Teacher Notes

Elements of the Short Story

Activity 1
Exploring the Short Story

Activity Overview

Using a short story by Edgar Allen Poe, "The Oval Portrait," available online, students will learn to identify various elements of short stories, including character, plot, setting, tone, theme, and style. Using excerpts provided in the lesson, students will identify literary devices Poe uses and discuss their effect on the overall story. Students will write a brief plot outline and create a list of directions one might follow to write in a similar manner.

Tips

Poe is, in many ways, the quintessential short story writer. By using one of his shorter stories, students can quickly identify the elements of a short story and devote time to literary devices within one class period. Using this model to create directions for writing a story like this ensures that students are able to

synthesize their understanding of various elements and how they work together to create a powerful story.

Directions

Before the Activity Begins

Deliver **The Short Story** edc file to the student devices using either the TI-GRAPH LINK™ cable, a USB cable, or TI-Navigator™.

Go over lesson objectives with students. Explain that Poe is revered for his short story writing abilities and that "The Oval Portrait," while very short, contains all of the elements of a short story and incorporates numerous literary devices that they will identify. Students should already be familiar with basic literary devices, including their identification and their effects.

During the Activity

Read aloud Edgar Allen Poe's "The Oval Portrait."

Students will use **The Short Story** edc files, **Directions**, **Characterization**, **Setting**, **Plot**, **Theme**, **Tone**, **Style**, **Alliteration**, **Personification**, **Foreshadowing**, **Irony/Paradox**, **Your Choice**, to record literary devices and story elements encountered in reading "The Oval Portrait." Ask students to read the story again silently after the class has read it aloud. For the second reading, ask them to list literary elements and devices in the appropriate files on their devices.

Discuss student identifications of character, setting, plot, theme, tone, and style. Examine the examples of style they identify.

Have students share their examples of the literary devices asked for, as well as any others they noticed.

Examples of Literary Devices:

"That I now saw aright I could not and would not doubt; for the first flashing of the candles upon that canvas had seemed to dissipate the dreamy stupor which was stealing over my senses, and to startle me at once into waking life." (alliteration of 'f' and 's'; personification of 'dreamy stupor')

"I had found the spell of the picture in an absolute life-likeliness of expression, which, at first startling, finally confounded, subdued, and appalled me." (foreshadowing)

"'This is indeed Life itself!' turned suddenly to regard his beloved – She was dead!" (paradox, irony)

Discuss the effects of these literary devices on the work as a whole. How do they work together to make the story compelling? Explain your reactions to the devices listed above to help students see how they might affect the reader's understanding of and investment in the story. See the **Think Aloud** example below.

Think Aloud: These various devices all seem to add to the story. The beginning of the story is full of description and doesn't really seem to go anywhere, but Poe keeps my attention by using a variety of literary devices. When the main character first notices the picture, the alliteration of the letters 'f' and 's' work together to help the story move forward, seeming to almost hiss along onomatopoetically with the character's discovery. Personifying dreamy stupor really gives me the chance to see how groggy he was, which makes his being startled "at once into waking life" all the more powerful an image. I didn't recognize the foreshadowing on my first reading, but when I re-read the story the line "absolute life-likeness" jumped out at me. The story actually becomes creepier for me on a second reading. The end, where the painter perfectly captures his bride's essence in his painting, only to discover her dead, is such a paradox. The irony exists both in the foreshadowing and in this final revelation; it makes me shudder that this young woman died to bring life's essence into a painting! Poe was at his scary best with stories like this…

Use the following instructions to access and use **The Short Story** files on devices. The action steps are the actions students need to perform to obtain the files and use the exercises on their devices. Additional information for the teacher appears in shaded boxes.

Voyage™ 200 PLT (or TI-92 Plus)

