

Session 2: What is the Short Story?

You think **differently** reading, thinking silently, talking, writing.

What is this story supposed to do?

What is your goal as a writer in this particular work?

(Sometimes stories shift and become different. The writer has to let it become what it will be, the writer cannot force the story into some outline if the characters are going in a different direction.)

A lot about what short stories are **NOT**

Mao said, "A revolution is not a dinner party." A short story is not a dinner party. Nor is it a novel (or a proto-novel or a little shrunken-down novel.)

Readings

Anderson	Written in 1924 Rebellion against constructed plot Against the idea of ONE idea for a story – "conceit"
Gordimer	a kind of creative vision a moment
Munro	a house enclosing space, not a road to create a feeling
Updike	ambiguous and opaque as life itself
Wharton	guidelines, not rules Unities – through one pair of eyes – unity of character

So what is a short story?

- unity of time
- singularity of point of view
- (unity of place)

Capture the moment of **understanding change** – a snapshot

This moment of change is the "now" moment. This is the most central issue in the story.

Give the reader **insight** experientially, not just intellectually so the reader can enter in.

The reader experiences the "now" moment.

The character's realization and the reader's don't necessarily match up – sometimes it is very satisfying to the reader to understand something a character doesn't.

Short story in contrast to novel vs. short story as a singularity – it is dense. There is no space and no wordage to spare. Every word must count, and if any image/word/character/action can do double or triple duty, then it should!

Short stories are extremely efficient.

The short story is not necessarily linear! (Munro essay) This is one of the central structural differences between the short story and the novel. Novels have an underlying linear structure even if the prose and expression of that structure is not linear. The short story is all about the single moment of change, and gives the information the reader needs to realize that moment. So the structure centers on that moment and does not need to be causal.

What is it **about**?

What is the author trying to convey?

Where are the subtleties?

Author's knowledge?

** Both stories – **Place** is central. **

Place? Character? Barbies?

Fiction and the idea of suspension of disbelief – (but not hang it until dead)

Look at your lists – the good things and the bad things – choose one. Think about it as a "seed idea."

(This is how we work from life – or one of the **primary** ways)

You don't have to have a story, but it should take you **somewhere**.