

# The Short Story; “Mama and the Garfield Boys”

Read the introduction to Unit 1: “The Short Story—for the Christ-Filled Life” (pp. 1, 2).

Write the four main elements of a short story.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Find each word in the story “Mama and the Garfield Boys.” Look at how it is used and write the letter of the best definition.

- |                  |                   |                   |                                   |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2. ___ suspended | a. surprised      | b. reprimanded    | c. temporarily denied a privilege |
| 3. ___ headlock  | a. wrestling hold | b. skull fracture | c. security measure               |
| 4. ___ groveling | a. complaining    | b. digging        | c. humbly pleading                |
| 5. ___ pummel    | a. to ridicule    | b. to beat        | c. to question                    |
| 6. ___ profound  | a. humorous       | b. famous         | c. deep                           |
| 7. ___ beck      | a. summons        | b. front porch    | c. nuisance                       |

Read “Mama and the Garfield Boys” (pp. 3-6).

Write the author’s name.

8. \_\_\_\_\_

Write the letter of the best answer.

9. \_\_\_ Suspension was not an effective punishment for the Garfields because
- Mr. Killingsworth did not care about them.
  - they had been suspended so often before.
  - they enjoyed missing school.
  - they were beyond hope of correction.
10. \_\_\_ The son did not want his mother to know Frankie had flipped his bike because
- he was embarrassed at his own weakness.
  - she would scold him for not getting away from Frankie.
  - he loved Frankie and did not want him to get into trouble.
  - he feared Frankie would beat him up worse if he told her.
11. \_\_\_ Mama took her son to the park with the Garfields because she
- hoped to help mend their relationship.
  - wanted to reward her son.
  - wanted to punish the Garfields.
  - did not trust the Garfields alone.

## Worksheet 1

12. \_\_\_ In the car on the way to the park, the main character's response was one of
- excitement and anticipation.
  - wholehearted forgiveness and unconditional love.
  - surprise at the Garfields' response but continued fear.
  - hatred for the Garfields and bitterness toward his mom.
13. \_\_\_ Mama was successful with children because she
- scolded them and made them apologize.
  - loved them but was firm with them.
  - gave them money and good times.
  - taught them to speak politely and dress neatly.
14. \_\_\_ *"You've been down that path hundreds of times. Now you tell me what really happened."*  
Mama meant her son
- had tried to fool her hundreds of times before.
  - had often come home beat up by someone.
  - knew the bicycle path too well to simply fall into the ditch.
  - was a daredevil who could not be trusted.
15. \_\_\_ *Me going to the park with the Garfields? Me, alone with them in a tree-shadowed park?*  
The boy is
- astounded that his mother is allowing him to do this.
  - pleased at the prospect of fun in the park.
  - shocked at his mother's suggestion and terrified of the Garfields.
  - asking his mother to repeat what she said because of his damaged hearing.
16. Write a sentence giving the author's name and one detail about his life that shows why he would understand something about the home life of boys like the Garfields.

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*Theme – the main principle or lesson a story teaches*

In most stories, the theme is not stated. Rather, you will find hints in the title, at the beginning, and especially at the end when the conflict has climaxed.

**Read “Looking for Literary Technique” on page 9 of your text.**

**Read this short story.**

I was the smartest student in physics class. Report cards don't lie, and neither do test scores. I worked harder, too; every detail of homework was treated with care. Of course, as some people were quick to point out, anyone can do well who only comes to school for one class. Well, excuse me—just because I homeschooled for the rest of my classes didn't mean I didn't work hard.

So, it was the natural choice for me to write the numbers in my notebook for our group's laboratory work. Besides the fact that I was the most intelligent, I would put more time into the numbers and they would be without error; our whole group would get a good grade. With confidence, I crunched the numbers at home and brought them back to school the next day with the answer: 1.9 grams. Since it was supposed to be the weight of an object we had worked with, I thought it was perhaps a bit small. However, I had done the math impeccably, and had no fear of being the spokesperson.

The other group went first. Mr. Schmidt asked for their number. Matt, my rival in intelligence (though not quite on my level) said, “42.2 grams.” Mr. Schmidt set their object on the scale and we watched the numbers come up in disbelief: 42.2 grams. They hit it to the nearest tenth of a gram! Next, Mr. Schmidt asked for ours, and I gave him my number, but with less confidence than before. Ours was smaller, but not that much smaller.

With a click, Mr. Schmidt dropped the metal on the scale. The bold, red letters (that I was to see for weeks in nightmares) flashed the number: 20.7 grams. We weren't even within 15 grams! I looked in horror at my lab partners, most of whom hadn't bothered with the calculations at all. Liz had, but her number wasn't quite right either. Then I discovered a decimal place error in one of the numbers I had first written. If I had just written that number right (how much intelligence does writing a number take?) we would have been at a much more respectable 19-something, only a gram or so off.

Why hadn't I let someone else do the writing instead of pushing my way in! What a bitter pill to swallow! But it was strong medicine, that pill, for the battle against my disease of superiority, and I never will forget it.

