Short Stories

Collection 1

Plot and Setting

Informational Text Focus: Text Structures

Writing Workshop: Personal Narrative

Listening & Speaking Workshop: Presenting an Oral Narrative

Collection 2

Characters

Informational Text Focus: Comparing Treatment, Scope, and Organization of Ideas

Writing Workshop: Short Story

Listening & Speaking Workshop: Giving a Speech of Introduction

Collection 3

Theme

Informational Text Focus: Analyzing Text Structures

Writing Workshop: Response to Literature

Listening & Speaking Workshop: Presenting a Response to Literature

Collection 4

Style

Informational Text Focus: Evaluating a Summary

Writing Workshop: Technical Documents

Listening & Speaking Workshop: Presenting and Responding to an Instructional Speech

UNIT 1

Short Stories

Writers on Writing



Ursula K. Le Guin on Short Stories Ursula K. Le Guin has written hundreds of short stories and many books for adults, young adults, and children, including the Catwing series and the Books of Earthsea. She is best known for her fantasy and science fiction writing, which explores ideas about culture, gender, race, and class.

Unit Resources

Resources for opening and closing the unit

Collections 1, 2, 3, and 4 Resources, on-level practice and assessment

Writers on Writing Study Guide, p. 1

- Collections 1-4 Diagnostic Tests
- Collections 1-4 Vocabulary Reviews
- Collections 1-4 Summative Tests

On Course: Mapping Instruction

Teacher One Stop™, on-level lesson plans and all print resources

Formal Assessment, Benchmark Tests 2

ThinkCentral Online Assessment, Collection Diagnostic and Summative Tests

ThinkCentral Online Remediation

"There have been short stories as long as there have been people. In the ages before we had writing, we told our stories aloud—animal fables, legends of gods and heroes, folk tales, joke tales, ghost stories. We still tell tall tales around a campfire and read bedtime stories aloud to little kids. The modern short story grew out of all those forms. Writers and readers love the short story because it can tell so much in so few words.

There are almost as many ways to write short stories as there are short stories. Some stories are very neat, with a tight, jack-in-the-box plot that pops a surprise out at the end. O. Henry was such a master of this kind of story that his name is still used to describe it. Many stories have no trick ending, but their plots are full of action and suspense. Other stories go along without very much happening and end quietly. A story that seems to have little action can still deeply involve your mind and emotions and imagination. What makes it a story is that *something happens.* It may happen through conflict or violence, or it may be a quiet discovery, something learned, or lost. But at the end of the story, *something has changed.*

If you want to write fiction, the short story is the best place to start. But 'short' isn't 'easy'! A story can start out almost anywhere, but it can't just stop anywhere. During a story, *something changes.* The writer needs to know beforehand: What's going to change as this story happens? Where is it all going to end up? And how is it going to get there? You don't have to know every detail beforehand, but you need to have the idea of it in your head. Then, knowing where you're going, you don't have to go in a big rush. You can take it easy, so long as you keep following your story to where it's headed. And always remember to bring the reader along with you!

A short story can be an adventure, or a warning, or a portrait, or a picture of a whole way of life, or a meditation about right and wrong, or a dream, or a nightmare. Many stories are written purely for entertainment and nothing more. Many are written to show people something fascinating or wonderful or terrible about our life on earth, to let us share the writer's deepest thoughts and feelings.

All storytellers use fiction to tell what they think is true. They have always done this, and always will, because often the only way to tell the truth, and to get people to listen to the truth, is to make it into a story."

Think as a Writer

Le Guin writes that "often the only way to tell the truth, and to get people to listen to the truth, is to make it into a story." What truths can you teach through a story? What truths have you learned through a story?

More About the Writer

Ursula K. Le Guin (1929–) has published numerous works in a variety of genres, including poetry, science fiction, fantasy, realistic fiction, screenplays, and essays. Her writing includes more than 100 published short stories and twenty novels. Three of her books have even been finalists for both the American Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Her book *Always Coming Hom*e won the National Book Award. Her writing is often thought-provoking, exploring moral and social issues. Le Guin once described herself as an artist, saying:

"Authors are writing artists. I think people restrict the term 'artist' to mean painters and sculptors, but you can practice art in whatever medium you choose. Words are my medium."

Think as a Writer

- Tell students that in this unit they will read a variety of short stories from different genres.
- Ask students to think about short stories they have read in the past. Encourage them to share any "truths" they learned from the stories.
- As they read the stories, ask students to think about the "truth" the story teaches.