

# 12 Short Stories for American History Classes



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## 12 American Short Stories for High School Classes

History and literacy are joined at the hip in today's schools. With unprecedented intensity, schools are pressured into increasing test scores in reading; history teachers have been enlisted in the literacy race, often with the driest, least interesting components, like *picking the main idea* from a paragraph or *summarizing a text book section*.

American history teachers, experienced in conducting higher level thinking discussions, would much prefer to use some of the “hearts and minds” materials like short stories or plays or poems.

These short stories were selected with just such critical thinking experiences in mind. They also teach dozens of literary terms and skills, all enclosed with each story. The sets of social studies activities include role plays, debates, research projects, inquiry tasks, discussion starters and writing tasks.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>The Hollow of the Three Hills</i>	Colonial New England
Kate Chopin, <i>A Respectable Woman</i>	19 c Women's Movement
Ambrose Bierce, <i>An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge</i>	Civil War
James Thurber, <i>If Grant Had Been Drinking at Appomattox</i>	Civil War
Mark Twain, <i>Investments</i>	Gilded Age, Inventions
Zitkala-Sa, <i>The Cutting of My Long Hair, The Snow Episode</i>	Indian Boarding Schools
Michael Gold, <i>Bananas</i>	Immigrant Jews
Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Sweat</i>	Black History, Harlem Renaissance
John Steinbeck, <i>Migrant People</i>	Great Depression
Truman Capote, <i>The Shape of Things</i>	World War II
Tim O'Brien, <i>Ambush</i>	Vietnam War
Sandra Cisneros, <i>Barbie-Q , Eleven</i>	Immigrant Chicanas, Feminism

*These materials were written by Syd Golston, Joan Brodsky Schur, and Donna Schell.*

## “The Hollow of the Three Hills”

**Author:** Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

- Author of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*
- Ancestor was a judge in the Salem witchcraft trials who never repented the convictions he handed down.

**Text:** From the collection *Twice Told Tales*, on many Websites for download.

**Plot Summary:** A forlorn young woman, who abandoned her family in England and immigrated to America, goes into the woods at an appointed hour to meet an old woman. There she asks the old woman to conjure visions of the parents, husband and child she left behind. She tells the old woman, “I will do your bidding though I may die.”

**History Connections:**

- Salem witchcraft trials
- Immigration to America
- Women’s lives in New England.

**Literary terms:** Setting, ambiguity, folk tale.

**Discussion Starters:**

- What are some of the **key ingredients of ghost stories or tales about witchcraft?** (Ambiguity— multiple ways to interpret events, setting in the woods, pact with the devil, inverted worship rituals.)
- How do **oral tradition and rumor generate stories** and keep them alive? Why do we enjoy these tales?
- What do you know about the **Salem witchcraft trials?** What kind of testimony was used to convict a person of witchcraft? (Spectral evidence was allowed at the trials). How did spectral evidence make it easy for the accusers to use the trials as a form of revenge?
- Why were so many more women convicted of witchcraft at Salem than men? (Fourteen women and five men were convicted and hung in Salem. Historians generally view the trials as a form of social control that protected the patriarchal system—keeping women from inheriting property, for example, by declaring them witches.)
- Who was Nathaniel Hawthorne and why do you think he was drawn to write stories about witchcraft several centuries after the Salem witchcraft trials were over?

**Teaching Activity: Two Sides to Every Story**

1. Divide the class into two halves.

- **Assign half the class to interpret the events in the story as supporting a verdict that witchcraft was practiced in the woods.**

- The other half will support the interpretation that a young woman simply died in the woods at night and that the rest is rumor.

2. Assign each class member to **write a news article** in support of his or her position. Students should imagine that they live in the same village as the woman who died and either knew her or heard rumors about her. In either case, students should use details from the story as well as their imaginations.

Possible headlines:

Death in the Woods Last Night! Strange Young Woman with a Disreputable Past Compacts With the Devil and Dies a Frightful Death!

OR

Heartbroken and Gentle Neighbor Wanders Off to Die in the Woods of Grief!

***Alternatively, students can submit a written or oral deposition for the trial of the old crone in the story, accusing her of practicing witchcraft.***

*Suggested Resources:*

***“The Salem Witch Trials” at Digital History***

[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/lesson\\_plans\\_display.cfm?lessonID=23](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/lesson_plans_display.cfm?lessonID=23)

***“Dramatizing History in Arthur Miller’s The Crucible” at Edsitement***

[http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=440](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=440)

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## “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”

**Author:** Ambrose Bierce, 1842-1913

- Bierce was born in Ohio to a poor family.
- He served in the Civil War in the 9<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry with distinguished service accolades. His war stories are a realistic presentation of the horrors he witnessed; he wrote this story in 1890.
- He moved to San Francisco following the war and became a journalist and author along with two other literary giants, Mark Twain and Bret Harte.
- He is nicknamed “Bitter” Bierce. He disappeared on a trip to Mexico to cover the Mexican Revolution at age 70. Some researchers believe he was executed in Mexico as a spy.
- This story was depicted in three different film versions and was an episode on the Twilight Zone. The life of Ambrose Bierce was chronicled in the movie, “Old Gringo” starring Gregory Peck.

**Text:** Available from the Electronic Text Center of the University of Virginia  
<http://etext.virginia.edu>.

**Plot Summary:** Peyton Farquhar, an ardent supporter of the Southern cause and a slaveholding plantation owner, was unable to serve and defend the South as a soldier in the Confederate Army. He does, however, assist the cause whenever he can, yet longs for a more distinctive role in the confrontation. The Federal army, engaged in repairing the railroad tracks to facilitate movement of troops and supplies in an advance through Alabama, is some thirty miles from Farquhar’s plantation. A rider in a grey uniform approaches Farquhar’s plantation and shares information about the Federal army and its whereabouts. He explains that an order has been issued that any civilian caught interfering with the railroads, bridges and tunnels will be hanged. Farquhar inquires how he might serve the Confederacy if he is able to reach the bridge undetected by the guards. Anxious to play a role, Farquhar ventures to the bridge and is caught. A realistic description of the hanging ritual is described with the reader uncertain if Farquhar escapes the noose or dies - until the very end of the story.

### **History Connections:**

- The Civil War

**Literary Terms:** flashback, realism, juxtaposition

### **Discussion Starters:**

- How does flashback, as a literary technique, serve this account of the “incident”?
- For what possible reasons would the disguised Federal scout suggest to Farquhar that the bridge could easily be burned?
- The description of the preparations and participants in the hanging are extremely detailed and disturbing due to their detached tone. Did you as a reader have an emotional response to this insensitive account of the hanging?

