



## Narrative—The Short Story—Introduction

- Storytelling is a part of everyday life.
- Some stories are true: They relate what happens in the lives of our friends and family.
- Other stories are fictional: They may teach or caution or amaze the listener.
  - These are the stories you read at bedtime and tell around the campfire.
  - These stories, although fictional, say something about the teller's beliefs, hopes, and ideas of truth and beauty.

**For the Teacher:** Use this lesson if you want your students to write something more creative than the non-fiction autobiography. Point out the similarities in the two writing processes, but keep in mind the differences.

**For the Student:** This lesson gives you the opportunity to use your storytelling and creative skills all in one place. Enjoy the process and the sharing!

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## What is a Short Story?

- **Narration** is writing that tells a story.
- A **Short Story** is a particular kind of narration
  - Always fictional, and always brief
  - Meant to be read in one sitting
  - Creating a powerful impression on the reader

## Ingredients of the Short Story

- **Main Character**
  - Undergoes a change
  - Or learns something during the course of the story
- **Setting**
  - The time and location in which the story takes place
- **Single Plot**
  - Series of events which leads to a **climax**, or high point of interest
- **Theme**
  - Main message that is revealed by story's end

## Some Types of Short Stories

Although a short story is a specific type of literature, the stories themselves, like longer fictional works, vary widely.

- **ADVENTURES** keep readers in suspense as they follow the plot twists and turns to the final outcome.
- **FANTASIES** depart from reality to explore worlds and characters that stem from the writers' imaginations.
- **FABLES** often contain animals as characters, and they convey a specific lesson or observation about life.
- **SCIENCE-FICTION** stories combine elements of fiction and fantasy with scientific fact.



## Choosing a Topic

- STRATEGY 1: Sketch a Character or Setting
  - Use your imagination to sketch a character or setting.
  - Review your sketch and jot down story ideas that stem from it.
  - Choose one idea to develop into your short story.
- STRATEGY 2: Browse Through Quotations
  - "There is nothing to fear but fear itself." "*One* is the loneliest number."
  - Look through a book of quotations to find a theme for a story.
  - Choose a quotation or theme that intrigues you.
  - Build a story around it.
- STRATEGY 3: Free-write
  - Free-write for ten minutes about whatever pops into your mind.
  - Review what you have written, looking for an interesting idea or theme.
  - Develop your short story around that idea.
- STRATEGY 4: Devise a story with a Theme
  - Write a story around the theme "All's well that ends well."
  - The theme may be implied or directly stated.
  - Write a story about a struggle with Nature.
  - **Conflict** is the heart of a short story:
    - Develop a conflict between a character and a dangerous foe—nature.
    - Hurricanes, anacondas, a sudden flash flood along a remote hiking trail—you choose the specific force with which the character clashes.
- STRATEGY 5: Respond to the Fine Arts
  - Check out art museum websites such as Boston's Museum of Fine Arts ([www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org)).
  - Study the images presented in a painting.
  - Use the characters or setting within the painting to spark story ideas.
- STRATEGY 6: Responding to Literature
  - Read a short story.
  - Write your own short story in response.
  - Imagine the rest of the story.
  - Create a modern update of the story.
  - Present the back story.
- STRATEGY 7: Cooperative Writing
  - Work in groups of three.
  - One group fills out note cards with descriptions of characters.
  - Another group fills out cards describing various settings.
  - Last group fills out cards that describe possible conflicts.



# The Writing Process—Narrative—Short Story—PreWriting

- Each group places their cards in a box.
- Each group selects one card from each box to provide the framework for a short story.
- Each group member writes a short story using the selected cards as a basis.
- Bind stories into an anthology when finished.
- All groups brainstorm for a book title.

## Narrowing Your Topic

A short story has to be short, containing a single main character, a limited setting, and a focused plot. To ensure that your story will be narrow and focused, answer the following questions as you plan your story:

- Who is the main character?
- What is the main character's problem?
- Will the main character solve the problem?
- What does he or she learn during the course of the story?