## Worksheet 2

### Write the letter of the answer.

1. \_\_\_ Which sentence best states the theme of this story?
  - a. It pays to stick to your work.
  - b. Pride goes before a fall.
  - c. When you count your blessings, you realize you are rich.
  - d. It is more blessed to give than to receive.
  
2. \_\_\_ Which sentence best states the theme of "Mama and the Garfield Boys"?
  - a. Children whose father is dead will be bullies.
  - b. Pride goes before a fall.
  - c. Love is the best way to overcome an enemy.
  - d. Spending time with an enemy can help you not fear him as much.
  
3. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ The theme often is not stated directly. Rather, you will likely find hints of it
  - a. in the title.
  - b. at the beginning.
  - c. in the middle.
  - d. especially in the title.
  - e. especially at the beginning.
  - f. especially at the end.

### Write the definition for *theme*.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

## Creative Writing

At the end of our study of stories, you will be asked to produce a carefully planned and well-written short story. This story will be due at the end of your study of the short story unit. In the next several lessons you will practice by writing six small pieces, focusing on different literary techniques.

### Write a story.

5. On other paper, write a story of a few paragraphs to illustrate one of the themes in No. 1. Do not state the theme; instead, show it by your story. The story may be true or imaginary. Give your paper to your teacher.

Find each word in the story. Look at how it is used and write the letter of the best definition.

- |                   |                 |                   |              |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. ___ gait       | a. movement     | b. walking manner | c. gesture   |
| 2. ___ reticent   | a. reserved     | b. sullen         | c. curious   |
| 3. ___ engrossing | a. easy         | b. difficult      | c. absorbing |
| 4. ___ deter      | a. hold back    | b. keep up with   | c. sicken    |
| 5. ___ garish     | a. expensive    | b. soft           | c. glaring   |
| 6. ___ august     | a. grouchy      | b. dignified      | c. sunny     |
| 7. ___ cobbled    | a. made roughly | b. pasted         | c. spoiled   |

Read "The Horse" (pp. 11-17).

Write the author's name.

8. "About the Author" says she homesteaded with her husband on a South Dakota Indian Reservation for two years. Likely she lived there at the same time Laura Ingalls Wilder did.

\_\_\_\_\_

Write the letter of the best answer.

9. \_\_\_ The thing about Martha that other students seemed to poke fun at the most was her  
a. country ways.      b. shyness.      c. intelligence.      d. appearance.
10. \_\_\_ Martha believed the students responded to her as they did because  
a. their background was different.  
b. they envied her intelligence.  
c. they could not associate with people from the country.  
d. she made them feel bad for not working hard.
11. \_\_\_ The difference between Martha and the other students in their schoolwork was mostly a matter of  
a. where they had gone to grade school.      c. how hard they tried.  
b. what classes they took.      d. how smart they were.
12. \_\_\_ Martha's attitude toward the other students was mostly  
a. jealousy.      b. complete awe.      c. mixed admiration.      d. deliberate hatred.
13. \_\_\_ "There's no beating that horse-girl," said David Conroy, who had always stood at the head of his class before. David's attitude in this statement was mostly  
a. grudging admiration.      b. spite.      c. jealousy.      d. ridicule.

## Worksheet 3

14. \_\_\_ *The dream of her heart was being realized. Two years, besides this, would give her her diploma and a chance to teach the Sageville School.*

Martha was planning to finish high school in

- a. two years.                      b. three years.                      c. four years.                      d. half the usual time.
15. \_\_\_ *Naomi had asked her, as a personal favor, to do this. It was a symbol of friendship.*  
This statement is ironic because
- a. one kind act does not mean someone wants to be friends.  
b. the request was a symbol of cruelty, not kindness.  
c. Naomi did not ask it personally.  
d. the request had been more of a command than a request.
16. \_\_\_ Ruth Bradford believed it was mean to
- a. know something someone else didn't know.  
b. take advantage of someone's intelligence.  
c. secretly plan a mean joke on someone.  
d. make someone read their own poetry out loud.
17. \_\_\_ When the Literary Society burst into wild applause, they were
- a. just clapping like always.                      c. giving Martha the recognition she deserved.  
b. really making fun of Martha.                      d. being courteous to Martha.
18. \_\_\_ According to Proverbs 17:5, the person who mocks another is actually
- a. mocking that person's parents.                      c. doing nothing wrong.  
b. mocking his Maker: God.                      d. breaking the Old Testament Law.
19. \_\_\_ *Oh, Youth is cruel.* The author means by this statement that youth
- a. often focus more on their own fun than on the feelings of others.  
b. are proud and look down on each other.  
c. do not like having friendships.  
d. purposely try to hurt others.
20. \_\_\_ Which best states the theme of the story?
- a. Good looks are not always accompanied by diligence and kindness.  
b. Lives can be permanently scarred by the thoughtless cruelty of others.  
c. Boys may be able handle social rejection better than girls.  
d. People who don't consider others' feelings will often hurt them without knowing it.