Opening Worlds short stories

KS4 > GCSE > Opening Worlds short stories (OCR)

How it works

These worksheets cover all the aspects that need covering and I find them more accessible than OCR’s own workbook.

Try this!

Being a Teachit member, I’m able to access the Word files and change the resources to suit my classes. I find for weaker classes it helps to give them just one or two tasks on a strip at a time as a whole worksheet is too daunting. I’m also able to enlarge any grids so that they can be filled in and pasted into their books rather than needing to be re-drawn.

It is also easy to take a question, separate the bullets under it [e.g. in ‘The Pieces of Silver’, 1. Read to line 41 … Comment on: The behaviour of the pupils etc] and turn it into an OHT or PowerPoint slide very quickly so that weaker pupils can come up to the board and fill in key words.

Ed
The following stories are to be studied for the English Literature exam.
You will be asked to compare them with the stories in the first part of the anthology which are assessed for English.
It is therefore important to make links between them as you go along. These links will help you to plan answers for exam questions which will ask you to compare two stories.

‘The Winter Oak’ by Yuri Nagibin

Themes and issues:
- Education
- Pupil/teacher relationships
- New experiences and change

1. What impression is created of a Russian school in the first part of the story? Consider:
   - The school environment
   - The contrast between Anna and the geography mistress
   - The atmosphere during the lesson

2. How does the character of Anna Vasilevna change during the story? Create and complete a chart like the one below (yours will need to be much bigger than this!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in Anna</th>
<th>At the beginning of the story</th>
<th>By the end of the story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Her attitude to language.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her feelings about herself as a teacher.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her attitude towards, Savushkin.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her response to nature.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Re-read from line 134 to the end of the story. The writer describes how on entering the forest ‘they were immediately transported into … an enchanted world.’ How does the language help to show this?
Find a quotation to support each of the following. Comment on the language that is used. An example has been done for you:

a. The forest is beautiful:
   ‘Now and again the trees would part and reveal sunny, joyful glades, criss-crossed with hare tracks that looked like watch chains.’
   The writer shows the beauty of the forest through his use of the adjectives ‘sunny’ and ‘joyful’ and the simile to describe the animal tracks. These details help us to visualise the scene.

b. The stream is full of contrasts

c. Anna is fascinated by her surroundings

d. The oak dominates the forest

e. The oak is welcoming

f. The oak protects the animals in the forest

4. What does Anna learn from her visit to the forest with Savushkin? How have her feelings changed by the end of the story?

5. Empathy writing task:
   Imagine that you are Anna, write a letter to a teaching colleague explaining what happened to you on the day that you went to the forest with Savushkin.

LINKS WITH OTHER STORIES

- Education/ The presentation of the Headteacher in ‘Dead Man’s Path’
- Education in ‘The Pieces of Silver’
- Changes in Cathy’s character in ‘The Young Couple.’
‘The Pieces of Silver’ by Karl Sealy

Themes/ issues:
- Education
- Pupil/teacher relationships
- Effects of poverty

1. Read up to line 41. How is school life presented in this description of the daily routine? Comment on:
   - The behaviour of the pupils
   - The behaviour of the teachers
   - The behaviour of the acting Headmaster

2. Read from line 42 to 107.
   - How is the Headteacher’s treatment of the boys described?
   - How does the writer use language to create sympathy for Clement and the other boys who have not brought any money?

3. Clement’s family life is described from line 108. Comment on the way that the writer has used language to describe it in the following quotations:

| ‘In the midst of this drab poverty the free, soaring seagulls, and the once gay pictures of the magazines were an unkind comment.’ |
| ‘Dave Dovecot, a grizzled gangling labourer, held his plate in his left hand, while with his right he plied his mouth from a peeling metal spoon.’ |
| ‘Mrs Dovecot, a long thread of a woman whose bones want had picked like an eagle … scraped and pecked and foraged her food like a scratching hen.’ |

4. What impression of Clement’s parents is created by the use of dialogue on page 55?

5. How is the relationship between Clement and his sister Evelina described on pages 56 and 57?

6. What sort of victory does Clement have at the end of the story?

7. Why do you think the story ends as it does? What sort of message is the writer trying to convey about poverty and the treatment that the boys receive at the hands of the Headmaster?

