

# Text analysis: a short story

## *Girl* by O. Henry

Here are the four parts of the story we read in class. This worksheet will guide you through the analysis of the text and serve you as an example of part of the exam you will take at the end of the year. Go through each step carefully.

Work in pairs. You will have to hand in a paper with your answers. One per pair in sufficient.

Read the text again and make sure you understand everything.

### **Exercise 1: Summarize the passage by answering the questions:**

a) Who are the main characters?

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b) What is the plot about – what is happening?

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c) When does the story take place?

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d) Where does the story take place?

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➤ **Now, write the summary (use phrases from “how to talk about a document”):**

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*This summary will serve as an introduction to the oral presentation about your reading at the exam. It needs to be short but contain enough element so that the person listening to you can understand the plot.*

**Exercise 2: Read the passage that was given to you more carefully. Write which part it is and answer the questions as a preparation:**

Part : .....

a) Who are the main characters in this passage?

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b) What are they doing?

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c) Where does the scene take place?

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d) When, in the story, does this scene take place? Write in a few words, what happens before and what happens after the passage.

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➤ **Now, write a summary of the passage and situate it (use phrases from “how to talk about a document”):**

Summary:

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Situation:

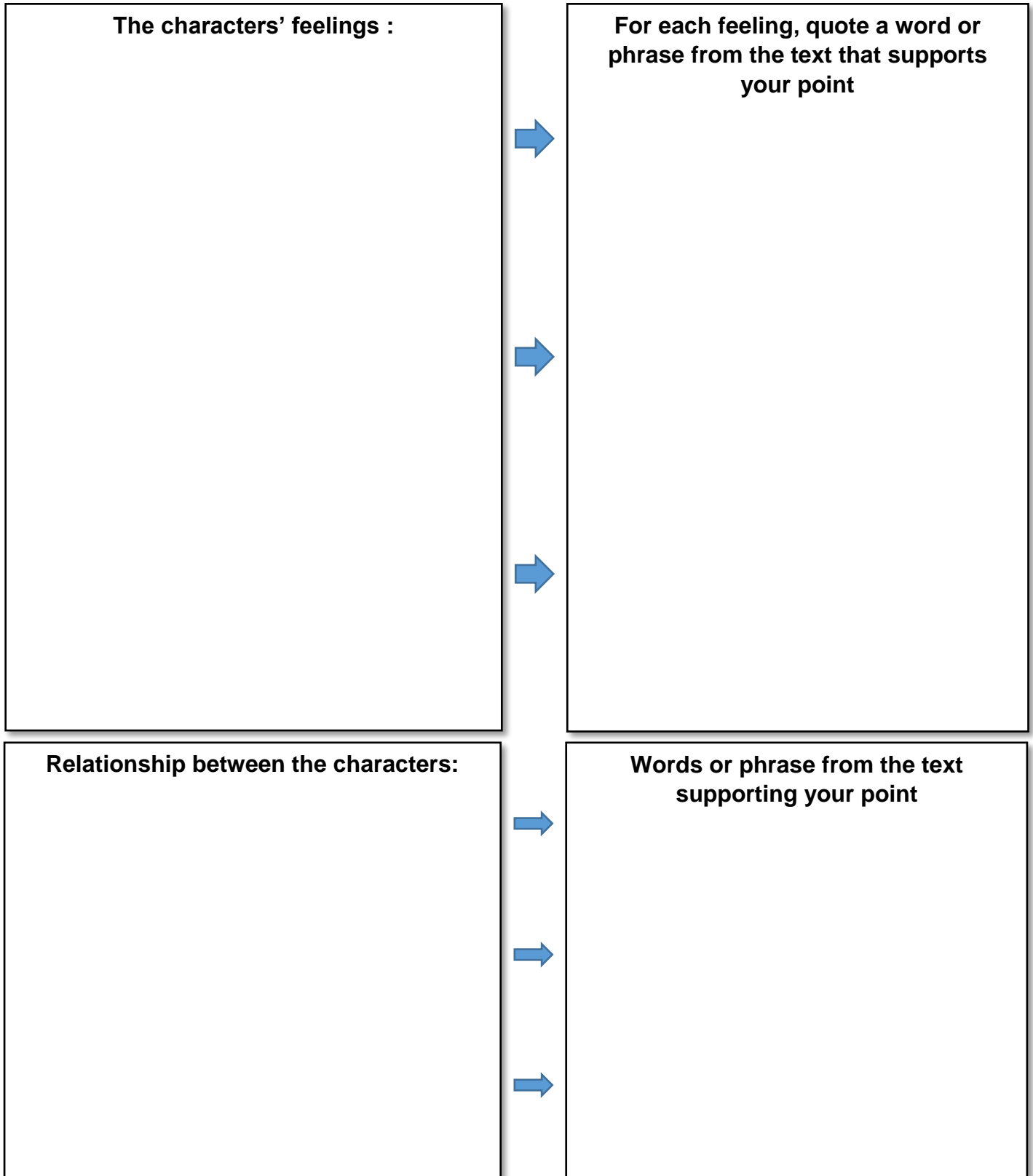
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*This step will help you to describe the passage that you picked at your exam.*



b) **Question 2** : How does the author create the mystery about her in this passage? Connect it to other ways he uses to confuse the reader in other parts of the story.

