

Grade 8: **Unit 4**

Short Stories: **Whole Class Short Story Seminars**

Seminar 1: Whole Class Short Story

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze Eckels’s perilous journey into the past. They understand Ray Bradbury’s argument about the relationship between man and nature in this story.

Seminar 1:

“A Sound of Thunder” by Ray Bradbury

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Show an exemplary Exit Ticket from the previous seminar to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes it exemplary. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their revisions.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Build excitement for this unit by telling scholars that they will spend the next week analyzing excellent short stories. Tell scholars that today, they will dive into an action-packed short story by Ray Bradbury: “A Sound of Thunder.”

Read and Discuss 1 — 40 minutes

Read:

- **Read or play a recording:** Paragraphs 1–39

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why is it crucial that the hunters stay on the path? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What does Travis mean when he says, “Step on a mouse and you crush the Pyramids”? (paragraph 37).

Read:

- **Read or play a recording:** Paragraphs 40–90

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why does Eckels say, “We were fools to come. This is impossible”? (paragraph 73). Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How does Bradbury convey the size and might of the dinosaur?

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- How does Bradbury build tension in paragraphs 1–90? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they need to apply to their own work moving forward.

Read and Discuss 2 — 25 minutes

Independent Reading (15 minutes):

- Paragraphs 91–143

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What does the change in the sign reveal? (paragraph 134). Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why does Ray Bradbury include details about the president in paragraph 140?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200:

- What is Ray Bradbury’s argument about the relationship between man and nature in “A Sound of Thunder”? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read “The Landlady” by Roald Dahl.

Seminar 2: Whole Class Short Story

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars recognize the danger Billy Weaver encounters at the Bed and Breakfast. They analyze the moves Roald Dahl makes to reveal the landlady’s intentions to readers.

Seminar 2:

“The Landlady” by Roald Dahl

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Show an exemplary Exit Ticket from the previous seminar to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes it exemplary. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their revisions.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from the at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: What is significant about the landlady’s parrot and dachshund? Then, build excitement for today’s reading and discussion.

Close Read 1 — 10 minutes

Close Read:

- **Read Aloud (5 minutes):** Paragraphs 5–35

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why does Billy choose to stay at the Bed and Breakfast? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How does Roald Dahl characterize the landlady?

Discuss 1 — 10 minutes

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: At what point in the story should Billy have felt suspicious of the landlady? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following question as a whole class:
 - How does Roald Dahl build suspense in this story?
- Extension: Why did Roald Dahl include paragraph 48?

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- At the beginning of the story, the narrator tells readers, “Billy was trying to do everything briskly these days. Briskness, he had decided, was the one common characteristic of all successful businessmen” (paragraph 5). Based on Billy’s experience at the Bed and Breakfast, what is Dahl’s argument about briskness? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they need to apply to their own work moving forward.

Close Read 2 — 25 minutes

Close Read:

- **Read Aloud (10 minutes):** Paragraphs 80–107

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What can readers infer happened to Christopher Mulholland and Gregory Temple? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why does Roald Dahl include the parrot and the dachshund in the story?

Discuss 2 — 10 minutes

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does Roald Dahl suggest to readers that the landlady is dangerous? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following question as a whole class:
 - Why does Billy fall prey to the landlady?
- Extension: What is the tone of “The Landlady”? How does Dahl convey this tone?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Based on the story, what will happen to Billy Weaver? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read “The Most Dangerous Game” by Richard Connell.

Seminar 3: Whole Class Short Story

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze General Zaroff’s rationale for hunting human beings. They understand Connell’s argument about reason vs. instinct and the ethics of war.

Seminar 3:

“The Most Dangerous Game” by Richard Connell

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Show an exemplary Exit Ticket from the previous seminar to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes it exemplary. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their revisions.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday’s reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: What is the dangerous game referenced in the story’s title? Then, build excitement for today’s reading and discussion.

Close Read 1 — 20 minutes

Close Read:

- **Read or play a recording:** Paragraphs 66–129

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why did General Zaroff decide to hunt men instead of animals? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How does General Zaroff justify killing human beings?

Discuss 1 — 15 minutes

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does General Zaroff guarantee that he has game to hunt? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - Before arriving on the island, what is Rainsford's position on hunting? How does he view his prey?
 - Why does Zaroff mention Rainsford's experience in the war? (paragraph 114)
- Extension: What is General Zaroff's tone in paragraphs 66–129? How do you know?

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Why is it ironic that Zaroff makes an effort to be “civilized” on his island? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they need to apply to their own work moving forward.

Close Read 2 — 10 minutes

Close Read:

- **Read Aloud (5 minutes):** Paragraphs 171–189

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does Rainsford evade General Zaroff in paragraphs 171–189? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What is the significance of General Zaroff's smile? (paragraph 175)

Discuss 2 — 10 minutes

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why does General Zaroff particularly enjoy hunting Rainsford? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - Based on paragraphs 201–207, what can readers infer happened to General Zaroff?
 - How does Connell build suspense in the story?

- Extension: Reread paragraphs 7–14. Why does Connell include these paragraphs? How does your understanding of the beginning of the story change after reading the entire story?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- What is a central theme of this story? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read “Flowers for Algernon” by Daniel Keyes.

Seminar 4: Whole Class Short Story

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze how Charlie’s life changes when his IQ increases. They evaluate the extent to which intelligence leads to happiness in “Flowers for Algernon.”

Seminar 4:

“Flowers for Algernon” by Daniel Keyes

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Show an exemplary Exit Ticket from the previous seminar to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes it exemplary. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their revisions.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday’s reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following questions: What role does Algernon play in the story? Then build excitement for today’s reading and discussion.

Close Read 1 — 15 minutes

Close Read:

- **Read Aloud (10 minutes):** Paragraphs 58–118

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What do paragraphs 58–118 reveal about Charlie’s progress? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.

- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How have Charlie’s relationships with others changed since his operation?

Discuss 1 — 15 minutes

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How do Charlie’s perceptions of the world around him change after his operation? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - Why do the factory workers act differently towards Charlie (Progress Report 12)?
 - Why does Charlie feel ashamed?
- Extension: How does the journal entry style of the short story impact your experience as a reader?

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- How does Charlie’s increased intelligence affect his quality of life? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they need to apply to their own work moving forward.

Close Read 2 — 15 minutes

Close Read:

- **Read Aloud (10 minutes):** Paragraphs 163–220

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why is the change in Algernon significant? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How does Keyes show the deterioration of Charlie’s intellect?

Discuss 2 — 10 minutes

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does Charlie cope with his loss of intelligence? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - Why does Charlie tell Miss Kinnian, “Don’t be sorry for me”? (paragraph 222)

- What is the significance of the scene in the diner that Charlie describes in the May 20th entry? (paragraphs 138–162)
- Extension: Why did Keyes write “Flowers for Algernon”?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Based on the story, what is the relationship between intelligence and happiness? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.