

PROSE

HANDOUT



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CONTENTS

I.	WHAT IS PROSE?	
	A. DEFINITION	1
	B. TYPES OF PROSE	1
II.	THE INTRINSIC ELEMENTS OF PLOT	3
	A. PLOT	3
	B. SETTING	6
	C. POINT OF VIEW	7
	D. CHARACTER	8
	E. THEME	10
III.	THE STORIES	
	A. <i>DAVID SWAN</i>	9
	BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE	
	B. <i>THE BRACELET</i>	16
	BY YOSHIKO UCHIDA	
	C. <i>ELEVEN</i>	22
	BY SANDRA CISNEROS	
	D. <i>CHARLES</i>	27
	BY SHIRLEY JACKSON	
	E. <i>TWO THANKSGIVING DAY</i>	
	<i>GENTLEMEN</i>	33
	BY O. HENRY	
	F. <i>ALL THE YEARS OF HER LIFE</i>	39
	BY MORLEY EDWARD CALLAGHAN	
	REFERENCES	46

I. WHAT IS PROSE?

A. DEFINITION

- The English word "prose" is derived from the Latin *prōsa*, which literally translates as "straight-forward".
(<http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Prose.html>)
- *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines prose as 'straightforward discourse' or 'the ordinary form of written or spoken language'.
- Based on Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (246: 1999) prose is an inclusive term for all discourse, spoken or written, which is not patterned into the lines either of metric verse or of free verse.

B. TYPES OF PROSE

1. Fiction:

It is a series of imagined facts that shows truths about human life. The examples are:

a. Short story

- Brief, artistic form of prose that is centered on a major main incident.
- This is a narrative involving one or more characters, one plot and one single impression.
- A brief tale which can be told or read in one sitting

b. Novel:

- A more extensive form of prose that is elastic and can expand to hundreds of pages.
- This is a long narrative divided into chapters.
- The events may be taken from true-to-life stories and span for a long period of time.
- There are many characters involved.

c. Legend

- From the Latin word, *legenda* which means "things to be read"
- A legend is a short narrative transmitted by word of mouth
- This type of traditional literature is usually an account of human actions that are alleged both by the teller and listeners to happen in the recent past
- Sometimes the narrative is about a named person and will frequently be linked to a particular location.

d. Fairy tales

- Are old stories that were passed down by word of mouth for many years before finally writing down, and for which an original author is usually unknown.
- It is a prose narrative with fictional content that has survived as part of an oral tradition
- Fairy tales' characteristics:

- 1) Make believe
- 2) Happen long ago
- 3) Have magic
- 4) Ended happily ever after

2. Non-fiction:

These are literary works that are based mainly on facts rather than on the imagination. However, it may contain fictional elements in certain cases. The examples are:

a. Essay

Essay, an analytic, interpretative, or critical literary composition usually much shorter and less systematic and formal than a dissertation or thesis and usually deals with its subject from a limited and often personal point of view.

b. Report

Report means to give an account or representation of in words, written or orally.

c. Article

Article is nonfictional prose forming an independent part of a publication

d. Journal

Journal, an account of day-to-day events or a record of experiences, ideas, or reflections kept regularly for private use that is similar to, but sometimes less personal than, a diary.

e. Letter

Letter is text which is written and sent to someone through the mail. Letter comes from the Old French *letre*, "character, letter, or note," from the Latin *littera*, "letter of the alphabet," and also "a writing or document."

f. Biography

Biography, a form of literature, commonly considered nonfictional, the subject of which is the life of an individual. One of the oldest forms of literary expression, it seeks to re-create in words the life of a human being—as understood from the historical or personal perspective of the author—by drawing upon all available evidence, including that retained in memory as well as written, oral, and pictorial material.

g. Memoir

Memoir, history or record composed from personal observation and experience. Closely related to, and often confused with, autobiography, a memoir usually differs chiefly in the degree of emphasis placed on external events; whereas writers of autobiography are concerned primarily with themselves as subject matter, writers of memoir are usually persons who have played roles in, or have been close observers of, historical events and whose main purpose is to describe or interpret the events.

II. THE INTRINSIC ELEMENTS OF PROSE

A. PLOT

According to Gill (1995) *a plot* can be defined as the order of events in which the reader learns of them. A plot is not the same as a story. Gill states “*a story* is just a set of events, whereas *a plot* is a set of events which the reader can see as related to each other” (1995: 164). Thus, a plot is not just a sequence of chronological events but also implies that there is a meaningful relationship among the events.

E.M. Forster (1955) in *Aspect of the Novel* wrote that “the King died and the Queen died” was a story, whereas “the King died and then the Queen died of grief” was a plot. The words “of grief” according to Forster made a crucial difference because a *reason* is given for what happened, the reader knows why one event has followed another (Forster in Gill, *ibid.*).

Plot is characterized by a conflict which means a struggle between two or more opposing forces (Spack, 2010: 23). There are two types of conflict:

- 1. External:** a struggle with a force outside one’s self.
- 2. Internal:** a struggle within one’s self.

The conflict comprises of four kinds as follows:

1. Human vs. human (physical)

The leading character struggles with his physical strength against other men, forces of nature, or animals.

2. Human vs. circumstances (classical)

The leading character struggles against fate or the circumstances of life facing him/her.

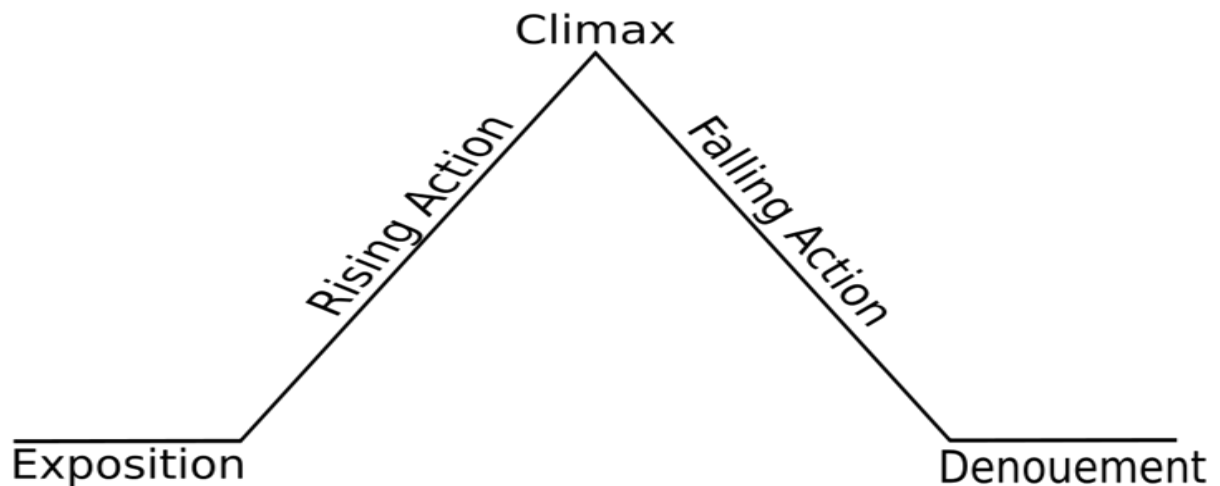
3. Human vs. society (social)

The leading character struggles against the ideas, practices, or customs of other people.

4. Human vs. himself/herself (psychological)

The leading character struggles with himself/herself (their own soul, ideas of right or wrong, choices, etc.) (Dewi, 2016: 50)

Plot has some parts; the common term referred to Gustav Freytag, a German writer. He advocated a model based upon Aristotle's theory of tragedy (Freytag, 1900: 115). This is now called "Freytag's pyramid," these parts are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement.



1. Exposition

The exposition is the portion of a story that introduces important background information; for example, information about the setting, events occurring before the main plot, characters' backstories, etc. It introduces the characters, especially the main character, also known as the protagonist. It shows how the characters relate to one another, their goals and motivations, as well as their moral character. During the exposition, the protagonist learns their main goal and what is at stake.

2. Rising action

In the rising action, a series of events build toward the point of greatest interest. The rising action of a story is the series of events that begin immediately after the exposition (introduction) of the story and build-up to the climax. These events are generally the most important parts of the story since the entire plot depends on them to set up the climax and ultimately the satisfactory resolution of the story itself. In this phase, the protagonist understands his or her goal and begins to work toward it. Smaller problems thwart their initial success and their progress is directed primarily against these secondary obstacles. This phase demonstrates how the protagonist overcomes these obstacles.

3. Climax

The climax is the turning point or highest point of the story. The protagonist makes the single big decision that defines not only the outcome of the story but also who they are as a person. Freytag defines the climax as the third of the five dramatic phases which occupies the middle of the story.

At the beginning of this phase, the protagonist finally clears away the preliminary barriers and engages with the adversary. Usually, both the protagonist and the antagonist have a plan to win against the other as they enter this phase. For the first time, the audience sees the pair going against one another in direct or nearly direct conflict.

This struggle usually results in neither character completely winning nor losing. In most cases, each character's plan is both partially successful and partially foiled by their adversary. The central struggle between the two characters is unique in that the protagonist makes a decision that shows their moral quality, and ultimately decides their fate.

