

*Important Concepts . . .*

# **Preview Review**



*Language Arts*

*Grade 9*

*W3 - Lesson 1: The Short Story*

Important Concepts of Grade 9 Language Arts	Materials Required
W1 - Lesson 1 .....Paragraph Structure	Textbooks
W1 - Lesson 2 ..... The Persuasive Paragraph	<i>ResourceLines 9 / 10</i>
W1 - Lesson 3 .....The Business Letter	
W1 - Lesson 4 ..... Business Letter Assignment	
W1 - Lesson 5 .....Paragraphs and Business Letters	<i>SightLines 9</i>
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Language Arts Grade 9  
Version 5  
Preview/Review W3 - Lesson 1

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# Preview/Review Concepts for Grade Nine Language Arts



*W3 - Lesson 1:  
The Short Story*

# OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, you should

- define the term *short story*
- be familiar with some of the basic elements of short stories
- identify basic elements in stories you read
- have begun thinking of ideas for your own story

## GLOSSARY

Refer to *ResourceLines 9/10*

**flat character** - a character who expresses only one type of personality trait, such as greed; usually appears in short stories due to limited space for developing a character

**prose** - fiction and non-fiction using spoken or written language (Types of prose include novels, short stories, plays and traditional stories.)

**round character** - a character whose thoughts and behaviours demonstrate several personality traits, similar to real people (Round characters usually appear in novels.)

**stock character** - a recognizable “type” or stereotype (Examples include the dashing hero, the helpless maiden, and the evil villain.)

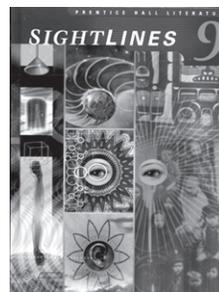
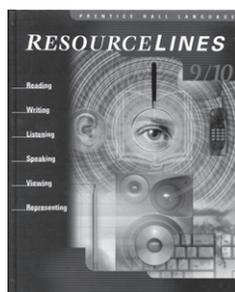
## Welcome to Language Arts 9 – Preview/Review!

Welcome back. If you have just joined the Preview/Review program, welcome. This program will help you to master certain key elements in the Grade Nine Language Arts curriculum. Each lesson focuses on a specific skill, *tool*, or strategy that you will use in future English/Language Arts courses and, in other courses, too, because reading, writing, and other communication skills are skills you use to learn in any subject.

You may be working through these lessons on your own, or you may be in a classroom situation. Be sure to try to answer the questions on your own first because you will learn more if you have done your own thinking about each question. If you are using these lessons in a classroom, keep in mind that your teacher might provide substitute activities to do in groups or pairs.

At the back of each booklet, you will find a learning log called **News, Clues, and Reviews**. Here is where you may note the main ideas you have learned in each lesson, along with questions or examples. This will give you a study guide for review. It will also help you to be sure you have understood the concepts in the lesson.

You need the textbooks, *ResourceLines 9/10* and *SightLines 9*, to complete some of the assignments.



## Overview

This lesson contains the following topics and activities:

- Glossary
- Overview
- What is a Short Story?
- Setting
- A Sample Story
- Characterization
- Plot
- Learning Check 1: Building a Plot Diagram
- Conflict
- Learning Check 2: Using Conflict Questions
- Theme
- Learning Check 3: Deciding on a Theme
- Story Starters
- Summary of W3 - Lesson 1
- News, Clues, and Reviews

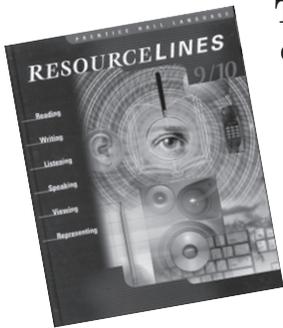


## Teacher Suggestion

Unit 3 introduces a variety of elements and techniques for understanding and writing short stories and is intended to guide students in the creation of their own stories. These stories are to be shared with peers at the end of the week.