1. Turn on the device and press the ◆ **Apps** key. Highlight the **Player** Application using ⊕ ⊖.

2. Press ENTER. The Assignment List is displayed. Use ⊕ ⊖ to highlight **The Short Story** file if more than one assignment is in the list.
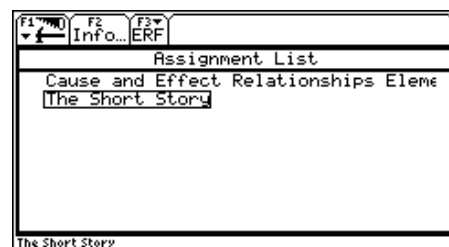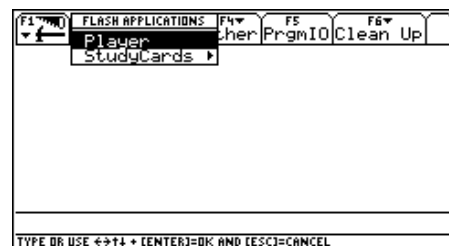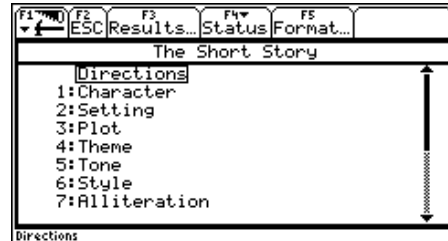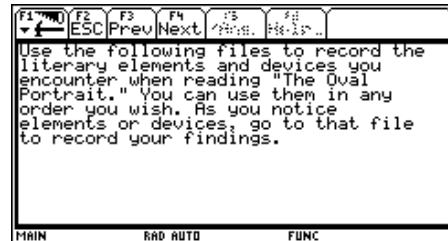
3. Press ⌈ENTER⌋. Enter your ID to sign in.
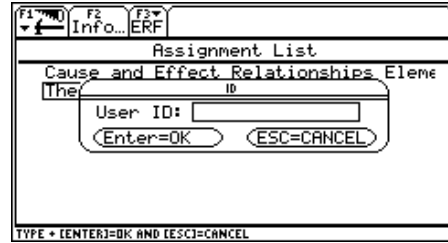
4. Press ⌈ENTER⌋. The files that comprise this assignment are listed. Use ⊙ ⊙ to scroll the list.

    Highlight the **Directions** file.

5. Press ⌈ENTER⌋ to open the file.

    > All students should read the activity instructions. Instruct the students to press **F4: Next** to access the first story element note file.

6. This activity provides several files for you to use in taking notes about different elements used in Poe's short story. The first of these files, **Character**, is shown to the right.
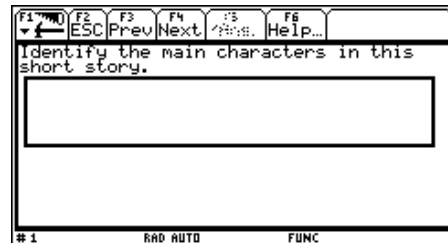
7. The last of the story element files is entitled **Your Choice**. Use it to record any other observations that were not covered in the previous files.
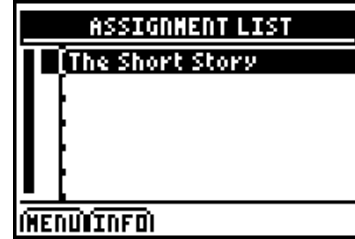
TI-83 Plus

1. Turn on the device and press the **Apps** key to display this screen. Select the **LearnChk** Application by highlighting the number next to it using ⌈▲⌋ ⌈▼⌋.

2. Press ENTER. Press ENTER again to move past the title screen. The **Assignment List** is displayed. Use ▲ ▼ to highlight the **The Short Story** assignment, and then press ENTER.

```
ASSIGNMENT LIST
│ The Short Story
│
│
│
│
│
MENU INFO
```

3. Enter your ID to sign in.

```
ASSIGNMENT SIGN IN

PLEASE ENTER
YOUR ID:

│ _        │


BACK
```

4. Press ENTER. Highlight the **Directions** file.

```
The Short Story
│ *** Directions
│ 1  Character
│ 2  Setting
│ 3  Plot
│ 4  Theme
↓ 5  Tone
MENU
```
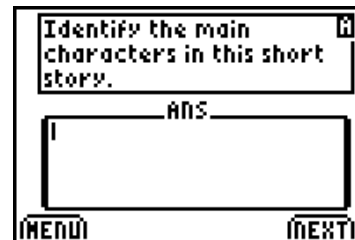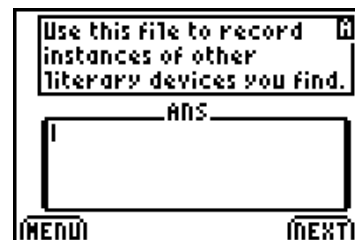
5. Press ENTER to open the file. Use ▲ ▼ to scroll the text.

> All students should read the activity instructions. Instruct the students to press **Next** to access the first story element note file.

```
│ Use the following files to
│ record the literary
│ elements and devices you
│ encounter when reading
│ "The Oval Portrait." You
│ can use them in any
↓ order you wish. As you
MENU                    NEXT
```

6. This activity provides several files for you to use in taking notes about different elements used in Poe's short story. The first of these files, **Character**, is shown to the right.

```
Identify the main        ▫
characters in this short
story.
        ANS
│ │
│
│
MENU                    NEXT
```

7. The last of the story element files is entitled **Your Choice**. Use it to record any other observations that were not covered in the previous files.

```
Use this file to record  ▫
instances of other
literary devices you find.
        ANS
│ │
│
│
│
MENU                    NEXT
```

After the Activity

Work with students to create a list of basic directions for someone to write a short story using "The Oval Portrait" as a model. Record the directions in **The Short Story** edc file, **Writing a Short Story**. Include a very basic plotline and advice for literary devices that are effective.