

*O. Henry's
The Gift of the Magi*

and other stories

Student Learning Materials

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THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

PRE-READING ACTIVITY 1: GIFTS IN YOUR LIFE

“The Gift of the Magi” is a story about a young married couple, Jim and Della, who are very poor. This story tells how they buy Christmas gifts for each other when they have saved very little money. Before you read, think about how you give and receive gifts in your own life and why these gifts are meaningful.

PART 1: WHAT MAKES A GIFT VALUABLE?

Directions:

Fill each box with the name of a valuable gift that you have received. Remember that gifts can be valuable in many ways (not just how much they cost).

For each gift, mark how expensive the gift was on line (1).

Mark how meaningful the gift was on line (2).

Explain why the gift was valuable on line (3). If you are working with a partner, compare your answers. The first box is completed for you as an example.

a scarf from my mother	(1) ← X → Not expensive Very expensive
	(2) ← → X Not meaningful Very meaningful

(3) The yarn to make the scarf did not cost very much money, but my mother stayed up late after work to make it for me.

PART 2: GIFT-GIVING PRACTICES

In your culture, when do you give gifts to other people? What types of gifts do you give? Use the chart below to outline gift-giving in your country. The first row of the chart provides examples of gifts that are given in the United States.

Directions:

- ✓ In the first column **Celebration/Event**, write a celebration or event when you would give a gift in your country.
- ✓ In the second column **Parents** write a gift that you might give to a parent.
- ✓ In the third column **Friends**, write a gift that you might give to your friend.
- ✓ In the fourth column **Children**, write a gift that you might give to a child.

Celebration / Event	Type of Gift for:		
	Parents	Friends	Children
<i>Birthday</i>	<i>A coffee mug</i>	<i>Flowers</i>	<i>A toy musical instrument</i>

PRE-READING ACTIVITY 2: VOCABULARY BUILDING

The story “The Gift of the Magi” takes place during the early 1900s when different words were sometimes used than the words that we use today. This activity will help you to understand these words and have an easier time reading the story. The first box has been completed for you as an example.

Directions:

- ✓ Look at each image and then describe it in your own words in the box below the image. Use descriptive words for color, shape, and other details of the objects. An example has been given for the first image. If you are working with a partner, compare your answers with those of the partner.

Chart 1: Vocabulary Words

<p>1. Wallet</p> 	<p>2. Pocket Watch and Watch Chain</p> 	<p>3. Coat</p> 
<p><i>1. A small, flat, brown leather case for carrying money.</i></p>		
<p>4. Looking-glass</p> 	<p>5. Comb</p> 	<p>6. Hat</p> 

7. Jewels



8. Hunting dog



9. Letter-box



10. Furnished room



11. Electric bell



12. Waterfall



WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 1: DRAW THE SCENE

In the first part of “The Gift of the Magi,” the narrator describes the one-room apartment of Jim and Della Young where the scene happens. In this activity, look for the words that describe the apartment to help you visualize it.

PART 1: FIND DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES

Directions:

As you read pages one and two, underline the names of items found in the apartment.

Write these items in the box below. (An example is given.)

Add three more things that you imagine a small, one-room home might have contained one hundred years ago.

windows

PART 2: DRAW THE SCENE

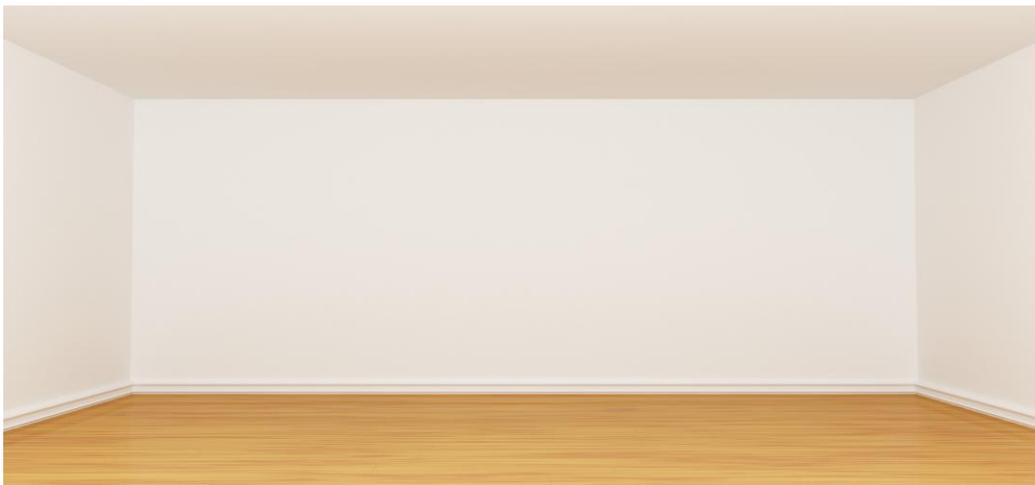
Directions:

Use the words you wrote in the box above and draw the scene from the story below. Use the description of the apartment on pages one and two to help. Some items belong inside the room. Some items belong in the hall outside the apartment. Imagine where the items you added might be.