4. Falling action

The falling action phase consists of events that lead to the ending. Character's actions resolve the problem. At the beginning of this phase, the antagonist often has the upper hand. The protagonist has never been further from accomplishing their goal. The outcome depends on which side the protagonist has put themselves on.

5. Resolution / Denouement

In this phase the protagonist and antagonist have solved their problems and either the protagonist or antagonist wins the conflict. The conflict officially ends. Some stories show what happens to the characters after the conflict ends and/or they show what happens to the characters in the future ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plot_\(narrative\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plot_(narrative))), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramatic_structure)

To summarize a plot, we need to determine what we believe are the key events or happenings in the story and to identify the conflict(s). Ask questions such as these:

- a) What is happening?
- b) What is the main conflict?
- c) Is the conflict resolved (brought to a conclusion)? (Spack, 2010: 23)

B. SETTING

The setting of a story is the time and location in which it takes place. Often, the setting of a story has a causal relationship with the events of the story. Setting also refers to social environment and physical environment of a story (Spack, 2010: 25):

1. Place

The setting may include details that indicate the geographical location of the story, such as the country or city in which the story takes place in a large city or small village. The details may show whether the story takes place indoors or outdoors, or both.

2. Time

The length of time during which the action occurs is a feature of the setting; this may span several years or months or only an hour. Details of the setting may reveal the time of day, not only through actual clock time, but also through descriptions of light, darkness, and shadows. Details of the setting may reveal time of year, through references to the seasons. The period of history in which the action occurs may also be revealed.

3. Social environment

Not all stories include references to social environment, but when they do, such references may include details about the manners, customs, rules, and moral codes of society. Details may also reveal socioeconomic status or class level.

4. Physical environment

Details of the setting reveal the physical environment in which the story takes place. Such concrete details may include references to or descriptions of objects, clothing, nature, buildings, rooms, weather, sounds, smells, and so on. These physical details often indicate the emotional state of the characters or the relationship between characters.

5. Mood or atmosphere

What feeling is created at the beginning of the story? Is it bright and cheerful or dark and frightening? Those are the details that may include in mood or atmosphere. (Dewi, 2016: 99)

Settings can be very important because they can be used to cover:

- the places in which the characters appear
- the social context of characters, such as their families, friends, and class
- the customs, beliefs and rules of behaviour that give identity to a society
- the particular locations of events

- the atmosphere, mood and feel that all the above elements create (Gill, 1995: 148)

To examine the setting of a story, we may use these questions:

- Where does the story take place?
- When?
- How long does it take for the action to occur?
- Which details reveal the society's manners, customs, rules, moral codes, and/or the socioeconomic level of the characters?
- Which concrete details reveal a character's emotional state and/or the relationship between the characters? (Spack, 2010: 26)

C. POINT OF VIEW

Point of view is a literary term that refers to the perspective from which a story is told. The author creates a narrator to tell the story. It is through the narrator's perspective (through the narrator's eyes and minds) that readers learn what is happening in a story. (Spack, 2010: 28)

There are two basic types of point of view (Dewi, 2016: 37):

1. The first-person point of view

It occurs when the story is told by a character within the story using the first-person pronoun "I". The narrator is one of the characters in the story.

2. The third person point of view

The story is not told by a character by a character but by an "invisible author", using the third person pronoun (he, she, or it) to tell the story. If the third person narrator knows almost everything about one character or every character, including inner thoughts, s/he is a **third-person omniscient** (all-knowing) narrator. Or the narrator may know everything about one or more character(s) *except* inner thought. The narrator may comment on the actions and thoughts, or the narrator may just describe them objectively. (Spack, 2010: 29)

It is easy to be fooled into thinking that the narrator is the author. But it is important to remember that **the narrator is a device** and **point of view is a technique** that an author uses to influence the way a reader perceives what is happening in the story (ibid.). To determine point of view in a story, here are some questions to guide:

- Who is telling the story?

- Is this narrator a character in the story?
- What does the narrator know about the (other) characters?
- Why do you think the author has chosen this point of view?
- How would the story be different if it were told from another point of view? (ibid.)

D. CHARACTER

There is an important distinction to be made between character and characterisation:

- *A character* is a person in a literary work.
- *Characterisation* is the way in which a character is created. (Gill, 1995: 127)

Calling figures in literature 'characters' rather than, say, 'persons', is a way of reminding ourselves that a character is a literary creation. Characters in books may have all sorts of links with the people we meet every day (in some cases we feel more strongly about them than real people) but we only meet them in books. (ibid.)

A way of putting this is to say that characters are all the product of characterisation; that's to say, they've been made in a particular way. Much of what follows in this chapter is about how characters are created. The words an author uses are the means that make each character who he or she is. Characters are what they are like because of the way they've been made. The kind of conversations they have, the things they do, their appearances and so on are the particular ways in which the author has chosen to characterise his or her characters. We might remember the difference by saying that:

Characterisation is a method and *character* the product. (ibid.)

Characterisation as a method to develop and reveal a character can be done through:

1. the character's physical description
2. the character's action
3. the character's speeches, thoughts and feelings
4. the comments and reactions of other characters
5. the direct statements were given by the author to the character (Dewi, 2016: 62).

According to E.M Forster (1955) in *Aspect of the Novel*, characters are divided by flat and round characters.

1. Flat character remains the same from the beginning of the story to the end

2. Round character, surprisingly and unpredictably changing like human beings (Dewi, 2016: 59-60)

There is also another term to divide the character:

1. Protagonist

A protagonist is a central character or leading figure in poetry, narrative, novel or any other story. A protagonist is sometimes called a “hero” by the audience or readers. The word originally came from the Greek language and in Greek drama which refers to the person who led the chorus. Later on, the word started being used as a term for the first actor in order of performance.

2. Antagonist

An antagonist is a character or a group of characters that stand in opposition to the protagonist or the main character. The term antagonist comes from the Greek word “antagonistēs” which means opponent, competitor or rival. (<https://literarydevices.net>)

Most stories have at least one **central character** (also called **main or major character, hero/heroine, or protagonist**), the person around whom the story revolves. Many stories also have at least one **minor character**, who is not the focus of the story but who still plays an important role (Spack, 2010: 27)

Some questions that can help us to analyze a character:

1. Who are the main characters and the minor characters in the story?
2. What do you learn about the characters when seen from their physical appearance, thoughts, and speeches?
3. Are there comments of other characters or from the narrator about the characters?
4. Does each character react to other people or events? What do these reactions reveal about him/her? What reasons might he/she have had for reacting that way?
5. In what ways does each character change over the course of the story? (Dewi, 2016:62-63)

E. THEME

A *theme* is a truth that a story reveals. Through the creation of a fictional world, authors reveal what they believe to be true about the real world.

A *theme* is rarely directly stated by the author. Instead, the reader discovers themes, inferring meaning from the details in the story. Usually, themes deal with general areas of human experience, for example:

- the nature of humanity or society,
- the relationship of human beings to the environment, or
- the question of ethical responsibility (Spack, 2010: 38)

A theme is not a subject. A subject is what the story is about. A theme reveals what the story says about the subject. For example:

- **Subject:** a woman's response to her husband's death
- **Theme:** the author shows that the only way that women can achieve freedom, which is acquiring self-assertion, is through death (ibid.)

A theme is not a topic. A topic is what an essay is about. A theme reveals a truth about the topic. For example:

- **Topic:** love and marriage
- **Theme:** It is human nature to seek love and to have a happy marriage life (ibid.)

A theme is not moral. A moral is a statement or lesson that teaches right and wrong behavior. A theme reveals how people behave (without telling people how to behave). For example:

- **Moral:** It is best to prepare for the days of necessity
- **Theme:** Life is a series of unexpected events, which may be taken both positively and negatively (ibid.)

Since themes are not clearly stated by the author, we uncover them through *a complex reading and thinking process*. This process includes examining:

- the "facts" the author provides (plot, setting, character)
- the literary devices the author uses (point of view, symbolism, foreshadowing, irony)

By piecing together some or all of the elements of fiction, we can discover the theme(s) that the details of the story reveal. (Spack, 2010: 40)

IV. THE STORIES

B THE STORY

About the Author

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) was born in Salem, Massachusetts. His father was the captain of a sailing ship and died when Hawthorne was only four years old. Hawthorne went to live with his mother's large family. As a young man he read a lot. By the time he was 16, he had read almost all of Shakespeare's plays.

In 1821, Hawthorne entered Bowdoin College in Maine. There he met Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a famous American author, and Franklin Pierce, the future president of the United States. After his graduation, Hawthorne spent the next 12 years writing. His first published book was *Twice Told Tales*, a collection of stories. "David Swan" is one of the stories. Later, Hawthorne wrote his most famous book, *The Scarlet Letter*.

When Franklin Pierce became president, he appointed Hawthorne the United States Consul at Liverpool, England. Hawthorne lived in England and Italy for many years. In 1864, he died suddenly on a trip with President Pierce.