- Describe what Farquhar encounters when he falls into the river.
- At what point in the story does the reader realize that the escape sequence is actually the planter imagining the scenes rather than true events? When does the author give the first clue of this twist in the tale?
- The story leaves the reader wondering about the obviously omitted portions of the planter's story. Does the author provide clues as to the missing pieces of the saga? If so, what?
- What are some examples of juxtaposition in this short story?

### Teaching Activities:

- Complete a one-page quick-write response to one of the following prompts:
  - What was Farquhar's actual crime and how he was captured?
  - What details make this psychological drama so intriguing?
  - Discuss the final sentence in each of the three sections of the story. How does each present a twist in the story that either baffles the reader or foreshadows events to come?
  - In your opinion, does the writer trivialize death? Manipulate the reader? Distort the reader's sense of time?
- Compare this story to other young adult literature about the Civil War such as the *Red Badge of Courage* (Crane), *Rifles for Watie* (Keith), *The Tamarack Tree: A Novel of the Siege of Vicksburg* (Clapp), and/or *the 290* (O'Dell).
- Suggest students watch the online black-and-white version of Robert Enrico's film adaptation of the story that was shown by Rod Sterling on the television show, *The Twilight Zone*.

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## “If Grant Had Been Drinking at Appomattox”

**Author:** James Thurber, 1894-1961

- Born in Columbus, Ohio, Thurber was a noted humorist, satirist, essayist and illustrator. A typical Thurber literary endeavor mixed “slightly mad happenings with a sane approach.”
- His career began as a newspaper journalist, but he joined the staff of the *New Yorker* in 1927. He collaborated with other noted authors like E.B. White.
- The *Last Flower* written in 1939 was an anti-war fable.
- Thurber’s self portrait.



**Text:** <http://www.visi.com/~tomcat/poetry/Grant.shtml>

### Plot Summary:

In this if...then zany account of the final day of the Civil War, April 9, 1865, General Grant is awakened by his aide, Corporal Shultz to meet with General Robert E. Lee. Grant is grumpy, disheveled and hung-over from the previous night of drinking and apparent rough-housing. His drinking excesses continue as he dresses and the stories of his drinking and Lincoln’s support of him are recounted. In his stupor, Grant misunderstands the purpose of Lee’s visit to his camp promoting him to surrender *his* sword to the astonished Lee while remarking that, “We dam’ near licked you. If I’d been feeling better we *would* have licked you.”

**Literary Terms:** exaggeration, humor, “alternate” or “counterfactual” history

### History Connections:

- Civil War – surrender at Appomattox Court House
- General Ulysses S. Grant

### Discussion Starters:

- How plausible is Thurber’s if...then “alternate” account of the surrender at Appomattox Court House?
- Select some examples of humor sprinkled throughout the story.
- To what effect does Thurber exaggerate the reported alcoholic indulgences of Grant? What other exaggerations of the truth or counterfactual statements does he make?
- Do you think that Thurber’s trying to assail the character of Grant with his humorous or “counterfactual” retelling of the surrender? Why or why not? What other motivation would he have for writing the story?

- Find evidence in the story that it follows Thurber's "slightly mad happenings" style of storytelling.

**Teaching Activities:**

- Students read *excerpts of the Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* and his account of the surrender at Appomattox Court House. Compare and contrast his eyewitness account of the surrender with Thurber's fictionalized and zany account.
- Students write their own if...then counterfactual short story.

**Comparison Chart**

Short Story/Counterfactual  
Humorous/Alternate History

Memoirs/Autobiography/Eyewitness  
Primary Document

<p><i>If Grant Had Been Drinking at Appomattox</i> by James Thurber</p>	<p><i>Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant</i> by Ulysses S. Grant</p>
Empty space for student notes	Empty space for student notes



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## **If...Then “Alternate” Historical Short Story Assignment and Planning Guide**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Directions:

Imitate Thurber’s if...then “alternate” historical short story spoof by writing your own humorous or silly short story. Make a **list of the key facts** of the event **prior** to writing the if...then fictionalized account. Decide which fact(s) you will exaggerate for the purpose of creating a social commentary or a humorous view of an event.

Select one of the following topics for your fictionalized/counterfactual if...then Civil War account.

- The Firing on and Surrender of Fort Sumter, S.C.
- First Battle of Manassas
- Death of General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson
- Battle of Gettysburg
- Commemoration at Gettysburg/Gettysburg Address
- Siege of Vicksburg
- Lincoln’s visit to Richmond, Virginia, following the capture of Richmond
- Sherman’s March to the Sea
- Battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac
- Capture of Confederate President Jefferson Davis
- Other...

Short Story Formatting Criteria:

- Minimum 1 page Maximum 2 pages
- Typed, 12 point font, single-spaced
- Title

Topic of If...Then "Alternate" Historical Short Story:

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Key Facts of the Event:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Point(s) to be exaggerated (counterfactually):

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

*Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*

Excerpts from "Interview with Lee at McLean's House", Chapter LXVII

"On the 8<sup>th</sup>, I had followed the Army of the Potomac in rear of Lee. I was suffering very severely with a sick headache, and stopped at a farmhouse on the road some distance in rear of the main body of the army. I spent the night in bathing my feet in hot water and mustard, and putting muster plasters on my wrists and the back part of my neck, hoping to be cured by morning...I proceeded at an early hour in the morning, still suffering with the headache, to get to the head of the column. I was not more than two or three miles from Appomattox Court House at that time."

"When I left camp that morning, I had not expected so soon the result that was taking place, and consequently was in rough garb. I was without a sword, as I usually was when on horseback on the field, and wore a soldier's blouse for a coat, with the shoulder straps of my rank to indicate to the army who I was. When I went into the house I found General Lee. We greeted each other and after shaking hands took our seats. I had my staff with me, a good portion of whom were in the room during the whole of the interview."

"General Lee was dressed in full uniform which was entirely new, and was wearing a sword of considerate value, very likely the sword which had been presented by the state of Virginia; at all events, it was an entirely different sword than one that would ordinarily been worn in the field. In my rough traveling suit...I must have contrasted very strangely with a man so handsomely dressed, six feet high and of flawless form. But that was not a matter that I thought of until afterwards."

"We soon fell into conversation about old army times...Our conversation grew so pleasant that I almost forgot the object of our meeting. General Lee called to my attention the object of our meeting, and said that he had asked for the interview for the purpose of getting from me the terms I proposed to give to his army."

"I called to General Parker, secretary on my staff, for writing materials and I commenced to write out the...terms."

