**Big, Scary, In-Depth** **Short Fiction Analyses**



You’re going to read four (longish) short stories and choose your favourite three to do the following for. (There will be a separate assignment for the fourth, your least favourite story.) Use format #3 for all three story analyses, please. As usual, submissions which use the expression “portray” (The words “evokes,” “instils,” “conveys,” and “elicits” are better) will not be accepted, nor ones which do not quote from the stories, or are missing the sentences in which to house the quotations used. Do not call a short story a “novel” or “book.”

Formal writing, but not boring. No “I”, “**you**” or “we,” either.

Title

Make a title for each story analysis. The title should really only fit an analysis of *this* *particular* story. Make sure it contains none of the words from the title of this sheet, nor any words from the title of the story itself. Your name goes under the title. Then make original bold headings for the sections. (for example, do not make the Setting Section heading say “Setting Section”)

Here Are Your Sections (How Many Have I Asked For?):

Setting Section

Start your setting section by letting the reader know what the title of the story is, where it takes place, who the author was, and what year it was first published. You must do all of those things in a single sentence which will then continue to discuss setting (see below). You can put those three bits of information in whatever order you choose. For example:

In 1957, Theodore Dursley’s story “The Rat In The Hat,” which takes place in a house on a rainy day, was published.

Theodore Dursley published his story “The Rat In The Hat,” which takes place in a house on a rainy day, in 1957.

“The Rat In The Hat,” which takes place in a house on a rainy day, was published by Theodore Dursley in 1957.

Taking place in a house on a rainy day, “The Rat In The Hat” was published by Theodore Dursley in 1957.

Now go ahead and write another sentence or two which further establish what the setting (where and when, and the historical or totally made up world within which events will be occurring) is. Does this world have magic? *Do not use the word “setting” in this paragraph.* Quote from the story, nesting your setting quotation inside a sentence of your own devising, rather than letting the quotation sit on the page, loose like a hamster with no cage. This is very wrong:

Dursley conveys the feeling of the rainy day. “Thick torrential gobbets, falling like hail onto the dirty streets.”

These are just right:

Dursley conveys the feeling of the rainy day by writing about “thick, torrential gobbets, falling like hail onto the dirty streets.”

Dursley establishes an oppressive, despondent atmosphere by saying that “the rain fell, as it always did, onto the hunched back of the slumped grey buildings on the street.”

Main Character Section

In this section, identify who and what kind of person (or thing) the main character is. Use the word “features.” It is important that you mention what his, her (or its) central motivation is without going on about overmuch plot. This is so when the plot is properly discussed later, the problems, complications and obstacles that enter the story will obviously be making it very difficult for him, her or it to follow this motivation, and achieve said goals. *Do not use the words “main,” “character,” “protagonist,” “motivation,” or “central” in this paragraph.* Say something like:

“The South Wind” features an angry, alcoholic garbage man named Geoff who flees for his life from psychotic killer robots every day. Geoff is desperate to survive the robot apocalypse and escape to somewhere safe. Parker describes Geoff as “tall, grizzled and [wearing] a perpetual scowl.”

Note that I have named and described the main character myself, as well as given his central motivation (what he wants). I have then quoted from the story so it is clear I actually read it and am not making all of this up. I then put the quoted bit inside a sentence of my own devising, and I have spoken in literary present tense (I have written “features,” “flees,” and “describes” rather than writing “featured,” “fled” and “described”) even though the story was written in 1927, and author Sanderson Parker has now been dead for twenty years. (Or would be, had I not made him and his story entirely up to serve as an example for the purposes of this assignment.)

Additional Characters (and Character Interplay) Section

In this section, identify and briefly describe any and all other important characters (maximum three) in the story. The first phrase of this section will be “Additionally, [author’s last name] includes” Then explain the dynamic or interplay between all the characters. Who helps whom? Who dislikes whom? Who wants to have whose baby? Keep plot to a minimum. You can take a break and not bother quoting from the story in this paragraph, but may simply refer to it. *Do not use the words “additional,” “another,” “interplay” or “character(s)” in this paragraph.*

Plot Section

In this section, outline the plot as briefly as possible, writing in literary present tense. Do not merely list all of the events, in the sequence in which they occur in the story. (Do not retell the entire story, in other words. Limit yourself to three sentences with no comma splices.) Start with the words “This work involves” If you submit an assignment in which the plot paragraph runs more than three sentences, including quotation sentences, your work will be returned to you for cutting down to size. How many events can you skip discussing, because they aren’t the vital ones? You must focus upon trouble or obstacles to what the main character(s) want(s). If there is a surprise, or a twist, be sure to mention that. Quote from the story, putting the quotation inside a sentence of your own devising. The plot paragraph is a good place to talk about irony and foreshadowing as well. *Do not use the words “plot,” “then,” “irony,” (“ironic” is okay, though) or “foreshadowed/ing.”* Do not use past tense (e.g. “said,” “told,” “went”) in this paragraph. Your plot paragraph could go like this:

This work involves Geoff fleeing robots for the entire story. Throughout “The South Wind,” Geoff has been running into more and more robots, which have locked into his genetic code so they can home in on him at any time, and discovered that what he thought was a band of rebel humans was really a group of androids. At the end of “The South Wind,” Geoff finds his way to the central complex and deactivates the main robot control unit, as seen when Parker writes “With a flip of the switch, Geoff [shuts] down the main control unit. Robots [drop] like felled trees all around him.”

