Two assessments come from this activity – a vicarious assessment of each kid's story through the eyes of his or her peers, and an assessment of the students' ability to assess – whether they are understanding the terms and responsibilities of a critic.

Attachments:
   • Sheet for the activity
   • Checklist for each student's story and participation

LESSON 9 - NOTES TO SELF

Block 1	What worked:
	What didn't work:
Block 2	What worked:
	What didn't work:

Story Swap

Your Name: _____   Author's Name: _____

Checklist (answer Yes or No):
- Does the story have a main idea or point? _____
- Has the author thought about The Questions? _____
- Is the story organized? Does it make sense so far? _____
- Has the author used any literary techniques? _____
- Can you tell who the story is about? Where and when it is set? What is going on, and why? _____
- Do you think you know what happens next? _____

My Three Questions for the Author:
1.

2.

3.

How I Feel About This Story:
Do you like it or not? Give some reasons explaining your answer.

What would you change about it? What would you keep the same?

Duncan Germain
Unit: Short Stories and Tall Tales
Grade: 6th grade
Content Area: Language Arts
Length of Lesson: 120 Minutes

LESSON

10

Lesson Title: Unit Assessment/Exam

Lesson Goal(s): To take a final, summative assessment of students' ability to use the tools of analysis before proceeding to treat those as learned and mastered skills. Assessment will be formative only for those struggling the most, who will receive targeted individual attention in the following week.

Instructional Objective(s):
- To have students read and analyze a short story entirely on their own.

NCSCoS Standards:
❖ Goal Two
  ➢ The learner will explore and analyze information from a variety of sources.
    ▪ 2.01 – Explore informational materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by monitoring comprehension for understanding, studying the characteristics of informational works, restating and summarizing information, determining the importance and accuracy of information, making connections between works, self, and related information, comparing and/or contrasting information, drawing inferences and conclusions, and generating questions.

❖ Goal Four
  ➢ The learner will use critical thinking skills and create criteria to evaluate print and non-print materials
    ▪ 4.01 – Determine the purpose of the author by monitoring comprehension for understanding, exploring any biased, apparent, or hidden messages, identifying emotional factors and/or propaganda techniques, identifying and exploring the underlying assumptions of the author, and analyzing the effects of the author's craft on the reader/viewer/listener.
    ▪ 4.02 – Analyze the communication and develop and apply appropriate criteria to evaluate the quality of the communication by using knowledge of the language structure and literary or media techniques, drawing conclusions based on evidence, reasons, or relevant information, and considering the implications, consequences, or impact of those conclusions.

- 4.03 – Recognize and develop the stance of a critic by considering alternative points of view or reasons, remaining fair-minded and open to other interpretations, and constructing a critical response/review of a work/topic.

- ❖ Goal Five
  - ➢ The learner will respond to various literary genres using interpretive and evaluative processes
    - 5.01 – Increase fluency, comprehension, and insight through a meaningful and comprehensive literacy program by using effective reading strategies to match the type of text, reading self-selected literature and other materials of individual interest, reading literature and other materials selected by the teacher, discussing literature in teacher-student conferences and small-group discussions, taking an active role in whole-class seminars, discussing and analyzing the effects on texts of literary devices, interpreting texts by explaining structural elements, investigating examples of distortion and stereotypes, recognizing underlying messages in order to identify themes within and across works, extending understanding by creating products for different purposes, different audiences, and within different contexts, and exploring the relationships between and among characters, ideas, concepts, and experiences.
    - 5.02 – Study the characteristics of literary genres of fiction, nonfiction, drama, and poetry through reading a variety of literature and other texts, interpreting what impact genre-specific characteristics have on the meaning of a work, exporing how the author's choice and use of a genre shapes the meaning of a literary work, and exploring what impact literary elements have on the meaning of a text (such as the influence of setting or the problem and its resolution)

Materials/Preparation:
- Copies of "The Minpins," by Roald Dahl
- Copies of exam (60)

Timeline of Activities:
- ❖ Introduction (10 min)
  - ➢ Five-minute warmup, as usual
  - ➢ Class agenda, getting students settled
- ❖ Summarize what was read of "The Minpins" in the previous class (5 min)
- ❖ Continue reading up to 2/3 of the way through the entire story (15 min)
- ❖ Pass out exam and get students started
  - ➢ Passing out exam and organizing students (5 min)

