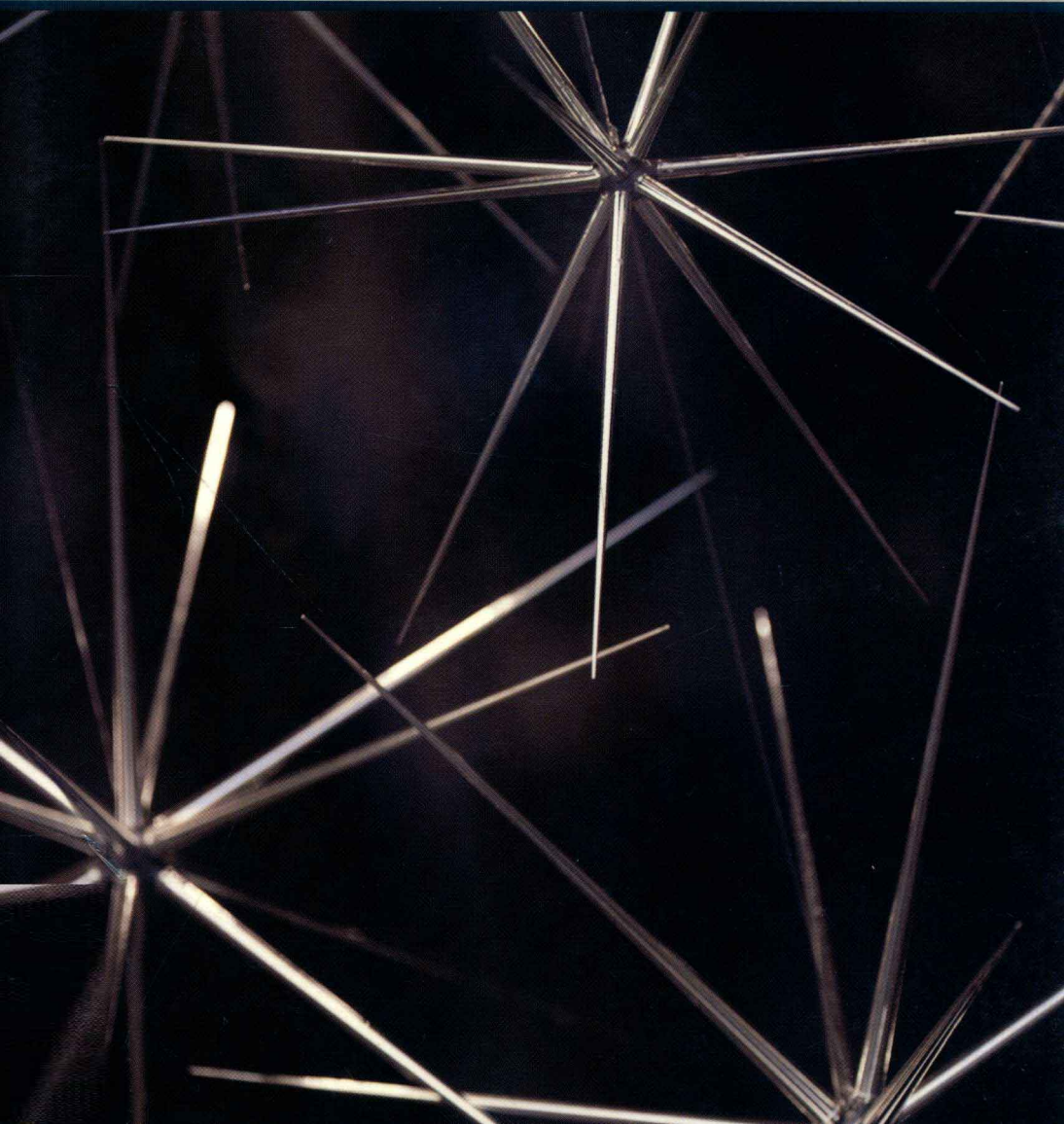


# STERLING STORIES

*12 Great Short Stories*

YVONNE COLLIOD SSKO



# Sterling Stories



## 12 Great Short Stories

**Yvonne Collioud Sisko**

Middlesex County College

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# Intent and/or Tone

## Contents

Here is a general listing of stories by themes, although most of these stories do not easily fit into one category or another. For instance, Twain's story of Tom Sawyer painting the fence can as easily be placed in *Irony*, *Triumph of the Spirit*, *Social Commentary*, or *Humor*.

### **TRIUMPH OF THE SPIRIT**

These stories inspire and offer insight into the human condition.