"The much talked of surrendering of Lee's sword and my handing it back, this and much more that has been said about it is the purest romance. The word sword or firearms was not mentioned by either of us until I wrote it into the terms."

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## “A Respectable Woman”

**Author:** Kate Chopin, 1851-1904

- Born to a wealthy family in St. Louis, Catherine O’Flaherty enjoyed the balls and high society parties; bright and fluent in several languages, she also loved to read, write and play the piano. At age 20, she married Oscar Chopin and moved with him to Louisiana where his family owned property and where the mix of Creole and Cajun and all sorts of interesting folks, fascinated her. Louisiana was the setting of many of her stories.
- Always an independent woman and not afraid to defy the conventional norms of behavior for women of the time, she was left a young widow with six children in 1882. It was at this point in her life that she began to write and publish stories in regional and national magazines including *Century*, *Atlantic* and *Vogue*.
- Kate Chopin is said to have been “a woman ahead of her time.” Her writing deals with the complex themes of love and marriage in a time when those issues weren’t openly spoken about; some female characters are content and devoted while others question the institution of marriage and the wives’ lack of independence and freedom. Lastly, her stories are non-judgmental and objective in tone; the reader is left to his/her own analysis and understanding of the characters.
- She returned to St. Louis in 1884 where she continued her prolific, yet brief writing career until her death in 1904.

**Text:** Available from the Electronic Text Center of the University of Virginia  
<http://etext.virginia.edu>.

### Plot Summary

Mrs. Baroda initially dismisses the charms of her husband’s college friend and their house guest, Gouvernail, but her opinion changes, and she soon becomes uncomfortable with her growing interest in him. She flees to the city in an effort to restrain herself, but eventually resigns herself to her attraction to him. Her husband, Guston, misreads her reaction to Gouvernail and is pleased when Mrs. Baroda suggests that Gouvernail make a return visit.

### History Connections:

- Behavioral norms for women of the South at the turn-of-the century
- Ladies of Seneca Falls - women’s rights movement
  - Lucy Stone
  - Susan B. Anthony
  - Elizabeth Cady Stanton

**Literary Terms:** irony, symbolism

**Discussion Starters:**

- How does a “respectable” woman behave in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century according to Chopin’s short story?
- What indicators reveal the setting of the story and the social position of the characters?
- Explain Mrs. Baroda’s relationship with her husband based on conversations between the two and the narrator’s comments.
- To what extent does irony and/or symbolism play a role in the story? Give examples.
- The story allows the reader to imagine the outcome of the second visit of Gouvernail. In your opinion, will Mrs. Baroda act upon her feelings for Gaston? Why or why not?
- Does the author “imply” what will happen during the second visit? If yes, what is your evidence?

### Teaching Activities:

- Discuss the **women’s rights/reform movement of the later half of the nineteenth century in the South**. Label a map of the states indicating the years each state permitted female suffrage. You will want to make the following points:
  - The women’s movement was an outgrowth of the activism of women in New York and the Northeast; the movement then spread from the Midwest to the Western states and from cities to rural areas.
  - The Southern states were the last to embrace women’s rights and to organize in behalf of the women’s movement. When the South industrialized following the Civil War, working-class women were employed by textile and tobacco mills. Professional women grew out of opportunities for college-educated strata of society.
  - Social clubs formed in the 1890s were the main medium for discussing social reform issues that included child labor, temperance and suffrage.
  - The ideal Southern woman was virtuous, compassionate and charitable. Women were generally limited to managing the domestic front - home and children and to participating in church-related activities.
- Have students create a **three-part foldable for comparing the key women of the mid-to-late nineteenth century women’s rights movement**. Students can form collaborative research triads to generate the data about each woman. Choices of key women would include: **Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton**. Data you might want students to research for the foldable includes:
  - Domestic situation/relationship with husbands/fathers (i.e. Stanton reared 7 children; Stone had a daughter, Anthony was unmarried.) Did their marital/domestic (love and marriage) situation play a role in their work with the women’s movement? (i.e. Stanton’s father was a judge; she read his law books.)
  - Were they, like Chopin, women ahead of their times? In what ways?
  - What were their roles in the women’s movement? What did they accomplish? What, if any, were their failures?

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## “The Cutting of My Long Hair” and “The Snow Episode”

**Author:** Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin), 1876-1938.

- A Yankton Sioux, writer and collector of oral traditions, founder of the National Council of American Indians.
- As a child Zitkala-Sa (Red Bird) left her South Dakota reservation for White’s Manual Institute in Indiana where she was schooled. There they succeeded in cutting off her hair, and tried as well to cut her off from her family and culture.

**Text:** First printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* of 1900 and included in her book *American Indian Stories* published in 1921. Available from the Electronic Text Center of the University of Virginia <http://etext.virginia.edu>.

## Plot Summary

The author arrives at a missionary school with a group of Yankton Sioux children where she is forced to trade in soft moccasins for hard leather shoes. To avoid having her hair cut she hides under a bed but is later found, tied to a chair and shorn of her long hair. “Then I lost my spirit,” she writes. In the Snow Episode the author and her friends assert themselves and find satisfaction in taking some playful revenge against the school authorities.

## History Connections

- The history of the Sioux Nation and other Indian Nations after the Civil War.
- The effects of the **schooling of Indian children in government and missionary institutions from 1850 to 1930**, which were designed to eradicate native languages and customs as they “civilized” Indian children.
- Women in the Progressive era.

**Literary Terms:** **Memoir, symbol.**

### Discussion Starters:

- In what ways do we express ourselves through our hairstyles? Can you think of specific times in history when hair-dos took on symbolic and political significance? (Long hair and Afros in the 60s, bobs for women in the 20s)
- In Zitkala-Sa’s native culture, what did shorn or short hair symbolize?
- Why do you think the white missionaries working at the school insisted that the long hair of American Indian children be cut?
- What were the advantages and disadvantages of attending a missionary or government school for American Indian children?
- What do the terms culture shock, assimilation, forced acculturation, and multiculturalism mean in the context of this story?
- What about the author’s writing style makes you most empathetic to her plight?

### Teaching Activity: Using Photographs as Writing Prompts

Divide the class into five groups and ask each group to analyze one of the following five photographs, using the photo analysis worksheets from the Website of the National Archives at <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/01/indian/photoany.pdf>

Use the following photographs from their on-line sites:

1. Zitkala-Sa, Frontispiece for *American Indian Stories*, Washington Hayworth Publishing House, 1921. <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/zitkala-sa/stories/stories.html>
2. Image of Zitkala-Sa, 1898 on the Website of City University of New York. <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/zitkalasaimages.html>
3. Image of Zitkala-Sa, 1898 on the Website of City University of New York. <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/zitkalasaimages.html>
4. Matron Mrs. Miller with party of girls in mid-1890s at the Fort Lewis Indian Boarding School. <http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/doit/archives/Indians/Indians.htm>
5. Dakota Indian Mission School c. 1880, Denver Public Library. Image available at the Digital Classroom, American Memory <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/01/indian/journal2.html>

Ask students to share what they have learned from looking at each photograph closely.

