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- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide



Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament

BY WILLA CATHER

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1.5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.V.11-12.1.2, 3, 5, 6



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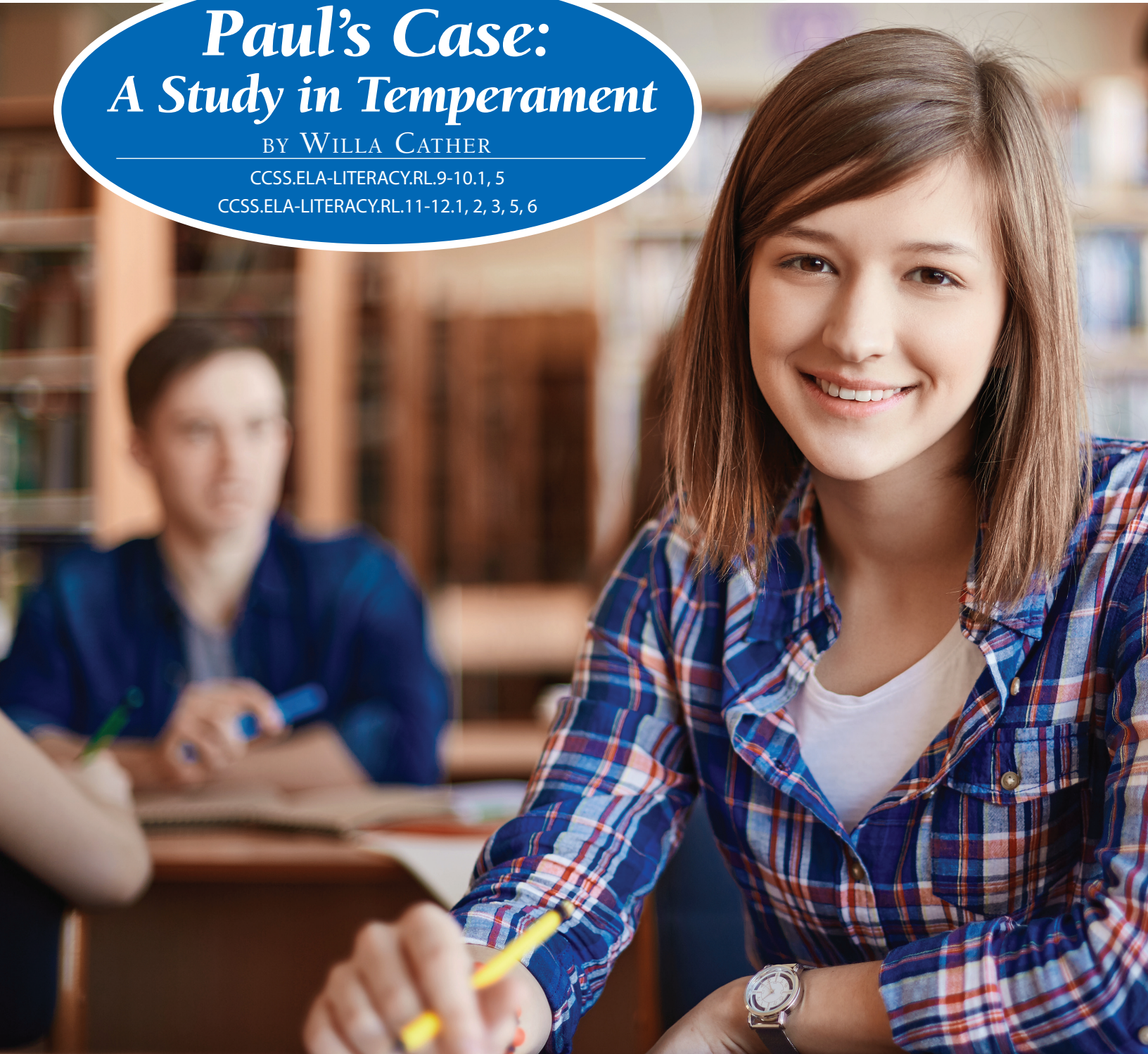
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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1, 5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1, 2, 3, 5, 6



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 **Prestwick House**

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Objectives:

After completing the activities in this packet, the student will be able to:

- cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain (RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1),
- analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding...where a story is set...(RL.11-12.3),
- analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding...how the characters are introduced and developed (RL.11-12.3),
- analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning (RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5),
- analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text...contribute to its...aesthetic impact (RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5), and
- analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (RL.11-12.6).

Time:

3-4 class periods

Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (3 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (21 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (2 pages) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (13 pages) – Activities and Graphic Organizers

✓ Teacher Answer Guide

Procedure:

1. Reproduce all handouts.
2. Distribute **Handouts #1** and **#2**.
 - Allow students to read the short biography of Cather (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Cather's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
 - Assign the story to be read for homework (might require 2 nights' reading) OR
 - Allow students to read the story in class (might take 2 class periods).
 - Have students perform the two **As you read...**activities.
3. Distribute **Handout #3**.
4. Give students time to read the questions (approximately 5 minutes).
5. Review with students what each question is asking for and what type of information is required for a thorough answer (e.g., references to prior knowledge, quotations from the story, additional reading or research, etc.).

Willa Cather

Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament

“Paul’s Case: A Study in Temperament” is the only story that Cather allowed to be anthologized. It was first published in 1905 in *McClure’s Magazine*. Later that year, she included it in her first short-story collection, *The Troll Garden*. While Cather herself claimed that the story was inspired by her experiences as a high school teacher, most scholars and critics look to the story’s subtitle, “A Study in Temperament,” to understand what Cather wants to achieve in this story.

