

## MULTILITERACIES: TEACHING WITH SHORT STORIES

**Abstract:** Despite the recognizable advantages of exploiting literary works in the ESL classroom, language educators are challenged with not only addressing the cognitive and linguistic aspects of reading, but also emphasizing the sociocultural dimension of textual discourse. The Multiliteracies Framework for Language Teaching responds to this call by exploring reading as a socially situated practice during which learners interact with, analyze, and interpret texts, thereby promoting cross-cultural awareness and creative meaning construction. Towards that end, short stories offer a promising middle ground as textual resources due to their genre-specificity and rich thematic diversity. The following article provides a brief introduction to the MFLT and reading as meaning design (Part I) as well as two sample lesson plans based on Roald Dahl's classic short story, *The Umbrella Man* (Part II).

**Keywords:** multiliteracies, short stories, literature, ESL, Roald Dahl

## MULTIALFABETYZM: NAUCZANIE Z WYKORZYSTANIEM OPOWIADAŃ

**Streszczenie:** Pomimo rozpoznawalnych zalet wykorzystywania dzieł literackich w procesie nauczania języka angielskiego jako obcego nauczyciele stoją przed wyzwaniem nie tylko uwzględnienia kognitywnych i językowych aspektów czytania, ale także podkreślenia społeczno-kulturowego wymiaru dyskursu tekstowego. Multiliteracies Framework for Language Teaching odpowiada na to wezwanie, badając czytanie jako społecznie umiejscowioną praktykę, podczas której uczniowie wchodzą w interakcje z tekstami i je interpretują, promując w ten sposób świadomość transkulturową i kreatywne konstruowanie znaczeń. W związku z tym opowiadania oferują obiecującą propozycję dydaktyczną ze względu na specyfikę gatunkową i bogatą różnorodność tematyczną. Poniższy artykuł zawiera krótkie wprowadzenie do MFLT i czytanie jako *znaczeniowórcze* (część I) oraz dwa przykładowe plany lekcji oparte na klasycznym opowiadaniu Roalda Dahla *Człowiek z parasolem* (część II).

**Słowa kluczowe:** multialfabetyzm, opowiadania, literatura, ESL, Roald Dahl

## 1.1. Introduction

Among the legion of pedagogical materials available at all levels of language proficiency to teachers of ESL, literary works (e.g. novels, stories, poetry) have received the least attention despite the popularity of extracurricular reading among students, particularly at the collegiate level, as well as the proliferation of guided English readers which offer learners abridged versions of literary classics with simplified, controlled language and ancillary exercises, often targeting key lexico-grammatical features. Moreover, the extensive reading (ER) approach has gained a widespread following in recent decades, advocating for learners to read longer texts based on their preferences, not only for pleasure, but also to increase reading fluency with a focus on content. Incorporating literature in the classroom has numerous benefits, ranging from unquestionable cultural and language enrichment to promoting personal involvement by having readers engage with the text on an emotive level, thereby stimulating interest to an even greater degree. Studying literary texts also develops learners' interpretative and critical thinking skills, while actively encouraging language acquisition, especially for those who do not have daily contact with the second language (L2) (Collie, Slater, 1991: 3–6, Lazar, 1993: 15–21). Educators may nevertheless view the process of selecting level-appropriate texts and later preparing lessons for classroom use a daunting task, evidenced by the fact that both short stories and full-length novels are rarely accorded a place on syllabi in General English courses.

One commonly held opinion is that unabridged literary works risk being too cumbersome for intermediate students and should be reserved either for advanced levels or slated for those pursuing philological studies. Even as a supplement to the core curriculum, it may at first glance seem overly disjointed to devote more than one lesson to a piece of fiction which does not quite align thematically with the rest of the material. On the other hand, a crucial distinction must be made between *studying* literature and *using* literature as a textual resource, in other words, exploiting a short story or poem as the basis for activities in the foreign language (FL) classroom. Whereas the former aims at developing “literary competence” outrightly, the latter may have the same result, albeit indirectly (Lazar, 1993: 14). In order to bridge the gap between these concerns and the importance of including literature into ESL curricula with an emphasis on the sociocultural dimension of learning, this article will briefly explore the conceptual background of reading in the Multiliteracies Framework for Language Teaching (MFLT) in Part One as well as provide sample lesson plan ideas on the basis of the much-revered short story, *The Umbrella Man* by Roald Dahl in Part Two (2.1). An alternative lesson based on a dramatization of a short story has also been provided at the final section of the article (2.2).