- What conclusions can students reach about Zitkala-Sa herself? **Did she totally renounce her Sioux identity?** Did she hold fast to it without any compromises with white culture and society? Was she in any way proud of her accomplishments in terms of her adaptation to white society?
- Looking at the photographs of Indian children at a variety of boarding schools ask students to consider **who is probably taking these photographs and why?** What can we learn from these photographs about the ways the missionaries and/or teachers viewed themselves? About the variety of experiences and feelings the children probably felt? How do clothing, expression, and the posed nature of these photographs all play a role?

Ask students to assume the role of one of the teachers or students in the school photographs. Direct students to **write an account as that person** explaining who they are and what they are feeling at the very moment this photograph is being taken. Alternatively, ask students to write a letter to someone in that persona.

### Recommended Resources

- "Indian Boarding Schools: Civilizing the Native Spirit" a lesson plan from the Learning Page of American Memory, available at <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/01/indian/teacher.html>
- Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories*. Lincoln, Nebraska: Bison Books, 2003 reissue.
- Doreen Rappaport, *The Flight of Red Bird: The Life of Zitkala-Sa*, NY: Puffin Books, 1997.



## Mark Twain's Investments From *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*

**Author:** Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens), 1835-1910.

- Steamboat captain, newspaper reporter, world famous author of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, inventor and investor.
- Chronicler not only of the American West, but of the East and the Gilded Age.
- **Text:** From *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* edited by Charles Neider.

**Plot Summary:** Mark Twain recounts a series of poor investments he made on patents for a variety of new inventions, from which he lost money. Finally he recoups twenty-three thousand dollars he loaned to someone. But when Twain gets the opportunity to buy stock in yet another new-fangled invention, the telephone, he refuses. "I was the burnt child. I wanted nothing further to do with speculations."

**History Connection:**

- Free enterprise and the patent clause of the U.S. Constitution.
- The effect of steam power, electricity, telegraph, telephone and other technologies on American life.
- The Gilded Age and how the stock market works.

**Literary terms:** Irony, hyperbole, digression, figures of speech.

**Discussion Starters:**

- What new inventions and discoveries have most changed American life in your parents' lifetime? In your own?
- Suppose you invented something new and wanted to mass produce it, market it, and reap the profit of the new invention before others copied your invention. What steps would you take to do this? (Obtain a patent, start a company, issue stock, find investors, etc.)
- What clause in the U.S. Constitution provides individuals with incentive to discover new technologies? (Discuss the patent clause, Article I Section 8.)
- If you had limitless money to invest in a new patent today, what would you invest it in and why? On what basis would you make your choices?
- Suppose you lived in America during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. What new technologies would have attracted you? Did all inventions become a success?
- What do you know about Mark Twain as a writer? As an inventor? An investor? Why do you think a character in Twain's novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* says "...the very first official thing I did in my administration-and it was on the very first day of it too-was to start a patent office; for I knew that a country without a patent office and good patent laws was just a crab and couldn't travel anyway but sideways and backwards." Do you agree?

## Teaching Activity: Marketing Patents, Winning Investors for A New Invention

The ultimate success of the telephone depended upon its purchase by many other people. If only a few businesses or homeowners bought them, their use would have remained very limited. So marketing the new invention was critical to its success.

Assign each class member to research an invention that was a success in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Then ask each student make a sales pitch to potential buyers of stock in a company that will produce the new invention. The sales pitch students create can take the form of an **advertisement, news article for the business section of a newspaper, or sales talk**. The class can vote in the end on their three top choices for best sales pitch in the class.

Students should include information about

- Who patented the invention
- The purpose of the invention
- The market for the final product: who will buy it and why.
- How the product will change the way people live.

Inventions include:

Electric iron, telegraph, safety matches, microphone, typewriter, sewing machine, rotary printer, incandescent light bulb, bicycle, zipper, McCormick reaper, tin can, barbed wire, phonograph, electric dynamo, fountain pen, record player, revolving door, elevator, Kodak camera.

## Recommended Resources

Teaching With Documents: Alexander Graham Bell's Patent for the Telephone and Thomas Edison's Patent for the Electric Lamp  
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/telephone-light-patents/>

Mark Twain on PBS <http://www.pbs.org/marktwain/> and  
[http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/lesson\\_plans/lesson02.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/lesson_plans/lesson02.htm)

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## “Bananas”

**Author:** Michael Gold, 1893-1967

- Born on the Lower East Side to immigrant parents.
- Founder and editor of *The New Masses*, writer for *The Daily Worker*.

**Text:** “Bananas” is a chapter from Gold’s autobiographical novel Jews Without Money. It can be viewed on the Web at Google Books. Reissued in print in 1996 by Carroll & Graff.

### Plot Summary

In this autobiographical story, Michael Gold describes growing up in poverty on the Lower East Side of New York City at the turn of the century. Mikey’s father, formerly a house painter and owner of a suspender shop, has fallen on hard times. When a neighbor comes to help set up Mr. Gold as a push-cart peddler selling bananas, the family faces a crisis. “It is better to be dead in this country than not to have money,” says Mr. Gold.

### History Connections:

- Immigration and the Lower East Side of New York City.
- Rise of the city.
- Growth of the working class.
- Investigative journalism.

**Literary terms:** Setting, plot, characterization, inner conflict, symbol.

### Discussion Starters:

- What expectations do immigrants have when they come to this country? What do we mean by the expression, “climbing the ladder of success”?
- Do you blame Mikey’s father for his lack of success? Why or why not? Do you think he would have had greater success in America had he arrived today? Why?
- Based on your own experience or that of your friends, do you think that the children of immigrants are under a greater burden to “make it in America” than other young people?
- In the opening scene, Mikey, Mikey’s mother, father and Mr. Lipzin hold a discussion. How do we know what each one is feeling? How does the author’s use of description and dialogue tell us what the characters are feeling? What is the father’s inner conflict?
- Why do you think the father says, “It’s better to be dead in this country than not to have money”? Do you agree with him? Explain your reasons.

- Based on this story, describe the way you imagine the Lower East Side at the turn of the last century. What other sources of information help you construct your image of it?