- Differentiation – students with reading problems will be in a separate group and will have the rest of the story read aloud, or will read silently with assistance
- Differentiation – students with difficulty writing will be checked on every ten minutes during the exam
- ➢ The exam will be open-book; each student will have a full copy of the text, but will not have time to re-read it thoroughly and will have to demonstrate abilities in skimming and finding information
- ➢ The exam will consist of three parts:
  - Details/Literary techniques – Students will be asked to find examples of characterization, figurative language, foreshadowing, symbolism, etc., and in short answer explain their meaning. Differentiated students may have the option of multiple choice.
  - Analysis – Students will be asked to make conjectures about genre, viewpoint, intended audience, meaning, mood, etc., in short answer form, drawing on specific examples for support.
  - Reader response – Students will be asked for a mini-essay of two solid paragraphs (at least seven sentences each) to discuss whether they liked the story, whether it was effective or had good moments, and what they would have changed or done differently, as writers.

Attachments:
- Unit exam

LESSON 9 - NOTES TO SELF

Block 1	What worked:
	What didn't work:
Block 2	What worked:
	What didn't work:

Name: _____ Date: _____ Block: _____

Unit Exam – The Minpins

Reading Comprehension & Basic Details (20 Points, 2 Points Each)

1. Author & Story Name: _____

2. Main Character's Name: _____

3. What Viewpoint is this story told from? _____

4. List two of the main character's traits, and write a sentence or phrase
    from the story for each one as evidence:

    a. _____

    b. _____

5. List two examples of figurative language. They can be metaphors,
    similes, personification, analogies, or hyperbole, but try not to pick two
    of the same kind:

    a. _____

    b. _____

6. Find an example of imagery, or vivid description, and copy it here:

    _____

    _____

7. Find ONE example of foreshadowing, irony, symbolism, flashback, or
    allusion, AND explain how you know what it is and what it means:

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

Analyzing the Story (45 Points)

1. What GENRE is this story, and how do you know? (5 pt)

   _____

   _____

2. What is the FOCUS of this story – Milieu, Idea, Character, or Event? Remember, there is no wrong answer if you give good reasons. (5 pt)

   _____

   _____

3. Describe the MOOD or TONE of this story. (5 pt)

   _____

   _____

4. What kind of audience do you think this story was written for? Why? Are you part of that intended audience? Why or why not? (10 pt)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. What was the author's purpose in writing this story? Does it contain a moral or an intended effect? Explain why you think the author succeeded or failed in his purpose. (10 pt)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. Summarize the PLOT of this story – either by talking about beginning, middle, and end, or by describing the major problem, the climax or resolution, and how the story wrapped up afterwards. (10 pt)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Reader Response (35 Points)

Write a mini-essay (2-3 strong paragraphs) responding to The Minpins. In your essay, make sure to answer the following questions with reasons and explanations: Did you like this story? Did it have an effect on you? Did it have good or bad moments? What would you have done differently if you were the author?

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Appendix – Strategies for Grading

Bearing in mind that this unit will be taught in an already-established classroom, I have not made extensive plans for how various assessments will combine to form final scores for the grade book and report cards. I plan to confer with Ms. Watson and to become familiar with her classroom strategies during the months of January and February. However, the following is a tentative description of how overall grading may look:

- ❖ Unit Total: 700 Points
  - ➢ Daily Student Assessment (150 or 10 per day)
    - ▪ To be completed using checklists similar to Attendance records
    - ▪ Student was on-task for the majority of class time
    - ▪ Student participated actively and completed work
    - ▪ Student was prepared for class (homework, materials, etc.)
  - ➢ Graded Work (150 or six 25-point assignments)
    - ▪ Each day contains some form of written work, homework, or other product that may be taken up for formative assessment. Some of these assignments are simple, while others are more complex (compare worksheet on p. 36 to that on p. 27-28). Of the more complex assignments, seven will be taken up for a grade, the lowest being dropped in the final summation.
  - ➢ Unit Exam – The Minpins (150 points)
  - ➢ Student Short Story (250 points)
    - ▪ Student progress on their stories will be assessed at various points, each of which may be assigned its own value (e.g. on Day 7, students should have completed an introductory paragraph and an overall outline, which may be worth 50 points).

Cornell Notes

Topic: _____

KWL Chart   Name:_____

Topic:_____

K What I Know	W What I Want to Know	L What I Learned