## 1.2. Multiliteracies Pedagogy

Contemporary literacy is a multimodal concept, the teaching of which, in the wake of the ever-changing landscape of technological advancements, rapid globalization, and greater diversity, must equally reflect the pressing need for learners to deal with an increasingly pluralistic pool of new media, information, and discourses. Bearing this in mind, the New London Group revitalized SLA scholarship by expanding the traditional definition of literacy, in proposing to emphasize the cultural, historical, and linguistic dimensions of reading and writing in the process of textual interpretation known as design of meaning. It incorporates the following components: *Available Designs*, *Designing*, and the *Redesigned*. The first of these includes “all resources – linguistic, social, cultural – that a learner brings to a text to create meaning” (Allen, Paesani, 2010: 123). In *Designing*, or transforming the text (via a modification of grammar or vocabulary, re-writing the story or adding to it, etc.), students tap into their *Available Designs* and create new ones – “a transformed representation” – through a re-shaping and re-contextualization of meaning, which is then evidenced by the fresh resources of meaning produced for the student’s own purposes, i.e., the *Redesigned* (Allen, Paesani, 2010: 123). According to the MFLT, a given pedagogical sequence is structured around four constituents or pedagogical acts, which are not arranged hierarchically and may overlap (Figure 1 see Cope, Kalantzis, 2015: 1–36):

1. *Situated Practice* [Experiencing] or the “immersion in meaningful practices within a community of learners who are capable of playing multiple and different roles based on their background and experiences” (NLG, 1996: 85). Here, learners are encouraged to use spontaneous language with a focus on formulating hypotheses, opinions, and predictions through communicative activities in the target language. Activities might include brainstorming, categorizing information, in-class surveys, a silent viewing/previewing of a video and then asking students to subtitle the scene, or showing the title of a magazine article and eliciting responses regarding possible content therein.

2. *Overt Instruction* [Conceptualizing] or “active interventions on the part of the teacher and other experts that scaffold learning activities, that focus the learner on the important features of their experience [...] building on and recruiting what the learner already knows and has accomplished” (NLG, 1996: 85). It is essential that both the student and teacher collaborate in this explicit learning stage during which metalanguages are used to help guide and identify new resources of meaning design. With regard to literature, metalanguage would here imply introducing literary terminology, figures of speech, stylistic devices, etc. In practice, activities might include labeling parts of a text, dictionary work activities with lexical items, semantic mapping, or, as a learner-centered task, negotiating the meaning of a grammatical concept.

3. *Critical Framing* [Analyzing] or “helping learners frame their growing mastery in practice (from Situated Practice) and conscious control and understanding

(from Overt Instruction) in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice” (NLG, 1996: 86). For this stage, sample activities would include close or guided reading exercises, critical thinking questions related to the text, or a jigsaw-style reading, whereby students become experts on a given topic and later share their findings with the rest of the class.

4. *Transformed Practice* [Applying] or having students apply what they have learned and demonstrate “how they can design and carry out, in a reflective manner, new practices embedded in their own goals and values” (NLG, 1996: 87). The application stage requires students to use their newly acquired knowledge in the FL in a creative way (metacognition), but also to personalize that experience to fit their purposes. In Part II, several transformed practice activities have been provided, such as penning a continuation of the story or requesting a sequel, re-writing an unsatisfactory ending with a change in point of view, organizing a re-telling while practicing the narrative tenses, or staging a dramatization of the short story.