## Teaching Activity: Investigative Journalism Web Quest

Ask students to imagine that they are investigative journalists, come to interview and photograph Mikey and his father about their lives on the Lower East Side. **Their goal is to write and “photograph” a chapter for *How the Other Half Lives* the groundbreaking work of photojournalism by Jacob Riis** (text available on line at <http://www.yale.edu/amstud/inforev/riis/contents.html>.) Photographs at “Documenting the Other Half” <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/Davis/photography/slideshows/slideshows.html>: and “Teaching With Documents. The Photographs of Lewis Hine Documentation of Child Labor” at <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hine-photos/>

Some quotations from the story that suggest companion photographs include:

- “The pot-bellied little peddler shyly fingered his beard. He had come for a purpose, but was too embarrassed to speak.”
- “...for a few dollars one buys a stock of bananas from the wholesalers on Attorney Street. Then one rents a pushcart for ten cents a day from the pushcart stables on Orchard Street. Then one finds a street corner and stands there and the people come and buy the bananas.”
- “They talked about it at the supper table, or sat by the stove in the gloomy winter afternoons, talking, talking.”
- “I managed to see all my newspapers and was coming home in the snow. It was that strange, portentous hour in downtown New York when the workers are pouring homeward in the twilight. I marched among thousands of tired men and women whom the factory whistles had unyoked. They flowed in rivers through the clothing factory districts, then down along the avenues to the East Side.”
- “I recognized him, a hunched, frozen figure in an old overcoat standing by a banana cart. He looked so lonely...”
- “The work crowds pushed home morosely over the pavements. The rusty sky darkened over New York buildings, the tall street lamps were lit, innumerable trucks, street cars and elevated trains clattered by.”
- “The workers drifted past us wearily, endlessly; a defeated army wrapped in drams of home. Elevated trains crashed...the sky grew black, the wind poured, the slush burned through our shoes. There were thousands of strange, silent figures pouring over the sidewalks in snow.”

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## Story: “Sweat”

**Author:** Zora Neale Hurston, 1891-1960

- Hurston was raised in an all-black, rural community in Eatonville, Florida; this community was the first of its kind – a racially homogeneous African-American town. Her parents were prominent members of the community – her father was a farmer, preacher and the mayor of Eatonville and her mother a teacher.
- She attended classes at Howard University and graduated from Barnard College with a degree in anthropology.
- Living in New York during the Harlem Renaissance, she won prestigious awards for her writing; she was the most prolific black writer between the years of 1920 – 1952.
- Later, she was criticized for her folksy writing style. Since she was mainly protected from racial discrimination by living in Eatonville, she does not focus her writings entirely on the theme of exploitation and oppression of southern blacks by their white neighbors. This fact angers her male Harlem counterparts – Richard Wright and Alain Locke; this rift causes her to lose prestige and eventually her livelihood. Her final years are spent in poverty working as a substitute teacher and maid in Florida.
- Alice Walker is responsible for rediscovering Hurston’s works and for returning her stature as an insightful chronicler of the lives of rural black women and the black folk culture of the South. Walker actually locates Hurston’s unmarked grave and purchases her a headstone.
- *Speak, So You Can Speak Again: the Life of Zora Neale Hurston* is a new biography written by Hurston’s niece, Lucy Anne Hurston.
- A Hurston commemorative stamp was issued in 2003.



**Text:** <http://ee.1asphost.com/shortstoryclassics/hurstonsweat.html>

### Plot Summary:

Delia Jones, a devout washerwoman, labors and “sweats” to keep her modest home and possessions by washing white folks’ laundry. Meanwhile, her abusive and cheating husband, Sykes, continues to undermine her efforts and to taunt her. Delia, no longer afraid of Sykes, raises a skillet to defend herself when he threatens to beat her. Her act of independence and escalating defiant attitude toward her husband further aggravates him, but also forces him to realize that Delia is no longer afraid of him. The couple’s relationship continues to deteriorate as he flaunts his marital indiscretions to the whole village. Knowing her intense fear of rattlesnakes, he brings one home in a box to

torment her (psychological abuse). But, fate intercedes and the tormenter becomes the tormented as the escaped snake bites Sykes. He succumbs to the poisonous bite while Delia rationalizes why she can not help him thereby, achieving a modicum of revenge.

**Literary Terms:** foreshadowing, dialect, third person omniscient narrator

### Discussion Starters:

- The story opens with hardworking Delia sorting laundry into piles, when her husband, Sykes, enters with his bull whip in hand and deliberately steps on the “whitest” pile of sorted laundry. Why does he call Delia a hypocrite? Why does he begin to verbally abuse her? How does she respond?
- Explain the role religion plays in Delia’s life. Use excerpts from the story to support your explanation.
- What **symbols of good and evil** are woven into the story?
- The entire community is aware of Sykes’s abuses of his wife, yet no one helps her. Why not? Why doesn’t Delia simply divorce Sykes?
- Delia and Sykes seem to be direct opposites. Discuss some of the ways in which the husband and wife stand on reverse ends of the spectrum.
- How do you know the Eatonville community’s views on Sykes? What are their views?
- **Describe the occasions when “whites” are mentioned in the story. What do these excerpts tell about race relations in 1926 when the story was written?**

### History Connections:

- African American life, labor and culture in the rural South
- Roles of African American women
- Harlem Renaissance writers
- Harlem Renaissance Era

### Teaching Activities:

- Hurston brilliantly chronicles the hardships of this hardworking and abused woman. The narrator’s voice is contrasted with the dialogue between characters employing a **Southern black dialect** appropriate to the time period of the story. Students may need help in translating the dialogue between the characters.
- Go to <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1993/2/93.02.10.x.html> to peruse an activity for helping students to translate the rural southern black dialect used by Hurston in her stories.
- The setting of “Sweat” is Eatonville, Florida, an all-black town in which Hurston grew up. In 1926, she published an anthology of stories about the town and its inhabitants. Assign students to read one of the Eatonville Anthology stories for a broader view of the residents. For example, one story titled “Tibby” tells about a dog owned by Sykes Jones, the husband of Delia.

- Assign a jigsaw activity using the brief vignettes about four other Harlem Renaissance writers. Students should look for similarities and differences between the writers; use the matrix for student notes.
  - Jessie Redmon Fauset
  - Paul Laurence Dunbar
  - Langston Hughes
  - Richard Wright

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## “Migrant People”

**Author:** John Steinbeck (1902-1968)

- Grew up in Salinas, California, the site of many of his novels and stories, which featured the plight of farmers and laborers during the Great Depression.
- Greatest works include *Cannery Row*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *East of Eden*, and *Of Mice and Men*.
- Winner of the 1962 Nobel Prize for Literature.

