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Activity Pack
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Great American Short Stories
BY PAUL MOLIKEN (ED.)



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Researching American History****Objective:** Providing context to the stories**Activity**

Using the Internet and other appropriate reference materials, research the span of time (1835 – 1927) represented by the stories collected in *Great American Short Stories*. Answer the following questions:

1. What is life like for the majority of people in the United States in 1835?

2. What important changes in lifestyle occur during these years?

- 1836: _____
- 1876: _____
- 1879: _____

3. What major political events took place during these years?

- 1835: _____
- 1836: _____
- 1837: _____
- 1842: _____
- 1845: _____
- 1846: _____
- 1848: _____
- 1857: _____
- 1861 – 1865: _____
- 1865: _____
- 1920: _____

4. What significant events take place in American literature?

- 1850: _____
- 1851: _____
- 1852: _____
- 1855: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

“Young Goodman Brown”**Story Discussion**

Objectives: Extracting and analyzing ideas from the text
Participating in a class discussion

Activity

Read each of the following questions about “Young Goodman Brown,” and write down your thoughts and opinions in response to them. Use your answers to effectively participate in a class discussion. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions as they are based on opinion, but you must be prepared to support your ideas with examples from the story.

1. Why does Goodman Brown leave his wife to enter the forest alone?

2. If Brown thinks the man in the woods is the Devil, why does he walk with him?

3. What is the significance of the Devil recounting the evil deeds done by Brown’s father and grandfather?

4. Why is Goodman Brown miserable after he renounces the Devil?

5. Do you think the meeting of the witches in the woods was a dream? If Goodman Brown was only dreaming, why does he ignore his wife the next morning?

6. What is the message or theme of the story?

7. If Goodman Brown’s walk with the Devil and the meeting of witches is a dream, does that have an effect on the message or theme?

8. Discuss the relationship between the psychological characteristics of the characters and the supernatural elements of the story.

9. “Young Goodman Brown” is an allegorical story. Do you think it can also be considered a satire of the Salem witch hunts?

Name: _____

Date: _____

“Bartleby”**Allusion**

Objective: Recognizing allusion and understanding how it enriches a story

Activity

An allusion is a reference to an event, person, place, myth, or artistic work that the writer thinks the reader will recognize. It conveys information quickly and helps the reader make a connection to the story. An allusion can convey a hidden meaning, emphasize a certain characteristic or event, or evoke a particular feeling in the reader.

In “Bartleby,” Herman Melville makes several biblical allusions and references to people and events that may be unfamiliar to the modern reader. Using library resources or the Internet, research each biblical and historical reference listed in the following chart, and explain it and why it is relevant to the story.

Name: _____

Date: _____

“The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky”**Figurative Language****Objective:** Identifying figurative language in a story**Activity**

Writers use figurative language to evoke emotion, convey a deeper meaning, or emphasize an action or event in the text. Similes, metaphors, and personification are just some of the literary devices used to achieve these goals. Stephen Crane uses all of these in “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky.”

Locate examples of each type of literary device listed and then complete the chart. You will need to find two similes, two metaphors, and two examples of personification. An example of simile has been provided.

Name: _____

Date: _____

“A White Heron”**Ten Years After**

Objectives: Examining relationships between characters
Predicting future events

Activity

Nine-year-old Sylvia lives on her grandmother's isolated farm. Sylvia prefers the farm to the crowded manufacturing town in which she was born, but her only friend is the family's cow. When a young hunter stumbles into the forest, Sylvia realizes how much she'd like to have a real friend. In addition, she develops a child's crush on the man. To impress him, Sylvia ventures out on her own to find the white heron he desperately wants to add to his collection; but, after observing the bird, Sylvia changes her mind about helping the man. In spite of the promise of money and friendship, Sylvia finds that she cannot reveal the location of the heron's nest to the man who would take its life.

Imagine that ten years have passed, and Sylvia encounters the hunter again. Consider the following questions and then write a few paragraphs describing their meeting:

- Sylvia is now nineteen. Would she still be living with her grandmother?
- Is Sylvia in school, or does she have a job?
- Where do Sylvia and the hunter see each other again and under what circumstances?
- Does Sylvia still love nature and want to protect it?
- Is the hunter still an ornithologist?
- Describe what happens when Sylvia and the hunter meet.

Name: _____

Date: _____

“The Yellow Wallpaper”

Journaling

Objective: Using journaling as a means of self-expression

Activity

The narrator in “The Yellow Wallpaper” is writing in secret because her husband believes that writing threatens her health. In reality, writing your thoughts in a journal can relieve stress and contribute to a healthier mental outlook.

Journaling is more than writing entries in a diary to keep track of daily events, although it may include that. Journaling is more about recording how you respond to those events. It may be said that Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote “The Yellow Wallpaper” in response to events in her own life. She suffered severe depression and anxiety and was forced to submit to the Victorian rest cure, which consisted of immobility and isolation. Her short story illustrates that such a treatment can have the opposite effect; it can cause a person’s mental health to deteriorate, and in this story, it causes the narrator to lose her sanity.

Write a journal entry in response to one of the following incidents from your own life:

- the last time you won something; a game, a prize, first chair in band class, etc.
- your most recent bad or good grade
- a time when you were sick
- a loss; as in the death of a loved one, a broken friendship, or a move

While journaling, first recount the event and then describe how it made you feel and how long that feeling lasted. Think about what the event may have taught you about the world or about yourself.

Name: _____

Date: _____

“The Egg”**Evaluation Chart****Objective:** Evaluating and critiquing the story**Activity**

Now that you have finished the story, you can evaluate it to determine its merit as a work of literature. Using the Evaluation Chart provided, rate “The Egg” in the following areas. Consider the questions in each area to assist you in your evaluation.

Plot:

- Did the story maintain your interest?
- Was the pace of the plot appropriate for the story, or was it too fast or too slow?
- Within the fictional context of the plot, was the story believable?
- Did you notice any holes in the plot, or were there any unanswered questions?

Characters:

- Were the characters easy for you to relate to?
- Were the characters well defined?
- Were they consistent throughout the story?

Themes and Motifs:

- Were there any themes and/or motifs in the story?
- Did the writer present a clear message about those themes and motifs? Were they well developed?

Style:

- Did the narrator have a unique and consistent voice throughout the novel?
- Did the writer frequently employ literary devices?
- Did the writer's tone help maintain your interest in the story?

Relevance to the 21st Century:

- Do you think the message of the story is as relevant to readers in the 21st century as it was to readers in the early 20th century?

Suitability for High School:

- Do you think a young adult can learn anything from this novel?