INTRODUCTION

Despite a distinguished, ancient lineage, that includes Aesop's *Fables*, the tales of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the Scottish Ballads, the *Arabian Nights*, Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the short story is a relative newcomer as a major, independent literary genre. It evolved as such in the nineteenth century in America, France and Russia, pioneered by Edgar Allan Poe, cultivated by his disciple, Guy de Maupassant, and extended by Anton Chekhov. In Scotland (and the rest of Britain) its early popularity was associated with the rise of literary periodicals such as *Blackwood's Magazine* and *The Edinburgh Review*, which often included short, free-standing pieces of fiction, or tales, that were subsequently published as collections.

The dominant literary form of the nineteenth century was the novel, and the short story shares its basic components of plot, character and narrative point of view. Indeed, in the early twentieth century many of the best writers of short stories, such as Joseph Conrad, Henry James, James Joyce and D H Lawrence, were primarily novelists. As early as 1842, however, Poe had argued that the short story was not only demonstrably different from the novel, but also potentially its artistic superior: its brevity, he contended, allowed it to achieve a 'unity of effect' normally denied the novel, and which may elevate the short story to 'the loftiest region of art'. He further maintained that all other aspects of the short story, such as style, plot and structure, should be conceived within the context of, and as subsidiary to, this 'one pre-established design'. In so defining the prerequisites for the genre, he signalled a clear refinement to the earlier tradition of straightforward tale and anecdote. Several of his stories also illustrate how well fitted the form is to exploring the inner workings of the mind, and by this example he established a lasting foundation upon which later writers would build.

Thus Poe's theory and practice were influential in establishing and popularising the short story, particularly in America, where it thrived in a myriad of commercial publications. Over time, however, there was an evident stultifying effect, as substance was subordinated to technique (and profitability!), and stories became increasingly formulaic and predictable. At the turn of the century the translation into English of the short stories of Chekhov served to signpost a range of new possibilities, no less demanding than those posited by Poe. Chekhov (almost an exact contemporary of R L Stevenson) shared Poe's view that nothing should be included that does not contribute to the general effect, or design of

the story. But in Chekhov's impressionistic style, the structure itself reflects the thoughts, actions and exchanges of the characters, and significance emerges from the seemingly slight or trivial (as it does in what James Joyce called an 'epiphany'). The influence of Chekhov on those who followed can scarcely be overestimated.

The modern short story continues to display the main marks of its recent ancestry in its economy of style, tightness of texture, coherence of tone and unity of impression. As it evolves, however, it also shows increasing diversity, as writers experiment in their quest to harmonise their expression of meaning with new, but appropriate forms. The novelist and critic Malcolm Bradbury highlighted this trend:

> *In the short story, as in the novel, it grows harder to suppose that there is a single, or clear-cut tradition, just as it does to deny that the short story is serving us as a supremely artful form and a field of fictional experiment.*
> (Introduction to *The Penguin Book of Modern British Short Stories*, 1988)

Bradbury also identifies a widely acknowledged characteristic of the modern short story in his description of it as 'the lyric poem of modern fictional prose' (ibid.), implying not merely its concentrated nature but also its allusive and symbolic power. The comparison with lyric poetry further suggests what many commentators have insisted, that a good short story should have a 'depth' or 'complexity' that can stand up to repeated re-reading.

It follows that the short story's demands on the reader are different from those of the novel: it requires the kind of alert attentiveness that is appropriate to the reading of a poem. As the critic Harold Bloom puts it:

> *Short stories favour the tacit; they compel the reader to be active, and to discern explanations the writer avoids. The reader…must slow down, quite deliberately, and start listening with the inner ear…*
> (from *How to Read and Why*, 2000)

Carl MacDougall points out in his Introduction to *The Devil and the Giro* that '...imaginative prose was well established in Scotland when Balzac was writing in France, and Edgar Allan Poe and Washington Irving were laying the foundations of American prose literature'. It is worth remembering that the stories in *The Devil and the Giro* by Scott, Galt and Hogg all pre-date the work of Poe. MacDougall traces the genesis of Scottish fiction to 'the oral traditions of the highlands and islands, or to

the great border ballads', and shows how this tradition continues to inform short story writing in the prevalence of 'the spoken voice and the power of first person narration'. Whether such a pattern is peculiar to Scotland is open to debate. MacDougall, however, goes on to identify what he sees as a number of distinctive characteristics and recurring themes of the Scottish short story. These include the 'archetypal twinning of opposites when the ordinary rubs shoulders with the fantastic' (from which his selection draws its title), black humour, the supernatural, and a preoccupation with aspects of Scottish identity; these features will repay close consideration. We would only add that the stories in *The Devil and the Giro* show the range and diversity that now typify the genre.

There are two main approaches to the close analysis of text: the 'top down' approach, where you start with a broad analysis and work in towards the detail, and the 'bottom up' approach, where you work out from a detailed analysis towards the wider picture. The two strategies are complementary, and both are used in the Support Notes that follow. These Notes are organised into Sections on different aspects of the short story: structure and point of view, characterisation, setting, theme and language. Of necessity, each Section restricts itself to the treatment of a small sample of stories from the anthology. The selected stories are considered individually, and in comparison with others.

You may use the Support Notes to explore in depth a particular aspect, such as characterisation or theme. However, the cross-referencing between Sections suggests that you will gain more by systematically working your way through them. Although this method may seem artificial and exclusive, it should help to familiarise you with the principal features of the genre; sharpen your critical faculties; extend (and refine) your enjoyment from your reading; and, ultimately, through the insights gained into the writers' craft, improve your own writing and crafting in a variety of genres.

To these ends, associated Activities are incorporated into each Section, and a range of Additional assignments is provided in Appendix 1. A selection of views of writers and critics on the nature and essence of the short story is offered in Appendix 2, while Appendix 3 comprises a Glossary of relevant critical terms.

Stories discussed

Boyd, William	'Not Yet, Jayette'
Davie, Elspeth	'Sunday Class'
Frame, Ronald	'Paris'
Gaitens, Edward	'The Sailing Ship'
Gibbon, Lewis Grassic	'Clay'
Kelman, James	'Not not while the giro'
Kesson, Jessie	'Until Such Times'
Leonard, Tom	'Honest'
McLellan, Robert	'The Cat'
Oliphant, Margaret	'The Library Window'
Spark, Muriel	'The Black Madonna'
Spence, Alan	'Tinsel'
Williamson, Duncan	'Death in a Nut'

SECTION 1

At its simplest level, the term 'structure', in relation to the short story, means its 'shape' or 'organisation' – the way in which the story is built. Conventional wisdom dictates that the accepted structure should be based on a distinct beginning, middle and end. This pattern may be clearly observed, for example, in Robert McLellan's 'The Cat', and Duncan Williamson's 'Death in a Nut'. However, as the short story has evolved, so has its structure become more complex and less predictable. Aspects such as point of view, theme and characterisation are increasingly interfused with, and contingent upon, the structure, so that each element interacts with, and helps to shape the others. Common to all structures is the element of conflict, without which there would be no story.

The structure of a story is often a marker of its genre. 'Death in a Nut' by Duncan Williamson has the structural markers of folklore, the oral tradition, the fairy tale, mythology – all of which are related. In this case, structure and theme are closely interwoven. As readers, we quickly recognise the familiar pattern and ritual of *Once upon a time there lived an old woman and her son* (although these are not the exact words). We can readily guess that something will happen to disrupt the predictable pattern of the lives of these two people. Unable to accept his mother's impending death, Jack walks along the shore and meets Death. Jack tries to impose his will on events; the consequences are dire; he learns that there is a purpose and a shape to life (and death) which he should not attempt to subvert. He is tested; he is not found wanting; order is finally restored once again.

The story ends on a positive note: Jack has grown up – he has learned one of life's lessons. Although the structure does not tell the tale, it does prepare the reader to connect to the narrative and the theme. Further structural markers of folk tale are to be found in the story's links to oral tradition and the use of the refrain-like repetition of language and incident:

> *…he beat him an he weltit him an he weltit him an he beat him an he weltit him.* (p447)

> *An the Auld Man got angrier an angrier an angrier an ugly-luikin…* (p446)

An it bubbled an bubbled an bubbled an bubbled an bubbled, an bubbled... (p449)

The eggs that do not break; the vegetables that will not be cut; the cockerel that cannot be killed...

And structurally, it is appropriate that, after miles and days of searching, Jack finds the nut right in front of his mother's house, where the story started. Full circle – but now Jack is enlightened.

William Boyd's story 'Not Yet, Jayette' exemplifies a tightness and subtlety of structure that repays close analysis. Written in the present tense, and in the form of a first person monologue, the story outlines Charlie's life – both in its immediate daily form (*I'm just telling you so's you know my day is for real*) and in the longer view of his past, present and likely future.