There is a large amount of information offered in this unit. It is suggested that students use the majority of time creating their own stories. Briefly discuss each concept then encourage students to refer to the teaching notes as they enhance and polish their stories for sharing.

## What is a Short Story?



The short story is a type of prose fiction that can be read or told in one sitting. Short stories were commonly published in newspapers and magazines, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, short stories are the oldest form of prose literature.

This lesson focuses on the elements that make up short stories. Read pages 41-44 in *ResourceLines 9/10*. This will introduce you to the basic short story elements and techniques.

## Setting

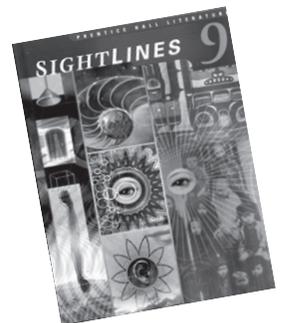
The setting of a story is the time (time period, time of year), place, and *milieu* (political or social situation) of the story. A story always has a setting. Usually, the setting is described at the beginning of the story.

## Ice Storm

Read the story, “What Happened During the Ice Storm”, on pages 66-67 of *SightLines 9*.

In this story, you learn much about the setting in the first paragraph. For example, we learn that it is winter and there has been freezing rain that has coated everything with ice. You learn, because of the words *farmers*, *livestock*, and *barns*, that the story takes place in the country.

This is a very short story. It is only four paragraphs long. Yet, you learn even more about the setting as the story progresses. For example, you learn that the story likely takes place in fairly modern times because there are roads and the house has lights. You also learn that the storm continues throughout the story.



In some stories, the setting is a fairly minor part of the story. In others, the setting may play a large role. In some stories, the setting may even pose the problem for the main character. Which do you think is the case in “What Happened During the Ice Storm”?

Often, the setting helps to create the mood of the story. (You will examine mood in greater detail later in this unit.) For example, the mood of a story that takes place in a dark forest on a November evening is probably going to be very different than the mood of a story that takes place on a sunny, spring day.

When you read a story, pay attention to the setting.

## A Sample Story

“The Three Little Pigs” will help us examine some of the other elements of short stories. Why has a story for young children been chosen for this? For one thing, it is short. For another, most of you are familiar with it. Do not worry. You *will* read more age-appropriate stories in this unit, as well.

In case you are not familiar with this story, here it is:

### The Three Little Pigs



Once upon a time there were three little pigs, all brothers. One day, the time came for them to go out into the world to seek their fortunes. Their mother told them that if they worked hard and always did a good job, they would do well in life.

So, they waved good-bye to their mother, and set off together through the forest.

After a while, they came upon a pile of straw. The first little pig, who was rather lazy, was getting tired, so he decided to stop and build a house of straw, because it was easy to do.

The second and third little pigs didn't think that a straw house would be strong enough, so they walked on until they came upon a pile of sticks. Here, the second little pig decided to stop and build his house of the sticks.

The third little pig didn't think a stick house would be strong enough, either, so he continued on his way. He remembered his mother's words, and he wanted to do a good job and build a strong house, so he waited until he found the right kind of mud for making bricks. He worked hard and made enough bricks to build a snug and strong little house.

Now, in the same forest lived a Big, Bad Wolf who had a particular fondness for pork chops. He decided to eat those little pigs. Because the house of straw was the weakest, the wolf decided to start with the pig who lived there. He knocked on the door and said, “Little pig. Little pig. Let me come in.”

“Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin,” said the little pig.

"Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!" roared the Big, Bad Wolf. And that is what he did, and he "wolfed down" the first little pig.

The wolf then decided to try the house of sticks.

He knocked on the door and said, "Little pig. Little pig. Let me come in."

"Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin," said the little pig.

"Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!" roared the Big, Bad Wolf. Because the house of sticks was stronger than the house of straw, it took the wolf a few tries, but eventually he succeeded in destroying the house of sticks, and he ate the second little pig, too.

Finally, the wolf then came to the house of bricks.

He knocked on the door and said, "Little pig. Little pig. Let me come in."

"Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin," said the little pig.

"Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!" roared the Big, Bad Wolf. So, the wolf huffed, and he puffed, and he huffed, and he puffed, but he just could not blow down that brick house. He was disappointed, but then he noticed the chimney on the roof.

"Aha! I'll get in that way," he said to himself, and he began to climb up onto the roof.

However, the smart little pig saw him do this, and he quickly lit a roaring fire in the fireplace. Then he placed a large pot of water over the fire.

When the Big, Bad Wolf came down the chimney, he fell, with a splash and a howl, right into the pot of boiling water, and that was the end of the Big, Bad Wolf.

The hard working, third little pig lived happily ever after.

## Characterization

Another important element of short stories is characterization. A short story usually focuses on one main character.

The author often reveals more and more about the character as the story goes along. Sometimes, the character changes or learns something in the story (**dynamic** character). Sometimes the character remains the same (**static** character). By examining whether the character changes, the reader can often learn something about the author's message.

A character in a short story can also be round, flat, or stock. A **round** character is one that is quite realistic, with many different characteristics. The reader learns much about this character and why he or she acts in a certain way. A **flat** character, on the other hand, has only a few characteristics that are revealed to the reader. There really is not room in a short story for the author to develop all of the characters in detail, so the minor characters are usually flat characters. Sometimes, they may be **stock** characters. A stock character is a recognizable "type" or stereotype. The nosy neighbour and the evil villain are examples of stock characters, as is the Big, Bad Wolf of many children's stories. Stories written mainly for entertainment often contain stock characters. In stories that have a deeper meaning, the major characters are hardly ever stock characters.

In “The Three Little Pigs”, we learn more about their characters as the story progresses. We learn that the first little pig is the laziest pig, for example. We also learn that the third little pig is a hard-working pig who listens to his mother’s advice. However, we do not learn much more about them because they are stock characters. Many fairy tales have three brothers or sisters, two of whom have negative characteristics and one of whom has positive characteristics.