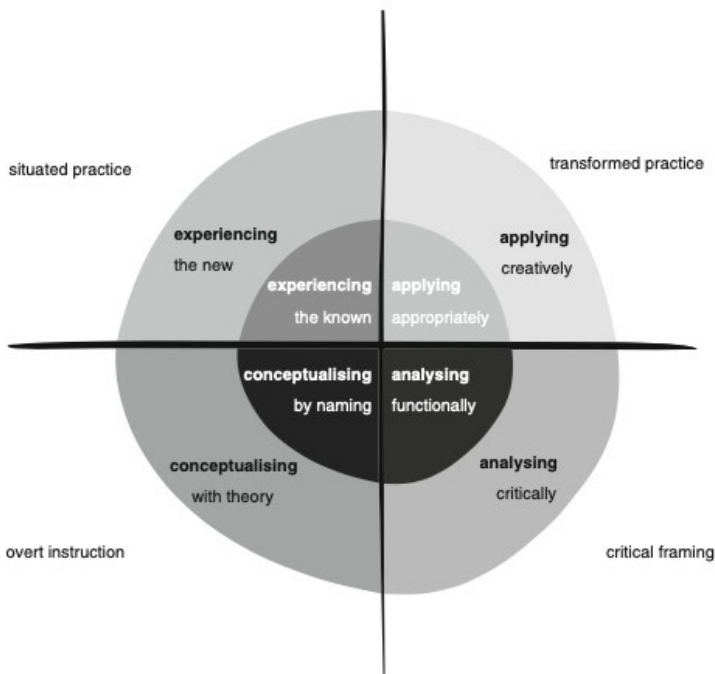


Figure 1. A representation of the original MFLT along with the “Knowledge Processes”

Source: Cope, Kalantzis, 2015: 5.

### 1.3. Reading Short Stories in the MFLT

In considering the aforementioned knowledge processes, short stories ought to be considered as promising examples of alternative, authentic texts for a classroom setting, insofar as they present not only situational language and promote linguistic enrichment in general, but likewise offer insight into the customs and history of the country where the target language is spoken, thus providing fertile ground for comprehensive study. Furthermore and due to genre-specific length and self-containment, short stories serve as an ideal conduit through which to introduce learners to English-language literature, encouraging the exploration of cross-cultural comparisons, and by the same token, emphasizing the sociocultural dimension of literacy – “the brevity of short stories makes them ideal for class discussion, and readers of all ability levels can finish reading an interesting story within a single class period. Perhaps the most valuable feature of all is simply that the short story allows students to deal, in depth, with a wide range of elements in literature” (Duke, 1974: 62). A discussion of Hemingway’s *Soldier’s Home* would undoubtedly necessitate a foray into the history of World War One, whereas a lesson inspired by Faulkner’s *Dry September* would require background knowledge of the civil rights struggle and status of African Americans in the American South; for example, one task might require researching contemporary episodes of discrimination against vulnerable minorities or the use of violence against out-groups in the learner’s home country. Therefore, as they approach a text, learners take part in the process of meaning design by interpreting and actively engaging with the text – “reading becomes a socially situated act that connects learners to the world around them. Linked to the sociocultural dimension of literacy is the idea that readers must determine an appropriate context for interpreting a written text, a context that is in part created by the features of a particular text or genre” (Paesani, Allen, Dupuy, 2016: 144). In combining backward and available designs, learners analyze, interpret, and think critically about the text, while also paying close attention to the sociocultural differences that require moving beyond a surface reading.

Still, the issue remains, that in spite of the ubiquity of short story anthologies available in English in affordable paperback, very few are designed specifically for (L2) in-class work, equipped with conceptual tools, author biographies, reading guides, and matrices, notwithstanding a few exceptions devoted to North American short stories.<sup>1</sup> It is likewise imperative to address one of the most overlooked aspects in FL teaching of reading that moves beyond the cognitive

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1 See J. Kay, R. Gelshenen (1997). *America Writes: Learning English through American Short Stories*. New York, and by the same authors (2008). *Discovering Fiction*, Vol. 1–2. Cambridge, as well as J.S. Mullen (1984). *Outsiders: American Short Stories for Students of ESL*. New York. For an alternative approach to teaching short stories with a focus on structural narrative, cf. B. Parkinson, H.R. Thomas (2000). Teaching short stories. In: *Teaching Literature in a Second Language*. Edinburgh, pp. 80–105. Regarding the selection of texts for classroom use and further lesson ideas, cf. G. Lazar (1993). Selecting and evaluating materials and Materials design

dimension and instead affords non-native learners both social and contextual clues, giving rise to a holistic and therefore, extrinsic approach to studying fiction as a literary genre, complemented by cultural enhancement and not just, as a means to an end, an exercise in practicing language forms. These types of didactic aids also allow the instructor unfamiliar with the teaching of literature to “immeasurably extend the students’ cultural awareness simply by drawing upon her or his own personal history and familiarity with the language” (Mullen, 1984: xxi). Reading must be treated as a multifaceted process that encompasses not only comprehension and emotional processing, but also interpretation underpinned by the life experience students bring with them to the classroom and later the application of that transformed or *redesigned* knowledge in the L2.