Through clear temporal markers, Boyd alerts us to the habitual and ritual aspects of Charlie's day:

Most mornings, early... (p702)

There's a café...where I eat breakfast. (p702)

After breakfast... (p704)

I usually park... (p704)

Lunch is bad. The worst part of the day for me because... (p704)

I always get depressed after lunch. (p705)

In the late afternoon... (p706)

Afternoons are quiet... (p706)

After work... (p707)

So I go down to the end of the pier most nights... (p707)

Well, tonight... (p708)

This narrative strand is punctuated by episodes of cumulative loss and failure in Charlie's life and career, as he continues to wait for the break that never comes:

> *...down to the beach at Santa Monica to try and meet Christopher Isherwood.* (p702)

> *...I like to think I'm going to have a luncheon date with...someone like Grace Kelly – as was...* (p705)

The episodes of loss are almost asides in the monologue and Charlie appears to link them to places rather than to himself:

> *...until my mother stuffed her face with a gross of Seconal one afternoon in a motel at Corona del Mar.* (p705)

> *The Santa Monica pier is...the last place I saw my wife and son.* (p707)

> *The pier brings back all these memories...things haven't been so good lately. On Friday Frank told me not to bother showing up at the hotel next week...* (p708)

But even as he appears to falter between hope, fantasy and reality, he also shows a kind of acceptance of his lot, and of the inevitability of what lies in store:

> *'Hi there, Charlie. Lucked-out yet?' I just smile and say 'Not yet, Jayette.'* (p703)

> *I could meet little Charlie on the beach today and say 'Look, there goes a sharp kid.' And never recognise him...It's a shame.* (p704)

Boyd then goes on to tease out Charlie's lack of success in the present and future by focusing our attention on the emptiness of his creative ambitions; empty, because they will never be realised. Charlie's idea for a screenplay is founded on the pedestrian sign 'Walk. Don't Walk.' He sees this as a metaphor for life, *for the whole can of worms* (p706). But his vision of the play is built around the final scene – *I'm having some difficulty writing my way towards it* (p706). For the reader, the irony is evident.

Structurally, Charlie's ambitions to write a screenplay are foreshadowed at the outset by the reference to the writer Christopher Isherwood, whom he hopes to meet on the beach (writer to writer?) and who, he

almost persuades himself, is the questioning stranger he encounters at the end of the story. Typically, however, he misses the perfect opportunity to speak to him. Another loss.

Boyd's choice of first person monologue is an artistically appropriate medium for the story. By its very form, monologue defines a point of view: in this case, Charlie's. In interpreting a monologue we need to be alert to the possibility of an 'unreliable narrator', and to be ready to recognise narrative and nuance that is not intended by the teller. As D H Lawrence said, 'Trust the tale' (as opposed to the teller). We get a view of Charlie's inner world of hope, fantasy and reality and are conscious of a poignant gap between how he sees things and how they are. Through careful reading we come to understand the character well enough to sift the impressionistic collage of his day as he relates it, and to see the sad life that underlies his narrative. And that is the final and sad irony: that Charlie gives the reader more understanding of Charlie than he has of himself.

James Kelman's story 'Not not while the giro' is a monologue of a very different kind. While Charlie often reveals more than he understands himself, the persona in Kelman's monologue appears to give us nothing that he does not fully intend to reveal. This is a kind of interior monologue – but so far inside the character's thought processes that we have to work hard to find a way in – and out. This form of writing is sometimes referred to as 'stream of consciousness', as the writer attempts to convey the texture of a character's innermost thought processes in all their complexity and randomness. At its most extreme, this style may have no reporting verbs (e.g. 'said', 'replied') or quotation marks; sentences may be short, elliptical; the topic may change abruptly. It can seem as though the mind of the character is in free fall. While Kelman's story carries many of these markers, we should also recognise that it is very carefully, and visibly, crafted: in punctuation, in layout, in language, and in narrative.

A short story in the form of a monologue gives us a direct line to some aspects of the character of the persona, but that is not necessarily the author's main purpose. Sometimes the transparency of the persona in a monologue acts as a window to allow us access not only to the narrative itself, but also to some understanding of the other characters in an oblique and often ironic way.

Jessie Kesson's short story 'Until Such Times' is in the form of the inner monologue of a young child. A close look at even a small part of the monologue reveals much about the author's technique. Here is an extract from early in the story:

> *But you weren't here to stay forever! Your Aunt Ailsa had promised you that. You was only here to stay… 'Until Such Times', Aunt Ailsa had said on the day she took you to Grandmother's house…'Until Such Times as I can find a proper place for you and me to bide. For you should be at school. But the authorities would just go clean mad if they found out they had a scholar who lived in a Corporation lodging house. And spent most of her time in the Corporation stables. Sat between the two dust cart horses! SO You are going to school. And biding with Grandmother…Until such Times…' You could never tell when Until Such Times had passed. But you began to recognise its passing. With Grandmother bringing each week to an end, always on the scold, on Sunday mornings.* (p548)

On a cognitive level, we recognise that the inner monologue is that of a young child for whom time is neither clear nor easily measured. The most striking and interesting aspect of the narrative style of the monologue, however, lies in the use of the second person 'you' for the child's voice. 'I' would have created a much more self-conscious tone, of someone older and alert to the art of the telling. The use of 'you' establishes a complete lack of artifice in the child's narrative.

Other features that add a childlike quality to the story are: the grammar of the child's own language (*You was only here to stay…*); and her ability to repeat the words and phrases of the adults around her (in this extract, Aunt Ailsa) to make real her story (*the authorities… scholar… Corporation lodging house…*).

The child also has an ear for the drama of other people's utterances (again, in this extract, Aunt Ailsa's) in her quoted *'Until Such Times'* and its repetition, always with the capital letters, indicating the importance the child gives to the phrase. The emphasis on *SO* allows us to hear the adult emphasis she is recreating from the occasion on which it was said.

What does the child's point of view add to the story? There is the instinctive view of the adult world, with its honesty of observation, bringing touches of humour – but there is also the ignorance of the adult world and the 'whole' picture. For example, she might not realise who Aunt Ailsa really is but she knows *She'd* never *marry a man with a wooden leg!* (p556). So while we can share in the innocence and honesty of the child's view, we are also alert to the ironies of a 'partial' vision, and can relish the tragi-comedy of the ending. In addition, we are able to 'see' Grandmother and the Invalid Aunt in ways that they themselves are not aware of, and cannot control. And we are able, through the 'window' of the child's viewpoint, to see the different

narratives of the adults, as well as that of the child who is waiting, *'Until Such Times'*.

'Tinsel' by Alan Spence is also told from a child's point of view. In this story the third person narrative conveys only the child's point of view.

Here is a paragraph from the story, annotated with a diagrammatic approach to textual analysis. Try using this model as the basis for your own close reading of other excerpts.

He had to walk very quickly, sometimes trotting, to keep up with the pram. The snow under his feet made noises like a catspurr at every step. The pramwheels creaked. In the pram was a tub full of damp washing which was already starting to stiffen in the cold. It was the same [pram] he'd been carried in when he was a baby. His mother's two other babies had been carried in it too. They would have been his [big brothers] but they'd both died. They would be in Heaven. He wondered if they were older than him now or if they were still babies. He was six years and two weeks old. His wellington boots were folded down at the top like pirate boots. His socks didn't reach up quite far enough and the rims of the boots had rubbed red stinging chafe-marks round his legs (pp194–5).

the choices of verbs and verbal phrases of motion suggest that he is very young

the narrative belongs to the child since everything is filtered through his perception and understanding of life

the repetition of the pronoun and possessive pronoun give clear indication of point of view

the sensory detail is observed from the child's point of view

the similes carry images that suggest a child's thinking

the 'leap' from his brothers ages to the specificity of his own is entirely in keeping with his very young age, which is reinforced by further sensory detail identifying his present discomfort

The above approach to analysis helps to identify linguistic clusters and can thus give a solid basis of textual evidence to our responses. In the example, the notes focus primarily on point of view. But we might also record, for example, that the extract has a number of short, simple sentences (invoking a child's thinking). These sentences take us swiftly through the child's sensory perceptions and reflections. There is the walk in the cold and the snow, with the creaking pram full of washing, leading to the realisation that it is the same pram that carried not only him as a baby, but also his two brothers, who are now dead. Thinking about them in Heaven and wondering what age they are now, brings him back to the matter of his own age, the present, and the discomfort of the chafing wellington boots. These thought processes also convey changes in tone, becoming almost wistful when he is thinking about his brothers, and back to the reality of his own cold and discomfort.

Often a third person narrative style is weighted towards the authorial voice and point of view. While the story in Grassic Gibbon's 'Clay' belongs to Rob Galt, it is not told from his point of view. In the first paragraph the authorial voice, the omniscient narrator, establishes the mood of the story:

> *...and spit in the vulgar way that they had: the average Galt knew less of politeness than a broody hen knows of Bible exegesis.* (p670)

In short-lived contrast, Rob Galt of Drumbogs is described as *lightsome and hearty, not mean like the rest...* (p671) But as the story unfolds Grassic Gibbon reveals the effect of clay on Rob Galt.

