**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 stories, please. Do not call a short story a “novel” or “book.”

Formal writing, but not boring. No “I/me”, “you/your” or “us/we,” either.

Giant 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, as per format #3. And there is the required format #3 picture and dividing line. *Each section will need an original title also*. If it has a title on these sheets, it needs a (different) title in your submission.

Setting Paragraph

Start your first, setting paragraph by letting the reader know, all in one sentence, what the title of the story is, who the author was, and in what larger book it was first published. You must do all of those things *in a single sentence which will also start to discuss setting* (see below). You can put those three bits of information in whatever order you choose. Use quotation marks for short fiction titles. Do one of the following:

1. Theodore Dursley published his story “The Rat In The Hat,” which takes place in a house on a rainy day, in the larger book *Tales For Children*.
2. “The Rat In The Hat,” which takes place in a house on a rainy day, was published by Theodore Dursley in the larger book *Tales For Children*.
3. Taking place in a house on a rainy day, “The Rat In The Hat” was published by Theodore Dursley in the larger book *Tales For Children*.

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 perfect:

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

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

Can you see the difference? You have to start your sentence with the author’s last name. See how the word “that” connects your words with the author’s words? *You are using the author’s words to look right. That’s why we use quotations.*

Main Character Paragraph

In this new, second paragraph, identify who and what kind of person the main character is. Use the verb “features.” Say something like:

 “The South Wind” features an angry, alcoholic, hearing impaired 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, and is smart, quick and mean. Parker writes that Geoff is “tall, grizzled and [wearing] a perpetual scowl.”

Note that I have named and described the main character myself, as well as mentioned 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, starting my sentence with the author’s last name. I 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.) I have used [square brackets] in my quote to change the verb into present tense too.

Additional Characters (and Character Interplay) Paragraph

In this new paragraph, identify and briefly describe any and all other important characters (maximum three) in the story. The first words of this paragraph will be “In addition to [main character’s name],” Then explain the dynamic or interplay between all the characters. Who helps whom in this story? Who works against whom? Who dislikes whom? Who wants to have whose baby? You can take a break and not bother quoting from the story in this paragraph, but may simply refer to it. Use present tense. (“says” and “goes” rather than “said” and “went.”)

Plot Paragraph

In this new paragraph, outline the plot as briefly as possible in no more than three sentences. Write 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. Hit the high points. Start with the words “This work involves” If you submit an assignment in which the plot paragraph runs more than three sentences, or does not start with “This work involves”, your work will be returned to you for you to redo. A story is about someone, wanting something, and overcoming obstacles to achieve it. Who wants what, and what will oppose him, her or it achieving it? Does s/he get a happy ending? How many events can you skip discussing, because they aren’t the vital ones? Quote from the story, putting the quotation inside a sentence of your own devising. Do not use past tense (e.g. “said,” “told,” “went”) in this paragraph. Your plot paragraph must go like this:

 This work involves Geoff fleeing robots for the entire story, because they want to kill him and he wants to shut down the robots for good. 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 helpful 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 that “with a flip of the switch, Geoff [shuts] down the main control unit. Robots [drop] like felled trees all around him.”

Author’s Style Paragraph

Comment on as many of these as you can (tell me what *is* in the story though, not what *isn’t*):

* How much, and what kind of dialogue (characters talking to each other) the author uses. (Chatty, jokey, threatening, insulting, serious etc.)
* How much description of settings, actions and people the author uses.
* Any humour the author may be attempting.
* How much use of violence the author uses.
* If there is any romance or a love interest in the story.
* How much use of supernatural creatures, actions, items or events the author uses.
* If the author uses the number three.
* If the narrator is the main character (and says “I”), or if the narrator does not occur in the story.
* If the author puts surprises into story, such as a twist ending, a betrayal, or a sudden reveal of a surprising secret.

You are writing about the author, not the characters, so always mention him or her:

Parker describes things vividly, saying Austin 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.