

Unit Organizer--Eighth-Grade English Short Stories

Subject Matter and Relationship to Core Knowledge Sequence:

- ❖ Short Stories
 - “The Bet” by Chekhov
 - “God Sees the Truth But Waits” by Tolstoy
 - “An Honest Thief” by Dostoyevsky
 - “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment” by Hawthorne
 - “The Open Boat” by Stephen Crane
- ❖ Elements of fiction: plot, setting, theme, point of view, conflict (internal/external), climax, character (static/dynamic; flat/round) (*Thinking Framework = Knowledge*)
- ❖ Expository writing: nonfiction essay to compare and contrast (*Thinking Framework = Modeling*)
- ❖ Literary terms (Irony, flashbacks, foreshadowing) (*Thinking Framework = Knowledge*)

Assessments:

- ❖ Class discussion (factual, cause-effect, interpretation, themes, literary terms)
- ❖ Comprehension/author quizzes
- ❖ Journal entries over key thematic and stylistic issues
- ❖ Writing summaries of the short stories
- ❖ Final test

Standards for Achievement and Performance:

AFTER THIS UNIT THE STUDENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO...

- ❖ Identify the plot structure of a narrative, including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement.
- ❖ Know the techniques of good characterization, especially vivid descriptions and anecdotes.
- ❖ Compare and contrast the thematic and stylistic concerns/peculiarities of the Russian and American authors studied in order to develop a continuing sense of the distinctiveness of each country’s rich literary traditions.
- ❖ Comprehend the essential facts about each author’s life and historical context and how those facts affect the works studied.
- ❖ Place these authors and works in their historical, cultural, and literary contexts.
- ❖ Understand the legacy/effect of these authors/stories on future literature.
- ❖ Understand the unique deficiencies and benefits of the short story genre.
- ❖ Craft his/her own short story that includes a cohesive plot structure with a meaningful theme.
- ❖ Understand how the stylistic devices affect the impression and message of these stories.
- ❖ Apply the thematic lessons to his/her own life and cultural context (*Thinking Framework = Modeling and Creativity/Problem Solving*)
- ❖ Identify the role of different grammatical structures in an author’s purpose.
- ❖ Understand the common human links between art/literature of different cultures and

- historical contexts.
- ❖ Want to read more by these authors.

Character Traits/Habits of Mind:

These works explore deep themes of life, God, crime, forgiveness, revenge, nature and its indifference, youth, human nature, evil, etc. The student must learn to process such things in a personal, uncomfortable way, letting the material get past his guard of indifference. This will lead to a greater ability to engage in meaningful, literary discourse. Great writing flows from great thinking, so the short story unit allows the student to confront multiple great minds and ideas in a short amount of time. Tolstoy's story is an incredible example of self-control, leaving vengeance and justice to God. Dostoyevsky's story explores the heart of man in a searching way as a man of integrity implicitly struggles with his compromise of treating a thief differently than he should. Crane's story explores the role of cooperation in a fight against Nature, but ultimately it shows that whatever we do, Nature is unpredictable and indifferent. This offers a great chance for debate in the classroom.

Previous Unit(s):

- ❖ Vocabulary
- ❖ The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck

Next Unit(s):

- ❖ Twelfth Night by Shakespeare
- ❖ Continue Vocabulary
- ❖ Continue Foreign Phrases/Spelling