

## English 1 CP Original Short Story

Name:

### I. Introduction – Observations on Story-Telling and Reality

#### A. Observations from *Famous Novelists* about **the Art of Writing Fiction**:

- “Write what you *know*.” —Mark Twain
- “I write to *discover* what I know.” —Flannery O’Connor
- “My belief is that art should *not* be *comforting*; for comfort, we have mass entertainment and one another. Art should provoke, disturb, arouse our emotions, expand our sympathies in directions we may not anticipate and may not even wish.” —Joyce Carol Oates
- “Novels are for readers, and writing them means the crafty, patient, selfless construction of *effects*. I think of my novels as being something like *fairground rides*: my job is to strap the reader into their car at the start of chapter one, then trundle and whizz them through scenes and surprises, on a carefully planned route, and at a finely engineered pace.” —Sarah Waters

#### B. Observations from *Wise Humans* about **The Nature of Reality**:

- “Every human being has a personal legend to be fulfilled, and this is our reason for being in the world.”  
—Paulo Coelho, novelist
- “We don’t accomplish anything in this world alone, and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one’s life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something.”  
—Sandra Day O’Connor, former Supreme Court Justice
- “We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.”  
—Thich Nhat Hanh, author & Buddhist monk

Story-telling is an art form that has existed as long as human beings have. We humans are story-tellers. From works more ancient than Homer’s *Odyssey* to those more recent than S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*, writers have used the raw material of their lived personal experience, combined it with human imagination and hard work, and created the ultimate result out of words on a page: human beings whose stories come to life in our minds as we read. As readers, we follow these characters through vivid experiences that challenge and even change them. In the best of these stories, we feel not only entertained, but moved by what we’ve experienced and learned, by characters we’ve known and what they’ve done. As the novelist Joyce Carol Oates suggests in the quotation above, perhaps a great story—like any great work of art—can expand our sympathies enough to aid in the mysterious process that makes us better humans.

### II. The Assignment – An Original Short Story

For this assignment, **compose an original short story of 750 to 1,500 words** with the following traits:

1. **Give your protagonist (or main character) some of your own interesting and important personality traits.** Use *some* of the knowledge, skills, experiences, thoughts, feelings, hopes, goals, hobbies, passions, beliefs, or even uncertainties that you possess from personal experience. Give your protagonist both “real” and “imagined” traits.
2. **Make your story reflect some aspects of the Hero’s Journey archetype.** Choose the most interesting aspects of the Hero’s Journey archetype to use in the telling of your story. (Note: It can be fun to use imagery—or descriptions involving sensory details—to symbolically represent an element or stage of the Hero’s Journey.)
3. **Communicate a theme about an issue of importance—such as relationships, growing-up, morality, injustice, human nature, survival, friendship, or love.** And remember not to treat human beings as objects in your story; depictions like that can encourage readers to see people as objects, which is a harmful delusion to have about others. Notice this advice that novelist Sarah Waters gives to aspiring writers: “Respect your characters, even the minor ones. In art, as in life, everyone is the hero of their own particular story; it is worth thinking about what your minor characters’ stories are, even though they may intersect only slightly with your protagonist’s.”

A complete list of grading criteria is coming next week.

Story Ideas  
Character Ideas  
Conflict Ideas