

### By the end of this lesson you should:

- Know the aspects to study in preparation for the September Examinations.
- Know the stories to study in “A Handful of Life”.
- Understand the different ways / approaches to unpacking the short stories.
- Understand the content (summary) of selected story.
- Possible examination questions/examples of questions to ask as you unpack the stories.

### FOR THE EXAMINATIONS

Prepare the following:

- Paper One:** comprehension, summary and language.
- Paper Two:** short stories (Sounding Wings or A Handful of Life, *selected stories*), novel (When The Rain Clouds Gather), poetry (Mosaic, *selected poems*) and drama (Romeo and Juliet).
- Paper Three:** creative writing, longer transactional text and shorter transactional writing. (Kindly draft your answers before you write your final version to be marked) (*refer to KZN 12's lesson one for the details*)

### A HANDFUL OF LIFE STORIES TO STUDY

**The Magistrate's Daughter, Strong Measures, An Oscar for Godfrey, The Overcoat, Noorjehan, The Road to Mecca, The Sisters and The Coffee-Cart Girl. (8 ONLY!)**

### STUDYING THE SHORT STORIES

As you read and/or study the short stories do the following on your own:

- Quickly scan and skim through the selected story.
- Read the story from the title up to the last line.
- What is the title of the story? What does it mean? What feelings / thoughts / ideas does it arouse? Use prior experiential knowledge to make some guesses and deductions about the story's title. Answers to the above questions will enhance your interest (expectations) and engagement of the story.
- Critically look at how the story begins. What is the writer's intention? How does this make you feel about the story? Are you getting too anxious? Study the exposition to the story and think deeply about the implications later in the story. This part always arouses reader's interest. Check the character/s that are introduced at this level. More often than not the story revolves around them.
- Take note of the different characters and events that make the plot of the story.
- Short stories don't have too many characters and events. They have a distinctly limited length. The short story's plot comprises of the introduction, development (rising action), climax and the ending /falling action / denouement
- Look at characterization: How are the characters presented? Are the characters described by others? Are the readers given a chance to make personal conclusions about characters based on what they do (roles) in the story? Take note of the characters and their roles in the story.
- Look at narration: How does the story teller present the events? Does s/he presides over and dominates the presentation of characters/events? Is s/he omniscient, sees all and is the window through which characters/ events have to be seen? Is s/he a narrator-character? In a story you can identify first person narration, third person narration and multiple narrations.
- Thoroughly look at the language and /or images that are used in the story. Link the events, the characters and images utilized by the story teller.
- What theme/s is presented in the story? What message/s is being conveyed in this story?
- Lastly, how does the story develop and end?

**These are not the only questions that you need to ask yourself. As an active reader ask yourself many others. Active readers interrogate the text; they enjoy looking critically at every symbol on the page. Read for both pleasure and understanding, you've examinations to write.**

**TO DO:** write a personal summary of each story. See format suggested below.

### SUGGESTED SHORT STORY SUMMARY STRUCTURE

**Author and title:** where possible do some research about the author, know something about him /her. This will enhance your understanding of the story in relation to: its time period, historical circumstances that might have influenced the author, style of writing, the writing conventions and associated interests. State the title and show how it links with the story as a whole / make any comment/remark about it. Engage the title!

**Setting /milieu:** Physical or non-physical place where events take place and the time of occurrence.

**Characters:** Enlist the characters in orders of significance/dominance in the story. You may briefly describe each character's role in the story.

**Plot/action-story line:** Briefly highlight the major events in the story. State what happens and who does it. Do this concisely and precisely. Your story line should cover all major aspects / events of the story.

**Theme (s):** Give what you think is the central idea in the story. Provide textual evidence for your chosen theme. Note that they could be more than one theme.

**Vocabulary:** Enlist a few strange words or strangely used words. Describe or give their contextual meanings briefly.

**This summary will act as a quick reminder to look at just before your examination day. Should there be aspects of the story that you cannot remember, refer to the text book. But note that such a summary will save you a lot of time. Once done share it with your peers and / or teacher to check and verify its completeness and relevance. Try to keep your summaries within 1-1.5 pages long.**

### EXAMPLE

#### The Magistrate's Daughter

**Allan Paton:** is a worldly acclaimed South African writer who suffered a lot of hostility during the period of apartheid in the country. The writer's interests include political and historical circumstances in the country, identity issues, race, power relations, etc. Some of his works involve challenging the oppressive political system, exposing the shortcomings of time, etc. The title evokes feelings of better life and difference, since the daughter comes from an educated and enlightened family. The reader is tempted to think of that she will be a proud, supportive and helpful child to her peers.

**Setting:** District/village, church, school/school grounds/residences

**Characters:** Magistrate's daughter (Hermione Parker), David Parker (Hermione's brother), Mrs. Parker, Elaine (Hermione's friend), Parkers' servant, Archie Garland, Mrs. Garland, Honest John (Archie's father), Mary (Archie's sister), Geoff Harrison.