**Plot Summary:** “Migrant People” comprises Chapter 17 of Steinbeck’s masterpiece, *The Grapes of Wrath*, about the trek across the country of the Joad family, destitute Okies who lose their farm in Dustbowl Oklahoma and seek a better life in California. The Joads are exploited by everyone from bankers to rent-a-cops to fruit growers, and exemplify the noble values of the working class that persist through suffering and injustice.

“Migrant People” has been anthologized as a stand-alone piece. It starts at sundown and ends at sunrise, as the Depression families heading westward in their overloaded jalopies choose a night camp by the road, feed their families, gather together to swap news and campfire songs, and become supportive communities for just a single evening.

**History Connection:**

- Great Depression
- Oakies, Route 66

**Literary terms:** Setting, exposition, character, word choice, vernacular

**Discussion Starters:**

- **Exposition:** How does Steinbeck establish the background details for the transients? (Opening paragraph: *lonely and perplexed, they had all come from a place of sadness and worry and defeat, etc.*)
- In a swift set of details, Steinbeck brings to life the **character** of the migrants, bringing them close to the heart of the reader. Choose one example of this from the first page of the story. (*a sick child threw despair into the hearts of twenty families; a birth there in a tent kept a hundred people quiet and awestruck through the night and filled a hundred people with the birth-joy in the morning; a family which the night before had been lost and fearful might search its goods to find a present for a new baby.*)
- Pick out some of the words which best paint the picture for you of the **setting** of the camps.

- **Vernacular speech** is everyday language, with regional dialect and accent. Give examples from the story. (*How's the water? Well, she don't taste so good, but they's plenty; I ain't let to swear, but I do, anyways; Fella says to me, gov'ment fella, an' he says, she's gullied up on ya; Had a brother Charley, hair as yella as corn, an' him a growed man.*)

## Teaching Activity: “Voices from the Dustbowl”

The American Memory website of the Library of Congress contains a rich source of information about the migrants.

*Voices from the Dust Bowl: The Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Migrant Worker Collection* is an online presentation of a multi-format [ethnographic field collection](#) documenting the everyday life of residents of [Farm Security Administration](#) (FSA) migrant work camps in central California in 1940 and 1941. This collection consists of audio recordings, photographs, manuscript materials, publications, and ephemera...

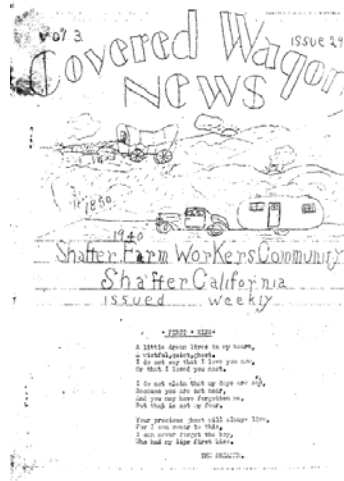
“Migrant Families” describes vividly the sights and sounds of the temporary migrant camps off the highways. After migrants like the Joads made their way to the California fruit lands, they discovered more permanent camps set up by the Farm Security Administration; these were also described in later chapters of *The Grapes of Wrath*. *Voices from the Dust Bowl* allows students to access photographs of the migrant families, and newsletters written by and for members of the FSA camps. Students can hear songs like those in Steinbeck’s haunting description of the fireside singing.

1. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/f?toddbib:0:./temp/~ammem\\_Bcod](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/f?toddbib:0:./temp/~ammem_Bcod): shows 23 pictures of migrants in the FSA camps. Choose one picture to look at carefully; one way to see details is to print out the picture and **look at just one quadrant at a time**. In this picture of children on a wooden bench, note what the children are wearing. Who has no shoes?



2. The FSA camps were organized by the migrants themselves. The newsletters they produced show communities of caring and creativity. Read a copy of the “Covered Wagon News” from the Shafter Farm Workers Community, or “The Hub” from the Visalia Migratory Labor Camp. What were the most important rules for the camps? What recreational opportunities were planned for the children and the adults?

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshtml/newslet.html>



3. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshtml/toddbibPerformers1.html#top>  
This part of the collection contains 113 songs recorded at the Farm Security Administration camps, by amateur women, children, and guitar-picking men like those in the final scene of “Migrant People.” The audio quality is excellent. Choose a few to hear. What kinds of songs did the migrants favor? Why?  
<http://memory.loc.gov/afc/afcts/audio/414/4147b1.mp3>

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## “The Shape of Things”

**Author:** Truman Capote (1924-1984)

- Following a lonely Depression era childhood in the South, he lived among jet setters for most of his life, as an alcoholic and intentionally outrageous international personality.
- Best known for the “non-fiction novel” *In Cold Blood* (1966), a genre of writing he is credited with inventing, and the novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958), which became a classic film.

**Plot Summary:** In 1944, on the diner car in a train headed north to Virginia, a well to do older lady is seated with a recently drafted young Marine and his wartime bride. They are joined by an Army Corporal who seems at first drunk but then experiences an emotional seizure. His companions at the table stab at sympathetic responses, but as he tells them, they can never understand what he has been through.

**History Connection:**

World War II:

- the fighting front vs. the home front
- Infantry front line experiences

**Literary terms:** Tone, conflict, point of view, figurative language (metaphor and simile)

**Discussion Starters:**

- What is the matter with the Corporal? What are the names for this kind of suffering? (Post traumatic stress disorder, shell shock, combat fatigue, etc)
- **Tone** is the author’s attitude toward his subject (or his reader). How do you see through word and detail the author’s attitude toward the older lady? (*In one sweep she...decided she was cheap; “You just never realize until you get on a train,” the woman shifted uncomfortably and pressed nearer the window; shaded a sensitive hand over her eyes; a trite smile; an offended tenseness.*)
- There is both **internal and external conflict** in the story. Describe these. (*external conflict: the Corporal vs. the other three at the table, who haven’t experienced combat; internal conflict: the Corporal vs. himself, in his desire to control his seizures and his feelings.*)
- Could Capote have written this story from a different **point of view**? How would it be different from the viewpoint of the Corporal himself, or of the Marine, or his wife?
- Capote’s writing is widely admired for its vivid qualities, often accomplished with **figurative language**. There are many **metaphors** and **similes** in “The Shape of Things.” Can you find them? Which are metaphors and which are similes? *“just like Boris Karloff”*

a voice like a chirping teakettle  
like a ragdoll  
like a cap of sealskin  
as though there were a screen flung between them  
*a distant burst of laughter sliced evenly through the car*  
“sorta like hiccups”  
as if she were swinging between two dream points  
channeling her thoughts  
as though he were praying  
a strong hand vise

## Teaching Activity: Internet Selections on Infantry Life in World War II

-

### 1 day

*Just 14% of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II were infantry soldiers, but they witnessed the worst of it, watching their friends die gruesomely in heavy fire, killing enemy combatants face to face, marching constantly while transporting heavy materials to maintain roads and camps on the front lines, suffering cold and snow in the northern European theater and intense heat and tropical discomforts in the South Pacific. About one out of 10 men in the infantry experienced some sort of psychological trauma. Symptoms included seizures like those of the Corporal in Capote's story, and a constellation of other ailments all the way up to suicide.*

In **jigsaw groups of four**, students will split the following tasks and report back to their groups, summarizing what they read or saw.