David Swan

David Swan, a young man of 20, was traveling on foot from New Hampshire to Boston. He was going to Boston to work as a clerk in his uncle's grocery store. It was a very hot day, and after walking all morning in the sun, he became tired and sleepy. He found a shady spot where he could sit and wait for a stagecoach. He made a pillow with the small bag of clothes he was carrying, and he put the pillow under his head. Soon David fell asleep.

While David took his nap in the shade, other people passed by him. They were walking, riding horses, or sitting in carriages. Some people didn't notice David. Others laughed to see how soundly he slept. One middle-aged woman looked at him and thought he looked charming in his sleep. Another rather serious-looking man thought David looked

drunk. As David slept, he was completely unaware of these people and what they were thinking.

15 After a few minutes, a brown carriage, pulled by a pair of large horses, stopped in front of the sleeping young man. A wheel of the carriage was broken and had to be fixed. A wealthy old man and his wife stepped out of the carriage and noticed David. The woman said to her husband, "What a beautiful young man! Doesn't he look like our dead son, Henry?"
20 Shall we awaken him?"

"Why?" her husband asked, "We know nothing of his character. What do you have in mind?"

"Perhaps fate sent him to us," she replied. "Since the death of our only child, we have no one to give our money to when we die."

25 "Do you think he is as innocent as he looks?" her husband asked.

"Yes, let's awaken him."

But just then the driver called out, "The wheel is fixed. The carriage is ready to leave."

The old couple hurried into the carriage. They felt foolish for thinking
30 they should awaken the stranger.

Meanwhile, David Swan enjoyed his nap.

Soon a pretty young girl walked along and stopped to fix her skirt.



35 She blushed when she saw David asleep in the shade. Suddenly, a large bee landed on David's face. Without thinking, the young girl pushed the bee away with her handkerchief.

"How handsome he is!" the young girl thought as she looked at David sleeping.

40 Now, this girl's father was a rich man, and he was looking for a young man like David to work for him and marry his daughter. But the girl was too shy to wake David, so she walked away. Here again, David was unaware that good fortune was close to him.

45 After the girl was out of sight, two evil-looking men came to the spot where David slept. These men made their living by stealing from other people. Finding David asleep, one man said to the other, "Do you see that bag under his head?"

The second man nodded.

The first man said, "I'll bet you he has money in that bag. Let's take it."

"But what if he wakes up?" the second man asked.

The first man opened his coat and showed his friend a large knife.

50 The two men approached the sleeping David. One man held his knife near David while the other man looked in David's bag.

At that moment, a dog came between the two men.

55 "We can't do anything now. The dog's master must be near." The two men ran from the spot while David continued to sleep. This time, David was unaware that death was close to him.

60 A few minutes later, a stagecoach came.

David quickly woke up when he heard the noisy wheels of the coach.

"Hello, driver," David shouted, "Will you take another passenger?"

"Sure!" answered the driver.

65 David climbed up to the seat next to the driver, and the stagecoach continued along the road to Boston.

That afternoon, while David slept, he was unaware of three events that could have changed his destiny. In that one hour, David Swan never knew that fate almost brought him wealth, love, and death.

After the girl was out of sight, two evil-looking men came to the spot where David slept.

1 Reading Comprehension

With a partner or in a small group, discuss the following questions:

- 1 Why is David traveling from New Hampshire to Boston?
- 2 What does the wealthy old woman want to give David?
- 3 What could the pretty young girl's father give David?
- 4 What do the evil-looking men want from David?

1 Discussing the Story

With a partner or in a small group, discuss the following questions:

- 1 What do you think might happen if the pretty young girl awakens David?
- 2 Why does the wealthy old woman think fate sent David to her and her husband?
- 3 Do you think David is more a lucky man or an unlucky man? Explain your answer.
- 4 Do you think David will work hard in his uncle's store when he gets to Boston? Why or why not?
- 5 What does the story tell us about fate?

3 Analyzing the Story: Plot

As you read on page 60, the plot is the events that happen in a story. A good way to remember the plot is to make a time line and show the events in the order they happened. The plot of "David Swan" has several events that happen while David is sleeping. Put the events in the time line. Use your own words. Work with a partner.



4 Summarizing

Put the following sentences in the correct order to summarize the story. Write the numbers 1 to 7 to show the order. The first one has been done for you.

- A pretty girl pushes away a bee that is on David's face.
- A dog saves David from being killed.
- While waiting for the stagecoach, David falls asleep.
- Two evil men try to take David's bag.
- An elderly couple almost decides to awaken David and adopt him.
- A middle-aged woman stares at David and admires his face.
- 1 David Swan is on his way to Boston to work in his uncle's store.

5 Writing

Describe what you think David's life is like when he lives in Boston.

B THE STORY

About the Author

Yoshiko Uchida (1921–1992) was born in California and grew up in Berkeley. After Pearl Harbor was bombed, her father was imprisoned, and the rest of her family was sent to a camp in Utah. This experience provides the background for “The Bracelet.” Uchida once commented, “I want to give young Asians a sense of their past . . . and to non-Asians, the picture of Japanese as real people.” Among the author’s novels are *Journey to Topaz* and *Picture Bride*.

The Bracelet

“Mama, is it time to go?”

I hadn’t planned to cry, but the tears came suddenly, and I wiped them away with the back of my hand. I didn’t want my older sister to see me crying.

“It’s almost time, Ruri,” my mother said gently. Her face was filled with a kind of sadness I had never seen before.

I looked around at my empty room. The clothes that Mama always told me to hang up in the closet, the junk piled on my dresser, the old rag doll I could never bear to part with; they were all gone. There was nothing left in my room, and there was nothing left in the rest of the house. The rugs and furniture were gone, the pictures and drapes were down, and the closets and cupboards were empty. The house was like a gift box after the nice thing inside was gone; just a lot of nothingness.

It was almost time to leave our home, but we weren’t moving to a nicer house or to a new town. It was April 21, 1942. The United States and Japan were at war, and every Japanese person on the West Coast was being evacuated by the government to a concentration camp. Mama, my sister Keiko, and I were being sent from our home, and out of Berkeley, and eventually, out of California.

The doorbell rang, and I ran to answer it before my sister could. I thought maybe by some miracle, a messenger from the government might be standing there, tall and proper and buttoned into a uniform, come to tell us it was all a terrible mistake; that we wouldn’t have to

25 leave after all. Or maybe the messenger would have a telegram from Papa, who was interned in a prisoner-of-war camp in Montana because he had worked for a Japanese business firm.

30 The FBI had come to pick up Papa and hundreds of other Japanese community leaders on the very day that Japanese planes had bombed Pearl Harbor. The government thought they were dangerous enemy aliens. If it weren't so sad, it would have been funny. Papa could no more be dangerous than the mayor of our city, and he was every bit as loyal to the United States. He had lived here since 1917.

35 When I opened the door, it wasn't a messenger from anywhere. It was my best friend, Laurie Madison, from next door. She was holding a package wrapped up like a birthday present, but she wasn't wearing her party dress, and her face drooped like a wilted tulip.

She helped me put it on, and I told her I'd never take it off, ever.

"Hi," she said. "I came to say good-bye."

45 She thrust the present at me and told me it was something to take to camp. "It's a bracelet," she said before I could open the package. "Put it on so you won't have to pack it." She knew I didn't have one inch of space left in my suitcase. We had been instructed to take only what we could carry into camp, and Mama had told us that we could each take only two suitcases.

"Then how are we ever going to pack the dishes and blankets and sheets they've told us to bring with us?" Keiko worried.

50 "I don't really know," Mama said, and she simply began packing those big impossible things into an enormous duffel bag — along with umbrellas, boots, a kettle, hot plate, and flashlight.

"Who's going to carry that huge sack?" I asked.

55 But Mama didn't worry about things like that. "Someone will help us," she said. "Don't worry." So I didn't.

Laurie wanted me to open her package and put on the bracelet before she left. It was a thin gold chain with a heart dangling on it. She helped me put it on, and I told her I'd never take it off, ever.

"Well, good-bye then," Laurie said awkwardly. "Come home soon."

60 "I will," I said, although I didn't know if I would ever get back to Berkeley again.

65 I watched Laurie go down the block, her long blond pigtails bouncing as she walked. I wondered who would be sitting in my desk at Lincoln Junior High now that I was gone. Laurie kept turning and waving, even walking backwards for a while, until she got to the corner. I didn't want to watch anymore, and I slammed the door shut.

The next time the doorbell rang, it was Mrs. Simpson, our other

neighbor. She was going to drive us to the Congregational church, which was the Civil Control Station where all the Japanese of Berkeley were supposed to report.

It was time to go. "Come on, Ruri. Get your things," my sister called to me.

It was a warm day, but I put on a sweater and my coat so I wouldn't have to carry them, and I picked up my two suitcases. Each one had a tag with my name and our family number on it. Every Japanese family had to register and get a number. We were Family Number 13453.

Mama was taking one last look around our house. She was going from room to room, as though she were trying to take a mental picture of the house she had lived in for fifteen years, so she would never forget it.

I saw her take a long last look at the garden that Papa loved. The irises beside the fish pond were just beginning to bloom. If Papa had been home, he would have cut the first iris blossom and brought it inside to Mama. "This one is for you," he would have said. And Mama would have smiled and said, "Thank you, Papa San,"¹ and put it in her favorite cut-glass vase.