LINKS WITH OTHER STORIES:
- The Presentation of the Headmaster in ‘Dead Man’s Path.’
- The effects of poverty on family life in ‘The Gold-Legged Frog.’
‘Games at Twilight’ by Anita Desai

Themes and issues:

- Childhood experience
- The effects of environment

1. How does the writer show that the atmosphere at the beginning of the story is oppressive? (See Lines 1 - 38) Consider:
   - The language used to suggest confinement
   - The language used to describe release
   - The way that the heat is described

2. What are your impressions of the following children from the first section of the story? (Lines 1 - 80)
   - Mira
   - Manu
   - Raghu

3. The rest of the story focuses on Ravi, the main character. Annotate each section of the story in detail and answer the following questions:

   Lines 83 - 125  RAVI FINDS A HIDING PLACE IN THE SHED
   - What are Ravi’s feelings at the beginning?
   - How is the shed described? Why are these details important to understanding Ravi’s feelings?
   - How does Ravi feel about managing to escape from Raghu at this point in the story?

   Lines 126 - 187  RAVI SPENDS TIME IN THE SHED
   - How does Ravi feel as he looks around his new environment?
   - What are his feelings about the people and the environment outside the shed?
   - Explain his thoughts of ‘victory’ as he waits in the shed.

   Lines 188 - 255  RAVI LEAVES THE SHED AS EVENING APPROACHES
   - How does Ravi feel as twilight approaches?
   - Explain his feelings of ‘misery’ as he finally runs out of the shed.
   - How do the others react towards him when he reappears?
   - What sort of game are they playing and how does this affect Ravi?
Lines 256 - 265  RAVI FEELS A SENSE OF DESPAIR

• Explain the ‘terrible sense of his insignificance’ which Ravi feels at the end of the story. What lesson has he learned about life?
• How does the ending of the story represent a complete reversal for Ravi and his hopes?

4. There are many references to death through the imagery used in the story. Comment on the imagery used in each of the following examples:

• ‘No life stirred at this time of day - the birds still drooped, like dead fruit, in the paper tents of the trees.’
• ‘The outdoor dog lay stretched as if dead on the veranda mat, his paws and ears and tail all reaching out like dying travellers in search of water.’
• ‘… a dark and depressing mortuary of defunct household goods seething with such unspeakable and alarming animal life.’
• ‘It was dark, spooky in the shed. It had a muffled smell, as of graves.’
• ‘Their faces were pale and triangular in the dusk. The trees and bushes around them stood inky and sepulchral, spilling long shadows across them.’
• ‘He had wanted victory and triumph - not a funeral.’

LINKS WITH OTHER STORIES:

• The presentation of childhood in ‘Leela’s Friend.’
• The presentation of childhood games and the boy’s feelings in ‘The Red Ball.’
‘Leela’s Friend’ by R.K. Narayan

Themes and issues:
- Childhood experience
- Injustice
- Relationships between parents and children
- Class divisions

1. Read the first part of the story up to line 57. What are your first impressions of Sidda from:
   a) his conversation with Mr Sivasanker?
   b) his conversation with Leela?

2. How do Mr and Mrs Sivasanker react to Leela’s missing chain? What does this suggest about them?

3. Look at what happens to Sidda after it is discovered that the chain is missing. Complete this list:
   - Sidda runs away

4. What is your assessment of Leela’s character? Is she ‘such an innocent child’ as the police inspector says on line 151? Consider:
   - Her treatment of Sidda
   - Her attitude towards her parents
   - Her behaviour over the ‘stolen’ chain

5. What does the story show about Indian society and its class structure?

6. What moral or message do you think Narayan is trying to convey through the story?

7. What is your view of Mr and Mrs Sivasanker as parents and employers?

8. What message is conveyed by Mr Sivasanker’s final words in the story, ‘in any case, we couldn’t have kept a criminal like him in the house’?

LINKS WITH OTHER STORIES:
- Injustice and poverty in ‘The Gold Legged Frog’.
- Class divisions in ‘The Train from Rhodesia’.
- Childhood experience in ‘Games at Twilight’.