1. Read “**Life in the Infantry**,” three pages of short selections by ten veterans, from the website for the **Ken Burns series “The War.”** Take notes to share with the group. [http://www.pbs.org/thewar/at\\_war\\_infantry.htm](http://www.pbs.org/thewar/at_war_infantry.htm)

One citation, from infantryman Paul Fussell: *When we were marching from one horror to another, I had shoepacks on because the ground was always wet or frozen. I had two pairs of woolen socks. In my pockets. I carried probably a couple of boxes of K-rations. I had never had a toothbrush at all. I didn't take a shower for six months. No change of underwear at all. No change of clothes at all for months. And I had a sleeping bag which I carried with a rope over my shoulder like a tramp. And that's all I had.*

Warning: much of this is graphic and violent.

2. Examine **Bill Mauldin's World War II cartoons** and text at the website of the Army publication “Stars and Stripes.” Print out three you especially liked. <http://ww2.pstripes.osd.mil/02/nov02/mauldin/>

Mauldin, who described and cartooned the infantry's experiences in the well known characters “Willie and Joe,” wrote:

### *“Infantry”*

*"Dig a hole in your backyard while it is raining. Sit in the hole while the water climbs up around your ankles. Pour cold mud down your shirt collar. Sit there for forty-eight hours, and so there is no danger of your dozing off, imagine that a guy is sneaking around waiting for a chance to club you on the head or set your house on fire. Get out of the hole, fill a suitcase full of rocks, pick it up, put a shotgun in your other hand, and walk on the muddiest road you can find. Fall flat on your face every few minutes, as you imagine big meteors streaking down to sock you. If you repeat this performance every three days for several months you may begin to understand why an infantryman gets out of breath. But you still won't understand how he feels when things get tough."*



*“Now that you mention it, it does sound like th’ patter of rain on a tin roof.”*

3. Look at **“The Story in Pictures”** at the **U.S. Army website about the Normandy Invasion on D-Day**. Print out three of the photographs, and write out a timeline from the photographs of the D-Day invasion, to share with your group.

<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/reference/Normandy/Normandy.htm>

4. Read the **Battle of the Bulge summary and personal diary** of machine gun sergeant John P. Kline of the Army 106th Infantry Division, who was captured on that front and became a prisoner of war, at

<http://ice.mm.com/user/jpk/battle.htm>

Choose selections to read to your group.

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## “Ambush”

**Author:** Tim O’Brien (1947-)

- Served in Vietnam with Alpha Company, the source of the characters in his fiction about the Vietnam War.
- Wrote other volumes about Vietnam, including *Going After Cacciato*, which won the 1979 National Book Award.

**Text:** From the collection *The Things They Carried*, Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

**Plot Summary:** The author, on patrol outside the small village of My Khe in South Vietnam, lobs a grenade and kills a thin young Vietnamese carrying a rifle and picking his way in rubber sandals through the path below. Although his buddies assure him that it was a “good kill”, because the victim had to be a Viet Cong from the village, O’Brien is tormented still by the conviction that “It was not a matter of live or die. There was no real peril. Almost certainly the young man would have passed by. And it will always be that way.”

**History Connection:**

- Vietnam War
- American foreign policy/Domino Theory

**Literary terms:** Internal conflict, climax, falling action

**Discussion Starters:**

- As the story begins, the author lies in response to his 9 year old daughter’s question – no, he says, he never killed anyone when he was a soldier. He adds that he keeps writing war stories because he *did* kill people. How can writing, especially writing for an audience, help someone with this kind of guilt?
- What were the justifications **for** the United States’ intervention in the civil war in Vietnam? (A concise and clear set of the arguments for and against U.S. involvement in Vietnam can be found at: [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/con\\_vietnam.cfm](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/con_vietnam.cfm))
- What were the arguments **against** our involvement in Vietnam?
- Benjamin Franklin wrote, “There never was a good war or a bad peace.” Do you agree? What do *pacifists* believe?
- The **climax** of the story is the author’s realization that the young man’s death was unnecessary. What comprises the **falling action**? (The final sentence, as the author relives the ambush years later and lets the young man pass on the path unharmed.)
- The title has a double meaning: there is a literal ambush in the story, but also what other “ambush?” (The author’s memories stealing into his head to torture him in later years)

## Teaching Activity: A Death in Vietnam: A Classroom Debate (2 days)

1. Choose 8 debaters, four per team.
  - Allow the teams to choose their own debate roles.
  - Show them how to fill out the “We Say” and “If They Say, We Say” brainstorming grids.
2. As the debaters leave to brainstorm arguments, you can play selections from “Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam” (1987), a Hollywood movie starring Robert de Niro, Robin Williams, and Michael J. Fox. It illustrates the feelings expressed in O’Brien’s story. One of the only Vietnam films rated PG-13, it is only 86 minutes long.
3. (Note: the debate activity takes 50 minutes.) The next day, distribute and discuss the debate ballots. The debate itself takes a full 30 minutes, so be quick. As you hold the debate, you will time the participants with a stopwatch. Students need 5 minutes to mark their ballots, and you will need 5 more minutes at the end to tabulate the ballots and announce the winning team. Students will be frustrated if the winner isn’t announced!

Debate Ballot and Debaters’ Brainstorming handouts follow on the 2 next pages.

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# Classroom Debate Ballot

**“Resolved: that O’Brien is right to feel guilty about killing the young Vietnamese man from My Khe.”**

## Affirmative Team Members

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## Negative Team Members

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## Sequence of the Debate

Follow the numbers for proper order of speakers. This order balances advantage during the debate.(Compare with the order of games in a sports championship series.)

