**Instructions Part 1 (2 periods)**

1. Read a short story together (“The Runner” from the blue book) as a class and create an exemplar to demonstrate.
2. Create 8 stations with several copies of each story in envelopes.
3. Have students take out 2 sheets of paper, and fold each in half (then unfold), and staple together.
4. Students will read each story and then complete an entry in a segment of the paper (at the end, all 8 segments, front and back, should be filled in).
5. Once finished, students will take turns swapping, reading, and discussing each other’s story entries.
6. Students will submit booklets, which will be marked out of 48 (6 marks per segment).

**Instructions Part 2 (1 period)**

1. Brainstorm components of a story and what makes a story worth reading and thinking about.
2. Review what is meant by protagonist, conflict, and theme.
3. Brainstorm (T-chart) what makes a protagonist, conflict, and theme worth reading and thinking about (and what doesn’t).
4. Have students select 2 short stories to compare and contrast on the following points:
	1. Protagonist (similarities, differences)
	2. Central conflict (similarities, differences)
	3. Theme (similarities, differences)
5. Have students evaluate the effectiveness of each component and explain their reasoning.

**Instructions Part 1:**

Read the story and then complete the following task in a segment of the paper (at the end, all 8 segments, front and back, should be filled in):

1. /1 In the top left corner, record the story number and title.
2. /1 Summarize the story in 10 words or fewer.
3. /1 Draw a picture to represent the story.
4. /1 Complete the prompt: This reminds me of …
5. /2 Ask a “why” or “how” question of the story. Attempt to answer it using the phrase, “I think … because …”

Each segment will be marked out of 6 for a total of 48 marks.

**Instructions Part 2:**

1. /6 Select 2 short stories and complete the comparison chart. Each response will be marked out of 2: 2 = thoughtful, 1 = basic, 0 = unsatisfactory.
2. /15 On the back, explain which story you think “did it better” and why, referring to the ideas we’ve generated about what makes these story elements worth reading and thinking about. Each response will be marked out of 5: 5 = insightful ideas and precise details; 4 = thoughtful ideas and pertinent details; 3 = general ideas and relevant details; 2 = vague ideas and imprecise details; 1 = limited ideas and unclear/inappropriate details.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Title |  |  |
|  | Differences | Similarities | Differences |
| Protagonist /2 |  |  |  |
| Central Conflict /2 |  |  |  |
| Theme /2 |  |  |  |
| Protagonist /5 |
| Central Conflict /5 |
| Theme /5 |

**1. With One Wheel Gone Wrong**
*By A.M. Homes*

With one wheel gone wrong, she careens into the checkout line. A perfect shopper, she prides herself on sailing the circulars, clipping coupons, buying in bulk. Her basket is overflowing with catnip and kitty litter, Pull-Ups and pomegranates—plenty of all. She takes a magazine out of the rack; there's a spot to scratch, an offer she can't resist—"Got an itch you can't identify, don't know what you want, let this be your moment." The background photo is of a beautiful house with everything just as you would want it to be—untouched by reality. She scratches; her finger is quickly coated with gold powder and under that is something a little sticky—tugging at her. It is as though she is being pulled into the magazine. A sudden burst of light, an explosion of inspiration, a fleeting illumination, and she is inside the picture and it is clear—this is her house, this is who she is, the life she is supposed to live.

It is incredible—she's seeing not only the future but the pathway there—and it's a new kind of floor tile—you just put one foot in front of the other, don't stop, and watch where you're going. And then, as though in a faraway dream, she hears the scanner beeping, she hears the checker say, "Are you taking that magazine?" Drawing a deep breath, she pulls herself back into the checkout line. She takes every copy of the magazine out of the rack. "I'll take all you've got," she says.

"Paper or plastic?"

**2. Her Number**
*By Antonya Nelson*

Dear Jim Barr,

You don't know me, but I know you. I was given your old number. It's for a secret cell phone, bought to have a love affair. Sometimes, instead of calls from my lover, I get yours.