Speculative/Imaginative/Fantastical Elements Section

These stories have mainly been chosen because they include speculative, imaginative or fantastical elements. This does not mean merely that they have more excitement and adventure, or more unrealistic and dramatic events than usual, but that they also contain (or are mainly about) imaginary technology or other made up things. Shooting for roughly three sentences, and using literary present tense, describe anything of this nature which the author has included, saying something like “Parker chooses to include time travel in this story” rather than “This story had dragons.” And why has he included them anyway? What do they allow him to do in the story? Don’t say “to make the story interesting” or “to entertain his readers” or “to help the reader \_\_\_\_” anything at all.

Life Issues/Author’s Views Section

*Do not use* ***“you”*** *or* ***“your”*** *in this section or any other.* Address any issue which, reading between the lines a bit, you feel the author is trying to get the reader to think about, or which you are certain the reader is likely to think about. It is quite common for authors to have included speculative, imaginative or fantastical elements in order to do this. If that happens, your previous section should “point forward” to this one, and this one will refer back to it. Good authors do not merely state their opinions, but instead *explore* topics and write something which will start people thinking (Rather than *ending* all thinking with a “Do you agree with me or are you *wrong*?”) Discuss in this section what the author seems to think or believe, what s/he wants the reader to think about, and what s/he does, in terms of story choices, to make this thinking begin. Say something like:

Camping clearly wants the reader to think about whether eating meat is ethical. His idea of bioengineered meat which never spoils, but which eventually develops human intelligence, was devised purely to make people question the practice of killing animals and eating them. The reader is likely to find the idea of intelligent “Evermeat” a bit upsetting and think about the fact that what they are eating once walked around and thought and felt things.

Author’s Style Section (How Does This Story Taste? The Level 4 Section)

You must quote properly from the story in this paragraph. For this section, use the “knobs” sheet for ideas. (make no reference to “knobs,” or “the knobs sheet” though) Writers often “pretty up” (or make clever) their written works in ways that you’ve often heard discussed at length in English class. Pointing out that the author has used a single simile, or that s/he has used alliteration (once), sounds pretty lame, though. Don’t bother. That’s almost as bad as pointing out that they *didn’t* use these things in the story. No point in doing that at **all**. If s/he’s used similes or alliteration several times, then you’re maybe onto something worth saying about what seems to be his/her personal style. Some author’s writing is “sparse” or “stark,” meaning it isn’t prettied up at all. Some is elaborate, poetic or lyrical. Some is dramatic. Some is understated. Say something like:

Parker describes Austin vividly, saying he eats “like a starving hog” and runs “like a crippled ostrich losing the Special Olympics.” Parker’s characteristic use of over the top descriptive language is likely to make the reader laugh sometimes, and be quite disgusted at other times.

or

Alliteration, seen in the repeated r’s in “raddled, rickety ruin” and the repeated “l” sounds in “loathesome, laggardly lout” are characteristic of Parker’s writing.

A metaphor is more impressive to catch than a simile, and symbolism is better *still*. Write something like:

The broken gold necklace is clearly meant to represent Fran’s inability to love her daughter.

or

Parker conveys how dysfunctional the Smith’s marriage is by saying it is “a crippled rhinoceros, shambling drunkenly through a glassware store.”

If the author does something clever like use flower imagery to describe something that isn’t a flower, or sea imagery throughout the story, you can point that out.

You can also talk about how the author’s writing ‘tastes,’ compared to other authors in terms of discussing if the author’s sentences are complicated, eloquent, full of purposeful repetition, short concise descriptions, dialogue with invented or colourfully used slang, if s/he has used humour, or what. If there is a strong mood or atmosphere throughout the story, you can talk about that.

For marks in the 80s or 90s, you must compare this author’s style to that of any other authors you’ve read.

*Do not use the words “tastes,” “style,”“symbol(izes/ism),” “metaphor,” “tastes,” or “alliteration” in this paragraph.* **Don’t say anything elementary school about “to make the story interesting” or “to entertain his readers” or “ to keep the reader wanting more” or “to help the reader \_\_\_\_” anything at all.**