In Elspeth Davie's story 'Sunday Class' the author draws us straight into the story by her use of the present tense; she invites us to see and hear the Sunday class as it takes place:

> *This semicircle crouched around the teacher are dead on time with their answers.* (p29)

There is further evidence of the omniscient narrator in Davie's comments:

> *There is reason to be grateful for the swinge and whack of the monstrous, scaly tails in this stifling hall.* (p30)
>
> *Today there are mixed feelings about her. ...All the same some of them feel for her in their hearts...* (p31)

Activities

1. Briefly analyse the relationship between structure and theme in 'Not Yet, Jayette'. You may choose to write in note form. In order to do this activity you need:

   - to identify what you consider to be the main theme
   - to trace the development of the theme
   - to look carefully at the few (and very short) pieces of dialogue (and other brief utterances), considering how these are linked to theme and how they act as structural markers.

2. Having read Boyd's story closely, read another monologue, Kelman's 'Not not while the giro'. Write brief notes in response to the following questions:

   - What marked differences do you find between the two monologues?
   - Why do you think each author chose the monologue form for his story?
   - What do you think is achieved by the monologue form that could not have been achieved by a third person narrative (perhaps with differing points of view)?

3. Briefly analyse the relationship between structure and theme in the story 'Death in a Nut'. Once again, you may choose to write in note form. You should pay close attention to the language of the tale.

4. Write notes on 'Clay' and 'Sunday Class' identifying, for each, the advantages of the narrative viewpoint chosen by the author.

SECTION 2

There are three main ways in which an author can develop character. The first, and most direct, is by *telling* the reader about the character through straightforward description from the standpoint of an omniscient narrator. The second is by *showing* us how the character talks, behaves and responds in a variety of circumstances, and how other characters respond to him/her. The third is by giving us direct, and perhaps sustained access to the character's own thought processes. This method may be presented as an interior monologue, or as a 'stream of consciousness'.

In Muriel Spark's 'The Black Madonna', the author establishes the characters of Raymond and Lou Parker early in the story. The paragraph in the middle of page 600 gives layers of authorial information about them. Their possessions and their behaviour are clear pointers to their characters and values:

> *…among the few tenants… who owned a motor car…*
>
> *…did not… have a television receiver…*
>
> *…expand themselves in the way of taste, so that their habits differed slightly and their amusements considerably, from those of their neighbours.*
>
> *…went to the pictures only when* The Observer *had praised the film; they considered television not their sort of thing; they adhered to their religion; they voted Labour; they believed that the twentieth century was the best so far; they assented to the doctrine of original sin; they frequently applied the word 'Victorian' to ideas and people they did not like…*
>
> *They read two books apiece each week. Raymond preferred travel books; Lou liked novels.*

At this stage in the story our view of the Parkers has been entirely 'determined' by the author. As the story unfolds, we are in a better position to understand Lou and Raymond 'for ourselves' (always given that the author is ultimately in control of the process).

After the birth of the baby there is a distinct change in the characters of Lou and Raymond. We are given hints during the pregnancy:

'Do you miss the niggers?' said Tina Farrell, and Lou forgot to correct her. (p611)

Raymond…applied for promotion and got it… (p611)

…next summer, after the baby was born, when they would put down the money for a house. (p611)

He thought, Lou's slipping, she didn't used to say that word, fancy. (p612)

And, of course, there is a change in their attitudes to Elizabeth – both in the withdrawal of the £1 allowance, and in the clear condemnation of her sex life (particularly in relation to 'calling herself a Catholic').

After the birth the shock of the new reality seems to reveal two entirely different people. This time Spark does not tell us what Raymond and Lou have become, but shows us mainly through dialogue and inner voice.

'Look here, you just take that name Parker off that child's neck. The name's not Parker, it isn't my child.' (p614)

…when he thought of the tiny black hands of the baby with their pink fingernails he did not regret smashing the cot. (p615)

'Write and ask your relations if there's been any black blood in the family.' (p615)

'Write and ask yours,*' she said.* (p615)

'You don't know what I'm suffering,' Lou said. (p615)

'I can't go against my nature,' said Lou. (p615)

'Oh, shut up,' she said. 'The baby's black and your blood tests can't make it white.' (p615)

'I can't take to the child. Try as I do, I simply can't even like it.'
'Nor me,' said Raymond. (p617)

We are almost shocked to remember that this is the same couple who offered friendship to the two black men who came to work in Raymond's department; a friendship that extended to inviting one of them to go on holiday with them. And yet, the author also manages to make us feel

some kind of sympathy for the Parkers' shame and dismay, because her characterisation has made clear how their lack of independent intellect restricts them. Finally, we come to appreciate that the title carries new resonance.

When reading this story you should ask yourself how you respond to the Parkers, and how the author has determined your responses. (As has been suggested in this Section, your response is likely to be influenced both by what the author *tells* you about the characters, and by what she *shows*.)

In the story 'Paris', Ronald Frame uses a number of techniques to create the characters of the two women. His principal method is one of comparison, with its hints of contrast. The very first sentence alerts us to this comparative technique:

> *Miss Caldwell was the smarter of the pair.*

This is followed in the second paragraph by:

> *Miss McLeod wasn't so meticulous in her appearance…*

Like Muriel Spark, Frame introduces us to the characters by both *telling* and *showing*. There are indications of the women's behaviour, dress, speech, occupations, homes, aspirations, appearance, and past. In almost every instance, the information is slipped to us unobtrusively: a comparison or hint here, a brief utterance or confession there. The intriguing aspect of Frame's characterisation in 'Paris' is that, having carefully established the differences between the two women, he leads us to see their similarities.

> *With a gracious wave of her hand and in a throaty voice Miss Caldwell had invited the quietly spoken, bespectacled, beanpole… to join her...* (p628)

> *…Miss Caldwell watched television, Miss McLeod listened to the radio; Miss Caldwell read the* Glasgow Herald*, Miss McLeod the London* Telegraph*.* (p628)

> *'I'd love to go!' exclaimed Miss Caldwell in her pan-loaf front-of-shop vowels, 'wouldn't you?' Miss McLeod nodded and replied in her more sedate Kelvinside teaching voice…* (p629)

> *Miss Caldwell walked with majestic slowness and the semblance of keen attention… Miss McLeod screwed up her eyes behind her spectacles and memorised the artists' names on the plaques for later reference.* (p632)

> *In one sense the two ladies knew they weren't so very different… They were both unhappily… aware of what was happening to them: that they were becoming afraid of real life… They never spoke of their shared fate… tried to appear content with the ritual… continuing from week to week to week to steer the same wary circle around each other… working on instincts… each to preserve her own secrets, the little white lies.* (p630)

Although their taste in art varies, their absorption with Paris and the pipe dream of visiting the city are apparently shared. Their 'little white lies' extend to hints of lost loves, through betrayal or death. Their two shared mornings a week come to be spent in the tea-room in the Art Galleries; later, they venture beyond, to the frightening world of 'reality' in the cinema. Finally, they 'share', in the lonely isolation of each, the genuine harshness of a terrible winter in Glasgow, without money and without heat. Through the symbol of the £500 legacy the author further reinforces character. We remember that

> *…Miss McLeod felt that being seen to be 'careful' with her funds gave her a sort of moral advantage…* (pp629–30)

So there was to be no holiday in Paris. And, on her visit to one of the travel agents, Miss Caldwell realises that her own clothes are no match for those shown in the Paris brochures. Instead she buys a dress with a Parisian label and opens an account with the remainder of the money. Paris remains a dream. Frame's subtlety of characterisation emerges not merely in his portrayal of the behaviour of the two women but also in the insight he offers into Miss McLeod's understanding of their shared vulnerability. This is evidenced by her legacy to Miss Caldwell, which results in Miss Caldwell's own enlightenment.

One of the ways in which we come to understand people (including ourselves) is to observe how others relate and react to them. In some cases, of course, we use such reactions to confirm our opinions. But when we meet someone for the first time, our initial judgements are informed not only by our instinctive first reactions, but also by taking the temperature of other people's responses. When we meet a character in fiction, we undergo a similar process. In Kesson's story 'Until Such Times' we are shown the child through the responses of others:

'A lot of help she'll be to you. That one!' the Invalid Aunt said. 'Her Cousin Alice is a different kettle of fish. Another bairn altogether. Well brought up. And biddable.' (p547)

'For pity's sake, Edith! She's only a bairn.' (p 547)

'She's taking no notice, Edith! She's got better things to look at, than you sat stuck there on the commode. Come on, bairn!' Grandmother said, elbowing you out of the kitchen. 'It's time you and me took a turn up the wood for a burthen of kindlers. And a breath of fresh air!' (p551)

The writer, however, may choose to deny us the means by which we might confirm our own impressions. For instance, in James Kelman's 'Not not while the giro' there is only one 'visible' character. There is no-one else present against whom we may 'frame' this central character: there is only his own monologue to guide us.

In contrast the young man in Edward Gaitens' story 'The Sailing Ship' is 'framed' by his mother's behaviour towards him. The opening sentence of the story is quite startling:

Mrs Regan yelled at her son: 'Get up, ye lazy pig!'

