

Mrs. Morrison's American Literature Short Story (ALSS) Unit SYLLABUS

This unit covers several short stories from various authors representing American culture and genres from different time periods. In this class students will conduct brief research about the authors, read each selection, outline/deconstruct each short story's components (theme, rising action, conflict, climax, falling action, message), answer Reading Comprehension questions, work with relevant vocabulary from the story and SAT, take "active reading" notes into their Brainstorming Outline for their own essays, and ultimately produce an essay responding to the prompt requirements.

Embedded practice with all writing conventions can be found in each assignment. Students participate in class discussions, learn and apply MLA format, share and read their writing and consider themes and ideas that apply to the greater world as per each cultural perspective. Each short story covers two to three class sessions requiring prep work, construction of rough draft, and final draft color-coded to demonstrate understanding of criteria.

Selections: (Not necessarily presented in this order)

1. "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (Humor & Folk Tale)

By Mark Twain

Focus: Colloquial Language; Satire; Setting and Theme

Essay Prompt: Read Twain's quote: "My books are water; those of the great geniuses are wine. Everybody drinks water." In 800-1000 words, explain what Twain meant and use "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" as evidence.

Key Activities:

- **Literary Analysis:** How Twain uses humor, irony, and exaggeration.
- **Vocabulary:** Personage, conjecture, infamous, exasperating, reminiscence.
- **Challenge:** Demonstrate Twain's literary techniques in your own writing.

2. "The Gift of the Magi" (Irony & Theme of Sacrifice)

By O. Henry

Focus: Recognizing and integrating literary devices into writing.

Essay Prompt: Using O. Henry's story as a model, rewrite "The Gift of the Magi" in a modern setting with new characters and objects. Demonstrate irony, symbolism, and foreshadowing effectively in your retelling.

Key Activities:

- Define and identify **imagery, repetition, symbolism, foreshadowing, irony, alliteration, metaphor** in the story.
- Reading comprehension and brainstorming (10 questions).
- **Challenge:** Integrate advanced literary devices into your retelling.

effectively in your retelling.

3. **“Rip Van Winkle” (American Romanticism & Folklore)**

By Washington Irving

Focus: Symbolism; Historical Allegory; Character Transformation

Essay Prompt: If time travel existed and you could safely travel to any era, would you? Write an 800–1000-word essay defending your position, using “Rip Van Winkle” to examine how society changes over time.

Key Activities:

- **Author study:** **Washington Irving’s influence on American folklore.**
- **Literary Devices Challenge:** Symbolism, irony, metaphor, humor, allegory.
- **Real-world connection:** Compare Rip Van Winkle’s experience to modern historical shifts.

4. **“Harrison Bergeron” (Dystopian Fiction & Social Commentary)**

By Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Focus: Satire; Equality vs. Individualism; Government Control

Essay Prompt: In 800-1000 words, define equality. Is true equality possible? Is it fair to handicap the exceptional? Support your argument with evidence from the text and real-world observations.

Key Activities:

- **Thematic Discussion:** Compare Vonnegut’s dystopian vision to modern society.
- **Literary Devices:** Satire, symbolism, dystopian elements, hyperbole.
- **Challenge:** Use vocabulary such as vigilance, impediment, dystopian, consternation, oppression, burden in your analysis.

5. **“The Pedestrian” (Science Fiction & Technology’s Impact on Society)**

By Ray Bradbury

Focus: The impact of technology on human behavior and individuality.

Essay Prompt Options:

1. What is the most significant theme of “*The Pedestrian*”? Provide evidence from the text.
2. Does technology benefit society, or does it cause more harm than good? Use textual evidence and real-life examples to support your opinion.

Key Activities:

- **Author Study:** Ray Bradbury’s concerns about technology’s influence.
- **Discussion:** Compare “*The Pedestrian*” to modern digital culture.
- **Challenge:** Use literary devices such as **metaphor, analogy, hyperbole, foreshadowing.**