<b>Affirmative Team</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Negative Team</b>	<b>Time</b>
1. Opening Statement _____ Debater’s Name	3 min	2. Opening Statement _____ Debater’s Name	3 min
3. Rebuttal Argument _____ Debater’s Name	3 min	4. Rebuttal Argument _____ Debater’s Name	3 min
6. Question Session _____ Debater’s Name	5 min*	5. Question session _____ Debater’s Name	5 min*
7. Summary _____ Debater’s Name	3 min	8. Summary _____ Debater’s Name	3 min

\*Debater answers 4 questions, one from each member of the opposite team; if time, also answers questions from the floor.

The winning team was: (Circle one.) **AFFIRMATIVE** **NEGATIVE**

This team won the debate because: (List one argument which convinced you that this side won.)

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*When you choose the winner, consider only the evidence presented during today’s debate. Your own personal opinions about the topic must be set aside, so that you may judge only the relative strength of each team’s arguments. Needless to add, don’t vote for a team because your friend is on it.*



## “Barbie-Q” and “Eleven”

**Author:** Sandra Cisneros (1954-)

- Mexican-American, the only girl of 7 children in a family that traveled back and forth from the Chicago Chicano barrio to Mexico. She lives now in San Antonio, Texas. Her subjects are both Mexican and Chicana women.
- Recipient of many awards, including a MacArthur “genius grant.” Her work is among the most popular today in American secondary schools, especially her novel *The House on Mango Street*.

**Texts:** From the short story collection *Woman Hollering Creek*, on many Websites for download.

### Plot Summaries:

**“Barbie-Q”:** A little girl rapturously describes in detail the two Barbies with which she and her friend in the barrio play. The dolls represent everything the girls are not: blonde, grown up, wealthy, elegant. One Sunday she and her family find in a flea market many Barbie dolls and outfits that have been damaged in a fire. “So what if our Barbies smell like smoke when you hold them up to your nose even after you wash and wash and wash them?” she writes.

**“Eleven”:** On Rachel’s 11<sup>th</sup> birthday, she examines her feelings about growing up, leaving childhood while much of her childish self stays with her. Her teacher, Mrs. Price, humiliates her by insisting that a cheap and misshapen sweater left in the coat closet must be Rachel’s, and she cannot assert herself enough to deny it. The teacher ruins Rachel’s birthday and her self-image on that special day.

### History Connection:

- Second Wave Feminism, latter 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Hispanic immigration
- Stereotyping, racism

**Literary terms:** Second person narrative, voice, author vs. narrator, metaphor, simile, stereotype

### Discussion Starters:

- “Barbie-Q” is written in the **second person** (“Yours is the one with the mean eyes,” “Your Barbie is roommates with my Barbie.”) **The reader, in effect, becomes the second little girl in the barrio.** How does this affect the reader? (*intimacy, immediacy, empathy*)
- Both stories are written by an adult in a child’s voice, including grammar errors. What is the difference between the **narrator’s voice** and the **author’s message** in the stories? (*The narrator is an innocent child, trying her best to keep cheerful as she grows up in the context of poverty and racism, while the message of the stories is the cruelty innate in the new culture in which the Chicana immigrant lives.*)

- How does the teacher **stereotype** Rachel in “Eleven?” (*Poor Hispanic children have neglected clothes; they lie; they won’t look you in the face, etc.*)
- Rachel says, “Because she’s older and the teacher, she’s right and I’m not.” This and other statements show you that Rachel feels powerless. Find other examples. How does the immigrant condition add to these feelings?
- Look at the **similes** in “Eleven.” What do they have in common? (*“the way you grow old is like an onion,” “like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box,” “sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope,” “my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast.” They all grasp through the limited experience of childhood to express feelings and thoughts of pre-adolescence. Rachel is beginning to see herself and her condition in sadder, older ways.*)
- What is the central **metaphor** of “Barbie-Q?” (*Barbies=the women you should grow up to be, with elegance, material goods, the importance of looks and clothes over qualities of character, etc.*) How does a Barbie doll **stereotype** American women?
- Why have the feminists of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century targeted Barbie particularly for criticism?
- How is Barbie specifically unlike a Chicana girl in Chicago?
- **How do the toys we play with shape our worldview**, for both girls and boys? What are the messages we receive from them, when we are too little to figure these out? **What toys did you play with that affected you in this way?**

## Teaching Activity: Barbie and the Women’s Movement

1. Students should use their textbooks or websites to look up **women’s achievements in the United States** over the past 50 years. ([www.history.com](http://www.history.com), the History Channel site, has both a **Timeline of Women in History** and a section of **Firsts in Women’s Achievements**.)
2. Each student should examine **the 8 Barbie dolls on the “Barbie Worksheet”** and write in the section provided how each Barbie reflects changes for women in our society, but persists in selling an image to little girls that limits their possibilities. (Examples: Barbie is an Olympic athlete but she is a skater in sequins, not a runner in shorts, like marathoner Joan Benoit; Barbie is a doctor, but only if she is still involved as a pediatrician with children; Barbie runs for President in a low cut blouse.)
3. Students may be interested in the **“Barbie Trivia”** which follows.

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### “Barbie” Trivia

1. Barbie was invented in 1959 by Ruth Handler, co-owner of the Mattel Toy Corporation, and named for her daughter Barbara.

2. The first Barbie wore black eyeliner, pearl earrings, a zebra striped bathing suit, and stiletto high heels. Her eyes gazed (modestly) sideways.
3. The Ken doll, which appeared in 1961, was named for Handler's son Kenneth. Ken wears non-removable jockey shorts.
4. If Barbie were a real life person, her measurements would be 36-18-38.
5. Over a billion Barbies have been sold, two every second of every day.
6. Barbie is a \$1.5 billion dollar per year industry.
7. Barbie has had more than 80 careers, everything from a rock star to an astronaut.
8. Barbie runs for President on a platform of opportunities for girls, educational excellence, and animal rights. (She has had 43 pets, including dogs, cats, horses, a panda, a lion cub, and a zebra.)
9. The first international Barbie was Italian, and now 45 nationalities are represented. Barbies are sold in 150 countries.
10. The first black Barbie, named Francie, was sold in 1966.
11. Hispanic Barbie dolls were produced in 1980. "Quinceanera Teresa" was released in Mexico in 1994 to celebrate Girls' Day. Mexican Barbie wears traditional Spanish colonial costume.
12. "Summit" Barbie appeared in the 1980's to celebrate the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.
13. "Freundshcrafts" (Friendship) Barbie was sold in 1990 to commemorate the tearing down of the Berlin Wall.
14. Barbie has five sisters, Skipper, Tutti, Stacie, Kelly, and Krissy.
15. In 1997 "Share a Smile Becky" was the first handicapped member of the Barbie family. Becky sits in a moveable wheelchair.