The verbs and adjectives in the rest of the first paragraph confirm her rage:

…yelled… brandishing… bulged… sneering…

…insane… scrawny… crazy… red…

The effect, of course, is to enlist our sympathy for her son, and this is developed as the story progresses. But in Kelman's story we have only the 'invisible' neighbours, the Nulties. And, because it is a monologue, we do not know what the Nulties think of the narrator, except what he chooses to tell us: *Perhaps she dislikes me intensely. Her husband and I detest each other* (p640). But we do learn what he thinks of them:

I am not overly fond of children… I am not particularly attracted to her [the mother]. *A massive woman.* (p640)

I once tried old Percy for a fiver on his wages day. He looked at me as if I was daft. … Friends by christ. (p643)

There is nothing or perhaps a lot to say about Percy but it is hell of a boring. …They skimp on grub. … I have no wish to continue a life of the Nulties. (pp645–6)

Here we see a fusion of characterisation and point of view.

Activities

1. Identify the contribution of the Glasgow setting to the characterisation of the two women in Frame's 'Paris'.

2. Discuss with a partner how the adult Nulties might perceive the narrator in 'Not not while the giro'. Choose one of the Nulties each, and write a character sketch of the narrator from the point of view of your chosen Nultie. With your partner, discuss the character that emerges.

3. Script a brief drama scene which takes place at the end of 'The Black Madonna', between Raymond and either Henry Pierce or Oxford St John. Try to reveal Raymond's state of mind. Remember to establish the setting through stage directions.

4. By close analysis of a story from the anthology, demonstrate how the writer communicates change in a particular character.

SECTION 3

The setting, or the particular time and place in which the events of a story take place, is more than a mere backdrop to the action, more than a means by which atmosphere is established. A carefully conceived setting suffuses the development of events, character and theme. Sometimes its role is to be in obvious harmony with these elements; sometimes it plays its part by offering contrast. In either instance, however, it should be seen as an integral part of the meaning of the text. The sense of local identity, whether urban or rural, is particularly strong in several of the stories in *The Devil and the Giro*.

A skilled writer can undoubtedly transport us to new and unfamiliar settings in time and place. Nevertheless, our own experience is crucial to our ability to read creatively – we bring that experience to the texts we read. When we read we enter into a relationship with the writer in which we are *both* actively engaged in the communicative process. For those readers who have lived in the time and place portrayed in 'Tinsel' by Alan Spence, there is a process of recognition of the child's experiences, and of what he feels and thinks, which enriches our engagement with the text. So, although Spence is telling a story, and taking us back to a time and place (childhood and city) which he richly evokes, the evocation inevitably has more immediate significance for us if we have already been there in our own lives.

In this short story Spence creates a setting of time and place that is almost tangible. Close analysis of the opening paragraph reveals much about the writer's craft in achieving this.

> *The swing-doors of the steamie had windows in them but even when he stood on tiptoe he couldn't reach up to see out. If he held the doors open, the people queuing complained about the cold and anyway the strain would make his arms ache. So he had to be content to peer out through the narrow slit between the doors, pressing his forehead against the brass handplate. He could see part of the street and the grey buildings opposite, everything covered in snow. He tried to see more by moving a little sideways, but the gap wasn't wide enough. He could smell the woodandpaint of the door and the clean bleachy smell from the washhouse. His eye began to sting from the draught so he closed it tight and put his other eye to the slit, but he had to jump back quickly as a woman with a pramful of washing crashed open the doors. When the doors had stopped swinging and settled back into*

place he noticed that the brass plate was covered with fingermarks. He wanted to see it smooth and shiny so he breathed up on it, clouding it with his breath, and rubbed it with his sleeve. But he only managed to smear the greasy marks across the plate leaving it streaky and there was still a cluster of prints near the top that he couldn't reach at all. (p192)

The minutiae of sensation, the size of the child, the cold, the sense of waiting as being endless – are all sensitively and carefully evoked, and contribute to the setting of the story. Spence captures the detail of the child's reality with precision:

…on tiptoe… the strain would make his arms ache… narrow slit… his forehead against the brass handplate… smell the woodandpaint… bleachy smell… covered with fingermarks… he couldn't reach…

The use of language and the close observation remind us of the child in Kesson's 'Until Such Times'. But there, the narrative voice is different; and, while one child closely observes the behaviour of those around her, the other closely observes his environment, mainly through his senses.

The sense of place and its relationship to theme and character have become well established in fiction in the last two centuries. While the novel has time and space to fully develop the links, the interdependence, and the texture of the relationship between setting and character, the short story has to be more economical. Sometimes the result is elliptical or symbolic. If you read the story 'Clay' by Lewis Grassic Gibbon you will appreciate the fusion of setting and character. Rob Galt battles with the land as he would with an enemy – or a recalcitrant mistress:

…the wretch wouldn't take. (p676)

Ay, quean, I've got you in fettle at last. (p676)

The unremitting, harsh nature of the land has its effect on Rob who would *chave, chave, chave till at last you would think he'd turn himself into an earthworm, near* (p672). The land seems to become a symbol of something more than hardship.

The setting of a story can convey a particular time and/or place, as in the stories identified above. It can also convey atmosphere, which is perhaps less easily identifiable. In Elspeth Davie's 'Sunday Class', the main

vehicle for atmosphere is the dialogue between the teacher and the boy:

'Come on,' urges the woman… 'Some of the things God wants us to be grateful for?'

'Dinosaurs,' says the boy…

'To be grateful *for,' she warns.*

'I know that. I said "dinosaurs".'

'I suppose you know what they are?'

'I know all about them. Always have.'

'And you know how to spell them?'

'It doesn't matter.'

'What did you say?'

'It doesn't matter.'

'*Can you not think of anything else?'*

'No. I'm thinking of them all the time.'

'All *the time?'…*

'Well, someone had better think about them. They were around for millions of years. I'm grateful for them!'… (p29)

'I'm afraid that's not quite good enough,' she insists. 'I want something more.'…

'There's a sort of insect –' he ruminates. 'A giant fish-killing bug with claws that fold up under its head like a clasp-knife…'

'I am taking no notice of you,' Miss MacRae interrupts… 'Everybody else can understand what I'm asking. Are you different from everyone else?' (p31)

Margaret Oliphant's 'The Library Window' is suffused with an atmosphere of the supernatural. Although the focus of the mystery is the existence (or otherwise) of a window in a building across the street, the supernatural texture is presented in many ways. The first person narrator is a visitor to the house of her aunt *…the house in which I spent that summer…* (p485); her aunt is elderly and her life has taken on a routine never broken, so we can understand that the narrator seeks interruption – *...I would rather have incident…* (p485). Her aunt's côterie of old ladies and her aunt herself hint at a bygone age. Added to this, we are told that the narrator is *fantastic and fanciful and dreamy* (p486). Echoes of the past sound in the present:

> *…heavy black Spanish lace… Everything she wore was trimmed with it. A large veil of it hung over her old bonnet. But her hand coming out of this heavy lace was a curious thing to see. She had very long fingers, very taper, which had been much admired in her youth; and her hand was very white, or rather more than white, pale, bleached, and bloodless, with large blue veins standing up upon the back; and she wore some fine rings… while the big diamond blazed… like some dangerous thing hiding… The hand… clutched at my half-terrified imagination. It too seemed to mean far more than was said* (p489).

The appearance and disappearance of the window continue to intrigue the narrator and the reader until *about midsummer* (the supernatural time), when she is able to see not only the window, but also through it and into the room, where a man is seated in a chair, *the outline of his figure dark and solid* (p501). The sexual as well as the supernatural implications are evident:

> *My head was throbbing and my heart beating. I was in such high excitement… I knew then, when I looked across, that this was what I had been looking for all the time – that I had known he was there, and had been waiting for him, every time there was that flicker of movement in the room – him and no one else. And there at last, just as I had expected, he was* (pp500–1).

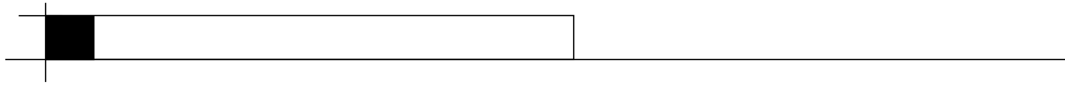
Oliphant's artistry lies in building up the layers of mystery, the sense of danger, the young girl's desire to find out, to discover her truth – all of which have as much to do with her awakening sexuality as they do with the supernatural. It is appropriate that an almost classical Greek chorus of old ladies forms the background against which the atmosphere is carefully etched.

Activities

1. Rewrite the first paragraph of the story 'Tinsel' as a third person narrative, using the authorial point of view to establish setting of time and place. Compare your piece with the original.

2. Write a few notes on what you think 'the land' symbolises in the story 'Clay'.

3. Choose a story in which the setting of time/place is clearly defined, and analyse its contribution. Rewrite one or two key paragraphs from that story, changing the setting to one that is significantly different. Compare what you have written with the original.



SECTION 4

Theme is a kind of sub-structure to the surface text. It embodies a significant thought/idea of the writer, but it usually emerges indirectly through the actions/interactions of character, through the presentation of setting, through the stance/point of view of the narrator, through the writer's lexical choice. It may be readily apparent to the reader, or it may make its presence felt more slowly, subtly and cumulatively. No matter how it is presented or emerges, the theme is a unifying force, particularly in the short story, given the tightly woven nature of the genre.

