

Short Story Discussion Paper Topics

DIRECTIONS:

Choose any one of these discussion topics to answer for each short story reading assignment.

Some questions may work better for some stories than for others; read over the whole list before deciding on which you will choose for each particular story.

You may use a question only ONCE during the semester.

Be sure to answer each question completely; often there are many different parts to each question. Complete answers will typically be one to two pages. If you do not type, please write neatly in blue or black ink, using only one side of a page at a time.

- A. Think about the main characters in the story. Which character do you personally identify with the most? Explain why. Give at least three examples from both the story and your personal life to prove your argument. Then, in contrast, discuss in what way(s) you do not identify with this character.
- B. Think about the main characters in the story. Which character do you personally identify with the least? Explain why. Give at least three examples from both the story and your personal life to prove your argument. Then, in contrast, discuss in what way(s) you do identify with this character.
- C. Consider this story from a psychologist's perspective. That is, what would the story (or the actions of a particular character) tell us about society, humanity, or human nature? Give at least three specific examples from the story to prove your argument.
- D. Find a point in the story in which a decision is made. Why did the character make this decision and what are ALL the consequences of the decision? (If there are no consequences in the story, what do you predict the consequences will be?) Do you agree or disagree with the decision? What would you have done if you were that character in the same position? Explain why.
- E. Choose two characters in the story and describe carefully the nature of their relationship with each other as you see it. Give at least three specific examples from the text to prove your points. (You might consider how they relate to each other, who has "power" over whom and in what ways, how they treat each other, if the relationship is positive or negative for each of them, etc.)

- F. Make a collage representing themes in the story using words and text.
- G. Compare this story with another story we have read. Be sure to give at least three examples from each story to prove your argument and use quotes from the texts.
- H. Look carefully at the writing style used by the author in this story. Every author tends to have a distinctive style unique to his or her writings. Describe three different aspects of the author's style that you notice, using specific examples from the story to prove your argument. (You might consider looking at such things as sentence structure, use of vocabulary, use of dialogue, the way a story "unfolds", characterizations, point of view, use of humor, narrative style, or anything that seems special or unusual about the way this author tells the story.)
- I. Main characters often learn a "lesson" or make an important personal discovery during the course of the story. If there is a lesson to be learned from this story, what would it be and who learns it? Give at least three examples from the text to prove your argument. Now consider your job as a reader. What lesson do YOU personally take from this story?
- J. Look at the year this story was written/published. What was generally going on in the world or society at that time? (Do informal research on this if necessary.) Discuss the story through this historical context (in what ways does the story represent that time period). Give at least three examples to prove your point. Also, does the story have a different effect for us reading it in today's time and perspective?
- K. If there were to be a sequel to this story, who and what would it be about? Based on specific examples from the story, predict at least three events that you imagine would unfold in an imaginary "part 2".
- L. Often in stories, authors will use an object or an event to symbolize something greater than itself. (For instance, in the fairy tale, "Cinderella", the glass slipper could be seen as a symbol of the fragility of life or love, it could represent all that is magic in the story, or represent femininity itself, etc.) Identify a "symbol" in this story. What does it represent and why is that important? Be sure to give at least three specific examples to prove your argument.
- M. Compare any theme of this story with either a political / social event or popular movie. Describe the event or movie so that someone who is not familiar with it could understand your argument. Give at least three specific examples from BOTH the text and the event or movie to show how they relate to each other in your opinion.
- N. Choose a song or poem whose lyrics relate to a theme of this short story. Make sure you attach a copy of the poem or the song lyrics with your discussion paper. Discuss how the song or poem relates with the short story. Be sure to give at least three

specific examples from the texts to prove your points. (If you like, you may additionally bring in a compact disc or tape of the song. Depending on time factors and level of appropriateness, you may be asked to share the song with the class.)

O. Re-tell this story, or a part of this story from another point of view (interior monologue, dramatic monologue, etc.).

P. Turn a section of the story into a play or monologue to perform, or make a video. (Worth TWO assignments.)