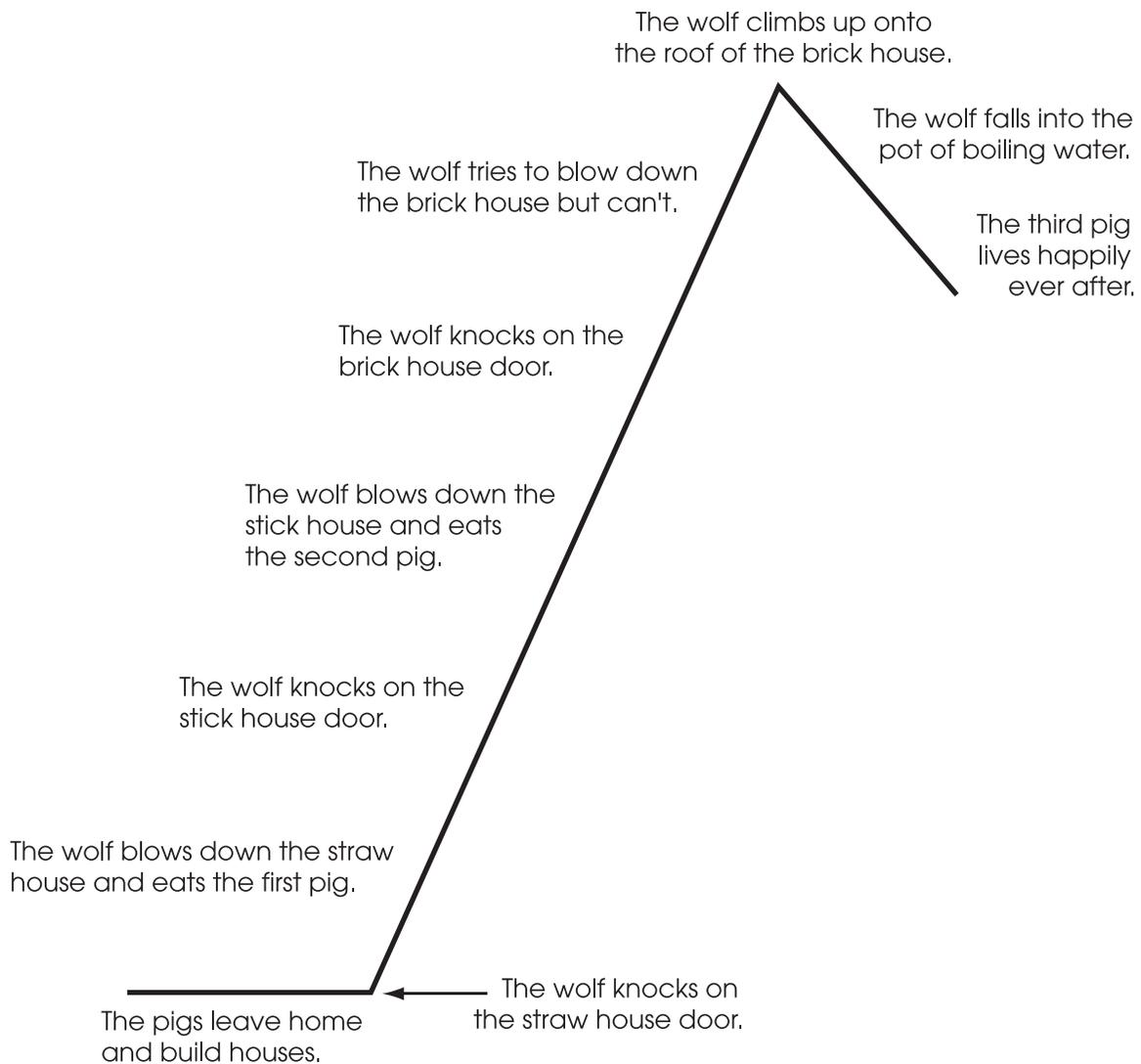
Understanding the characters is often an essential part of understanding a story.

### Plot

The plot is the sequence of events in a story. The diagram on page 41 of *ResourceLines 9/10* shows the basic sequence for the plot of most short stories:



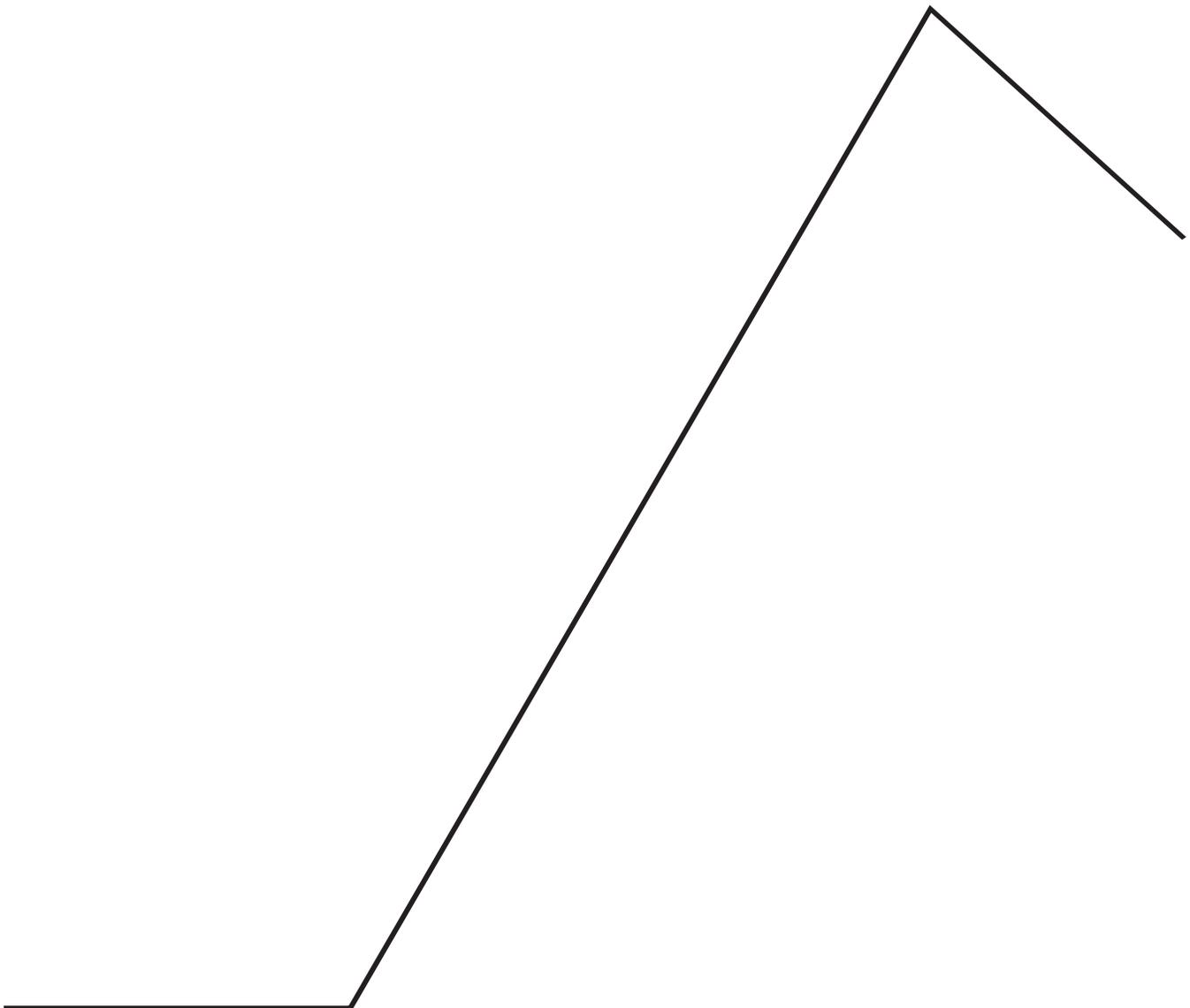
Does “The Three Little Pigs” follow this sequence? Look at the diagram below.



Note that this diagram includes the **exposition**—the part of the story that comes before the initial incident. The exposition often gives information about the setting and the character(s). In this diagram, “The pigs leave home and build houses in the forest” is a brief summary of the exposition.

### Learning Check 1: Building a Plot Diagram

Make a plot diagram for the story, “What Happened During the Ice Storm”. Use the blank diagram below to help you.



## Conflict

The essential ingredient of plot is conflict. Without conflict there would *be* no story. Can you imagine if the three pigs had all listened to their mother? What if there had been no Big, Bad Wolf? What if there were no giants, no dragons, no wicked stepmothers, no Coyote, no Nanabush, no Wesakechak<sup>1</sup>, and no Anansi<sup>2</sup> to cause conflicts? Those old stories would not have been very interesting at all. Conflict makes a story interesting. It makes the plot happen.

In any short story conflict, there is a **protagonist** and an **antagonist**. The protagonist is the main character. The antagonist is the character, force, or idea against which the main character is struggling. In other words, the antagonist presents a problem for the protagonist. Do not confuse protagonist and antagonist with “good guy” and “bad guy”, however. The protagonist is not necessarily good or all good, and the antagonist is not necessarily bad, or all bad. In escape fiction or simple stories (such as fairy tales), this may be the case, but most well-written literature is not so simplistic. The characters, especially the main character or protagonist, tend to be more dynamic than that - just like real people.

