

PAPER THREE – SHORT STORY ASSIGNMENT 3-4 pages

The short story follows the principle of “show, don’t tell” in order to make its meaning through primary evidence, rather than thesis statements that explicitly spell out the story’s intent. A successful short story, like Alice Walker’s “The Flowers,” relies on deliberate word choice, such as the use of the term “sharecropper,” in order to subtly indicate things like time period, geographical location, race, and socioeconomic status. The short story form thus allows the reader to engage with the material and to do some intellectual work in order to move from the evidence presented to its possible implications.

Though you are free to choose what you will write, you should know that you can create an amazing story from the mundane. Many students want to write for shock or about a serious or even disturbing subject—such as death, murder, incest, rape, infidelity, et cetera. These topics are not off limits or taboo, but they do not necessarily produce the best stories either. Think about small, everyday moments as well. These are the moments you live in most and thus the moments about which you have the most authority and experience to write.

I am not looking for you to produce a masterpiece. I will, however, be looking for improvements between your drafts. I will also evaluate your usage of dialogue, style of narration, development of character, and effective use of detail. Is your dialogue realistic or contrived? What type of narration do you use and what are the rhetorical strategies underlying it? Do you make your characters noteworthy, so that the reader has a reason to empathize with or care about your protagonist or antagonist? Do you write close, vivid scenes packed with details? Finally, is the scope of your story’s plot appropriate for the length of our assignment?

The Purpose: I want you to use this essay to develop an understanding of how to utilize evidentiary support in your writing. In accordance with the conventions of the short story, this assignment requires you to use evidence to illustrate your points, rather than thesis sentences to state them outright. We will model the ways in which readers can draw inferences from the information you present and consider whether the evidence you have used in past essays has worked successfully to support your intended conclusions. The skills you will practice in writing your short story--the use of primary evidence and the intentional selection of words--will relate directly to the writing of a strongly and clearly supported argument in your other classes.