But the garden looked shabby and forsaken now that Papa was gone and Mama was too busy to take care of it. It looked the way I felt, sort of empty and lonely and abandoned.

When Mrs. Simpson took us to the Civil Control Station, I felt even worse. I was scared, and for a minute I thought I was going to lose my breakfast right in front of everybody. There must have been over a thousand Japanese people gathered at the church. Some were old and some were young. Some were talking and laughing, and some were crying. I guess everybody else was scared too. No one knew exactly what was going to happen to us. We just knew we were being taken to the Tanforan Racetracks, which the army had turned into a camp for the Japanese. There were fourteen other camps like ours along the West Coast.

What scared me most were the soldiers standing at the doorway of the church hall. They were carrying guns with mounted bayonets. I wondered if they thought we would try to run away, and whether they'd shoot us or come after us with their bayonets if we did.

A long line of buses waited to take us to camp. There were trucks, too, for our baggage. And Mama was right; some men were there to help us load our duffel bag. When it was time to board the buses, I sat with Keiko and Mama sat behind us. The bus went down Grove Street and passed the small Japanese food store where Mama used to order her bean-curd cakes and pickled radish. The windows were all boarded up, but there was a sign still hanging on the door that read, "We are loyal Americans."

¹**Papa San:** In Japan, the suffix *san* is added to a name as a mark of respect

110

The crazy thing about the whole evacuation was that we were all loyal Americans. Most of us were citizens because we had been born here. But our parents, who had come from Japan, couldn't become citizens because there was a law that prevented any Asian from becoming a citizen. Now everybody with a Japanese face was being shipped off to concentration camps.

115

"It's stupid," Keiko muttered as we saw the racetrack looming up beside the highway. "If there were any Japanese spies around, they'd have gone back to Japan long ago."

120

"I'll say," I agreed. My sister was in high school and she ought to know, I thought.

This was our apartment, and it still smelled of horses.

When the bus turned into Tanforan, there were more armed guards at the gate, and I saw barbed wire strung around the entire grounds. I felt as though I were going into a prison, but I hadn't done anything wrong.

We streamed off the buses and poured into a huge room, where doctors looked down our throats and peeled back our eyelids to see if we had any diseases. Then we were given our housing assignments. The man in charge gave Mama a slip of paper. We were in Barrack 16, Apartment 40.

135

"Mama!" I said. "We're going to live in an apartment!" The only apartment I had ever seen was the one my piano teacher lived in. It was in an enormous building in San Francisco with an elevator and thick carpeted hallways. I thought how wonderful it would be to have our own elevator. A house was all right, but an apartment seemed elegant and special.

140

We walked down the racetrack looking for Barrack 16. Mr. Noma, a friend of Papa's, helped us carry our bags. I was so busy looking around, I slipped and almost fell on the muddy track. Army barracks had been built everywhere, all around the racetrack and even in the center oval.

Mr. Noma pointed beyond the track toward the horse stables. "I think your barrack is out there."

145

He was right. We came to a long stable that had once housed the horses of Tanforan, and we climbed up the wide ramp. Each stall had a number painted on it, and when we got to 40, Mr. Noma pushed open the door.

"Well, here it is," he said, "Apartment 40."

150

The stall was narrow and empty and dark. There were two small windows on each side of the door. Three folded army cots were on the dust-covered floor and one light bulb dangled from the ceiling. That was all. This was our apartment, and it still smelled of horses.

Mama looked at my sister and then at me. "It won't be so bad when

we fix it up," she began. "I'll ask Mrs. Simpson to send me some material for curtains. I could make some cushions too, and . . . well . . ." She stopped. She couldn't think of anything more to say.

Mr. Noma said he'd go get some mattresses for us. "I'd better hurry before they're all gone." He rushed off. I think he wanted to leave so that he wouldn't have to see Mama cry. But he needn't have run off, because Mama didn't cry. She just went out to borrow a broom and began sweeping out the dust and dirt. "Will you girls set up the cots?" she asked.

It was only after we'd put up the last cot that I noticed my bracelet was gone. "I've lost Laurie's bracelet!" I screamed. "My bracelet's gone!"

We looked all over the stall and even down the ramp. I wanted to run back down the track and go over every inch of ground we'd walked on, but it was getting dark and Mama wouldn't let me.

I thought of what I'd promised Laurie. I wasn't ever going to take the bracelet off, not even when I went to take a shower. And now I had lost it on my very first day in camp. I wanted to cry.

I kept looking for it all the time we were in Tanforan. I didn't stop looking until the day we were sent to another camp, called Topaz, in the middle of a desert in Utah. And then I gave up.

But Mama told me never mind. She said I didn't need a bracelet to remember Laurie, just as I didn't need anything to remember Papa or our home in Berkeley or all the people and things we loved and had left behind.

"Those are things we can carry in our hearts and take with us no matter where we are sent," she said.

And I guess she was right. I've never forgotten Laurie, even now.

READING COMPREHENSION

With a partner, answer these questions:

1. Where do Ruri and her family live?
2. Why do they have to live in their home?
3. Where is Ruri's father?
4. Why is Ruri upset when she loses the bracelet? What does the bracelet mean to her?
5. How does Ruri's mother comfort her when Ruri loses the bracelet?

DISCUSSING THE STORY

Discuss the following questions with a partner or in a group:

1. Why do Ruri and her family have to leave their home?
2. Why is Ruri upset when she loses the bracelet? What does the bracelet mean to her?
3. How does Ruri's mother comfort her when Ruri loses the bracelet?
4. Why is the sign "We are loyal Americans" a sad contrast to the way the Japanese Americans are treated in the story?
5. Discuss some of the unjust decisions that governments make during wartime.

Analyzing the Story: Setting

Look back at the Literary Term on page 30. Make a chart like the one below and find the details that describe the setting of the camp. Fill in those details in the left column. Then think about what those details tell you about the setting and list your conclusions in the column to the right.

SETTING DETAILS	WHAT THE DETAILS TELL YOU ABOUT THE SETTING
<i>There are armed guards and barbed wire at the gate.</i>	<i>The camp is like a prison.</i>

Pair Discussion With a partner, compare what you have written in your charts. Correct any mistakes you find. Then think about the way the setting changes from the beginning to the end of the story. What kinds of changes can you find? What do the changes tell you?

About the Author

Sandra Cisneros (born 1954), the only daughter in a family of seven children, was born in Chicago. Her Mexican-American heritage, of which she is proud, is evident in many of her short stories. Cisneros has had a successful and varied career. In addition to being a poet and fiction writer, she has worked as an arts administrator and has taught students who have dropped out of high school. She has written four books of poetry and two books of short stories; *The House on Mango Street* and *Woman Hollering Creek*. In many of her short stories, such as "Eleven," Cisneros creates a view of the world through the eyes of a child. The language of these stories is simple and direct, but their ideas are serious and important.

Eleven

What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don't. You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's today. And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you are – underneath the year that makes you eleven.

Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten. Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five. And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry like if you're three, and that's okay. That's what I tell Mama when she's sad and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.

You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even,

sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you. And
20 you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the
way it is.

Only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years rattling inside me
like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. Today I wish I was one hundred and
two instead of eleven because if I was one hundred and two I'd have
25 known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk.
I would've known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting
there with that look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth.

"Whose is this?" Mrs. Price says, and she holds the red sweater up in
the air for all the class to see. "Whose? It's been sitting in the coatroom
30 for a month."

"Of course it's yours," Mrs. Price says. "Not mine," says everybody. "Not me."

"It has to belong to somebody," Mrs. Price keeps saying, but nobody
can remember. It's an ugly sweater
with red plastic buttons and a collar

and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It's
maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me I wouldn't
say so.

40 Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me,
that stupid Sylvia Saldívar says, "I think it belongs to Rachel." An ugly
sweater like that, all raggedy and old, but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs.
Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my
mouth nothing comes out.

45 "That's not, I don't, you're not . . . Not mine," I finally say in a little
voice that was maybe me when I was four.

"Of course it's yours," Mrs. Price says. "I remember you wearing it
once." Because she's older and the teacher, she's right and I'm not.

50 Not mine, not mine, not mine, but Mrs. Price is already turning to
page thirty-two, and math problem number four. I don't know why but
all of a sudden I'm feeling sick inside, like the part of me that's three
wants to come out of my eyes, only I squeeze them shut tight and bite
down on my teeth real hard and try to remember today I am eleven,
eleven. Mama is making a cake for me for tonight, and when Papa comes
55 home everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you.

But when the sick feeling goes away and I open my eyes, the red
sweater's still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater
to the corner of my desk with my ruler. I move my pencil and books and
eraser as far from it as possible. I even move my chair a little to the right.
60 Not mine, not mine, not mine.

In my head I'm thinking how long till lunchtime, how long till I can
take the red sweater and throw it over the schoolyard fence, or leave it

hanging on a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and toss it in the alley. Except when math period ends Mrs. Price says loud and in front of everybody, "Now, Rachel, that's enough," because she sees I've shoved the red sweater to the tippy-tip corner of my desk and it's hanging all over the edge like a waterfall, but I don't care.