The **initial incident** is the first point of conflict in the story. It is where the conflict begins, or where the reader first gets a glimpse of an ongoing conflict. For example, in “The Three Little Pigs”, the initial incident occurs when the wolf knocks on the door of the straw house.

The **rising action** is the increase of conflict. As the story unfolds, the problem becomes more intense and the **suspense** builds.

**Suspense** is tension created by the conflict in the story. It is the feeling of wondering “What is going to happen next?” and “How is all this going to turn out?”

The tension builds until the conflict reaches its **climax**. This is where the protagonist must face the antagonist for the “final showdown”. This is the point where the conflict is about to be resolved, one way or another.

Finally, the **resolution (dénouement)** is the outcome of the conflict or the solution of the problem. This is where the reader learns how everything turned out.



<sup>1</sup> Coyote, Nanabush, and Wesakechak are “trickster” characters in some First Nations stories. They often cause things to happen, for bad and for good. In other words, they are frequently the source of conflict.

<sup>2</sup> Anansi is a trickster character in some African stories.

Note: Conflict is not necessarily a physical fight between two characters. It may be a competition to win a race. It may be a struggle between two people with different ideas and expectations, such as conflict between a parent and a teen. It may be a character struggling against the forces of nature in a fight for her survival. The conflict may be internal where the character struggles with his own conscience or fears. The struggle may be between an individual or group and society, where someone resists society’s rules or fights for equality or acceptance. Conflict can take several different forms.



## Types of Conflict

The types of conflict that occur in short stories can be summarized as follows:

- **Person vs. Herself/Himself:** The protagonist is in conflict with herself. She must overcome some fear, idea, or characteristic to accomplish a goal, or she must make a difficult decision.
- **Person vs. Person:** The protagonist struggles against another character in the story. The protagonist and antagonist are usually people, but they may also be other creatures or objects that have been personified.



- **Person vs. the Environment:**  
 The protagonist struggles against a situation in which he finds himself. The situation may involve the physical environment (e.g. a man struggles to save his livestock from a flood), or it may involve the social environment (e.g. a disabled person strives to overcome prejudice and prove he can do a certain job). This second type of conflict is sometimes referred to as “Person vs. Society.”

## Learning Check 2: Using Conflict Questions

1. Who is the protagonist in the story, “The Three Little Pigs”?
2. Who or what is the antagonist?
3. In a sentence or two, describe the main conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist in this story.
4. What is the main conflict in the story, “What Happened During the Ice Storm”?  
What are your reasons for thinking so?

## Theme

The theme of a story is the central idea or message the story expresses. The theme is often an insight about people, life, or society. It is the message that the author is trying to communicate to the reader.



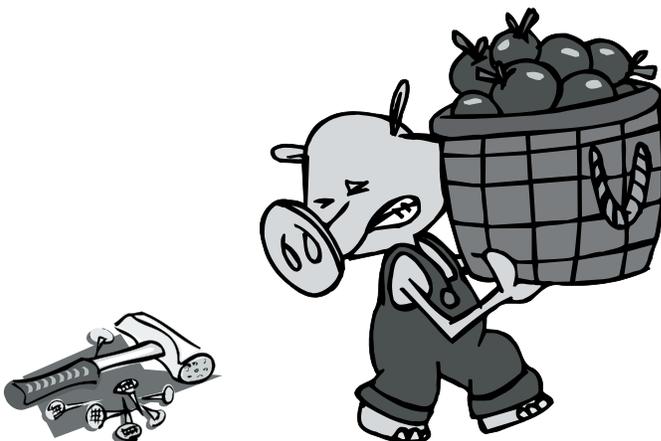
A theme can never be expressed with just a single word. For example, *love* is not a theme. Instead, ask yourself, “What is the author trying to say about love?”

