



Unit One Who Am I?



Understanding Fiction 12

What's the Worst That Could Happen?
Bruce Coville short story 15

Eleven
Sandra Cisneros short story 30

Charles
Shirley Jackson short story 37

Understanding Poetry I 44

I'm Nobody! Who Are You?
Emily Dickinson poem 46

Primer Lesson
Carl Sandburg poem 47

Change
Charlotte Zolotow poem 51

Tuesday of the Other June
Norma Fox Mazer short story 55

Unit Two Family Matters



The Circuit
Francisco Jiménez short story 70

My Father's Hands Held Mine
Norman H. Russell poem 80

Knoxville, Tennessee
Nikki Giovanni poem 81

The All-American Slurp
Lensey Namioka short story 85





Understanding Nonfiction 96

Power of the Powerless: A Brother's Lesson
Christopher de Vinck nonfiction 99

Beneath the Cherry Trees from *Marley and Me*
John Grogan nonfiction 105

Understanding Drama 114

These Shoes of Mine
Gary Soto drama 116



Unit Three Best of Friends?

The Dog of Pompeii
Louis Untermeyer short story 131

Elephants Cross Under River, Making Hearts Rise
Michael Kaufman nonfiction 144

Thank You, M'am
Langston Hughes short story 151

Noodle Soup for Nincompoops
Ellen Wittlinger short story 159

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Lewis Carroll poem 178

What Do Fish Have to Do with Anything?
Avi short story. 187

Homeless
Anna Quindlen nonfiction 203

from *Reflections on the Civil War*
Bruce Catton nonfiction 209



.....

Unit Four Decisions, Decisions



President Cleveland, Where Are You? Robert Cormier short story	226
<i>Understanding Folktales</i>	240
Shrewd Todie and Lyzer the Miser Isaac Bashevis Singer Jewish folktale.	242
The Princess and the Tin Box James Thurber fable	250
The Curious Treasure of Captain Kidd Alvin Schwartz nonfiction	256
<i>Understanding Poetry II</i>	264
The Highwayman Alfred Noyes poem.	266
Ballad of Birmingham Dudley Randall poem	274
<i>from Woodsong</i> Gary Paulsen nonfiction.	278

Unit Five To Be a Hero



Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima from <i>Now Is Your Time!</i> Walter Dean Myers nonfiction	289
The Living Kuan-Yin retold by Carol Kendall and Yao-Wen Li Chinese folktale	303
Where the Girl Rescued Her Brother Joseph Bruchac Cheyenne legend	311
Paul Revere's Ride Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem	318





Sally Ann Thunder Ann Whirlwind
 Mary Pope Osborne American tall tale 327

The Mysterious Mr. Lincoln
 Russell Freedman nonfiction 334

Casey at the Bat
 Ernest Lawrence Thayer poem 341

Rikki-tikki-tavi
 Rudyard Kipling short story 347



Unit Six On the Edge

On Being Seventeen, Bright, and Unable to Read
 David Raymond nonfiction 370

The Tell-Tale Heart
 Edgar Allan Poe short story 377

Southbound on the Freeway
 May Swenson poem 386

All Summer in a Day
 Ray Bradbury short story 391

The Cremation of Sam McGee
 Robert Service poem 400

Frozen Man
 David Getz nonfiction 409

The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street
 Rod Serling drama 422

Where the Sidewalk Ends
 Shel Silverstein poem 444



Understanding Fiction

Short Stories

The two main types of fiction are short stories and novels. How do they differ? Short stories can usually be read in one sitting, have fewer characters, and take place in a limited setting. They generally have just one theme, unlike a novel, which is multi-themed. Both types of fiction contain the following basic elements.

Plot The plot is the action of a story—what happens in it. As one old saying has it, the writer gets the hero up a tree and then gets him back down again. A good plot shows how one event leads to another, which causes another, and so on until the story ends. A problem or **conflict** is needed to move the story forward. No “trouble” equals “no story”!

But fictional conflict doesn’t necessarily mean things blowing up. In fiction, a conflict means that the main character wants something and someone or something is in the way of getting it. The “opponent” can be anything from a raging hurricane to a picky math teacher. And some conflicts occur from within. Perhaps the main character wants to be popular, but his or her basic nature—shy and awkward—makes that goal difficult. Inner conflicts can be the worst kind.

