

Pick of ONE of the following short stories for your Short Story Journals:

“Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” by Joyce Carol Oates

“Cathedral” by Raymond Carver

The Journals will help you explore your chosen short story and develop a good critical question for your essay. Good critical questions call attention to problematic details in the text, stimulate conversation, and provoke readers to return to the story to reread and rethink.

Short Story Journal 1

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

1. As you read the story, stop at several points and predict what you think will happen in the rest of the story. Make your first stop a couple of pages into the story, choose a second stopping place in the middle, and stop a third time couple of pages from end. In each case, predict what you think will happen next and note what in the short story causes you to make your prediction. (Write for at least 3-4 minutes for each prediction)
2. As soon as you finish your reading, write down your immediate responses to the story: What emotions did it trigger? What questions does it raises? What did you find confusing? and so on. (Write for at least 5 minutes)
3. What interested most you about the story? Explain why it interested you. What is the most important question you're left with after reading the story? How would you answer that question? (Write for at least 5 minutes)

DUE: 23 January

Short Story Journal 2

THE ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Write on each of these four elements for at least 5 minutes.

PLOT

What is the single most important moment or event in the story? Why do you see this moment as important or crucial?

SETTING

What is worth noting about the story's setting? What is the setting? How does it change? How would the story be different if it was set in a different place and time? Consider multiple aspects of time, location, atmosphere, and so forth, to determine the role setting plays in the unfolding events.

CHARACTERS

Who do you think is the most important character in the story? How does this character change or grow as the story progresses? How do the other characters promote or inhibit change in the main character? How do the other characters help you see and understand the main character's change?

POINT OF VIEW

What is the story's point of view? What is the narrator's role in the unfolding events? How do the narrator's perceptions filter your understanding of the story? Do you consider the narrator's perceptions reliable, or does the text suggest alternative understandings? Is the narrator's way of seeing part of what the story is about?

DUE: 28 January

Short Story Journal 3

TURNING POINT QUESTIONS

Using the following Turning Point Questions as a model, write **THREE** specific questions about this story.

1. Changes in A Character:
 - a. How do circumstances change for the character? What provokes each change of circumstances?
 - b. How does the character's understanding or knowledge change?
 - c. How does your attitude toward the character change?
 - d. How does the character's relationship to other character's change?
2. Changes in Point of View:
 - a. How does the narrator's attitude toward the characters and events change? Does the narrator move closer or farther away from characters and events at any point?
 - b. How objective or biased is the narrator? If the narrator seems untrustworthy, at what point do you begin to question their objectivity?
3. Changes in Setting:
 - a. How does the time or place depicted in the text change? How are other changes in the text related to these changes?

Pick ONE of your turning-point questions and explore your own answer to it. (10 minutes writing time.)

STARTER QUESTIONS

Using the following Starter Questions as a model, write **TWO** specific questions about this story.

1. How does the short story's title contribute to your understanding of the story?
2. What does each of the major characters seek and want? What are each character's values?
3. What are the main conflicts in the story? What or who blocks the characters from reaching their goals? Are blocks internal, external, both? How much control do they have over achieving their ends?
4. How successful are the characters in achieving their goals? How do they respond to the outcome?
5. Among all the characters, who seems to best understand what happens and why?

Pick ONE of your starter questions and explore your own answer to it. (10 minutes writing time.)

DUE: 30 January

Short Story Journal 4

CRITICAL QUESTION, WORKING THESIS, & INFORMAL OUTLINE

1. Write out the **critical question** you want to ask about this short story in your essay. What makes this an interesting and significant question? What competing answers to this question might various readers of the story give? (Write for at least 10 minutes.)
2. Make an **informal outline** that explores your answer to this question. Your informal outline should include a **working thesis** and a bullet-points list of **evidence** you will use to support that thesis. Use details from the text and your own critical thinking to create an argument supporting your answer. (Write for at least 10 minutes.)

DUE: 4 February

Sample Critical Question

Why do the first lines of dialogue between Romeo and Juliet (1.5.94-108) take the form of a sonnet?

Sample Informal Outline

Working Thesis: The sonnet-dialogue Romeo and Juliet share when they first meet demonstrates how well matched the two lovers are and helps dramatize how quickly they develop a sense of intimacy.

- Alternate View: most people won't even *notice* that R&J are speaking a sonnet
 - Even if you don't consciously notice it, it can have an effect on you, like subliminal advertising.
 - Actors will know about the sonnet and use in their performance.
- Sharing a sonnet makes R&J seem like they were made for each other.
 - Trading lines back and forth makes R&J seem like an old couple who finish each other's sentences.
 - Juliet's replies make her seem just as clever and quick-witted as Romeo; they make a good couple.
 - By analogy, R&J fit together like the parts of a sonnet: the parts are greater than the whole.
- The progression of the shared sonnet demonstrates how quickly R&J fall in love.
 - The sonnet begins with the couple holding hands and ends in a kiss.
 - Units get progressively smaller (first quatrains, then couplets, then single lines, then a shared line) which makes it feel like they are literally getting closer to each other.