"Rachel," Mrs. Price says. She says it like she's getting mad. "You put that sweater on right now and no more nonsense."

"But it's not -"

"Now!" Mrs. Price says.

This is when I wish I wasn't eleven, because all the years inside of me - ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one - are pushing at the back of my eyes when I put one arm through one sleeve of the sweater that smells like cottage cheese, and then the other arm through the other and stand there with my arms apart like if the sweater hurts me and it does, all itchy and full of germs that aren't even mine.

That's when everything I've been holding in since this morning, since when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally lets go, and all of a sudden I'm crying in front of everybody. I wish I was invisible but I'm not. I'm eleven and it's my birthday today and I'm crying like I'm three in front of everybody. I put my head down on the desk and bury my face in my stupid clown-sweater arms. My face all hot and spit coming out of my mouth because I can't stop the little animal noises from coming out of me, until there aren't any more tears left in my eyes, and it's just my body shaking like when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast.

But the worst part is right before the bell rings for lunch. That stupid Phyllis Lopez, who is dumber than Sylvia Saldívar, says she remembers the red sweater is hers! I take it off right away and give it to her, only Mrs. Price pretends like everything's OK.

Today I'm eleven. There's a cake Mama's making for tonight, and when Papa comes home from work we'll eat it. There'll be candles and presents and everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you, Rachel, only it's too late.

I'm eleven today. I'm eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one, but I wish I was one hundred and two. I wish I was anything but eleven, because I want today to be far away already, far away like a runaway balloon, like a tiny *o* in the sky, so tiny-tiny you have to close your eyes to see it.

1 Reading Comprehension

With a partner, answer these questions:

- 1 Where does the story take place?
- 2 Who is the narrator (the person telling the story)? How old is she?
- 3 Why is the day special to the narrator?
- 4 Why does Mrs. Price give Rachel the sweater?
- 5 What does the sweater look like?
- 6 What does Rachel plan to do with the sweater during lunchtime?
- 7 Why doesn't she do what she planned? What happens instead?
- 8 How does Rachel finally get rid of the sweater?
- 9 How does she feel at the end of the story?
- 10 According to Rachel, how is growing older similar to an onion or a tree with rings?

2 Guessing Meaning from Context

The words in the list are in the story. Find the words in the story and try to understand their meanings. Choose the word from the following list that best completes each sentence below. Do not use the same word more than once.

alley	skinny	spit	raggedy
itchy	invisible	toss	pretend
scared	lap	hiccups	squeeze

- 1 A(n) lap is a strange part of the body because you have it only when you are sitting down.
- 2 To get juice from a lemon, you have to _____ the lemon.
- 3 Children often get _____ when they hear stories about ghosts and monsters.
- 4 The red sweater wasn't comfortable because it felt _____.
- 5 The red sweater looked old and _____.
- 6 People who don't eat much are often _____.

3 Analyzing the Story: First Person Narrator

Look back at the Literary Term on page 6. What have you learned about Rachel as a result of her telling her own story? How much of this would you know if the story had a third person narrator, who could only tell you what Rachel said and did? Look at the story again and then make a chart like the one below and add examples to each category.

INFORMATION YOU LEARN FROM RACHEL AS NARRATOR

Rachel's ideas:
you have other ages inside you

Rachel's feelings:

Rachel's wants and wishes:

Rachel's way of looking at the
red sweater:

INFORMATION ANY NARRATOR COULD GIVE YOU

Rachel's words:
*"That's not, I don't, you're not ...
Not mine."*

Rachel's actions:

Pair Discussion With a partner, compare answers. Do you think you learned much more about Rachel because the story is told in the first person? Why or why not?

THE STORY

About the Author

Shirley Jackson (1916–1965) was born in San Francisco, California, and later moved to Rochester, New York. Jackson attended the University of Rochester, where she began her writing career, and then later attended Syracuse University. After graduation, she submitted stories to the famous *New Yorker* magazine, which published most of her work. Her fiction ranges from horror stories, like “The Lottery,” to humorous pieces, such as “Life Among the Savages,” based on her large family with many children. Jackson’s experience as a parent probably inspired the story you are about to read, entitled “Charles.”

Charles

The day my son Laurie started kindergarten, he began wearing blue jeans with a belt; I watched him go off the first morning with the older girl next door, seeing clearly that an era¹ of my life was ended, my sweet-voiced nursery tot² transformed into a tough character who forgot to stop at the corner and wave good-bye to me.

He came home the same way, the front door slamming open, his cap on the floor, and in a rough voice shouted, “Isn’t anybody here?”

At lunch he spoke insolently to his father, and spilled his baby sister’s milk.

“How was school today?” I asked.

“All right,” he said.

“Did you learn anything?” his father asked.

He looked at his father coldly. “I didn’t learn nothing,” he said.

“Anything,” I said. “Didn’t learn anything.”

“The teacher spanked a boy, though,” Laurie said, looking at his bread and butter. “For being fresh,” he added, with his mouth full.

“What did he do?” I asked. “Who was it?”

Laurie thought. “It was Charles,” he said. “He was fresh. The teacher

¹era: a period of time

²tot: a young child

spanked him and made him stand in the corner. He was awfully fresh.”
20 “What did he do?” I asked again, but Laurie slid off his chair, took a cookie, and left.

The next day Laurie remarked at lunch as soon as he sat down, “Well, Charles was bad again today.” He grinned enormously and said, “Today Charles hit the teacher.”

Do you think kindergarten is too upsetting for Laurie?

“Good heavens,” I said. “I suppose he got spanked again?”

“He sure did.” Laurie said.

“Why did Charles hit the teacher?” I asked.

“Because she tried to make him color with red crayons,” Laurie said. “Charles wanted to color with green crayons so he hit the teacher and she spanked him and said nobody could play with Charles but everybody did.”

35 The third day – it was Wednesday of the first week – Charles hit a little girl, and the teacher made him stay inside during recess. Thursday Charles had to stand in a corner during story-time because he kept pounding³ his feet on the floor. Friday Charles wasn’t allowed to write on the blackboard because he threw chalk.

40 On Saturday I remarked to my husband, “Do you think kindergarten is too upsetting for Laurie? All this toughness and bad grammar, and this Charles boy sounds like such a bad influence?”

“It will be all right,” my husband said. “There are bound to be people like Charles in this world. He might as well meet them now as later.”

45 On Monday, Laurie came home late, full of news. “Charles,” he shouted as he came up the hill. I was waiting anxiously on the front steps. “Charles,” Laurie yelled all the way up the hill. “Charles was bad again.”

“Come right in,” I said as soon as he came close enough. “Lunch is ready.”

50 “You know what Charles did?” he said, following me through the door. “Charles yelled so loud in school they sent a boy in from first grade to tell the teacher she had to make Charles keep quiet, and so Charles had to stay after school. And so all the children stayed to watch him.”

“What did he do?” I asked.

55 “He just sat there,” Laurie said, climbing into his chair at the table. Turning to his father, he said, “Hi, Pop.”

“Charles had to stay after school today,” I told my husband. “Everyone stayed with him.”

“What does this Charles look like?” my husband asked Laurie.

60 “What’s his other name?”

“He’s bigger than me,” Laurie said, “and he doesn’t have any

³pounding: a repeated hitting action

rubbers,⁴ and he doesn't even wear a jacket."

Monday night was the first Parent-Teachers meeting, and only the fact that the baby had a cold kept me from going; I wanted so much to meet Charles's mother. On Tuesday Laurie remarked suddenly, "Our teacher had a friend come to see her in school today."

"Charles's mother?" my husband and I asked.

"No," said Laurie, "It was a man who came and made us do exercises; we had to touch our toes. Look." He climbed down from his chair and bent down and touched his toes. "Like this," he said. He got back into his chair and said, picking up his fork, "Charles didn't even *do* exercises."

"Didn't Charles want to do exercises?" I asked.

"Naaah," Laurie said, "Charles was so fresh to the teacher's friend he wasn't let do exercises."

"Fresh again?" I said.

"He kicked the teacher's friend," Laurie said. "The teacher's friend told Charles to touch his toes the way I just did and Charles kicked him."

"What are they going to do about Charles, do you suppose?" Laurie's father asked him.

Laurie shrugged. "Throw him out of school, I guess," he said.

Wednesday and Thursday were the same. Charles yelled during story hour and hit a boy in the stomach and made him cry. Charles stayed after school again and so did the other children.

With the third week of kindergarten Charles was an institution in our house; the baby was being a Charles when she cried all afternoon; Laurie was being a Charles when he filled his wagon full of mud and pulled it through the kitchen; even my husband, when he caught his elbow in the telephone cord and pulled the telephone and a bowl of flowers off the table, said, after the first minute, "Looks like Charles."

During the third and fourth weeks, it looked like a change in Charles. Laurie reported at lunch on Thursday of the third week, "Charles was so good today the teacher gave him an apple."

"What?" I said, and my husband added, "You mean Charles?"

"Charles," Laurie said. "He gave the crayons around and he picked up the books afterward and the teacher said he was her helper."

"What happened?" I asked incredulously.

"He was her helper, that's all," Laurie said.