In a well-made story, the conflict builds until there is a **climax**, or high point of the action. Here the bully is confronted, or the inner demon is conquered. In the story’s **resolution**, the conflict sorts itself out.

Character As a reader, you keep turning the pages of stories mainly because you are interested in what happens to the characters. Writers create believable characters by describing their actions, speech, thoughts, feelings, and interactions with others. There are **round characters**—characters who are drawn realistically and seem capable of change—and **flat characters**, who are undeveloped.

Setting A story’s setting includes the time period and location in which the events of the plot occur. A setting can actually influence the plot and characters, sometimes even becoming a character itself. When nature is given human characteristics—an angry sea, a forbidding forest—setting is being used as a character.

Theme The theme is the underlying meaning or message of a story. A story is about a particular character and what happens to him or her. The *theme* of the story is how the reader interprets what the author is saying about the story. Usually, the theme is not directly stated. The reader must discover it through careful reading and analysis.

Previewing

Eleven

by Sandra Cisneros

Reading Connection

Sandra Cisneros says that she still feels like she's eleven years old inside. "When I was eleven years old in Chicago, teachers thought if you were poor and Mexican you didn't have anything to say. Now I think that what I was put on the planet for was to tell these stories. Because if I don't write them, they're not going to get the stories right." Cisneros was often the "new kid" at school because her struggling family moved so often. Her background and constant transfers made fitting in difficult. "I didn't like school because all they saw was the outside me."

Skill Focus: Simile

A simile is a comparison between two things that are not alike. The comparison includes the word *like* or *as*. For example, "The kitten looked *like* a soft puddle of gold." Often writers use similes to draw images, or word-pictures, which give a fresh feel to familiar ideas, feelings, or things. As you read this story, note any similes that you find.

Eleven



Sandra Cisneros



Russian Nesting Dolls

What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don't. You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's today. And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you are—underneath the year that makes you eleven.

Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten. Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five. And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry like if you're three, and that's okay. That's what I tell Mama when she's sad and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.

You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you. And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way it is.

Only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years rattling inside me like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. Today I wish I was one hundred and two instead of eleven because if I was one hundred and two I'd have known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk. I would've known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with that look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth.

"Whose is this?" Mrs. Price says, and she holds the red sweater up in the air for all the class to see. "Whose? It's been sitting in the coatroom for a month."

.....

“Not mine,” says everybody. “Not me.”

“It has to belong to somebody,” Mrs. Price keeps saying, but nobody can remember. It’s an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It’s maybe a thousand years old, and even if it belonged to me, I wouldn’t say so.

Maybe because I’m skinny, maybe because she doesn’t like me, that stupid Sylvia Saldívar says, “I think it belongs to Rachel.” An ugly sweater like that, all raggedy and old, but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs. Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my mouth nothing comes out.

“That’s not, I don’t, you’re not . . . Not mine,” I finally say in a little voice that was maybe me when I was four.

“Of course it’s yours,” Mrs. Price says. “I remember you wearing it once.” Because she’s older and the teacher, she’s right and I’m not.

Not mine, not mine, not mine, but Mrs. Price is already turning to page thirty-two, and math problem number four. I don’t know why but all of a sudden I’m feeling sick inside, like the part of me that’s three wants to come out of my eyes, only I squeeze them shut tight and bite down on my teeth real hard and try to remember today I am eleven, eleven. Mama is making a cake for me tonight, and when Papa comes home everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you.

But when the sick feeling goes away and I open my eyes, the red sweater’s still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater to the corner of my desk with my ruler. I move my pencil and books and eraser as far from it as possible. I even move my chair a little to the right. Not mine, not mine, not mine.

In my head I’m thinking how long till lunchtime, how long till I can take the red sweater and throw it over the schoolyard fence, or leave it hanging on a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and toss it in the alley. Except when math period ends, Mrs. Price says loud and in front of everybody, “Now Rachel, that’s enough,” because she sees I’ve shoved the red sweater to the tippy-tip corner of my desk and it’s hanging all over the edge like a waterfall, but I don’t care.