Most critics look to the words *case*, *study*, and *temperament* to support a claim that “Paul’s Case” is a psychological study more than a typical story. There is still considerable disagreement about whether Cather is inviting her readers to examine the case of a suicidal adolescent, a narcissistic personality, or an alienated young man looking for the place he fits in.

As you read the story, notice the unusual techniques Cather uses, especially the fact that except for three bits of dialogue, the story is almost entirely exposition—information presented to the reader by the narrator. All of the exposition, though third person and impersonal, is tightly filtered through Paul’s point of view. None of the judgments or evaluations are objective, nor are they the narrator’s—they are all Paul’s. Thus, Cather allows us to experience life as Paul experiences it while, at the same time, inviting us to judge Paul in the same way that his teachers do at the beginning of the story.

This is one of those stories that will likely raise as many questions for you as settle them. If you find yourself reaching the end with mixed feelings of sympathy and aversion toward Paul, it is probably because that is precisely what Cather wanted you to do.

Before you read:

Know something about the life of the author:

Willela “Willa” Cather was born on December 7, 1873, in Back Creek Valley, Virginia, where her family had lived for six generations. In 1883, the family moved to Webster County, Nebraska. She attended the University of Nebraska in Lincoln in 1890. Although she originally intended to earn a degree in medicine, she quickly discovered a talent and passion for writing. She wrote frequently for the *Nebraska State Journal* and the *Lincoln Courier*.

Willa Cather

Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament

Lexile Measure: 1240L

I

IT WAS PAUL'S afternoon to appear before the faculty of the Pittsburgh High School to account for his various misdemeanors. He had been suspended a week ago, and his father had called at the Principal's office and confessed his perplexity about his son. Paul entered the faculty room suave and smiling. His clothes were a trifle outgrown, and the tan velvet on the collar of his open overcoat was frayed and worn; but for all that there was something of the dandy about him, and he wore an opal pin in his neatly knotted black four-in-hand, and a red carnation in his buttonhole. This latter adornment the faculty somehow felt was not properly significant of the contrite spirit befitting a boy under the ban of suspension.

Paul was tall for his age and very thin, with high, cramped shoulders and a narrow chest. His eyes were remarkable for a certain hysterical brilliancy, and he continually used them in a conscious, theatrical sort of way, peculiarly offensive in a boy. The pupils were abnormally large, as though he were addicted to belladonna, but there was a glassy glitter about them which that drug does not produce.

When questioned by the Principal as to why he was there, Paul stated, politely enough, that he wanted to come back to school. This was a lie, but Paul was quite accustomed to lying; found it, indeed, indispensable for overcoming friction. His teachers were asked to state their respective charges against him, which they did with such a rancor and aggrievedness as evinced that this was not a usual case. Disorder and impertinence were among the ones named, yet each of his instructors felt that it was

Willa Cather

Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) Examine the story's five-part organization and explain what element(s) each part contributes to the overall narrative structure of the story.
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3) What are some likely reasons that Cather chose to set this story in Pittsburgh during the winter?
3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3) What is the significance of flowers in the story?
4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1) To what extent does Cather share Paul's view of his life and environment? What textual evidence can you provide to support your answer?
5. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6) Examine the following excerpts from the story. Recount what *each* means on a literal, surface level and then explain what the narrator is most likely implying in each. Be certain to discuss the context that suggests and supports the implications you note.
 - (A) Paul was always smiling, always glancing about him, seeming to feel that people might be watching him and trying to detect something. This conscious expression, since it was as far as possible from boyish mirthfulness, was usually attributed to insolence or "smartness."
 - (B) He turned and walked reluctantly toward the car tracks. The end had to come sometime; his father in his nightclothes at the top of the stairs, explanations that did not explain, hastily improvised fictions that were forever tripping him up, his upstairs room and its horrible yellow wallpaper, the creaking bureau with the greasy plush collarbox, and over his painted wooden bed the pictures of George Washington and John Calvin, and the framed motto "Feed My Lambs," which had been worked in red worsted by his mother, whom Paul could not remember.
 - (C) It was a highly respectable street, where all the houses were exactly alike, and where businessmen of moderate means begot and reared large families of children, all of whom went to Sabbath-school and learned the shorter catechism, and were interested in arithmetic; all of whom were as exactly alike as their homes, and a piece of the monotony in which they lived.
 - (D) On the eighth day after his arrival in New York, he found the whole affair exploited in the Pittsburgh papers, exploited with a wealth of detail which indicated that local news of a sensational nature was at a low ebb. The firm of Denny & Carson announced that the boy's father had refunded the full amount of his theft, and that they had no intention of prosecuting. The Cumberland minister had been interviewed, and expressed his hope of yet reclaiming the motherless lad, and Paul's Sabbath-school teacher declared that she would spare no effort to that end.

ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:

Willa Cather, *Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament*

Question 1: Examine the story's five-part organization and explain what element(s) each part contributes to the overall narrative structure of the story.

STEP 1: The answer to any plot and story structure question will require you to know and be able to use certain terms. The following chart provides the opportunity for you to review the terms, their definitions, and to consider which term can be best used to describe a particular passage or incident in the story.

Term	Definition	Application to "Paul's Case"
Exposition: (Plot Exposition) (Character Exposition)		
<i>In medias res</i>		
Inciting Incident		
Introduction of Conflict		
Complication		
Reversal		
Crisis		
Climax		
Denouement		