The following template offers a sample reading instruction sequence centered around the four pedagogical acts (see Table 1).

Table 1. Reading Instruction Sequence

	<b>Examples</b>
1. <i>Pre-Reading</i> to access background knowledge and make predictions about the text.	predicting, scanning for information, instructional conversations
2. <i>Initial Reading</i> to develop global comprehension of the facts or major events of the text.	sequencing of text elements, information mapping
3. <i>Detailed Reading</i> to link meaning with language forms used in the text.	reading text signals, synonym substitution, focusing on relationships
4. <i>Critical Reading</i> to explore rhetorical organization and genre features found in the text, evaluate knowledge gained from reading the text, or explore cultural concepts related to the text.	multiple interpretations, textual comparison
5. <i>Knowledge application</i> to demonstrate textual interpretation through transformation activities.	reading journal, text elaboration, story retelling

Source: from Paesani, Allen, Dupuy, 2016: 156.

The above sequence and accompanying examples work well with shorter literary texts or extracts as well as individual chapters, such as when studying a novel. Longer works, however, can be parsed into manageable sections which then

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and lesson planning: Novels and short stories. In: *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers*. Cambridge, pp. 48–61, 71–93.

require closer reading. Lastly, each activity should be adequately scaffolded so as to support students during each stage of the lesson.

## 2.1. Sample Lesson Plan: *The Umbrella Man* by Roald Dahl (1980)

**Author Biography:** Roald Dahl was born on September 13, 1916 to Norwegian parents in Llandaff, Wales. He was named after the famous arctic explorer, Roald Amundsen, whom his father greatly admired. After graduating from Repton School, he traveled extensively, on an expedition to Newfoundland and later to work for an oil company in Africa. Dahl joined the RAF (Royal Air Force) in 1939, where he served in Greece and the Middle East. It was during WWII that he began to write short stories for *the Saturday Evening Post*, only later turning to children's fiction with *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (1970), *The BFG* (1982), and *Matilda* (1988) among his most revered stories. He married American actress Patricia Neal and together they had five children (their eldest, Olivia, died tragically from encephalitis at the age of 7). They would divorce in 1983, leading to Dahl's second marriage to Felicity Ann Crosland. He succumbed to leukemia seven years later and is buried in Great Missenden (Buckinghamshire).

**Background:** Dahl was fond of reading bedtime stories to his children. When writing, he frequently portrayed villains as evil, sadistic adults who mistreat and despise children (perhaps modeled after the teachers he met at boarding school), whereas the stories themselves are mostly narrated from the point of view of children. He likewise incorporated dark humor and suspenseful plot twists, encouraging the imaginative and creative side of his young readers, without any explicit moralizing. *The Umbrella Man* was first published as part of a collection of nine short stories, anthologized in *More Tales of the Unexpected*.

**Summary and Themes:** A mother and daughter are visiting London when the rain catches them after exiting a café. All of a sudden, an elderly man approaches the pair with an offer to sell his expensive silk umbrella in exchange for the £ 1 taxi fare to return home, explaining that he has forgotten his wallet and that his legs are too weak to make the journey back. At the daughter's suggestion, the mother's caution gives way to compassion as she simply gives him the money, but the man refuses her seemingly charitable act, instead insisting on offering them the umbrella. Strangely, the ostensibly feeble man scurries off while dodging traffic, landing at a pub in order to indulge his penchant for drinking, as the duo soon discover. Having downed a treble whiskey in one gulp, the man selects a wet umbrella from the stand and exits the pub, in search of another unsuspecting victim... Dahl's short story explores the parent-child dynamic and the supposedly authoritative role the former plays. The narrator details her mother's "suspicious"



nature who, in the end, falls prey to a con man's ruse. Thus, *The Umbrella Man* highlights the notion that appearances may indeed be deceiving and questions the trustworthiness of first impressions, while demonstrating the potential gullibility of even the most skeptical among us.