“Rachel,” Mrs. Price says. She says it like she’s getting mad. “You put that sweater on right now and no more nonsense.”

.....

“But it’s not—”

“Now!” Mrs. Price says.

This is when I wish I wasn’t eleven, because all the years inside of me—ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one—are pushing at the back of my eyes when I put one arm through one sleeve of the sweater that smells like cottage cheese, and then the other arm through the other and stand there with my arms apart like if the sweater hurts me and it does, all itchy and full of germs that aren’t even mine.

That’s when everything I’ve been holding in since this morning, since when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally lets go, and all of a sudden I’m crying in front of everybody. I wish I was invisible but I’m not. I’m eleven and it’s my birthday today and I’m crying like I’m three in front of everybody. I put my head down on the desk and bury my face in my stupid clown-sweater arms. My face all hot and spit coming out of my mouth because I can’t stop the little animal noises from coming out of me, until there aren’t any more tears left in my eyes, and it’s just my body shaking like when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast.

But the worst part is right before the bell rings for lunch. That stupid Phyllis Lopez, who is even dumber than Sylvia Saldivar, says she remembers the red sweater is hers! I take it off right away and give it to her, only Mrs. Price pretends like everything’s okay.

Today I’m eleven. There’s a cake Mama’s making for tonight, and when Papa comes home from work we’ll eat it. There’ll be candles and presents, and everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you, Rachel, only it’s too late.

I’m eleven today. I’m eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one, but I wish I was one hundred and two. I wish I was anything but eleven, because I want today to be far away already, far away like a runaway balloon, like a tiny *o* in the sky, so tiny-tiny you have to close your eyes to see it.

Reviewing

Eleven

Discussing the Selection

1. According to Rachel, the narrator of this story, why is being eleven so hard?
2. Describe Rachel and Mrs. Price, her teacher. Use specific details that show what each character is like.
3. Why doesn't Rachel stand up for herself? Explain what you would do in her situation.
4. What similes are used to describe growing old? Do they sound like comparisons an eleven-year-old girl might make? Decide whether you think they are effective.

Writing a Description

What do you remember about being eleven? Write a paragraph describing the “one person in the world who is you.” What did you look like? What were some of your favorite things? What people, situations, or events from this year will stick in your mind for a long time?

About Sandra Cisneros (1954–)

When Sandra Cisneros was growing up, her large Mexican-American family moved from one rundown Chicago neighborhood to another. They also went back and forth to Mexico to visit relatives. She coped with these painful moves by retreating inside herself and writing poetry, eventually editing the literary magazine for her high school. Cisneros's novel *The House on Mango Street* (1984) is a classic of American literature and a favorite on teachers' reading lists. In 1995, the author won the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, one of the most prestigious and high-paying awards in the arts world. By writing honestly and poetically about growing up poor and Latina, Cisneros creates stories that appeal to readers everywhere.



Previewing

I'm Nobody! Who Are You?

by Emily Dickinson

Primer Lesson

by Carl Sandburg

Reading Connection

At first glance, 19th-century poet Emily Dickinson and 20th-century poet Carl Sandburg don't seem to have much in common. She was a celebrated loner; he was a poet of the people, sociable and outgoing to the end of his life. But both poets are identified with free verse—poetry that doesn't require regular patterns of rhythm, rhyme, or line length. Though she also wrote traditional poetry, Dickinson was a pioneer of less-structured forms, often experimenting with punctuation and phrasing. For Sandburg, the conversational rhythms of free verse were a natural way of showing his kinship with common Americans.

Skill Focus: Personification

Both the Dickinson and Sandburg poems employ personification. This literary technique involves giving human characteristics or traits to nonhuman things. As you read each poem, notice what traits are assigned to things that aren't human. Think about how personification contributes to meaning.

I'm Nobody! Who Are You?



Emily Dickinson

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—Too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise—you know—!

How dreary—to be—Somebody!
How public—like a Frog—
To tell one's name—the livelong June—
To an admiring Bog!¹

5



1 **bog**: a stretch of wet, soggy ground