

故事使用之一方式

A Way to Use a Story When Applying a Literary Theory

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Abstract

Applying a literary theory into a story is helpful for one to understand the story. A teacher can use this same understanding to consider how to utilize a story in the classroom. This paper will introduce a literary theory called New Criticism. This theory will be used to analyze two stories, which are Carlson's (1988) *I like me!* and Rosen's (1990) *Little Rabbit Foo Foo*. From the analysis of the stories, this paper will offer questions that a teacher can choose to use. A teacher will have one more way to teach a story in the classroom.

Keywords: New Criticism, story

摘要

文學理論有助於對故事的了解，教師可思考如何善用故事。本文介紹一個文學理論叫新評論(New Criticism)，將新評論 (New Criticism)應用於兩個故事的分析，這兩個故事是 Carlson (1988) 的 *I like me!* 和 Rosen (1990) 的 *Little Rabbit Foo Foo*。故事分析後，問題被提供，教師可有多一種方法在教室進行教學。

關鍵字：新評論、故事



It is good to understand a literary theory. A literary theory can help one analyze a story so that one can better understand the story. Then, a teacher can think about how to use the story in the classroom. As a result, the teacher can have one more way to effectively teach. Students can also benefit from this style of teaching. This paper is going to introduce a literary theory, called New Criticism and then use the theory to analyze stories. After that, a way to use the stories in the classroom is suggested.

New Criticism

New Criticism emphasizes the importance of a text. The meaning of a text comes from the words. Belsey (1980) says, "Their New Critical insistence on the words of the text became an orthodoxy in its turn" (p. 15). The words in a text are used to describe objects, situations, and developing events. As these three factors are put together, they can help convey meaning of a text and provide an experience. The idea that three factors can involve forming an experience can be understood as follows:

Eliot was particularly influential in his formulation of the "objective correlative" ["a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of [a] *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately invoked"],.... (Guerin, Labor, Morgan, & Willingham, 1979, p. 75)

As these factors are combined, they produce a human experience that can be expressed in a narrative. As stated in, *Narrative as a Primary Act of Mind*, "... narrative is a basic way of organizing human experience" (Hardy, 1977, p. 12).

It is common for people to use narratives to think. Huck (1994) states, "Narrative,...., is a primary act of the mind (Hardy, 1978) and children make narrative do for 80 to 90 percent of their thinking" (p. 4). People use narratives to describe objects, situations, and developing events to explain their experiences. A story is also a narrative that is filled with objects, situations, and developing events. A story can help children reinforce their narrative competence and undergo a new experience which enables them to understand the meaning of the story. Also, children can gain insight and learn language from the story.

This paper is going to apply New Criticism into two stories. The two stories are Carlson's (1988) *I like me!* and Rosen's (1990) *Little Rabbit Foo Foo*. These two stories were chosen because they are simple. The two stories' simplicity makes it easy to show how to analyze them. These two stories are intended for young children, such as kindergarteners and first graders, to read. This paper will use objects (characters), situations, and events to analyze the two stories. From the analysis of the two

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stories, this paper will provide questions that a teacher can choose to use in the classroom. If the teacher uses the questions, it is suggested that a student's English ability be at least at a level to be able



to simply express his or her ideas. The teacher can also use the questions to teach reading and writing. This paper will first examine Carlson's (1988) *I like me!*. Then, the paper will look at Rosen's (1990) *Little Rabbit Foo Foo*.

Analysis of Carlson's (1988) *I like me!*

This story's main character is “me,” the girl pig. The situation of the story appears to be about the main character, the girl pig, being in conflict with some people or society. The developing events in the story include the main character drawing beautiful pictures, riding a bicycle quickly, reading good books by herself, taking care of herself, brushing her teeth, keeping herself clean, eating good food, telling herself that she looks good, saying to herself that she likes her curly tail, round tummy, and tiny little feet, cheering herself up when she feels bad, picking herself up when she falls down, trying again when she makes mistakes, and always being herself so that she likes herself.

The analysis of the story above can turn into a question-and-answer form. By answering the questions, one can understand the character, situation, and events in the story. The answers to the questions can also help one comprehend the meaning of the story and gain insight from the story.

1. Who is the main character?

The main character is "me," the girl pig.

2. What is the situation?

It seems that the main character is in conflict with some people or society. Some people or society may think negatively of the main character because she is a pig. Some people or society may think that she is too heavy, she is not good looking, she is moody, and she is clumsy. They may also think that the girl pig has no abilities, she has bad habits, and she makes mistakes .

3. How does the main character deal with the situation?

The main character explains that she is good to be with, she is skilled at drawing beautiful pictures, and she can ride a bicycle fast. She has good habits such as reading good books, brushing her teeth, keeping herself clean, and eating good food. She is comfortable with her looks and body parts. She is good at cheering herself up and not giving up when she makes mistakes. No matter where she goes or what she does, she enjoys being herself.