Like me, you can't be trusted. The angry woman, for instance, who accuses me and then lets loose her barrage of complaints about you. I can see why you'd abandon this number. Those creditors won't give up, either, their flawless Indian-inflected English, the gentle hum of others in the background. Like me, you've made some promises you can't fulfill.

You live in my hometown, your area code from the state where I grew up rather than where I live. If my husband discovers this phone in my underwear drawer, tucked away like a land mine, I can claim it's my mother's.

I looked you up, Jim Barr, last time I was home, just to see where you live. Not far from my mom's, it turns out. You ought to get rid of that broken play pool on your lawn. And the swing set without swings. You got rid of your number, and now it's mine. My lover and I whisper over it persistently. My heart pounds, I want him so furiously.

I'm not you, I tell those calm but persistent 800 operators, them and that angry woman. She is as furious as my husband would be.

This phone is for passion; it ought to be hot to the touch.

Sincerely yours,

404-BAD-RISK

**3. Grace  (continues on reverse)**
*By Anna Deavere Smith*

Watching—the men from the township strip bark. Twisting, turning, diagnosing the disease all over "Grace," the Grandame tree on his father's farm.

Thinking—about that hot time. J-Burg. Mandela released from prison. Dancing the toi toi in the street.

He gasped when he saw her.

"Hey!" The toi toi wave seized her.

"Who *are* you?" he yelled. The crowd wrapped him.

Arm of her ripped bomber jacket. Hand. Her camera.

"Where do I send this?" she hollered.

Picture travels. His father's house. His own desk in Geneva. Postmark: Chicago.

"She's American!" He laughed, and showed the pic to his chemist.

"Wheresshe? Thass you." The chemist said.

Told her two things about his childhood

—Surviving polio. Straight strong legs now. ( "You da rich white boy. No shots?" she jived.)

—Going to the mines.

He knew diamonds.

"She's *black*! And splendid" he whispered to his twin sister, the dancer. (Wine, hunky bread, fish, Gauloises, seaside—Essaouira, Morocco.)

He nicknamed the American "Chicago."

They did the nasty and the magic for 16 years.

Sudden: "Gotta ditch xmas, going 2 afganistn. BTW, think Mandela's release = birth of G-zus? Joyful noise, etc.," Chicago Blackberried.

*"Ditch" Christmas?????*

She changed lenses. Snapshotting terrorism rather than stark raving racism.

Tears.

"Where ahhh yoooo?" his twin calls, long legs pounding the hardwood floor. Sister's cheek-kiss cracks heart open like a surgeon's hammer. "She'll be back," she singsongs.

He descends. To the decked halls. Flesh, blood, sibs, babies.

"The hell they doing ta that tree?" father growls, "Circumcising it? "

Laughter.

**4. Near Taurus**
*By Dawn*

After the rains had come and gone, we went down by the reservoir. No one was watching, or so it looked to us.

The night was like to drown us.

Our voices were high—his, mine; soft, bright—and this was not the all of it (when is it ever?).

Damp palms, unauthorized, young: We would never be caught, let alone apprehended, one by the other.

He was misunderstood; that's what the boy told me.

"Orion, over there. Only the belt. The body won't show until later," he said. "Arms and such."

Me, I could not find the belt, not to save my life, I said.

Flattened with want: "There is always another time," he said.

He died, that boy. Light-years! Ages and ages. And here I am: a mother, witness, a raiser of a boy.

I could tell you his name.

I could and would not.

"Here's where the world begins," he'd said. I see him now—unbroken still; our naked eyes searching for legends—the dirt beneath us parched.

**5. Ad Infinitum**
*By Mark Leyner*

One prematurely sultry afternoon in May, Dean took his 8-year-old daughter to the park. (His wife was the features editor at a nesting magazine; Dean taught math to seventh- and eighth-graders). He met a 23-year-old Haitian au pair named Sanette. He heard her laugh, throaty and uninhibited, turned, and there she was, seated amidst other au pairs and a miscellany of children and strollers. She was voluptuous, her skin gleaming with perspiration, her black bra straps alluringly askew alongside the shoulder straps of her tank top. And Dean experienced a sort of petit mal seizure of lust.