### Stage One: Pre-Reading Activity Examples<sup>2</sup>

**Critical Reflection:** Observe and reflect on the following images. What does each represent? Where and when might you see them? Share your thoughts with a partner and then provide a brief title (or subtitle each appropriately).<sup>3</sup>



**Quote Analysis:** Many languages have a version of the proverb “All that glitters is not gold.” (Italian: *Non è tutto oro quel che luccica*, French: *Tout ce qui brill n'est pas or*). It was popularized by William Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice* (Act II, Scene 7). What does it mean? Give an example. Does your language have an equivalent expression?

**The “Gullible Person” Test:** In the link below, you will be asked thirty questions which assess your susceptibility to outside influence based on data collected by researchers. Discuss your results with a partner – do you agree or disagree with the results?  
Link: <https://www.idrlabs.com/gullible-person/test.php> [accessed: 4 April 2023].

Discussion (in pairs):

- What types of scams can you name? What comes to mind when you hear the word “scam?”
- Have you ever been ripped off when buying something?
- What advice would you give to someone to avoid being scammed?
- What should be the punishment for these types of crimes?
- Are these crimes common in your country?

**Stage Two: Initial Reading Activity Examples (Negotiation of Meaning).** Ask students to search their dictionaries for the part of speech for each word or phrase, a definition, as well as where it can be found in the story. For adjectives in the vocabulary bank, students should find both one synonym and one antonym.

<sup>2</sup> All quotes from the text are taken from Dahl (1996: 115–123).

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://unsplash.com> [accessed: 22 May 2023].



Over Instruction

Vocabulary	
banana split	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Part of Speech: n.</li> <li>2. Definition: <i>a dish of ice cream and banana cut in half, often topped with syrup, nuts, and whipped cream.</i></li> <li>3. In the story: “I had a banana split and my mother had a cup of coffee.”</li> </ol>
bushy (e.g. eyebrows)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4. Antonym and Synonym.</li> </ol>
stammer	not to bat an eye(lid)
clasp	sternly
trickster	to sidestep
to dodge	to scuttle
snug	to sum someone / something up
stony-faced	have a nerve
to tilt	to rush / run someone off their feet
to scurry	to peer
golden rule	beastly

**Alternative Stage Two Activities:** Story Map (Figure 2) or Plot Diagram (Figure 3) for more advanced students. Additionally, a “Survey the Structure and Compare” activity can be found below (adapted from Mullen, 1984: 170–171).