"Can this be true about Charles?" I asked my husband that night. "Can something like this happen?"

"Wait and see," my husband said. "When you've got a Charles to deal with, this may mean he's only plotting."

He seemed to be wrong. For over a week Charles was the teacher's helper; each day he handed things out and he picked things up; no one had to stay after school.

⁴rubbers: waterproof boots

105 "The PTA meeting's next week again," I told my husband one evening, "I'm going to find Charles's mother there."

"Ask her what happened to Charles," my husband said. "I'd like to know."

"I'd like to know myself," I said.

110 On Friday of that week things were back to normal. "You know what Charles did today?" Laurie said at the lunch table. "He told a little girl to say a word and she said it and the teacher washed her mouth out with soap and Charles laughed."

115 "What word?" his father asked unwisely, and Laurie said, "I'll have to whisper it to you, it's so bad." He got down off his chair and went around to his father. His father bent his head down and Laurie whispered joyfully. His father's eyes widened.

"Did Charles tell the little girl to say *that*?" he asked.

"She said it *twice*," Laurie answered. "Charles told her to say it *twice*."

120 "What happened to Charles?" my husband asked.

"Nothing," Laurie said. "He was passing out the crayons."

Monday morning Charles abandoned the little girl and said the evil word himself three or four times, getting his mouth washed out with soap each time. He also threw chalk.

125 My husband came to the door with me that evening as I set out for the parent and teacher meeting. "Invite her over for a cup of tea after the meeting," he said. "I want to get a look at her."

"If only she's there," I said hopefully.

130 "She'll be there," my husband said. "I don't see how they could hold a PTA meeting without Charles's mother."

At the meeting I sat looking at each woman's face, trying to guess which one was Charles's mother. None of them looked to me tired enough. No one stood up at the meeting and apologized for the way her son had been acting. No one mentioned Charles.

135 After the meeting I found Laurie's kindergarten teacher. We came up to one another and smiled.

"I've been so anxious to meet you," I said. "I'm Laurie's mother."

"We're all so interested in Laurie," she said.

140 "Well, he certainly likes kindergarten," I said. "He talks about it all the time."

"We had a little trouble adjusting the first week or so," she said, "but now he's a fine little helper. With occasional problems, of course."

"Laurie usually adjusts very quickly," I said. "I suppose this time, it's Charles's influence."

145 "Charles?"

"Yes," I said, laughing. "You must have your hands full in that kindergarten with Charles."

"Charles?" she said. "We don't have any Charles in the kindergarten."

C UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

1 Reading Comprehension

With a partner, answer these questions:

- 1 What are some of the bad things that Charles does in kindergarten?
- 2 What are some of the ways that the teacher punishes Charles?
- 3 How do Laurie's parents react to his stories about Charles?
- 4 Why does Laurie's mother want to attend the PTA meeting?
- 5 What is the surprise at the end of the story?

1 Discussing the Story

Discuss the following questions with a partner or in a group:

- 1 Why does the author use Laurie's mother as the narrator of the story? If the story were told from the teacher's viewpoint, what would change?
- 2 How does Laurie describe Charles to his father? Why do you think he tells him only about Charles's size and clothes?
- 3 What are some examples of humor from the story?
- 4 At any point in the story did you suspect that Charles is Laurie? When?

2 Making Inferences

Practice making inferences. Circle the letter of the answer that best completes each of the following statements:

- 1 Laurie looked at his bread and butter when he first told his parents the teacher had spanked a boy because
 - a his mouth was full of food.
 - b his father had corrected his bad grammar.
 - c he wanted to show disrespect toward his father.
 - d he wasn't telling his parents the whole truth.
- 2 On Monday of the second week, Laurie came home late because
 - a the teacher had punished him for yelling.
 - b all the children had to stay after school.
 - c everyone stayed at the school to watch Charles.
 - d he didn't want to go home and eat lunch.
- 3 Laurie whispers the bad word to his father *joyfully* because
 - a he was happy that he had learned this new word from Charles.
 - b he was able to say the bad word to his father without getting into trouble.
 - c he was happy that Charles got into trouble for saying the bad word.
 - d he wanted his father to shout at him for saying the bad word.

D THINKING CRITICALLY

1 Discussing the Story

Discuss the following questions with a partner or in a group:

- 1 Do you agree with Rachel's idea that, no matter how old we are, we always have all the ages we have been inside of us? Why or why not?
- 2 If you were Mrs. Price, how would you have handled the situation with Rachel?
- 3 Why do you think Phyllis Lopez at first didn't say the sweater was hers?
- 4 How does Cisneros make us understand how Rachel feels? Give examples from the story of descriptions and language that helped you understand Rachel's feelings. Is the story believable – that is, do Rachel and her situation feel real to you?

2 Making Inferences

Making inferences means understanding ideas that are not specifically stated. When you infer things, you figure things out from what the author does tell you.

Circle the letter of the answer that best completes each of the following sentences:

- 1 Rachel wishes she were 102 because
 - a at that age school and teachers like Mrs. Price would be in the distant past.
 - b at that age she wouldn't have an 11-year-old inside her.
 - c at that age she would have many older ages inside her.
- 2 In the end, when Phyllis has the sweater, Mrs. Price pretends everything is OK because
 - a she doesn't want Rachel to be upset.
 - b she doesn't want to admit she made a mistake.
 - c she doesn't want her class to be late for lunch.

B THE STORY

About the Author

O. Henry's real name was William Sydney Porter (1862–1910), but he used the pen name O. Henry. Although he is best known for his stories about New York City, he didn't actually live in New York until 1902. Born and raised in North Carolina, he moved to Texas in 1882. While in Texas, he wrote stories but also worked in a bank to support his wife and child. He was accused and convicted of stealing money from the bank and served three years in prison. During his prison term, he developed his writing technique. From fellow prisoners he heard some of the interesting stories that he used in his work.

After O. Henry moved to New York and began to make his living as a short-story writer, he continued to be fascinated with down-and-out people. The colorful characters he met in the streets and cafés of the city became immortalized in his stories. "Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen" deals with two such characters. O. Henry was the first American writer to popularize the surprise ending, another feature of the story you are about to read.

Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen

There is one day that is ours. There is one day when all Americans like to go back home to eat a big dinner and feel they are part of a family. Bless the day. We hear some talk about the Puritans and the original Thanksgiving. But that was a long time ago. They landed on
5 Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts after escaping religious persecution in England. I'll bet we could lick 'em if they tried to land again today.

They were lucky. The Indians they met took pity on them and helped them survive the winter. The first feast was held to celebrate their survival and their friendship with the original Americans, the Indians. Today

10 we celebrate the fourth Thursday in November as a national holiday. It is one day that is purely American. Yes, it is a day of celebration, exclusively American.

The following story will prove to you that we have traditions on this side of the ocean even though we are still a young country. Our story takes place in New York City on Thanksgiving Day.

15 Stuffy Pete took his seat on the third bench to the right as you enter Union Square from the east, at the walk opposite the fountain. Every Thanksgiving Day for nine years he had taken his seat there promptly at one o'clock. For every time he had done so, he had been rewarded with a feast.

Our story takes place in New York City on Thanksgiving Day.

But today Stuffy Pete's appearance at the annual meeting place was a result of habit rather than hunger - which philanthropists seem to think the poor feel only on holidays. It seems that these are the only times the well-fed think of their less fortunate brothers and sisters.

20 Stuffy Pete was not hungry. He had just come from a feast that left him barely able to breathe and move about. His breath came in short wheezes. The buttons that had been sewn on his coat by Salvation Army workers were popping from the pressure of his fat belly. His clothes were ragged and his shirt was split open. The November breeze, carrying fine snowflakes, brought a grateful coolness. Stuffy Pete was still recovering from a huge dinner beginning with oysters and ending with plum pudding and including (it seemed to him) all the roast turkey and baked potatoes and chicken salad and squash pie and ice cream in the world.

30 The meal had been an unexpected one. He was passing a red brick mansion near the beginning of Fifth Avenue. In this mansion there lived two old ladies of a traditional family. One of their traditional habits was to station a servant at the gate with orders to admit the first hungry person who walked by after the hour of noon. Stuffy happened to pass by on his way to Union Square and the servants upheld their custom.

40 After stuffing himself and confirming the meaning of his name, Stuffy wandered on to the square as he had done so many times before. He sat on the park bench for ten minutes and stared into space. With a tremendous effort he turned his head slowly to the left. His eyes bulged out and his breath ceased. The Old Gentleman was coming across the walk toward his bench.

50 Every Thanksgiving Day for nine years the Old Gentleman had come there and found Stuffy Pete on the bench. Every Thanksgiving Day for nine years he had led Stuffy Pete to a restaurant and watched him eat a big dinner. The Old Gentleman was a proud American patriot, and he

was pleased to have established this Thanksgiving Day tradition with
55 Stuffy Pete. It was extremely important to the Old Gentleman that their
tradition should continue.

The annual feeding of Stuffy Pete was significant. It showed, at least,
that traditions were possible not only in England. They were possible in
America, too!