Hwang Sunwon	<i>Cranes</i>
Anita Endrezze	<i>Marlene's Adventures</i>

### **HUMOR**

These stories tickle the reader's funny bone.

Roch Carrier	<i>The Hockey Sweater</i>
Mark Twain	<i>Strong Temptations—Strategic Movements— The Innocents Beguiled</i>

### **IRONY**

These stories come with unexpected twists.

Catherine Lim	<i>Ah Bah's Money</i>
O. Henry	<i>Gifts of the Magi</i>
Max Brand	<i>Wine on the Desert</i>

### **SOCIAL COMMENTARY**

These stories examine social and/or cultural issues.

Langston Hughes	<i>Salvation</i>
R. K. Narayan	<i>Trail of the Green Blazer</i>
Kate Chopin	<i>The Story of an Hour</i>

**EERIE**

These stories visit the worlds of the macabre and/or the supernatural.

Joseph Bruchac

*Bone Girl*

Edgar Allan Poe

*The Tell-Tale Heart*

# Foreword

With the successes of *American 24-Karat Gold*, *A World of Short Stories*, and *Looking at Literature*, we decided to create a collection of the most readable stories to introduce beginning students to literature and the relevant skills therein. *Sterling Stories* is that collection. We have taken the most succinct, most readable stories and have collected them here. Each story is still surrounded by the full complement of learning materials that are intended to maximize student learning while simultaneously maximizing teaching efficiency. In fact, among the now several thousand students who have field-tested these stories, we have seen dramatic increases in student performances in both reading and writing after studying these entries.

Many thanks go to each person whose interest, effort, and—especially—patience have supported me in this process. First, I heartily thank Lucille Alfieri, Betty Altruda, Jim Bernarducci, Debbie Brady, Santi Buscemi, Wilson Class, Gert Coleman, Jamie Daley, Sallie DelVecchio, Leah Ghiradella, Evelyn and Kristin Honey, Vernie Jarocki, Jim Keller, Angela Lugo, Ben Marshall, JoAnne McWilliams, Albert Nicolai, Renee Price, Ellen Shur, Rich Strugala, Helena Swanicke, Shirley Wachtel and Dan Zimmerman, all dear friends and colleagues. I also thank Liz Oliu, Andre Gittens, and Dennis Cutburth, all library faculty at Middlesex who always seem to find the impossible for me. Then I must thank my cherished mentors—Drs. Dan O’Day, Bernie Weinstein, Bill Evans, Eileen Kennedy, Carla Lord, Carol Kouros-Shaffer, and Howard Didsbury—who ever inspire me. Special thanks go to the many students who have field-tested these materials and who continue to teach me what works and what does not work. And most special thanks go to Susan Kunchandy, who initiated this book, Melanie Craig, who brought it to fruition, and Lindsay Allen, who energetically assisted all along the way.

Special thanks also go to my mother, Margaret, and to my sisters, Michelle, Dodee, and Alice, who have often had to change plans around my schedules. Super thanks go to my brother-in-law, John, and my son, Teddy, whose illustrations light this book. My whole family thanks son-in-law Dave for his computer abilities that have stopped many a technical tantrum on my part. And loving thanks always go to my son, Ted, my daughter, Laura, and her beautiful new baby, Alex—they bring me joy every day of my life. And, of course, special thanks always go to my husband, George, who is ever patient and who has, in between books, retired

from higher education—thank goodness for golf!—and now runs my endless errands for paper, ink, and so forth on his way to the links.

This book is very dear to my heart. By choice, I have long taught our beginning students and I love teaching these students. I watch people not just become students, but I watch whole lives pull together as the academy becomes a viable path in their lives.

I truly hope you enjoy using this book as much as I have enjoyed developing it.

—YVONNE COLLIOD SSKO  
*Old Bridge, New Jersey*

# Preface

## To the Student

It seems that human beings have always loved a good story. In fact, anthropologists tell us that story telling has been used to teach rules and ideas for millennia.

This book is filled with good stories, or narratives or narrations. Read these stories to gain knowledge about yourself, for a good story invariably offers us some information about ourselves. Most of all, read these stories to enjoy them. Stories have a way of taking us into new worlds, offering universals (feelings we all can understand).