Sometimes particular elements in a story can contribute to the theme. Paris and all its associations become thematic in Ronald Frame's story of that name. Recurring references to the city reinforce the theme of genteel loneliness, as Paris itself carries the dreams and aspirations of the two women – aspirations which will not be fulfilled.

In William Boyd's 'Not Yet, Jayette', the chosen point of view (first person monologue) and the structure are both instrumental in conveying the theme. The use of monologue allows for ambivalence, projection, wish-fulfilment, and careful selection on the part of the individual speaking; it is also the obvious medium to convey the loneliness or isolation of a character. Charlie is lonely. Charlie's loneliness is reinforced by a sub-theme of the story: the relationship between fantasy and reality.

Like Charlie, the narrator in Kelman's story 'Not not while the giro' creates complex and unrealisable fantasies to help him fight the desolate reality of his existence. It might be difficult to agree on what the theme of the story is – but it is evident as we read that some unifying force binds the stream of consciousness. Kelman creates echoes in phrasing, in language, in symbol which combine to persuade us of the monologue's integrity and significance.

It is interesting to look at Edward Gaitens' 'The Sailing Ship' alongside the Kelman story. The treatment of setting, character and theme, while distinct, is central to each. And, although the narrative style of the stories is very different, the point of view in each is that of the central, disillusioned male character.

Three of the stories we have selected feature children at their centre – Davie's 'Sunday Class', Spence's 'Tinsel' and Kesson's 'Until Such Times'. The first is told by an omniscient narrator and the other two are monologues. It could be said, in a general way, that the theme of all three stories is childhood, but that would be only a starting point for a closer consideration of theme. On further analysis, each story reveals the child's stance in relation to his/her world – and the theme is seen as not just 'childhood', but the child in relation to a world which is precisely observed, either through monologue or the narrator's all-seeing eye.

'Sunday Class', with its omniscient narrator, establishes very precisely and quickly the battle lines drawn against the boy whose view of the world differs from the conventional. The imagery is appropriately military:

> *This semicircle crouched…dead on time…* (p29)

> *A well-drilled lot, they flick them back…* (p29)

> *Down both sides of the room, separated from one another…* (p30)

This gladiatorial element is also seen in the carefully portrayed bystanders. Both the living (*…they all turn their heads…* (p29) *the rest of the class fix him with their eyes...* (p31)) and the pictorial – *various Bible pictures* (p30) – seem to be waiting for blood. And the sense of expectancy is heightened by Davie's use of the present tense to tell the story.

In Spence's 'Tinsel' the boy's acute observation of his physical environment seems, ironically, to emphasise its ephemeral nature. The ritual of washday and the return journey home are described from the child's point of view, with detail and sensation accorded the prominence characteristic of childhood – *He warmed his hands till they almost hurt* (p196). At the same time there are pointers to the fragility both of his life and of the happiness of the family:

> *His mother had to take pills to help her breathing. At night she had to lie on her back, propped up with pillows.* (p196)

> *And hung there, shimmering, in that room he could never enter, the tinsel garland that would never ever tarnish.* (p201)

But it will: despite the child's faithful capturing of time and place, he cannot hold it untarnished. His childhood is fleeting: it is a fragile time.

The young child in Kesson's story 'Until Such Times' is both watcher and listener. She observes closely the behaviour of the adults she knows, and derives much of her understanding of them by listening to what they say – to her and to each other. So acute are her powers of repeating verbatim what they say, that she conveys (albeit unwittingly, and therefore, ironically) the cruelty of the Invalid Aunt's deliberate dissociation with her:

> *'A lot of help she'll be to you. That one!' the Invalid Aunt said.*
>
> *'The din that one makes,' the Invalid Aunt grumbled…* (p547)
>
> *'I'm needing to pay a big visit. And I can't do a thing! Not with that one. Stood there. All eyes!'* (p551)
>
> *'My conscience, bairn!' Grandmother edged you out of her road, and away from the window. 'You should know every tree from this scullery window by heart! For I never did see anybody who could stand so long. Just looking!'* (p554)

This child, absorbing so faithfully all that she can understand about those around her, knows the name of the pony, Donaldie; knows that her Aunt Ailsa would never *…marry a man with a wooden leg!*; but finally, and distressingly, hears the secret that has been hidden from her:

> *'…*My! *But you're stubborn! Just like Ailsa. The living spit of the mother of you…'*
>
> *'She's my Aunt Ailsa,' you said, protective of a relationship that was acceptable. 'She's my Aunt Ailsa… She's not my* mother*!'* (p556)

The innocence of childhood is short-lived. In all three stories we are conscious that experience is a harsh teacher.

Activities

1. Having re-read 'Paris' jot down notes in response to the following questions:

   - What does Paris mean to Miss McLeod?
   - What does Paris mean to Miss Caldwell?

2. Identify the main differences and similarities in the stories by Gaitens and Kelman, and suggest the theme(s) of each.

3. Discuss with a partner, or in a group, the ways in which you think McLellan reveals theme in 'The Cat'.

SECTION 5

The most obvious, yet most important point to make about language is that it is the means by which writers craft their art. It is their raw material – the clay from which they construct their representation of reality, and the means by which they persuade the reader of its truth. Language provides the ground where writer and reader meet and negotiate. Writers select language to create narrative, mood, meaning, perception, and point of view which they want the readers to share. It may itself be the focal point of the story (as in Tom Leonard's 'Honest'); it may be stark; it may be extravagant. Whatever it is, it has design and purpose.

'Honest' is a celebration of the language of speech and thought. In his (or the persona's) examination of the writer's quest for elusive inspiration, Leonard shapes the thoughts of the monologue into a *tour de force* of spoken dialect. A comic irreverence is to be found in the contrast between matter and manner; between topic and language. While his highly wrought, phonetic spelling seems to betoken a tone that is lightweight or comic, the seriousness of the reflections suggests otherwise. Further, the complexity of argument and thought are highlighted by the use of dialect to deal with ideas which we might expect to see treated in more formal language. Not only does Leonard sustain the tightness of the argument point by point, but he also convinces us that the language he uses can readily accommodate the complexities.

> *'Whut um a – a social inadequate?' N as if that izny bad enough, thi nixt thing that yi find yirself thinkin, is, 'Am a compensatin for ma social inadequacy, "by proxy", as it were?' An thi nixt thing, thi fourth thing, that yi find yirself thinkin, is, 'If av committed maself, unwittingly, ti compensation "by proxy", does that mean that a sense a inadequacy, unwittingly, huz become a necessity?' An thi fifth, an thi sixth, an thi seventh thingz that yi find yirself thinkin, are, 'Whut if ma compensation "by proxy" is found socially inadequate? And 'Ivdi's against me – a always knew it,' and 'Perhaps posterity will have better sense.'* (p43)

He also 'challenges' the language by using characters 'off stage':

> *But ifyi sayti sumdy, 'Whaira yi afti?' nthey say, 'Whut?' nyou say, 'Where are you off to?' they don't say, 'That's no whutyi said thi furst time.' They'll probably say sumhm like, 'Doon thi road!' anif you say,*

> *'What?' they usually say, 'Down the road!' the second time – though no always. Course, they never really say, 'Doon thi road!' or 'Down the road!' at all. Least, they never say it the way it's spelt. Coz it izny spelt, when they say it, is it?* (p43)

In both the above extracts the rhetorical questions indicate the polemical nature of the monologue.

In the extract from Muriel Spark's story 'The Black Madonna', already quoted in Section 2, it is instructive to look closely at the language:

> *…among the few tenants… who owned a motor car…*
>
> *…did not… have a television receiver…*
>
> *…expand themselves in the way of taste, so that their habits differed slightly and their amusements considerably, from those of their neighbours.*
>
> *…went to the pictures only when* The Observer *had praised the film; they considered television not their sort of thing; they adhered to their religion; they voted Labour; they believed that the twentieth century was the best so far; they assented to the doctrine of original sin; they frequently applied the word 'Victorian' to ideas and people they did not like…*
>
> *They read two books apiece each week. Raymond preferred travel books; Lou liked novels.* (p600)

For example, the aspirations of the Parkers is suggested by the verbs: *expand, considered, adhered, believed, assented, applied, preferred*. The author's word-choice here denotes the characters' careful thought, a measured and deliberate approach to life, following a pre-ordained path; lack of spontaneity; uncertainty about making their own judgements. Word-choice denoting possessions (or lack of them) also adds to the picture of the Parkers, a picture which has to be seen against the society of the period. They have a car but no television; they went only to those films approved by a reputable Sunday newspaper; they professed *religion*; they voted *Labour*; their religion and their aspirations are defined by the *newspapers* and *periodicals* they read. In short, the author has identified their mores by a very deliberate form of 'telling' and 'layering', all of it shot through with a dark humour.