Sometimes, it is tempting to try to sum up a theme using a cliché or a moral. “Love is blind” is not a theme; it is a cliché. A story that is written for young children, or a story that is written mainly for entertainment, might have such a simplistic theme, but in most “good” literature, and certainly in most literature that you will study in school, the author explores a much more original idea.

Theme is sometimes called the “unifying” concept of a story. To unify means to join or bring together. Therefore, the theme must be an idea that combines all of the elements in the story. All of the parts of the story must fit that theme. Nothing can be in the theme that is not explored in some part of the story. In other words, all parts of the story match the theme.

On the other hand, a theme should not be so narrow that it applies only to that story. It should apply to life or to people in general, or perhaps to a certain aspect of life or a certain type of person. For example, the theme of “The Three Little Pigs” is not *A pig builds a brick house and outsmarts a wolf*. Instead, it is something like *Hard work and doing one’s best can help give a person security in life*.

When you are trying to determine the theme of a story, realize that no answer is right or wrong. However, your theme must account for all of the details in the story, and you must be able to defend your theme, if necessary, by referring to these details. That is, a theme may be appropriate or inappropriate.



## Learning Check 3: Deciding on a Theme

Decide on a likely theme for “What Happened During the Ice Storm”? Write it in a sentence or two. You may find help in reading the questions at the bottom of page 67 in *SightLines 9*. If you are in a classroom situation, your teacher may ask you to work with a partner for this.

Remember, a theme is not a single word (such as “happiness”), nor is it a moral or a cliché. It is an observation about people, life, or society. It should be supported by the details in the story.



## Story Starters

In this unit, you will write a short story of your own. Today, you begin thinking of ideas for your story.

One way to begin is to decide upon the conflict for your story. Remember that conflict is at the core of every short story. Without conflict, there *is* no story. Deciding on the conflict is an effective beginning.

Here are some ideas for conflict that might occur in a story:

1. A conflict occurs between a parent and a teenager.
2. A romance goes wrong.
3. Someone is trying to win a competition.
4. Someone is trying to survive in a hostile environment.
5. Someone is facing a physical challenge.
6. Someone faces an inner conflict over doing the right thing.
7. Someone learns self-confidence or self-acceptance.
8. Someone has to learn to deal with a difficult person.
9. Someone is in a new or strange situation (e.g. new community, new school).
10. Someone has a difficult decision to make.



Take one of these ideas, or think of one of your own, and brainstorm for more specific ideas for your story.

### Brainstorming

Think of as many ideas about the topic as you can. Do not stop to think about whether the ideas are good or bad. Just write them and keep on going until you cannot think of anything more. You might set a time limit (for example, 5 minutes) for a brainstorming session. When you are finished, you can go through the ideas, select the ones you want to use, and organize them.

For more information on brainstorming, read “Here’s How: Brainstorming” on pages 145-147 of *ResourceLines 9/10*.

Save your ideas. You will use them in the next lesson.



## Summary of W3 - Lesson 1

- A short story is a work of prose that can be read or told at one sitting.
- The elements of short stories include setting, characterization, plot, conflict, and theme.
- Setting is the time, location, and milieu in which the story takes place.
- Characters may be static or dynamic. They may also be round, flat, or stock characters.
- The plot of a short story usually follows this sequence:  
initial incident → rising action → climax → resolution
- A short story must have conflict.
- Conflict occurs between the protagonist (main character) and antagonist (something or someone that poses a problem for the protagonist).
- Types of conflict include person vs. person, person vs. the environment or society, and person vs. him/herself.
- The theme of a short story is the author’s message about life, society, or people in general.

## News, Clues, and Reviews

### News

Extra! Extra! Here are three new ideas I learned in this lesson:



1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Clues

Here is a question or an example I thought of for each of the above ideas. When I thought of a question, I tried to find the answer, and I wrote it below the question:

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

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Reviews

Use the notes you made on this page to help you review for tests.