60 The Old Gentleman was thin and tall and sixty. He was dressed all
in black and wore the old-fashioned kind of glasses that won't stay on
your nose. His hair was whiter and thinner than it had been last year,
and he seemed to make more use of his big, knobby cane with the
crooked handle.

65 As his benefactor came up, Stuffy Pete wheezed and shuddered like
some over-fat pug when a street dog snarls at him. He would have
escaped, but he was too full to move quickly.

70 "Good afternoon," said the Old Gentleman. "I am glad to see that
this year you are enjoying good health in the beautiful world. For that
blessing alone this day of thanksgiving is well proclaimed to each of us.
If you will come with me, my man, I will provide you with a dinner that
will satisfy you physically and mentally."

75 That is what the Old Gentleman had said every time on every
Thanksgiving Day for nine years. Nothing compared with these words
except the Declaration of Independence. Always before they had been
music in Stuffy's ears. But now he looked up at the Old Gentleman's face
with tearful agony. The Old Gentleman shivered a little and turned his
back to the wind.

80 Stuffy had always wondered why the Old Gentleman spoke his speech
a little sadly. He did not know that it was because he was wishing every
time that he had a son to succeed him. A son who would come there
after he was gone - a son who would stand proud and strong before
some future Stuffy and say: "In memory of my father." Then the tradition
would be an institution.

85 But the Old Gentleman had no relatives. He lived in rented rooms
in one of the decayed old family brownstone mansions on one of the
quiet streets east of the park. In the winter he raised fuschias in a little
greenhouse the size of a closet. In the spring he walked in the Easter
Parade. In the summer he lived in a farmhouse in the New Jersey hills,
90 and sat in a wicker armchair, speaking of a rare butterfly that he hoped
to find some day. In the autumn he fed Stuffy a dinner. These were the
Old Gentleman's occupations.

95 Stuffy looked at him. The Old Gentleman's eyes were bright with the
pleasure of giving. His face was getting more lined each year, but his
black necktie was in a bow, his shirt was beautiful and white, and his
gray mustache was curled gracefully at the ends.

"Thank you, sir. I'll go with you and I'm very grateful. I'm very

hungry, sir," said Stuffy Pete. His Thanksgiving appetite was not his own; it belonged by established custom to this kind, old gentleman.
100 True, America is free. It got this freedom through the hard work of its heroes. Though he wasn't as famous as George Washington or Abraham Lincoln, Stuffy Pete was a hero who fought bravely to maintain tradition.

The Old Gentleman led his guest to the restaurant and to the table where the feast had always been served. They were recognized by the
105 waiters. "Here comes that old guy who always treats that same bum to a meal every Thanksgiving."

The Old Gentleman sat across the table glowing with the pride one feels after doing a good deed. The waiters covered the table with holiday food and Stuffy began eating.

110 Our valiant hero fought his way through turkey, chops, soups, vegetables, and pies. Every time he felt discouraged and ready to give up the battle, he looked at the Old Gentleman. He saw the look of happiness on the Old Gentleman's face, and it gave him the courage to go on. Stuffy did not have the heart to see the Old Gentleman's
115 happiness wane. In an hour Stuffy leaned back with the battle won.

"Thank you kindly, sir. Thank you kindly for a hearty meal," Stuffy said. Then he got up with glazed eyes and started toward the kitchen. A waiter turned him around and pointed toward the door. The Old Gentleman carefully counted out \$1.30 in change, leaving three dimes
120 for the waiter.

They parted as they did every year at the door, the Old Gentleman going south, Stuffy going north.

Stuffy turned around the first corner and stood for one minute. Then he seemed to puff out his rags as an owl puffs out its feathers, and fell
125 to the sidewalk like a horse who has been in the sun too long.

When the ambulance came the young doctor and the driver cursed at his weight. Stuffy did not smell from whiskey, so instead of transferring him to the police, Stuffy and his two dinners went to the hospital. There they stretched him on a bed and started testing him for strange diseases.

130 An hour later another ambulance brought the Old Gentleman. They laid him on another bed and talked about his case. Pretty soon one of the young doctors met one of the young nurses, whose eyes he liked, and stopped to chat with her about the cases.

"That nice old gentleman over there, now," he said. "You wouldn't
135 think that was a case of near starvation. Proud old family, I guess. He told me he hadn't eaten a thing in three days."

1 Reading Comprehension

With a partner, answer these questions:

- 1 Where does Stuffy Pete have his first Thanksgiving dinner? What does he eat?
- 2 What tradition do Stuffy Pete and the Old Gentleman maintain? For how many years have they maintained it?
- 3 Why is Stuffy Pete taken to the hospital?
- 4 Why is the Old Gentleman taken to the hospital?

1 Discussing the Story

Discuss the following questions with a partner or in a group:

- 1 How do you feel about Stuffy Pete when you first meet him in the story?
- 2 How do you feel about him at the end of the story?
- 3 There is only one character in the story called a "gentleman," but the title of the story is "*Two* Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen." Why does O. Henry use the word *two* in the story's title?
- 4 There is a saying, "You can't judge a book by its cover." How does it apply to the story you have just read?

2 Making Inferences

Practice making inferences. Circle the letter of the answer that best completes each of the following statements:

- 1 "We hear some talk about the Puritans and the original Thanksgiving. But that was a long time ago." In these sentences, O. Henry is saying that
 - a the first Thanksgiving was a very long time ago.
 - b the Puritans didn't have anything to do with the first Thanksgiving.
 - c the original Thanksgiving was a happy occasion for the Puritans.
 - d most people don't remember the meaning of the first Thanksgiving.
- 2 When O. Henry says that the story "will prove to you that we have traditions on this side of the ocean even though we are still a young country," he means that
 - a the United States has many traditions.
 - b the United States is a younger country than England, but it has traditions.
 - c England doesn't have traditions.
 - d the United States and England both celebrate Thanksgiving Day.

3 Analyzing the Story: Theme

Look back at the Literary Term on page 72. One of the story's themes is the importance of tradition. Both Stuffy Pete and the Old Gentleman respect tradition; yet their ways of doing so are often different. Find as many similarities and differences as you can, and write them in the chart below. An example has been provided for you.

TRADITIONS: THANKSGIVING DAY SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Stuffy Pete

Stuffy Pete eats Thanksgiving Day dinner.

The Old Gentleman

The Old Gentleman treats Stuffy Pete to a Thanksgiving Day dinner.

Pair Discussion With a partner, compare what you have written in your charts. Correct any mistakes you find. Then discuss the ways Stuffy Pete and the Old Gentleman are similar and different.

B THE STORY

About the Author

Morley Edward Callaghan (1903–1990) was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario. He attended the University of Toronto Law School, but he never practiced law. Instead, he became a newspaper reporter for the Toronto Daily Star. Callaghan became friends with the famous American author Ernest Hemingway, who was working in Canada at the time as a reporter. It was Hemingway who encouraged Callaghan to write short stories.

After Callaghan married, he and his wife went to Paris. They spent several months in Paris and were part of a group of writers that included Hemingway, James Joyce, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. During this time in Paris, Hemingway challenged Callaghan to a fighting match. Callaghan, who had been a fighter in college, knocked Hemingway to the ground, and Hemingway never forgave him.

Callaghan wrote short stories, short novels, and nonfiction. He became a well-known writer in Canada and the United States. One of his two sons, Barry Callaghan, also became a writer and poet. He wrote about his father in *Barrelhouse Kings* (1998).

All the Years of Her Life

Alfred Higgins worked in a drugstore. One night, as he was getting ready to leave for the day, he took off his white jacket and put on his coat. Sam Carr, who owned the drugstore, was standing near the cash register.¹ Most nights, he didn't look at Alfred and just said, "Good night." Tonight, he said softly, "Just a moment, Alfred. Just a moment before you go."

Alfred started to button his coat and felt nervous. His heart began to beat so loud it was hard for him to catch his breath. "What is it, Mr. Carr?"

"Maybe you should take a few things out of your pocket before you go," said Mr. Carr.

¹cash register: a machine used in stores for keeping money from a sale or giving money as change

“What things? What are you talking about?”

“You have a compact² and a lipstick and two tubes of toothpaste in your pocket, Alfred.”

15 “What do you mean? Are you calling me a thief?” Alfred’s face got red, and he knew he looked insulted. Sam Carr’s blue eyes were shining behind his glasses, and his lips were moving underneath his gray mustache. He nodded his head a few times, and Alfred became frightened. Slowly he put his hand in the deep pocket of his coat. He never looked at Sam Carr’s eyes as he took out a compact, a lipstick, and
20 two tubes of toothpaste. He put them one by one on the counter.

“How long have you been stealing from me?” asked Mr. Carr.

“This is the first time I took anything, Mr. Carr.”

“How long have you been stealing from me?”

“Do you expect me to believe that? You’ve probably been robbing the store for a while. I liked you, Alfred. I trusted you, and now, I’ll have to call a policeman. You’re a fool, and maybe I should call your

30 father and tell him you’re a fool. Maybe I should let him know I’m going to have you arrested and put in jail.”

“My father’s not at home. He’s a printer, and he works nights,” said Alfred.

“Who’s at home?”

“My mother, I guess.”

35 “Then we’ll see what she says,” and he went to the telephone and dialed her number.