Kelman's story 'Not not while the giro' displays a rich, diverse and subtle use of language. He uses the technique of stream of consciousness to give us access to the character and feelings of the narrator, who swings from outrageous thought to flights of fantasy. The language, by turn mockingly sentimental and self-deprecatingly humorous, tracks and reflects the narrator's progress, diversions and asides, capturing the irony, humour and underlying despair. The episode when the narrator constructs fantasies around Mrs Soinson is appropriately mock-sentimental, creating, by word choice and phrasing, echoes of the Southern belle of Tennessee Williams, mixed with the cliché of pulp fiction:

> *A man probably wronged her many years ago. Jilted. With her beautiful 16 year old younger sister by her as bridesmaid, an engagement ring on her finger just decorously biding her time till this marriage of her big sister is out of the way so she can step in and get married to her own youthful admirer, and on the other side of poor old Mrs Soinson stood her widowed father or should I say sat since he would have been an invalid and in his carriage, only waiting his eldest daughter's marriage so he can join his dearly departed who died in childbirth… up there in heaven. And ever since that day Mrs Soinson has remained a spinster, virginal, the dutiful but pathetic aunt – a role she hates but accepts for her parents' memory.* (p651)

Whether the narrator is creating fantasies about other people or about ways of escaping from his own condition, these fantasies are interspersed by a starkly phrased refrain which underlines the grim recognition of his plight:

> *I steal.*
>
> *Possibly I am a hopeless case.*
>
> *I am fed up with this business*
>
> *Suicide can be contemplated*
>
> *Something must be done. A decisive course of action*
>
> *I lack follow through*
>
> *I should commit suicide.*
>
> *Why am I wiped out*

I'm fed up with being fed up.

I am chucking it in.

My brain cannot cope on its own.

Apart from a couple of clerks nobody knows a thing about me.

The narrator also deploys a self-consciously mock-archaic style, as if trying to believe in, or to assert his own significance:

I somehow expected her to perceive my plight and suggest I accept a minor sum to tide me over…

…here I am in curiously meagre surroundings, living the life of a hapless pauper, my pieces of miserable silver supplied gratis by the Browbeaten Taxpayer.

Throughout this story language is used to reveal the contrast between the narrator's spasmodic bursts of linguistic energy and the sudden fading of drive as the words seem to die on the page. Such contrasts might be seen to represent the very powerful force for life that battles within him against the equally potent feelings of despair. The more he exhibits what he terms 'gibberishness', the more visually detailed and linguistically complex the fantasies become. The use of the clichéd phraseology of cheap popular fiction further points up the theme of worthlessness. And the nearer we move towards the story's 'conclusion', the more we feel and understand something of his despair:

I don't have to restrict myself to mapped out routes from which the slightest deviation is frowned upon. On the contrary, that last minute decision at the country crossroads can only enhance the affair. And certain items of clothing are already marked out as essential items. The stout boots and gnarled staff to ward off country animals after dusk. A hat & coat for wet weather. The Imitation Crombie may suffice.

I would be travelling on an arc – the farmfolk and country dwellers would know me well, the goodwives leaving thick winter woollies by the side of the road, flasks of oxtail soup under hedges. Shepherds offering shelter in remote bothies by the blazing log fires sipping hot toddies for the wildest nights and plenty of tobacco always the one essential luxury… A stray dog joining me… I at last turn and at my first grunt of encouragement it comes bounding joyfully forwards to

shower me in wet noses and barked assurances to stick by me through thick & thin and to eternally guard my last lowly grave when I have at length fallen in midstride… (p661)

The language of Margaret Oliphant's 'The Library Window' offers a complete contrast to that of the Kelman story. Here, the syntax, phrasing, word choice and punctuation capture the formality of past times, as well as the supernatural and sexual undercurrents that pervade the story. The following excerpts demonstrate these points:

At the time of which I speak the deep recess of the drawing-room window was a great comfort to me. (p486)

They were all pressing into my recess, pressing upon me, a row of old faces, peering into something they could not understand. I had a sense in my mind how curious it was, the wall of old ladies in their old satin gowns all glazed with age. (p488)

But it was very tantalising that it should fluctuate so; for sometimes I saw that room quite plain and clear – quite as clear as I could see papa's library, for example… (p498)

Not only the escritoire, which was very plain to me now, with the papers upon it… but the great picture that hung against the farther wall, and various other shadowy pieces of furniture, especially a chair which one evening I saw had been moved into the space before the escritoire, – a little change which made my heart beat, for it spoke so distinctly of some one who must have been there, the some one who had already made me start, two or three times before, by some vague shadow of him or thrill of him which made a sort of movement in the silent space: a movement which made me sure that next minute I must see something or hear something which would explain the whole – if it were not that something always happened outside to stop it at the very moment of accomplishment. (pp499–500)

Activities

1. Read 'Honest' again. With a partner (or in a group) discuss what purpose the plumber serves in the story.

2. Make notes on striking use of punctuation, layout and language in Kelman's 'Not not while the giro', and try to determine how each of these serves the writer's purpose.

3. Using the model of diagrammatic analysis demonstrated for the extract from 'Tinsel', on page 10, analyse the following extract from 'The Library Window' (page 492) – *All through the lingering evening… but a room – oh, as distinctly as ever room was!*

APPENDIX 1

Section 1 – Structure and point of view

1. Write a monologue in which the persona reflects on the recent discovery that he or she has been deceived by a close friend or family member. Before you start, you should try to understand as fully as possible the character of the persona who tells the story: you should create the details of the character's life well beyond the immediate requirements. Listen closely to the 'voice' of the character you create and satisfy yourself that the monologue sounds natural.

2. Having re-read 'Until Such Times' by Jessie Kesson, write a narrative, first-person account of the day from the grandmother's point of view. Try to reveal a distinctive voice, in keeping with the character in Kesson's story, and try to accommodate both action and reflection in the narrative.

3. Go back to 'Not Yet, Jayette' and write a short episode of the story as it might be told from Jayette's point of view. You may choose to use first or third person narrative. You should root the episode in the story that Boyd has written, although you can use some imaginative licence.

4. Read 'Clay' again. Taking as your starting point the paragraph beginning *But they'd hardly sat down a week, in Pittaulds…* (page 672), write a short drama script involving the three characters, Rob Galt, Mrs Galt and Rachel. Try to reveal the point of view, motivation and character of each of the three.

Section 2 – Characterisation

5. Write an episode featuring two contrasting characters, the portrayal of whom emerges not directly, through authorial description, but indirectly through, for instance, dialogue, the characters' responses to incident, their interaction with others, their past, their hopes/ ambitions… You may write an episode from any part of a story.

6. Write a short folk/fairy tale which includes a 'good' and 'bad' character. It will probably help you to read again, before you start, one or two classic fairy tales.

7. Read carefully Elspeth Davie's story 'Sunday Class'. Consider the dynamics of the characterisation as revealed in the dialogue. Create a one-scene drama that captures the impact and the tone of the original story. It is important that you set the scene carefully and use stage directions appropriately. You should feel free to adapt the story in such a way as to make it your own work; at the same time try to convey the essence of the original story. You might, for instance, wish to expand the dialogue or to use dialect.

8. Read Muriel Spark's 'You Should Have Seen the Mess'. (The story is widely anthologised.) Write a critical piece comparing this story with 'The Black Madonna'. You should pay close attention to:

   - tone
   - techniques of characterisation
   - use of language.

9. Briefly outline in note form the setting and plot of a short story. Select an appropriate place in which to introduce the two main characters, and write this section of the story. Try to introduce the characters using only dialogue (i.e. without the authorial voice). If possible, you should hint at complexity of character.

Section 3 – Setting

10. What are the main differences between the Glasgow of 'Tinsel' and the Glasgow of 'Paris'? In what ways do these differences affect your understanding of the characters and the themes of the two stories?

11. Take time to think closely about a place you know well. Make a few notes, if that is helpful, then write the opening page of a short story to establish setting (place). Exchange your work with a partner, and continue your partner's story, introducing character and plot. Finally, exchange your stories again, and discuss your responses to both pieces.

12. In about one hundred words establish a setting of time. You might want to try techniques such as flashback, factual reference (e.g. the Beatles!), or dialogue.

13. Write the opening paragraphs of a short story, recreating a time/ place you know well. As far as you can, make full use of all the senses.

Section 4 – Theme

14. Select from the anthology any story not discussed in these Support Notes. Identify the main theme. In note form, analyse and sum up the elements that bring out that theme.

15. Write a critical evaluation of 'The Library Window', paying special attention to the development of theme.

16. Write the opening few paragraphs of a short story, making clear your theme. Exchange your work with a partner and identify your partner's theme.

Section 5 – Language

17. Write the story of 'Death in a Nut' in the form of a ballad.

18. Write a drama script of 'The Cat', using no dialect. (You might find it necessary to expand the dialogue in order to convey the narrative.) Compare your script with the original story. What have you learned?

19. Write a critical evaluation of 'The Cat', with particular focus on the use of dialect.

20. Choose a genre (such as detective fiction, horror, Mills and Boon) with which you are familiar. Adopting the linguistic conventions of your chosen genre, write the first part of a story sufficient to include the foundations for plot, setting and character.

APPENDIX 2

A skilful literary artist has constructed his tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents – he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect.

Edgar Allan Poe 1809–49: *Graham's Magazine* (1842)

To write a series of good little tales I deem ample work for a lifetime.

Henry James 1843–1916: attributed

The dénouement of a long story is nothing; it is just a 'full close', which you may approach and accompany as you please – it is a coda, not an essential member in the rhythm; but the body and end of a short story is bone of the bone and blood of the blood of the beginning.