He devised a convoluted plan to "befriend" Sanette's employers—convincing them to share a summer house that August, thus enabling Dean to vacation under the same roof as the au pair.

On several occasions that dreary August, Dean and Sanette got a room at the Sea Spray. And their relationship—never openly acknowledged—effectively poisoned the summer for everyone.

Sanette was fired, lost her work visa, and had to return to Haiti, which she'd planned on doing anyway. Dean's wife just chalked it all up to a "bad patch," when, in actuality, it hurt her terribly.

I don't know, frankly, if he'd ever done this sort of thing before, but he certainly has since, and with monotonous regularity.

So I guess, in terms of Dean's life, this summer was a *fractal*—one of those geometric patterns that repeats itself at every scale. Or, come to think of it, more like a *repetend*—that chain of digits that recurs endlessly in a repeating decimal, like the 214 in 2.214214214214214214....

**6. Vista di Mare**
*By Stuart Dybek*

In Genoa, as she packs to leave, he tells her that he doesn't want it to end, and she replies that if he really knew what he wanted, she wouldn't be leaving.

Alone, he continues on along the coast toward Rome, but at a station where a field of sunflowers overlooks the sea, he impulsively gets off the train. Not far from shore, he can see two fishermen employing their nets.

He sets off on a trail climbing through olive and lemon groves and steeply terraced vineyards. In Genoa he'd reduced his belongings to what fit in a backpack. He sweats under its straps and imagines this is how it would have felt to tour Europe when he was young. In college he had a girlfriend who wanted to travel together. He'd have liked to go but was afraid it would seem like more of a commitment than he was ready for, and he took a job instead. Along a rocky cliff, he stops to watch the gulls ride the updrafts and wonders if he's ever known what he's most wanted. Then it comes to him with a force like tears that for once, at least, he does know: He wants this, to be here now, this moment looking out to sea.

The town, carved from the mountainside, is terraced like the vineyards—streets of cobbled steps. He wants to stay here where he's had his revelation, where nothing seems out of sight of the sea, but the only pension is closed due to a death. At a restaurant, he orders a bottle of mineral water and figs with prosciutto. The waiter speaks a little English and tells him about an apartment for rent, but it might not be a place the man would want to stay.

"Why not?" he asks.

"No *vista di mare*." All Americans, the waiter says knowingly, want a *vista di mare.* "That's why it is so inexpensive."

"What does it look out on?" he asks the waiter.

"Mountains."

**7. Witness**
*By John Edgar Wideman*

Sitting here six floors up on my little balcony when I heard shots and saw them boys running. My eyes went straight to the lot beside Mason's bar, and I saw something black not moving in the weeds and knew a body was lying there and knew it was dead. A 15-year-old boy, the papers said. Whole bunch of sirens and cops and spinning lights the night I'm talking about. I watched till after they rolled him away and then everything got quiet again as it ever gets round here, so I'm sure the boy's people not out there that night. Didn't see them till next morning. I'm looking down at those weeds. A couple's coming slow on Frankstown with a girl by the hand, had to be the boy's baby sister. They pass terrible Mason's and stop exactly next to the spot the boy died. How did they know. Then they commence to swaying, bowing, hugging, waving their arms about. Forgive me, Jesus, but look like they grief dancing, like the sidewalk too cold or too hot they had to jump around not to burn up. How'd his people find the spot. Could they hear my old mind working to guide them, lead them like I would if I could get up out this damn wheelchair and take them by the hand.

**8. Sing to It**
*By Amy Hempel*

At the end, he said, No Metaphors! Nothing is like anything else.

Except he said to me before he said that, Make your hands a hammock for me. So there was one.

He said, Not even the rain—he quoted the poet—not even the rain has such small hands. So there was another.

At the end, I wanted to comfort him. But what I said was, Sing to it. The Arabian proverb: When danger approaches, sing to it.

Except I said to him before I said that, No metaphors! No one is like anyone else. And he said, Please.

So—at the end, I made my hands a hammock for him.

My arms the trees.