**Plot:** The story presents divisions in a stratified (class) society. Hermione is a shallow-minded and arrogant young girl who thinks of herself. She is not compatible with Archie, a blacksmith's child. Archie, although needy is a very intelligent, talented and a skillful village school hero. He is a role model to many other kids at school. From a moral and intellectual point of view he is far better than her. Hermione attended a city school. Her limitedness does not allow her to see how good the young poor man is. Archie fell in love with her at first sight. Archie becomes David's friend, they play tennis, and he teaches him more skills. David admires Archie as a human being who deserves recognition and dignity despite his socio-economic background. He values his presence and skillfulness. He visits him at his home ('The Residency'), a strangely beautiful place to Archie. David visits a shop that belongs to Archie's dad. Mrs. Garland writes an invitation letter to the Parkers requesting kids to attend dance. Mary is uncomfortable with the arrangement since she sees the Parkers as belonging to an untouchable class. The response was negative, they never met, social walls prevented them. Archie is hurt and helpless.

**Theme (s):** Social stratification-an impediment to human freedom and intellectual / emotional growth. It stifles the feelings of self-sufficiency and self-fulfillment.

- Intelligence has nothing to do with colour / class / background.
- Love can transcend socially constructed barriers.
- Youth can be pure, serene and tranquil, only to be spoiled by adulthood and social illnesses (context).

**Vocabulary:** Check the meaning for each of the concepts used in this story. The meaning you choose should be context specific i.e. story related. What does the word mean in the story?

**Words to look at:** Ethereal, cruel, unattainable, righteous soul, indescribable, empress, servant, cricket, tennis, aura, adoration, hatred, arrogance, aristocracy, ecstasy, etc.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who were Hermione and Elaine?
- Who described the Parkers as “a stuck-up lot”?
- What does “a stuck-up lot” mean?
- Why did the speaker describe the Parkers as such?
- What do you make of Archie's father being called Honest John?  
What does this mean? Is it related to his job and how he was going about doing it?
- Contrast means opposites or differences. Clearly show how this story is developed around contrast.
- Briefly explain how David differed from his sister, Hermione.
- Archie's admiration for Hermione elicited different responses.  
Mary and David differed significantly. State and describe their responses.

- What do you make of Mrs. Garland's letter to the Parkers? What does this say about her?
- Briefly explain how the families contaminate the purity of the young people.
- What message would you think the writer is sending across to the readers?
- To what extent would you agree with that the story is reflective of apartheid South Africa? Give practical examples to illustrate your answer.

### QUESTION TYPES

- Questions based on the extract: you will be given an extract from which to derive the answers. The extract /passage will remind you of the story.

It is a springboard for ideas about the story.

Read it carefully.

e.g. **extracted text to read:**

**“And that was the end of the holiday friendship and the cricket and the tennis. Archie did not see his friend again. And he himself felt too hurt and shamed to go into the village street. But on the last day but one of the holiday, on the day of the dance itself, there were dozens jobs to do, and----“**

### Your questions:

- Who is Archie's friend?
- Why he too hurt and shamed to go into the village street?

To answer these questions you must refer to the story as a whole. The text given does not give you all the details.

Questions could vary from low order to high order types.

Read the given extract very carefully. Check the part (paragraph) of the extract to be attended before you write your answer.

- Recall questions you are expected to remember facts about the story.
- Middle order questions such as describe, explain, show the differences and/or similarities between/amongst, etc.
- Questions based on the story's theme could come as:  
What is the author interested in?  
What are the authors' concerns?  
How does the author view the things and the world around?  
What is the author's vision of life and the world?

Don't re-tell the story when asked such questions, rather show that you've read and understood the story. The theme emerges in and through the development of characters, dialogue, settings and the movement of the plot. Titles could give you some clues and cues into the theme. Identifying the theme is / should be preceded by the interpretation of the story as whole. Interpretation derives from characters, setting, plot, societal influences and experiences (history) and also literary forms. Ensure that you can give textual evidence for the chosen theme. So, engage the text carefully!

### 4. Opinion type questions-

You could be asked to give your interpretations and deductions about what is presented in a story e.g. an event or action. Refer to the text or support your answer /response with evidence from the story. Don't talk at a superficial level. In this case you must use your prior and experiential knowledge to give your opinion. You are less likely to get this wrong; such are subjective and open ended questions. The marker will listen to what you say and reward you accordingly as long as you have supported your answer adequately.

### 5. Language use-

Figures of speech and other artistic language usages should be understood and contextualized accordingly. Give the correct meaning of the figures of speech that the author has exploited. general language questions could come up as well.

### 6. Vocabulary-

You could be asked questions that demand understanding of words that have been used in the story.

**NOTE: You cannot answer questions set on both the short stories. Choose either Sounding wings or A Handful of Life. Answer or respond to all parts of the chosen question.**

**“Act well at the moment, and you have performed a good action for all eternity” Johan Lavater**

Until next time!! Enjoy!!