- Analyse each character's attitude and feelings, and the relationship they have with each other. Then analyse the feelings you had when you first read the passage and then when you discovered the rest of the story. Pay attention to the words that the author uses to create these feelings.





➤ Find two different instances in the story in which the author creates confusion.

a) Write your ideas in the boxes below in note form. Explain how they function.

b) Write the second part of your answer to question 2 in a clear and organized way (Connect it to other ways the author uses to confuse the reader in other parts of the story). Remember to use phrases from “how to talk about a document”:

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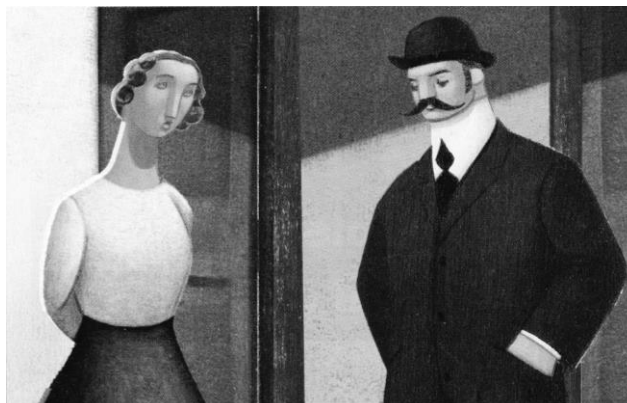
*This step will help you to analyse the passage that you will pick at the exam.*

**Exercise 4: Think of a few themes that the author is touching through this text.**

*This step is an introduction to the presentation of a theme in connection with your reading. You might be required to talk about a theme with regards to the text.*

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### PART 1

“I’ve found where she lives”, said the detective quietly. “Here’s the address”.

Hartley took the piece of paper. On it were the words “Vivienne Arlington, No. 341 East 49<sup>th</sup> Street”.

“She moved there a week ago”, said the detective.

“I can follow her if you want. It will only cost you \$ 7 a day and expenses...”

“No, thank you”, interrupted Hartley. “I only wanted the address. How much is it?”

“One day’s work”, said the detective. “Ten dollars”. Hartley paid the man. Then he left the office and took a tram to Broadway. After walking a short distance he arrived at the building he was looking for. Hartley rang the bell. The door opened. He went in and began climb the stairs.

On the fourth floor he saw her standing in an open door. Vivienne was about twenty-one. Her hair was red-gold, and her eyes were sea-blue. She was wearing a white top and a dark skirt.

“Vivienne”, said Hartley, “you didn’t answer my last letter. It took me a week to find your new address! Why didn’t you answer me? You knew I was waiting to see you and hear from you”.

### PART 2

The girl looked out of the window dreamily.

“Mr. Hartley”, she said slowly, “I don’t know what to say to you. I understand all the advantages of your offer, and I sometimes feel sure that I could be happy with you. But, then sometimes, I am less sure. I was born a city girl, and I am not sure that I would enjoy living a quiet life in the suburbs”.

“My dear girl”, said Hartley, “you will have everything that you want. You can come to the city for the theatre, for shopping, and to visit your friends as often as you want. You can trust me, can’t you?”

“I can trust you completely”, she said, smiling at him. “I know you are the kindest of men, and that the girl who you get will be very lucky. I heard all about when I was at Montgomerys’.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Hartley, “I remember so well the evening I first saw you at Montgomerys’. I will never forget that dinner. Come on, Vivienne, promise me. I want you. Nobody else will ever get you such a happy home.”

Vivienne didn’t answer. Suddenly Hartley was suspicious. “Tell me Vivienne”, he asked, “is there – is there someone else?”

“You shouldn’t ask that, Mr. Hartley”, she said. “But I will tell you. There is another person – but I haven’t promised him anything yet.”

“Vivienne”, said Hartley, masterfully. “You must be mine.”

Vivienne looked at him in the eye.

“Do you think for one moment”, she said calmly, “that I could come to your home while Héloïse is there?”

### PART 3

“Héloise will go”, said Hartley angrily. “I haven’t had one day without problems since I met her. You are right, Vivienne. Heloise must go before I can take you home. But she will go. I have decided...”

“Then”, said Vivienne, “my answer is yes. I will be yours”. She looked into his eyes and Hartley could hardly believe his luck.

“Promise me”, he said.

“I promise”, repeated Vivienne softly.

At the door he turned and looked at her happily, “I will come for you tomorrow”, he said.

“Tomorrow”, she repeated with a smile. An hour and forty minutes later Hartley stepped off the train when it stopped in the suburbs, and walked to his house. As he walked towards the door a woman ran to him. She had black hair and was wearing a long white dress. They kissed, and walked into the house.



### PART 4

“My mother is here” the woman said. “But she’s leaving in half an hour. She came to have dinner, but there’s nothing to eat.”

“I have something to tell you”, said Hartley. He whispered something in her ear. His wife screamed. Her mother came running into the hall. The woman screamed again, but it was a happy scream – the sound of a woman whose husband loved her.

“Oh mother!” she cried, “what do you think? Vivienne is coming to be our cook! She is the cook that was with the Montgomerys’. She is going to be ours! And now, dear”, she told her husband, you must to the kitchen and tell Héloise to leave. She has been drunk again all day”.