However, the stories in this book are designed to do more than just expose you to each story itself. Each story is surrounded with exercises that will help you better understand it. Each story includes:

- **Vocabulary Exercises**—Vocabulary exercises help you define the words you need to know for the story, before you read it.
- **Questions**—Questions help guide you through the story.
- **Biography**—A biography of the story's author provides you with information about the author's style and other works.
- **Journal**—After reading, you can record and organize your thoughts about the story in a journal.
- **Follow-up Questions**—You can demonstrate what you've learned about the story in follow-up questions.
- **Discussion Questions**—These questions ask you to reach deeper and to react to the story.
- **Writing**—Writing ideas help to focus and guide your writing.

To better understand how this book works, turn to the Sample Lesson on page 1 and work your way through it. You'll find that you will be actively participating in this book, which will make understanding and appreciating the stories easier and more rewarding for you.

Welcome to *Sterling Stories*! Read this book, study it, and—most of all—enjoy it.

## To the Teacher

The greatest assets of *Sterling Stories* are its participatory lessons and the many options these lessons offer you. Certainly, the literature is the core of this book, but the pedagogical materials that consistently surround every



story require students to actively participate. Simultaneously, these materials offer you a choice of multiple, administratively efficient diagnostic and assessment tools. Each story is a self-contained lesson, and all the stories are consistently formatted, thereby offering students clear expectations and offering them multiple options.

## Sample Lesson

*Sterling Stories* starts out with an applied **Sample Lesson**. The Sample Lesson can be used in class, or it can be assigned as homework. Written in simple and accessible language, this introductory lesson walks students through the basic story format, using Kate Chopin's "Ripe Figs." This lesson, as all lessons, opens with Pre-reading Vocabulary—Context and Pre-reading Vocabulary—Structural Attack to help students define important words used in the story. Pre-reading Questions set purpose and an author biography supplies relevant background information.

After reading "Ripe Figs," students learn notation strategies that they can then apply to the subsequent readings. With the story completed, students move on to the Journal exercises, which are comprehensive and participatory studies of the story. The Sample Lesson explains the tasks in each Journal section, offers sample answers to get students started, and introduces relevant literary terminology.

With the Journal completed, students will have an active, working understanding of "Ripe Figs." They can then move on to three sets of Follow-up Questions. These questions consistently use multiple assessment formats: (1) ten multiple-choice questions objectively assessing comprehension; (2) five significant quotations subjectively assessing comprehension; and (3) two essay questions subjectively assessing comprehension. Then Discussion Questions ask students to reach deeper, to reflect upon, and to react to each story. Each story ends with Writing suggestions. In the Sample Lesson, students are introduced to pre-writing and outlining strategies. In subsequent stories, students will find multiple writing prompts.

I suggest that you work through the Sample Lesson in class, for it is here that you will find the dynamics and possibilities of this book encapsulated.

## Chapter Structure

The stories in *Sterling Stories* are arranged into four topical chapters, based on and reinforcing the literary terminology the students have already encountered in the Sample Lesson. While all stories contain combinations of these terms and/or elements, each of the chapters focuses on a specific term(s) and/or element(s) by beginning with a restatement of the term(s) and then by presenting the stories that have been specifically chosen to demonstrate the term(s) and/or element(s). Chapter 1 focuses on characters

and conflicts, Chapter 2 focuses on setting and props, Chapter 3 focuses on plot and foreshadowing, and Chapter 4 focuses on irony.

Within each chapter, you have many options:

1. You can assign these chapters in any order.
2. You can also assign the stories within each chapter in any order. Generally, the stories within each chapter progress from more accessible to more difficult; but the strengths of each class vary, and what may seem more accessible for one group may be more difficult for another.
3. You can assign all the stories in a chapter or any number you prefer.
4. You can use the alternative table of contents. Selecting from *Intent and/or Tone Contents* can make for interesting study.
5. All of these exercises are equally useable for individual assignments, for small group discussions, and/or for full class discussions.
6. You can ignore all these suggestions and assign any story at your discretion.

## Story Structure

Each story in *Sterling Stories* is set amid carefully designed teaching materials, and because the format is consistent, you will be able to find material easily. These materials were discussed generally in the overview of the Sample Lesson above, but here we look at the materials more closely.

### Pre-reading Materials

Each story selection begins with pre-reading materials. The pre-reading materials prepare students for reading each story while offering you insights into their vocabulary mastery and study habits.

**Pre-reading Vocabulary—Context** presents words that are crucial to understanding the story. These words have been chosen to make the story accessible to students and may or may not be the most sophisticated words in the story.

**Pre-reading Vocabulary—Structural Attack** offers structural analysis exercises. These words were chosen not for their sophistication, but because they help students apply structural analysis skills. Thus, before students start the story, they have defined at least 20 words in context and 10 to 30 more words in structural attack. The need for distracting glossed words and marginal definitions is thereby eliminated because students are well prepared by the pre-reading vocabulary to approach the story. Further, the Glossary at the end of the book supports students in this area and encourages referencing skills.