## Purpose and Audience

- Though your general purpose for writing a short story is probably to entertain, you should focus on a more specific purpose as well. This purpose will affect the language details you choose.
- Create a Purpose Planner.
  - Because short stories are meant to convey a single strong impression, think about the impression you want your story to leave on the reader. This will become your purpose for writing.
  - Once you identify your purpose, develop a plan for achieving that purpose.

Purpose	Details to Achieve this Purpose
To amuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Create eccentric characters</li> <li>■ Use exaggeration</li> </ul>
To teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ State your theme</li> <li>■ Use main characters as example</li> </ul>
To horrify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Create a mood of horror through word choice</li> <li>■ Leave things unsaid and mysterious</li> <li>■ Create suspense by foreshadowing or by dropping hints about the story's outcome</li> </ul>





## Gathering Details about Characters and Setting

- While the plot is the “engine” of your story, details help to develop the characters, and setting helps to bring your short story to life for your readers.
- Before you begin drafting your story, gather details about your characters and setting.
  - Characters are people, animals, alien life forms, or other creatures that take part in the action of a narrative.
    - Effective characters are memorable, believable, and understandable.
    - Before you begin drafting, jot down details about each character.
  - The setting is the time and place in which story events unfold.
    - It includes the historical period, year, season, and time of day.
    - It also includes the planet, country, city, block, or building, as well as specific physical features—such as furniture, plants, and weather conditions.
    - To gather details about the setting, make a setting chart like the one below:

TIME	PLACE	WEATHER/ OTHER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ WEEKEND</li> <li>■ EARLY EVENING TO VERY LATE AT NIGHT</li> <li>■ SUMMER</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ House: 163 Willowbend Lane</li> <li>■ family room: brown sofa;</li> <li>■ the basement: dark, burnt-out light bulb, cold concrete floor, spooky banister leading down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Howling winds</li> <li>■ Thunderstorm</li> <li>■ Lightning</li> </ul>



# The Writing Process—Narrative—Short Story—Drafting

## Shaping Your Writing

- As you draft your narrative, keep your central conflict in mind and shape the story around it.
- You may want to use a plot diagram to plan the events leading up to and following the climax of your plot.
  - In the **exposition**, the characters and setting are introduced, as is the **conflict**—the struggle between characters or between a character and some other force.
  - During the **rising action**, the tension builds as the conflict becomes more evident.
  - The **climax** is the high point of interest in the story, during which one of the battling forces wins and the conflict is resolved.
  - The **falling action** refers to the events that immediately follow the climax.
  - The section of the story in which loose ends are tied up is called the **resolution** (denouement).

## Providing Elaboration

- Use Dialogue to develop and reveal character.
  - Convey traits and attributes of your characters through dialogue.
  - Dialogue is the exact words that your characters say aloud or think to themselves.
  - *Show* rather than *tell* readers about the characters in your story.
  - Look for opportunities to use dialogue rather than description.
- Use Dialogue to further the plot events.
  - Avoid always having your narrator explain what events happened next.
  - Let the dialogue sometimes reveal what happened to whom.





## Revising your Overall Structure

- Critically examine your short story to ensure that it's fast-moving and interesting.
- Strategy: Identify the Purpose of Plot Events.
  - Stories should not contain too many plot events (slow-moving and boring).
  - Stories should not contain plot events that are not clearly connected to the rest of your story (confusing and hard to follow).
- Review your draft critically, examining your story's plot events.
- Fill in a chart like the one below in which you identify plot events and evaluate their usefulness:

	How does it further plot?	What is its purpose?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Event A:</li> <li>■ Event B:</li> <li>■ Event C:</li> </ul>		

## Revising your Paragraphs

- Revise the dialogue to make it realistic.
  - Make it sound as if your characters are real people, speaking as they would in the real world.
  - In the real world, people often use sentence fragments and slang in conversation.
  - Use contractions in dialogue. Only in rare situations would you encounter someone who avoids contractions in everyday speech. When revising, combine word pairs, such as *I will* and *have not*, to make contractions.