Figure 2. Story Map

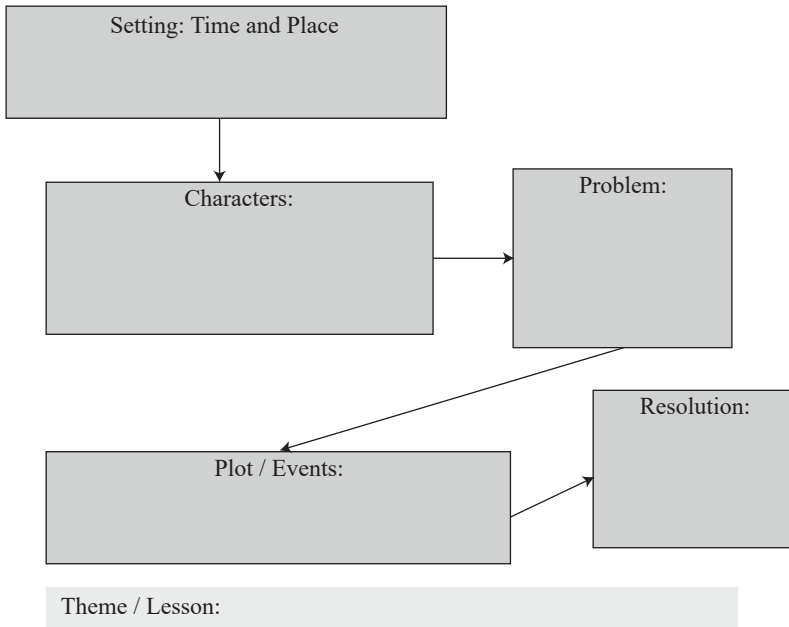
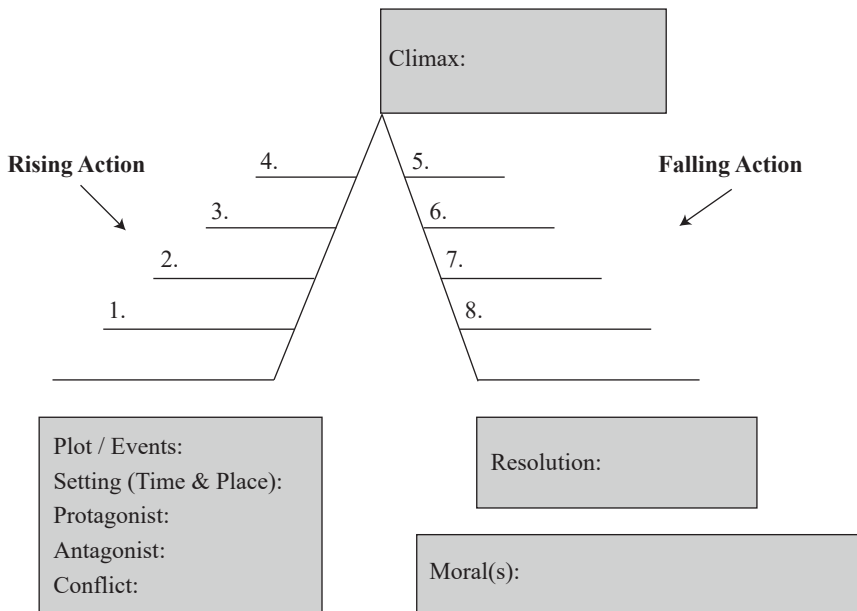


Figure 3. Plot Diagram



**I. Setting:**

- a. The place where *The Umbrella Man* is set is\_\_\_\_\_.
- b. The time of year might be \_\_\_\_\_, when the weather in this part of the country is \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. The time of day might be \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. What type of mood (i.e. the author’s attitude toward the subject) is the author trying to display? \_\_\_\_\_.
- e. The setting for *The Umbrella Man* is important because \_\_\_\_\_.

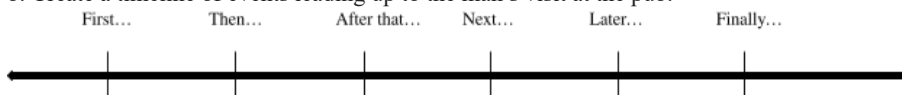
**II. Characters:**

- a. The major characters in *The Umbrella Man* are\_\_\_\_\_.
- b. What is the point of view from which the story is being told?\_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Can you describe the narrator? Why do you think Dahl chose him / her?\_\_\_\_\_.
- d. What is the relationship like between mother and daughter? \_\_\_\_\_.
- e. How is the man in the story described? Does he seem trustworthy at first glance? Would you consider him a real, hardened criminal or an endearing character? Elaborate.  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Source: adapted from Mullen, 1984: 170–171.

**III. Plot:**

- a. What is the conflict in the story?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Create a timeline of events leading up to the man’s visit at the pub.



- c. Why is the mother suspicious of the old man?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- d. What happens at the Red Lion? Describe what they see.  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- e. What is the resolution of the story (the conclusion of the plot)? Were you satisfied after reading it?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**IV. Themes and Symbols:**

- a. “Of course. But I bet he prays like mad for rainy days.” Explain this quote.  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- b. What are some of the mother’s maxims / words of advice for her daughter. Would you consider the mother an authority figure? Why or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- c. What is the major theme (the central idea) of *The Umbrella Man*? Are there any minor themes?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

d. Are there any symbols present in the story? If so, what do they represent?

\_\_\_\_\_.

e. Is there a moral value to this story? For children? For adults?

\_\_\_\_\_.

**Stage Three:** Detailed Reading Activity Examples (1) A gap fill exercise with quotes from the text or (2) “Discovering the Story through Observation and Inference” (adapted from Mullen, 1984: 49–50). In the latter exercise, students will be given an excerpt from the story from which they must *infer* certain facts. One sample student response has been provided.