R L Stevenson 1850–94: letter (1891)

The novel tends to tell us everything, whereas the short story tells us only one thing, and that intensely.

V S Pritchett 1900–97: Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Short Stories* (1981)

Atmosphere and precision, however subtly concealed, are in fact two of the cardinal points in the art of the short story writer.

H E Bates 1905–74: *The Modern Short Story* (1941)

Poetic tautness and clarity are so essential to it that it may be said to stand on the edge of prose.

Elizabeth Bowen 1899–1973: Introduction to *The Faber Book of Modern Stories* (1937)

The first necessity for the short story, at the set out, is necessariness. The story, that is to say, must spring from an impression or perception pressing enough, acute enough, to have made the writer write.

Ibid.

I have always thought that the writer of short stories is a mixture of reporter, aphoristic wit, moralist and poet – though not 'poetical'; he is something of a ballad-maker, and in the intricacy of his design is close to the writer of sonnets. He has to catch our attention at once, to get the opening line right. He has to be something of an architect. …It is the glancing form of fiction that seems to be right for the nervousness and restlessness of contemporary life.

V S Pritchett 1900–97: Preface to *Collected Stories* (1982)

Jorge Luis Borges has said that the short story 'has more of discovery about it than of deliberate invention'; Kipling held that it must have what he called 'economy of implication'; and most strikingly Chekhov declared that if an author describes a gun hanging on the wall on page one then that gun sooner or later must go off.

Roger Sharrock: Introduction to *The Oxford Library of Classic English Short Stories* (1989)

Formal definitions of the short story are commonplace, yet there is none quite democratic enough to accommodate an art that so readily lends itself to experimentation and idiosyncratic voices.

Joyce Carol Oates 1938 – : Introduction to *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories* (1992)

The story may be slight, its subject matter of no great moment, yet still every word must tell – there is no margin for error, no room for in-filling, no time in which to falter and dawdle, then to recover before the final sprint. It is, in short, an unforgiving form. Bad writing shows up. Clichés jar. Everything must be sharply in focus, unambiguous though never unsubtle, crystal clear.

Susan Hill 1942 – : Introduction to *Contemporary Women's Short Stories* (1995)

It is famously a matter of touch, a swift touch, almost a raid – there is no time to be ponderous. Nor is there time to develop character at length – only brush-strokes are available, and they must be clear and strong and ineradicable, as well as delicate and passing. The finished product must appear to have been effortlessly wrought, like porcelain, steel, lace, and just as lasting, as vivid and as evocative. …The Short Story is inner, not outer, space.

Frank Delaney: Introduction to *Irish Short Stories* (1999)

From time to time there is an urge not to speed up and condense events and character development, which is what one does in a play, but to hold them frozen and to see things isolated in stillness, which I think is the great strength of a good short story.

Arthur Miller 1915– : Foreword to *I Don't Need You Anymore* (1967)

The modern short story may be defined as the distillation of an essence.

William Trevor 1928– : Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Irish Short Stories* (1989)

I think it is the art of the glimpse. If the novel is like an intricate Renaissance painting, the short story is an Impressionist painting. It should be an explosion of truth.

William Trevor : in *Paris Review* (1989)

The key to a short story is tension. At the end of a short story the reader's imagination should be able to take the story on in his mind, but at the end of a novel he is entitled to expect a rounding-off.

William Trevor: interview in *Sunday Telegraph* (1990)

Good short stories would not have made better novels.

Anon.

The greatest masters of the form of the short story… have all tended to seek their material in the realm of the unremarkable – which turns out, under their patient illumination, to be remarkable after all.

John Wain 1925–94: attributed

Places and their typical inhabitants are the recurring concerns of most modern story-writers; but it is especially true of Scotland.

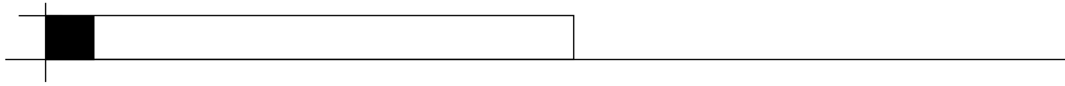
Douglas Dunn 1942– : Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Scottish Short Stories* (1995)

…overhear[s] the characters, as well as hearing them; think of them as your characters, and wonder at what is implied, rather than told about them. Unlike most figures in novels, their foregrounding and postgrounding are largely up to you, utilising the hints subtly provided by the writer.

Harold Bloom 1930– : *How to Read and Why* (2000)

…the most skilled short story writers are as elliptical in regard to moral judgements as they are in regard to continuities in action or the details of a character's past life. You, as reader, are to decide if moral judgement is relevant, and then the judgement will be yours to make.

Ibid.



APPENDIX 3

Here is a brief guide to some useful, critical terms related to the short story. There is no attempt to explain everything – merely to offer signposts to help you engage with the texts and the Activities, and to find understanding and enjoyment.

Anecdote
A short, often amusing account of an event or incident. The subject matter is usually personal, biographical or gossipy.

Ballad
Traditionally, the ballad was a spoken – or sung – narrative poem, passed down (and adapted) through the generations. The great period of the ballads was the late Middle Ages, especially in Lowland Scotland and the border country with England. These poems are usually called Border Ballads. Ballads often contained a supernatural element, and, perhaps because of the oral tradition from which they come, they frequently have a refrain. (See also ***Oral tradition***.)

Characterisation
The techniques used in the artistic process of creating character. Such techniques might include:

- direct characterisation (a form of 'telling' the reader), in which the writer uses description (miserly, neurotic, loving…) or perhaps a name (Mr Jolly, Scrooge…) to convey character. (What characteristics might you associate with the Nulties in 'Not not while the giro'?)
- indirect characterisation (a form of 'showing' the reader), in which the writer uses action, speech/thoughts, appearance, environment to convey character.

Climax
The most intense point in a literary work – although there are likely to be more than one, some major and some minor. In a short story the climax can occur at any point – but there is usually a sense of the writer building towards it. (See also ***Plot***.)

Complication/Development
From the beginning of a short story the reader is hooked into a tight design (plot) which sometimes has a quality of inexorability. As a narrative proceeds so do elements such as characterisation and theme

gain in complexity, adding to the layers of the plot. The techniques used by a writer to achieve such complication/development should be integral to the narrative, although you will sometimes find narrative where character is subordinated to plot, e.g. in some detective fiction. (See also ***Plot***.)

Conclusion/dénouement/closure

The word *dénouement* is French (*dénouer*, to untie, from the Latin *nodus*, a knot). The conventional structure of the short story has a distinct beginning, middle and an end (see Section 1). Ideally, the middle and end are foreshadowed by the beginning. From the beginning of a literary piece, conflict and tension are likely to increase (complication/development), sometimes to a climax (the knot), leading to some kind of resolution, *dénouement* (untying of the knot). Of course, many writers, working in a variety genres, choose not to have a conclusion; instead they simply finish a piece (closure), perhaps by increasing the tension (climax). Look at the ending of 'Until Such Times'. (See also ***Plot***.)

Crisis

Crisis is the crucial stage or turning point in a series of events. Although this turning point might also be the climax of a piece, it is not necessarily so. You might consider what might be the crisis in 'Clay', and what might be the climax. (See also ***Plot***.)

Dialect

Dialect is a variety of spoken language which is rooted in place or social class. Although a dialect of a language has usually been understood to differ from the 'standard' language, and therefore has often been deemed to be inferior, there is now recognition that 'standard' language is itself a dialect – i.e. one of the many varieties of a language. A dialect has its own distinctive accent, grammar, vocabulary and idiom. Compare the dialects of 'The Cat' and 'Death in a Nut'. What similarities and what differences do you find?

Dialogue

In fiction or drama, dialogue is normally a term used for conversation between characters. When written, it is presented using the conventions of the written form (e.g. inverted commas), according to the requirements of the genre. There is also a kind of dialogue in the relationship between writer and reader. This 'dialogue' underlines the active nature of reading that is so important to our understanding and appreciation of text.

Ellipsis
Strictly speaking, ellipsis refers to the omission of an element of language (perhaps punctuation or a phrase). In some forms of writing, particularly in poetry, but also in many short stories, it can refer to the unstated, the implied – hence the term 'elliptical'.

Epiphany
Epiphany is a moment of sudden and significant revelation – or manifestation (in its original Christian context). James Joyce adapted the term to describe the sudden 'revelation of the whatness of a thing' – that moment in which 'the soul of the commonest object seems to us radiant'. It is now generally used to indicate some moment of insight or discovery, which has a profound effect on a character's life, or view of life.

Fable
A short story (usually told in a simple way for children) that illustrates a moral principle. In most fables the characters are animals or birds who behave like humans. The most famous collection of fables is attributed to Æsop, a Greek slave (6th Century BC). Fable is also used of stories or legends with supernatural or mythical characters.

Flashback/Time shift
A visual and structural device (primarily used in film), flashback allows the audience to experience a previous occasion/time/circumstance that gives information about the present. In fiction it is usually achieved by means of a character remembering something in the past, often triggered by something in the present, which can illuminate the present for the character and for the reader.