## Revising your Sentences

- Change the Passive Voice to Active Voice.
  - Your short story should engage and hold the interest of your readers.
  - One way to do this is to write in the active voice, where the subject performs the action.
  - This makes your work livelier and more direct.
  - The use of too many passive sentences results in clunky and lifeless writing.





## The Writing Process—Narrative—Short Story—Revising

### Revising your Word Choice

- Revisions Strategy: Evaluating the Use of Tag Words
- Tag words describe the way a character in a narrative speaks. “He *said*” and “they *whispered*” are examples of tag words.
- When the same tag words are used repeatedly, writing may get repetitive and dull.
- The overuse of tag words or too large a variety of tag words may be annoying to readers.
- Rely mainly on *said* as a tag word, and let the actual dialogue convey the *emotion*—the way the line would be stated.
- Try to limit the use of tag words in extended passages of dialogue. It has to be clear to readers, however, who is addressing whom.
- Vary the use of tag words to avoid repetition

### Peer Review

- Consult with peer reviewers as you revise your short story.
- Use the “Say Back” Sheet for getting useful feedback from peer reviewers.







# The Writing Process—Narrative—Short Story—Peer Review

Say Back Evaluation Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Short Story Title \_\_\_\_\_

■ What I liked about the story: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

■ What I'd like to know more about: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## The Writing Process—Narrative—Short Story—Editing & Proofreading

- An error-free, clearly written story will be easier for readers to follow and enjoy.
- When you have finished revising your narrative, check for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

### Focus on Punctuation

- Check your short story to be sure that you have correctly punctuated passages of dialogue.
- First, read through your draft and locate all opening quotation marks.
- Then, make sure that for each opening quotation mark, there is a closing quotation mark.
- Also, check to see that you have correctly placed end marks in passages of dialogue.

### Formatting and Punctuation Dialogue

- A character's exact words are enclosed in quotation marks.
- Commas separate quotations from words that identify the speaker. The comma always appears inside the closing quotation mark.
- A new paragraph begins each time the speaker changes.
- When a paragraph ends while a character is still speaking, quotation marks do not appear at the end of that paragraph. However, quotation marks do appear at the beginning of the next paragraph.





# The Writing Process—Narrative—Short Story—Publishing & Presenting

## Building your Portfolio

- Verbal Sharing: With a partner, take turns reading your narratives aloud or organize a reading in which several people read their short stories. Place a copy of the story or a tape of the reading in your portfolio.
- Anthology: Present your short story as part of a larger collection of short stories. In your anthology, include works written by your classmates. Organize the stories by theme.

## Reflecting on Your Writing

- Think back for a moment about your experience writing a short story. Then, answer the following questions, and save your responses in your portfolio.
  - Which part of writing a story appealed to you most? Why?
  - If you were to write another short story, on which stage of the writing process would you spend more time?





# The Writing Process--Narrative—Short Story—Rubric for Self-Assessment

## Narrative—Short Story Rubric for Self-Assessment

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Total Score \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Score 4</b>	<b>Score 3</b>	<b>Score 2</b>	<b>Score 1</b>	<b>Your Score</b>
<b>Audience and Purpose</b>	Contains details that engage the audience	Contains details appropriate for an audience	Contains few details that appeal to an audience	Is not written for a specific audience	
<b>Organization</b>	Presents events that create an interesting narrative; told from a consistent point of view	Presents a clear sequence of events; told from a specific point of view	Presents a confusing sequence of events; contains a point of view that is inconsistent	Presents no logical order; is told from no consistent point of view	
<b>Elaboration</b>	Contains details that create vivid characters; contains dialogue that develops characters and plot	Contains details that develop character and describe setting; contains dialogue	Contains characters and setting; contains some dialogue	Contains few or no details to develop characters or setting; no dialogue provided	
<b>Use of Language</b>	Use of language creates a tone; contains no errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling	Uses vivid words; contains few errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling	Uses clichés and trite expressions; contains some errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling	Uses uninspired words; has many errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling	