(1)

A. “I saw my mother looking at him suspiciously. She is a suspicious person, my mother. She is especially suspicious of two things – strange men and boiled eggs. When she cuts off the top of a boiled egg, \_\_\_\_\_ to find a mouse or something. With strange men, she has a golden rule which says, ‘ \_\_\_\_\_ the more suspicious you must become.’ This little old man was particularly nice. He was polite, \_\_\_\_\_. He was well-dressed. He was a real gentleman. The reason I knew he was a gentleman was because of his shoes. ‘ \_\_\_\_\_ ’ was another of my mother’s favourite sayings. This man had beautiful brown shoes.”

B. “My mother’s chin was up and she was staring down at him along the full length of her nose. It was a fearsome thing, this \_\_\_\_\_ of my mother’s. Most people go to pieces completely when she gives it to them. I once saw my own headmistress begin to \_\_\_\_\_ when my mother gave her a really foul frosty-noser. But the little man on the pavement with the umbrella over his head didn’t bat an eyelid. He gave a \_\_\_\_\_ and said, ‘I beg you to believe, madam, that I am not in the habit of stopping ladies in the street and telling them my troubles.’”

C. “‘Come under here and keep dry, darling,’ my mother said. ‘Aren’t we lucky,  
\_\_\_\_\_’

‘Why were you so horrid to him in the beginning?’ I asked.

‘I wanted to satisfy myself he wasn’t a trickster,’ she said. ‘And I did. He was a gentleman. I’m very pleased I was able to help him.’

‘Yes, mummy,’ I said.

‘ \_\_\_\_\_,’ she went on. ‘Wealthy, too, otherwise he wouldn’t have had a silk umbrella. I shouldn’t be surprised if he isn’t a titled person. Sir Harry Goldsworthy or something like that.’

D. “The little man was standing by the bar with the\_\_\_\_\_. He was smiling now, and a sort of golden glow of pleasure was spreading over his round pink face. I saw his \_\_\_\_\_, as though searching for one \_\_\_\_\_ whisky.

Slowly, he turned away from the bar and edged his way back through the crowd to where his hat and coat were\_\_\_\_\_hanging. He put on his hat. He put on his coat. Then, \_\_\_\_\_, he lifted from the coat-rack one of the many wet umbrellas hanging there, and off he went.”

(2)

<b>Observation:</b>	<b>Inference:</b>
<p>“I’m going to tell you about a funny thing that happened to my mother and me yesterday evening. I am twelve years old and I’m a girl. My mother is thirty-four but I am nearly as tall as her already.”</p>	<p><i>The narrator only briefly describes herself– she’s much too concentrated on the banana splits! She divulges her mother’s age and, like all children, compares herself to her elders. There’s a grammatical error – “my mother and me” (as opposed to I). Lastly, the sentence structure is very simple, a bit unsophisticated (12 y/o).</i></p>
<p><b>Additional textual fragments to be used:</b></p>	
<p>“Just then a man came up to us. He was a small man and he was pretty old, probably seventy or more. He raised his hat politely and said to my mother, ‘Excuse me, I do hope you will excuse me . . . ’ He had a fine white moustache and bushy white eyebrows and a wrinkly pink face. He was sheltering under an umbrella which he held high over his head.”</p>	<p>“I saw my mother’s hand feeling for the clasp of her purse. She saw me watching her. I was giving her one of my own frosty-nosed looks this time and she knew exactly what I was telling her. Now listen, mummy, I was telling her, you simply mustn’t take advantage of a tired old man in this way.”</p>

<p>‘He went in that door!’ my mother said. ‘I saw him! Into that house! Great heavens, it’s a pub!’ It was a pub. In big letters right across the front it said THE RED LION.</p>	<p>‘That’s my pound!’ my mother hissed. ‘By golly, he’s got a nerve!’ ‘What’s in the glass?’ I asked.</p> <p>‘Whisky,’ my mother said. ‘Neat whisky.’ The barman didn’t give him any change from the pound.</p> <p>‘That must be a treble whisky,’ my mummy said. ‘What’s a treble?’</p> <p>‘Three times the normal measure,’ she answered.</p>
<p>“We followed him back to the main street where we had first met him, and we watched him as he proceeded, with no trouble at all, to exchange his new umbrella for another pound note. This time it was with a tall thin fellow who didn’t even have a coat or hat.”</p>	

