

## **Short Story Assignment**

Short story writers use the various techniques we have been (and continue) to work with: fictionalizing reality, creating and developing characters through interviews or character charts, practicing perspective, inserting dialogue, revealing tone, and plotting conflict. All the writing exercises we have practiced have readied you for this first assignment.

### **Task:**

Write a short story that develops at least one character, incorporating the elements of fiction writing that we have practiced: perspective, tone, characterization, plot development, detail and setting. You may include dialogue or symbols if you want, but it's not a requirement of this assignment.

### **How do you begin?**

Fiction is often divided into plot/action driven vs. character driven work. But any good writing will need to carefully develop both. A great action story ends up being flimsy without meaningful, real characters, and by the same token, richly developed, round characters fall flat without well thought-out conflict (doesn't have to be action, the conflict could be internal). Begin by looking through your journal or exercises for either a character or incident that sets up a problem that needs solving. Or, write down several conflicts or problems on paper and pick one with your eyes closed. There are hundreds of ways you can begin; the most important thing is to begin.

### **How long should it be?**

It's difficult to say. A short story might be fully fleshed-out in a few pages and have interesting, round characters with fully a fully realized plot. Or, it may take a dozen or twenty or thirty pages to do so. I don't expect a twenty or thirty page story, however, you should plan on 3-5 pages as a rough estimate. If you have trouble filling those pages, you might want to sign up to have your story workshopped or see me during office hours for feedback.

**Rough draft due: 3/21    Final Draft due: 3/28**

**These are my expectations for an “A” story. Use them as a guide.**

<b>Characterization:</b>	<i>Advanced:</i> Characters are strongly drawn, clearly separate and fully developed. The main character(s) are presented in multiple ways (appearance, action, thoughts, speech, etc.). They behave "within" their character. They have a past and a future.
<b>Plot:</b>	<i>Advanced:</i> What the conflict is in the story is clear and the importance of it to the characters is convincing. Actions will produce new situations which will produce new actions. The characters will struggle with their problems in interesting and meaningful ways. The story will have a satisfying and logical climax that is the culmination of the proceeding events.
<b>Setting, Narration and Exposition, and Appeals to the Senses:</b>	<i>Advanced:</i> Where the story takes place is clearly drawn and has an impact on the story. The reader will experience the story through multiple appeals to several senses. An appropriate amount of the story is shown rather than told.
<b>Style (use of language):</b>	<i>Advanced:</i> The style is appropriate to the story and heightens its effectiveness. This may include interesting and appropriate figurative language, diction and syntax. Sentences will be varied in length and type. The relationships between the parts of the story will be smoothly handled and clear.
<b>Mechanics:</b>	<i>Advanced:</i> The story will be closely proofread and will contain few or no errors in punctuation, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, capitalization, etc. The manuscript is "clean" and in proper format.
<b>Overall:</b>	<i>Advanced:</i> All the elements of the story will work together in a successful way. The meaningfulness of the narrative will be apparent, compelling and artful.