Third, **Pre-reading Questions** offer food for thought as students enter the story. The author's **Biography** offers not only biographical background but also offers additional information about the author's other works.

## Journal

After students have read and annotated the story, the **Journal** then draws them into active reflection and participation.

- *MLA Works Cited*—Students record the story in MLA Works Cited entry format, using the generic model provided (applying and reinforcing MLA format).
- *Main Character(s)*—Students separate, describe, and defend the character(s) they have selected as main character(s) (applying and reinforcing the separation of main ideas from details).
- *Supporting Characters*—Students separate, describe, and defend the characters they have selected as supporting characters (applying and reinforcing the separation of main ideas from supporting details).
- *Setting*—Students describe and decide if they can change the setting (applying and reinforcing inference skills).
- *Sequence*—Students outline the story's events in order (applying and reinforcing sequencing and outlining skills).
- *Plot*—Students summarize the story's events in no more than two sentences (applying and reinforcing the separation of main ideas from supporting details, as well as summary skills).
- *Conflicts*—Students identify and explain the relevant conflicts (applying and reinforcing inference and judgment skills).
- *Significant Quotations*—Students explain the importance of quotations that are central to the story (applying and reinforcing inference skills).
- *Foreshadowing, irony, or symbolism*—There may be a section to discuss foreshadowing, irony, or symbolism as is relevant to the story. Students explain foreshadowing, irony, or symbolism (applying and reinforcing inference and judgment skills).

The Journal is a comprehensive cognitive workout for students. In the Journal, students reflect on the story, sort out the details, and organize the story's components while applying and/or reinforcing their comprehension skills. You can collect any part or all of the Journal to check on student progress. The wealth of diagnostic information in the Journal will enable you to spot misunderstandings, illogical thinking, and so forth, that may compromise comprehension. Requiring a completed Journal for classroom participation also assures you of students who are prepared to discuss the story.

## Follow-up Questions

The Journal is followed by three follow-up question formats. The Follow-up Questions are designed for assessment but can also be used for small group or class discussion. All of these questions are intended to measure comprehension; they purposely avoid literary controversy.

- **10 Short Questions** offers ten multiple-choice questions.
- **5 Significant Quotations** asks students to explain the importance of five quotations that are always central to the story.
- **2 Comprehension Essay Questions** provides two essay prompts.

The Follow-up Questions offer you multiple, efficient assessment options. You may decide to use some questions for discussion or some for testing. If you are trying to establish standardization, the section of 10 Short Questions is applicable for measuring comprehension efficiently by psychometrically employing 10 questions with 3 choices each (only 6 are needed for accurate measurement).

## Discussion Questions

Each story provides two thought-provoking questions. Unlike the Follow-up Questions, Discussion Questions encourage reflection, personal opinion, and/or literary debate. Again, you may choose to have students discuss these or to have students write these answers.

## Writing Prompts

Each story concludes with options for **Writing**. Here, two prompts for personal writing are included. Then, under **Further Writing**, you will find prompts for more challenging, research-oriented writing. These prompts may be literary (compare and contrast this story with another in this book, with another by this author, with one by another author, and so forth) or topical research suggestions.

## Some Final Notes

The materials in *Sterling Stories*—the context and structural vocabulary exercises, the journal format, the three assessment options, the discussion questions, as well as the many writing prompts—have been extensively field-tested by more than two thousand students. These field tests have taken place in one of the most culturally diverse counties in America—Middlesex County, New Jersey. Three major results have occurred. First, student competencies in both reading and writing have dramatically increased. Second, these stories have also come to serve as a

basis for acculturation discussions with ESL and/or international students. Third, the pedagogical materials have been streamlined to maximize learning efficacy and to maximize administrative efficiency simultaneously.

To further assist you, I have added a section in the appendix on "How I Use This Book." This has been written in response to the many enthusiastic questions I received on this book, and I hope this will be of use to you.

It should also be noted that, although copyright restrictions apply, we have elided offensive words wherever feasible.

Last, but certainly not least, we must address the stories themselves. The richness of the literature speaks for itself, and the stories have been most carefully chosen to combine the best of writers with the most readable of stories. This collection sets out to expand the literary lexicon of today's entering students.

I sincerely hope you and your students enjoy reading these stories as much as I have enjoyed working with them.

—YVONNE COLLILOUD SISCO  
*Old Bridge, New Jersey*

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