

## **Beat by Beat of Short Stories**

**Q1: For each story, identify the shifts in emotional tone, from the initial state to the resolution. Discuss how the characters' actions and internal reflections contribute to the progression of the narrative. Pay particular attention to how the resolutions provide closure to the emotional journey in each story.**

### **Short Story 1:**

#### **The Train Ride**

Michael boarded the crowded train, finding a seat near the window. The hum of conversations and the faint screech of the tracks created a background rhythm as he pulled out a photograph from his jacket pocket. He stared at the image, a small smile playing on his lips, his fingers brushing the edges of the photo gently. The smile faded slowly as he traced the face in the picture, his eyes darkening. His shoulders slumped slightly, and his hand lowered the photo to his lap. He turned to look out of the window, the blur of the passing landscape mirroring the turmoil in his mind. For several moments, he sat unmoving, his expression unreadable. Then, with a sudden inhale, he straightened, placing the photo back in his pocket with deliberate care. His gaze returned to the window, but now his expression had shifted—there was a quiet determination in his eyes, as though he had reached an unspoken decision. As the train slowed at the next station, Michael stood and stepped off onto the platform. He walked purposefully toward a small café, where a woman sat at a corner table, her back to him. Hesitating for just a moment, he approached her and placed the photograph gently on the table. The woman turned, her expression softening as she saw the picture. Michael took a seat across from her, a faint but genuine smile breaking across his face as the conversation began—a long-overdue chapter finally being written.

### **Short Story 2:**

#### **The Clockmaker's Curse**

In the dim recesses of his workshop, Elias sat hunched over his latest creation—a clock unlike any he had ever built. The faint glow of the candle on his desk cast long, flickering shadows across the room, the rhythmic ticking of countless clocks forming a dissonant symphony around him. His hands moved with a mechanical precision, yet his eyes betrayed a frenzied energy, darting to the strange, blackened timepiece before him as though it might spring to life at any moment. He muttered to himself in hurried whispers, fragments of words tumbling forth in a rhythm as erratic as his heartbeat.

At first, his expression was one of intense concentration, his brow furrowed and lips pressed thin. The clock's inner workings gleamed under his gaze, a lattice of gears and springs that seemed impossibly intricate. But as the hours dragged on, his hands began to tremble, his movements growing less precise. A cold draft swept through the room, causing the candle to flicker violently, and Elias froze, his breath catching in his throat. He glanced over his shoulder, his pulse quickening as he swore he heard a faint, echoing whisper—too faint to decipher but unmistakably there.

Shaking his head, he turned back to the clock, laughing nervously, the sound hollow and forced. "It's nothing," he murmured, but his voice wavered. As he wound the clock, its ticking grew louder, sharper, like a heartbeat accelerating in a confined space. The room seemed to close in around him, the shadows deepening with each passing second. Sweat beaded on his forehead, and his fingers fumbled as he tried to adjust the final gear. The whisper came again, clearer now—a low, mocking tone that seemed to emanate from the clock itself.

Elias's calm shattered. He recoiled from the clock, his chair scraping against the floor as he stood. "Who's there?" he demanded, his voice cracking. The room was silent, save for the ticking of the clock, which now felt deafening, each tick a cruel reminder of his growing dread. He clutched at his chest, his breath coming in short, panicked gasps.

Summoning what little courage remained, he stepped closer to the clock, his hands trembling as he reached for it. His reflection in the polished surface stared back at him, eyes wide with terror. As his fingers brushed the clock's edge, it suddenly stopped ticking. The silence was absolute, crushing, and Elias felt his knees weaken.

Then, with an abrupt, jarring clang, the clock struck midnight. The sound was deafening, reverberating through the room like a thunderclap. Elias staggered back, his eyes locked on the clock as it began to unwind itself, its gears spinning faster and faster, spewing black smoke into the air. From the smoke, a figure began to take shape—a shadowy form with hollow, glowing eyes that seemed to pierce his soul.

Elias screamed, the sound swallowed by the figure's laughter—a deep, guttural sound that filled the room with a malevolent glee. The shadow loomed closer, and Elias stumbled backward, knocking over the candle. The flame extinguished, plunging the room into darkness. The last thing Elias heard was the relentless ticking of the clock, growing louder and louder, until it was the only sound left in the world.