**Alternative Stage Three Activities** (Lazar, 1993: 85):

<p><b>Understanding Plot</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students write a brief summary of the plot in 50 words. They then write another summary in 100 words and see what they have added.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students provide ‘titles’ for each paragraph.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are given a series of ‘jumbled’ sentences which summarise the plot. They have to re-order them.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are given three slightly different summaries. They have to decide which is the best one.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Understanding Characters</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students choose from a list of adjectives which ones are most appropriate for describing a particular character.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students rank the characters in the story according to certain traits; for example which character is the most or least active, passive, aggressive, gentle, decisive, etc.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students write ‘references’ for different characters as if they were applying for a particular job.</li> </ul>

**Stage Four:** Post-Reading Activity Examples (1) Diary Entry recounting the event of the day, particularly useful as a review of narrative tenses or (2) Story Sequel from the perspective of the con man.

Transformed Practice

(1)

30 July 1955  
Saturday  
5 p.m.

Dear Diary,

*The oddest thing happened to mummy and me this afternoon...*

(2) As a preface to this exercise, you may wish to acquaint your students with the following article by Patrick Flavin, *5 Notorious Con Artist Cases (and What Did Them In)* (2022).

Link: <https://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/justice-studies/blog/con-artist-cases/> [accessed: 6 July 2023].

Your title _____
<p><b>Assignment Instructions for <i>The Umbrella Man</i>, cont'd...</b></p> <p>* You will be tasked with writing a sequel to <i>The Umbrella Man</i>, but written from the perspective of the elderly gentleman. A change of narrator is therefore necessary. You must also create a different meaning for the story (i.e. purpose), perhaps allowing the reader to enter into the mind of a con man in order to understand his motivation. You might want to chronicle his potential metamorphosis, showing his character's growth and change over time. Organize the events / narration logically while also providing effective dialogue. Use correct grammar and punctuation.</p>
<p><i>'He could go on doing this all night,' I said.</i></p> <p><i>'Yes,' my mother said. 'Of course. But I'll bet he prays like mad for rainy days.'</i> [...]</p>

## 2.2. Dramatization of a Short Story (adapted from Wajnryb, 2003: 150–152)

**Lesson One (Initial Reading):** Divide *The Umbrella Man* into three (or more) parts, such as:



“A Rainy Day” – Exposition and character description
“The Deal” – Dialogue sequence
“The Chase” – Mother and daughter follow the elderly gentleman

After the initial reading stage of the entire story as a class, divide students into three groups, assigning one section to each. Ask students to re-read their part of the story, paying particular attention to the traits (behaviors, mannerisms, appearance etc.) of each character.

Time permitting and as an added dose of inspiration, you may wish to show the class a TV adaptation of the story from the popular series *Roald Dahl's Tales of the Unexpected*, starring Michael Gambon and John Mills. Steve Hume (2020). *The Umbrella Man* [Video] YouTube, <https://youtu.be/vy7cuOjEUqc> [accessed: 5 May 2023]. (Nota bene: the film version differs considerably from the story).

**Lessons Two, Three, and Four (Detailed Reading):** In small groups, students will collaboratively turn their section of the story into a mini script. Wajnryb offers the following helpful suggestions when planning the performance and script-writing stages:

- Discuss and act out in your group how the main characters would have acted and looked.
- Consider what props and costumes could be used to enhance the performance.
- What language do you want to keep, throw out or amend?
- [*In preparation for scriptwriting*] Highlight or mark those parts that are crucial to the story's action and momentum (Wajnryb, 2003: 152).

Have the class reassemble, asking students to allocate roles amongst themselves, compare and contrast their character analyses, and edit a final draft of the script, while ensuring a performance faithful to the story's narrative thread. Allow ample time to rehearse, in preparation for an in-class (or all-school) dramatization complete with costumes and props.

**Lesson Five (Transformed Practice):** The students' performance, which can be taped for discussion or evaluation purposes.

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