“Just a minute. Do you have to tell her?”

40 He wanted to sound like a big guy who could take care of himself, but there was still a childish hope that someone at home would come and help him.

Alfred left school and lived at home with his parents. His older brothers were married and his sister just got married, so it was finally easier for his parents. But Alfred always got in trouble and couldn’t hold a job for very long.

45 “Yes, that’s right, Mrs. Higgins. Your boy’s in trouble, I’m afraid. You better come here in a hurry.” Alfred heard Mr. Carr speaking to his mother.

50 Alfred knew his mother would come rushing in. Maybe she would be crying, and she would push him away when he tried to talk to her. Yet he hoped she would arrive before Mr. Carr saw the policeman who usually walked by the store.

While they waited, they didn’t speak. Then they heard someone

²**compact**: a small box for women’s face powder

tapping on the glass door. Mr. Carr opened the door and said, "Come in, Mrs. Higgins." He looked angry.

55 Mrs. Higgins looked as if she was going to bed when she got the phone call. Her hair was tied and covered with a hat. Her coat was wrapped around her tightly. She was large and round and had a friendly smile on her face. Most of the store lights were turned off, and at first, she didn't see Alfred. He was standing in the dark at the end of the counter. When
60 she saw him, she looked at him with her blue eyes and smiled. She was calm and dignified. She gave Mr. Carr her hand and said, "I'm Mrs. Higgins. I'm Alfred's mother. Is he in trouble?"

Mr. Carr was a little surprised by her lack of fear. "He is. He's been stealing from the store. I caught him red-handed. He took little things
65 like compacts, toothpaste, and lipstick. It's stuff he can sell easily."

"Is it true, Alfred?"

"Yes."

"Why have you been doing it?"

"I wanted to have more money, I guess."

70 "For what?"

"When I hang around with the guys, I guess."

Mrs. Higgins touched Mr. Carr's arm gently and spoke as though she didn't want to disturb him. She was serious and shy as she asked, "What did you plan to do, Mr. Carr?"

75 "I was going to call a policeman. That's what I should do."

"Yes, maybe. I can't tell you what to do because he's my son. Yet sometimes I think a little good advice is the best thing for a boy when he's at a certain period of his life."

80 Alfred was amazed at his mother's quiet behavior. If they were at home and someone said Alfred was going to be arrested, she would be crying. Yet here she was standing there with a gentle smile on her face saying, "Maybe it would be better to just let him come home with me. He looks like a big fellow, doesn't he? It takes some of them a long time to get any sense."

85 Both adults looked at Alfred. Alfred felt uncomfortable. He knew Mr. Carr realized that his mother was really a fine woman. There was only the sound of his mother's soft, confident voice in the store. Without being excited or frightened, Mrs. Higgins showed dignity in the dark store.

90 Mr. Carr nodded his head. "Of course, I want to help him learn to do what is right. I tell you what I'll do. I'll just fire him and I won't tell the police. Okay?" Then he shook hands with Mrs. Higgins.

"I'll never forget your kindness, Mr. Carr," she said.

"Sorry we had to meet this way."

95 They acted as if they liked each other, as if they had known each other a long time. "Good night, sir."

“Good night, Mrs. Higgins. I’m truly sorry.”

The mother and son walked along the street together. Mrs. Higgins took long steps, and her serious face looked worried. Alfred was afraid to speak to her. He was afraid of the silence between them. The longer they walked in silence, the more he realized how strong his mother was. He wondered what she was thinking. She seemed to forget that he was walking beside her. Finally, he said, “Thank goodness it turned out like that. I certainly won’t get in trouble like that again.”

“Be quiet. Don’t speak to me. You’ve disgraced me again and again,” she said angrily.

“That’s the last time. That’s all I’m saying, Mom.”

When they arrived home and his mother took off her coat, Alfred saw that she had put on a dress quickly before she went to the store. “You’re a bad one. You are always in trouble. Why do you stand there? Go to bed. I’m going to make a cup of tea. Remember now, don’t say anything about tonight to your father.”

Alfred went upstairs and got undressed. He heard his mother in the kitchen filling the tea kettle, putting it on the stove, and moving a chair. He could remember Mr. Carr listening to her talk simply. Alfred felt a pride in her strength and calmness when she spoke to Mr. Carr. “I’d like to tell her she was great with Mr. Carr.”

Alfred went downstairs to the kitchen. He watched his mother pour a cup of tea. He watched silently as his mother sat there. Her face was frightened and not like the face of the woman who was so confident before in the drugstore.



When she reached for the kettle, her hand was trembling and she spilled some water on the stove. Leaning back in the chair, she sighed and lifted the cup to her lips. She swallowed the hot tea. Then she sat up straight, though her hand still trembled. She looked very old.

Alfred realized that his mother always trembled whenever he was in trouble. This trembling had been inside her when she rushed to the drugstore. He watched his mother, and he didn’t speak, but at that moment, his youth seemed to be over. All the years of her life showed in her trembling hand as she raised the cup to her lips. This seemed to be the first time he ever really looked at his mother.

D THINKING CRITICALLY

1 Discussing the Story

With a partner or in a small group, discuss the following questions:

- 1 Why do you think Alfred doesn't want Mr. Carr to call his mother?
- 2 Do you think Alfred will steal again? Why or why not?
- 3 Do you think Mr. Carr should have fired Alfred, called the police, or told his father? Explain your answer.
- 4 What does Alfred understand about his mother and her life when he sees her hand trembling?

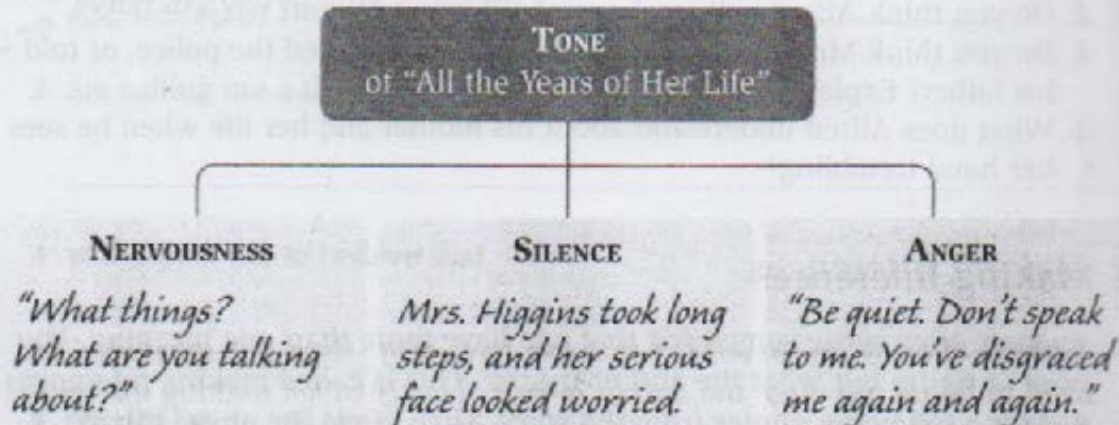
2 Making Inferences

Authors often write something that can have more than one meaning. You need to figure out what the author means. This is called making inferences. Read the following quotes from the story. Then circle the answer that shows the author's meaning. If you need help, look back at the story. Discuss your answers.

- 1 Alfred says to Mr. Carr, "What do you mean? Are you calling me a thief?"
 - a Alfred pretends he doesn't understand what Mr. Carr is thinking.
 - b Alfred is insulted that Mr. Carr thinks he is a thief.
 - c Alfred hopes Mr. Carr will think he's scared.
- 2 Alfred asks Mr. Carr, "Do you have to tell her?"
 - a Alfred wants Mr. Carr to call the police instead of his mother.
 - b Alfred knows his mother isn't at home.
 - c Alfred is scared and hopes Mr. Carr will change his mind.
- 3 On the walk home, Alfred tells his mother, "That's the last time."
 - a Alfred is telling his mother that he will not steal again.
 - b Alfred is lying to his mother.
 - c Alfred doesn't want to talk to his mother anymore.
- 4 Alfred says, "I'd like to tell her she was great with Mr. Carr."
 - a Alfred wants his mother to feel proud of him.
 - b Alfred respects the way his mother behaved with Mr. Carr.
 - c Alfred likes Mr. Carr.

3 Analyzing the Story: Tone

As you read on page 156, tone shows the writer's feelings about the subject and characters. The writer sets the tone through description and dialogue. Three types of tone from the story are in the chart. Examples of descriptions or dialogue are shown for each type of tone. Read the story again and look for more examples to add to the chart.



4 Summarizing

Put the following sentences in the correct order to summarize the story. Write the numbers 1 to 6 to show the order. The first one has been done for you.

- Mr. Carr calls Mrs. Higgins on the telephone.
- Alfred and his mother walk home in silence.
- 1 Mr. Carr accuses Alfred of stealing from the store.
- Mrs. Higgins is calm and dignified in the store.
- Mr. Carr agrees not to call the police.
- Alfred watches his mother drink the tea with a trembling hand.

5 Writing

Pretend you are Alfred. Write a letter to Mr. Carr. Explain how sorry you are about stealing from him and about the lesson you learned.

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