4. What is the meaning of the story?

This story uses a pig as a metaphor to show how people usually look at a child, especially a heavy child. The pig, who is the main character, does not allow some people's opinions of her to affect her. She feels comfortable with her skills, her habits, and her looks. She is self-confident.



5. What insight do readers gain from this story?

This story uses the first person point of view to draw readers in and to identify with the main character so that readers learn not to allow other people's negative opinions of them to influence them. Instead, readers can learn to appreciate their skills, good habits, and appearances. They can also learn to take care of themselves when they feel sad and try again when they make mistakes.

A Way to Use a Story

To utilize the questions that are stated above is one way for a teacher to use a story in the classroom. These questions are listed here:

1. Who is the main character?
2. What is the situation?
3. How does the main character deal with the situation?
4. What is the meaning of the story?
5. What insight do readers gain from this story?

In addition, a writing activity can be provided. A writing activity can be given to students so that students can show their understanding of the story, their narrative ability, and their skill in expressing their ideas in English.

The following is a suggested writing activity. The writing activity can be very simple. It can just have students write what the story is about. Then, a teacher will know if students have the ability to write a narration, understand the meaning of the story, gain insight from the story, and have learned to explain their ideas in English.

A Writing Activity

What Is the Story about?

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Analysis of Rosen's (1990) *Little Rabbit Foo Foo*

The main character is Little Rabbit Foo Foo. The situation is that Little Rabbit Foo Foo scoops up and hits field mice, wriggly worms, tigers, and goblins on their heads while riding through the forest. He bullies these animals and creatures. The developing events are that the field mice, the wriggly worms, the tigers, and the goblins tell the Good Fairy that Little Rabbit Foo Foo scoops them



up and hits them on their heads. The Good Fairy wags her finger at, points her finger at, waves her umbrella at, and swings her purse in a circle towards Little Rabbit Foo Foo. The Good Fairy does these actions as she warns Little Rabbit Foo Foo to stop bullying these creatures. The Good Fairy gives Little Rabbit Foo Foo three chances to change his behavior. Since Little Rabbit Foo Foo does not change his behavior, the Good Fairy uses her purse to hit Little Rabbit Foo Foo and turn him into a goonie.

The analysis of the story above can turn into a question-and-answer form. By answering the questions, one can understand the characters, situation, and events in the story. The answers to the questions can also help one comprehend the meaning of the story and gain insight from the story.

1. Who is the main character?

The main character is Little Rabbit Foo Foo.

2. What is the situation?

The situation is that Little Rabbit Foo Foo is riding his scooter through the forest. He scoops up field mice, wriggly worms, tigers, and goblins. Then, Little Rabbit Foo Foo hits these creatures on their heads.

3. How do the main and minor characters deal with the situation?

The field mice, the wriggly worms, the tigers, and the goblins tell the Good Fairy that Little Rabbit Foo Foo is bullying them. The Good Fairy tells Little Rabbit Foo Foo to change his behavior. Little Rabbit Foo Foo does not change his behavior. So, the Good Fairy turns Little Rabbit Foo Foo into a goonie.

4. What is the meaning of the story?

Little Rabbit Foo Foo is bullying the field mice, the wriggly worms, the tigers, and the goblins by scooping them up and hitting them on their heads. He is told by the Good Fairy to change his behavior. After continuously failing to change, Little Rabbit Foo Foo is turned into a silly, foolish creature, called a goonie.

5. What insight do readers gain from this story?

This story uses the third person point of view to guide readers to see if they are naughty and don't change, they will eventually be punished.

A Way to Use a Story

Just like the questions from the previous story, Carlson's (1988) *I like me!*, the questions stated above can be used by a teacher when discussing a story in the classroom. The questions are listed here:



1. Who is the main character?
2. What is the situation?
3. How do the main and minor characters deal with the situation?
4. What is the meaning of the story?
5. What insight do readers gain from this story?

Also, like the previous story, Carlson's (1988) *I like me!*, a writing activity can be provided. A writing activity can be given to students so that students can show their understanding of the story, their narrative ability, and their skill in expressing their ideas in English.

Just like the previous story, Carlson's (1988) *I like me!*, the following is a suggested writing activity. This writing activity can help a teacher know if students have the ability to write a narration, understand the meaning of the story, gain insight from the story, and have learned to explain their ideas in English.

A Writing Activity

What Is the Story about?

Implication

A literary theory is a useful tool to analyze and to better understand a story. It can also help a

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teacher consider how to use a story in the classroom. The questions developed from the theory can be applied to many stories. So, a teacher can conveniently use these questions to help students understand many other stories and learn from the stories. In short, a teacher can have one more way to teach. Students can benefit from this teaching method. If more literary theories can be understood and applied into stories, a teacher will have more ways to teach in the classroom.

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