Genre
This term is taken from a French word, meaning 'kind' (as in 'a kind of…'). In literature it refers to the classification of texts into broad categories according to shared characteristics or family resemblances, e.g. prose, drama, poetry. Within each category there are also sub-categories. In poetry, for example, there are epic, ballad, lyric, sonnet…and so on. In prose there are the broad categories of fiction and non-fiction, and within these there are further categories (e.g. in fiction: the novel, the fable, the short story). The term is in no way prescriptive but it can be convenient for analysis.

Interior monologue see ***Monologue***

Irony
You will be familiar with dramatic irony, a term which is used in drama to suggest the kind of 'double vision' (or acutely informed vision) on the part of the audience (or reader) in relation to what is *really* happening in a play. Ironic tension lies in the fact that the characters are unaware of important or fateful circumstances, while the audience, in contrast, has an informed understanding. Something of this tension can be found also in irony used in fiction: the writer creates duality of meaning that allows the language to carry another message – often mocking or sardonic, and running contrary to the first. You might like to consider examples of irony in Spark's 'The Black Madonna'.

Language
Language is the medium of the narrative. It influences every aspect of the writer's craft since it furnishes the very tools of that craft. Description, dialogue, dialect, lyricism are a few of the many areas in which a writer can demonstrate variety, subtlety and flexibility of language – all of which are revealed by the lexical choices the writer makes. (See ***Word/Lexical choice***.)

Monologue
Monologue is a term from Greek and simply means speaking alone. In drama it is a solo speech for a single performer. In prose fiction, it is the creation of a single voice talking to a 'listener' (who may or may not be the reader), and 'overheard' by the reader. Interior monologue is also a single voice within a character's head. (See also ***Stream of Consciousness***.)

Mood
Mood is most often used to refer to the underlying feeling that characterises a piece of writing – part atmosphere, part *Tone*. To establish mood a writer depends heavily on aspects of craft – e.g. it will be determined by word choice. But mood is also created and reflected by such aspects as setting, theme, characterisation, and by the narrative itself (think of 'Death in a Nut').

Motivation
Motivation is the process that gives incentive to human behaviour; it also sustains and regulates it. It is therefore closely linked to ***Characterisation***. One of the reasons for reading prose fiction is to meet people we have never met, and to come to understand them, and ourselves. The writer's skill in delineating character will include persuading us to believe in a character's behaviour. Only then can we appreciate and understand what drives characters to do what they do

(or don't do); and say what they say. Consider, for instance, the motivation of Miss McLeod in leaving £500 to Miss Caldwell in Frame's 'Paris'.

Narrative

Narrative simply refers to the telling of a story. Narrative poetry tells a story in verse – sometimes these are lengthy stories or histories, as in epics such as Milton's 'Paradise Lost'; sometimes they are shorter as in the traditional ballad, or Burns's 'Tam o' Shanter'. A story can be described as having a 'strong narrative'. This simply means that the story-line has a strong hold on the reader: it has a powerful turn-the-page factor. Narrative is primarily concerned with 'What happens?', 'What happens next? and 'Why?'

Narrative style

This term has very wide application, as it refers to the *way* in which a story is told. This might be, for instance, the use of the third person narrative, the epistolary style or ***Stream of consciousness***. It might refer to stylised, descriptive writing, deliberately ornate language, use of dialect… and so on.

Narrator

The narrator is the notional teller of the story – the real teller, of course, being the author. A range of narrative devices is used to indicate the narrator of a story. A third person narrative, for example, may be 'told' by an omniscient narrator, or by the third person him/herself, who might be 'an unreliable narrator'. With a first person narrative, we might find a narrator who is an observer, or a participant. In either case, the narrator might be 'unreliable', even though the author has persuaded us of the narrator's objectivity. Would you consider Charlie in 'Not Yet, Jayette' a reliable or unreliable narrator?

Novella

The word is taken from Italian and means 'little and new'. It was originally used of short narratives such as Boccaccio's collection *The Decameron*. The term is now used of prose fiction that is in its length somewhere between the novel and the short story, e.g. *The Virgin and the Gypsy* by D H Lawrence and *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James.

Oral tradition

The process by which the linguistic art forms of a culture (e.g. songs, poems, proverbs and stories) are passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. The oral tradition makes a significant contribution to the Scottish short story (see ***Introduction***).

Persona

Persona refers to the protagonist in fiction or poetry who speaks in the first person. It is important to remember that the persona of a literary piece is not actually the author, but the author's creation – just as any other character is a creation. The persona of 'Not not while the giro' is such a created character.

Plot

Plot is the overall design of a story: its structure, sequencing, causal links and planned conclusion. In the economy of a short story the plot is likely to be tightly structured, every detail contributing to the whole. The accepted plotting of the short story conforms to Aristotle's theory of classical unity of action in dramatic tragedy requiring a single, continuous story to have a beginning, middle and end. The short story shares much with drama in having tension and conflict, which are necessary to the momentum of the plot and the development of the story. There are classical stages of plot such as a reversal of fortune, the revealing of a blood relationship, and catastrophe, the term used to denote the final suffering or downfall of a principal character. In more recent times these stages of plotting are referred to as:

- beginning/exposition/introduction
- complication/development
- climax/(sometimes)crisis
- dénouement/resolution/closure

Increasingly, resolution is not seen as a prerequisite: stories have to end (closure), but conflict is not necessarily resolved.

Point of view

A writer must create a window – or a series of windows – through which the reader can 'see' the narrative. These windows are deliberately created to give a particular viewpoint, and that point of view will influence not only the narrative but also (and intentionally) the reader's perception of the narrative. The point of view may be voiced in the first, second or third person narrative. First person narrative can reveal only that character's point of view, although there are techniques which allow the reader access to other perspectives (speech that is reported, for instance). Second person narrative is quite rare, and is generally used to give the narrator's point of view (see 'Until Such Times'). Third person narrative can be used either to tell the story from that person's point of view or, combined with an omniscient narrator, to give a reliable account of all aspects of the story, including the motivations of any and all of the characters. (See also ***Narrator***.)

Protagonist
The protagonist is the most important character in a play or a story.

Realism
The term denotes a style that seeks to represent the familiar or typical in real life, as opposed to the idealised, romantic or supernatural.

Scene
Scene is the place, setting or situation in which the action(s) and event(s) take place. It is not merely a backdrop against which actions and events unfold, but is integral to the whole text, contributing to narrative, characterisation and theme.

Setting
The significance of setting for the short story can be seen in its three main functions:

- establishing the historical and geographical location
- contributing to mood/atmosphere
- contributing to the action, characterisation and theme.

(See also ***Scene***.)

Stance
Stance refers to the emotional or intellectual attitude of the writer to the narrative. It might be sympathetic, challenging… and so on. Stance will be revealed in a number of ways: for instance, through characterisation, setting, description, dialogue and word choice. It is also linked to ***Tone***.

Stream of consciousness
A narrative technique used by the writer to convey, or reproduce, the inner process of a character's (often random) thoughts and emotions. Thoughts may be expressed in irregular syntax and punctuation.

Structure
Structure refers to the arrangement, organisation and interrelationship of parts of a piece of writing. It refers to the 'building' of text. (See also ***Plot*** and Section 1 of these Support Notes.)

Surrealism
Surrealism is characterised by the evocation of the unconscious, the incongruous and the dream-like. (Find examples of surrealism from the selection of stories, and identify how it is achieved.)

Symbol
The term refers to the use of something (especially something concrete or material) to represent something else (very often something abstract or non-material). For symbolism to be effective, readers must have some shared association of ideas, and understanding of what the symbol might represent. Consider the symbolic significance of the 'Imitation Crombie' in Kelman's 'Not not while the giro'.

Tale
A tale is a short narrative, often associated with oral tradition. Fairy tales are traditional stories about fairies, mythical or magical beings, and are usually told to children. Folk tales originate from, and relate to, ordinary people, and are part of their popular culture. (See also ***Oral Tradition***.)

Theme
In music the theme is the dominant and unifying melody of a piece. In literature it is a dominant, significant and unifying idea. Theme may be closely integrated with setting, structure and characterisation, and be developed through these elements.

Tone
Although 'tone' is a term more recognisably associated with music, painting and the spoken voice, it is also used to describe the overall quality or 'shading' of a piece of writing. For example, a text might be said to be challenging in tone; or pessimistic; or light/dark; or mysterious; or ambiguous; or positive; or satirical; or ironic; or… The means by which a writer achieves a particular tone are sometimes difficult to recognise, since it is something that tends to permeate a work. Descriptive passages, the choice of words and phrases, the structure and form of a piece, the language used will all contribute to the overall tone. As you would imagine, tone is closely linked with writer's stance. How does Gaitens set the tone at the beginning of 'The Sailing Ship'?

Word/Lexical choice
In the short story, every word and phrase carries significance. Consider the enormous range of possible words available to the writer to convey what he/she wants to say. Narrowing down those possibilities, and identifying a particular word or phrase as the most fitting and artistic, is essential to the craft of the writer. Coleridge defined poetry as 'the best words in the best order'. The same could be said of the short story.