Outside Jim and Della's Apartment



Figure 1 Inside Jim and Della's Apartment



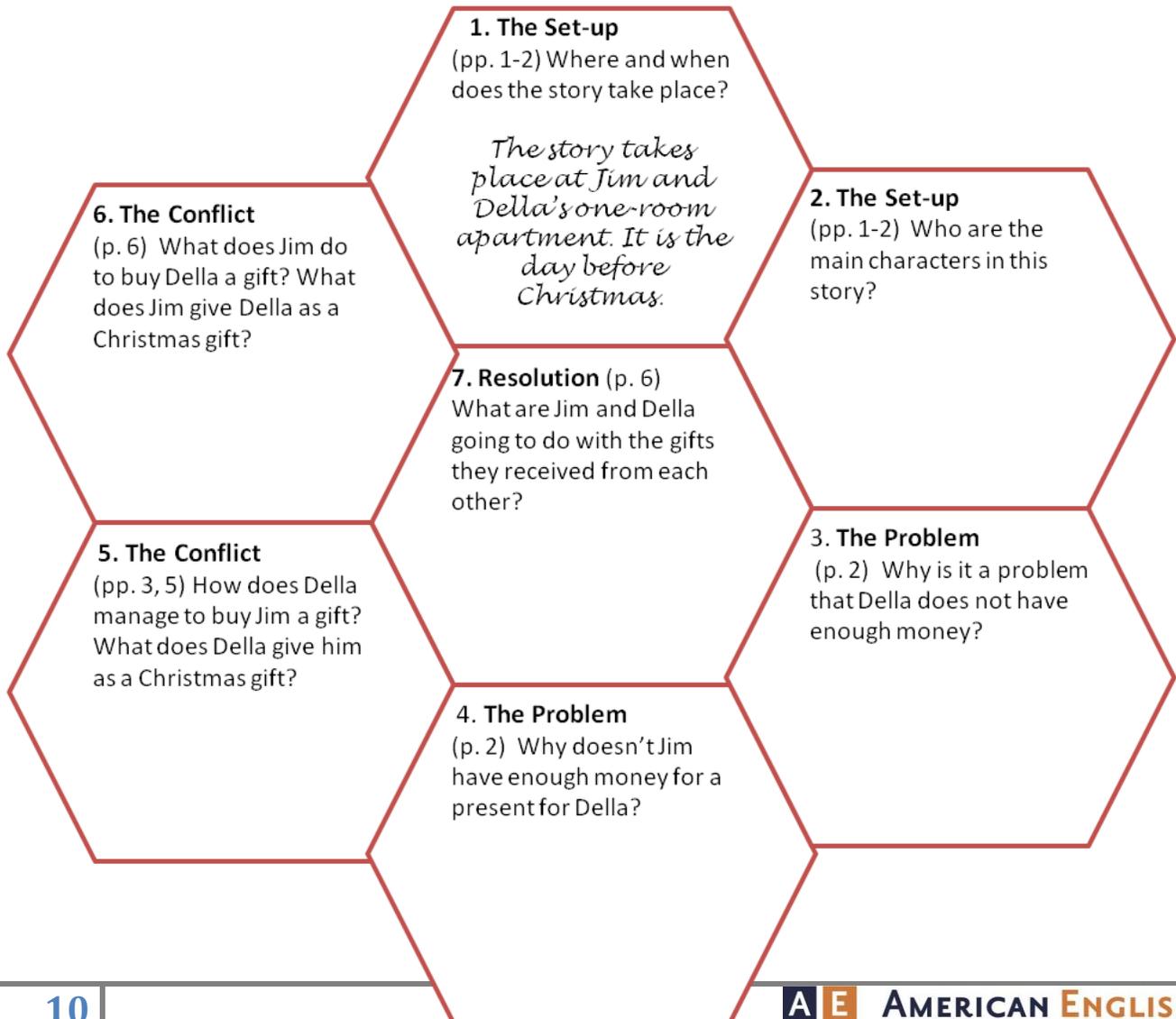
WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 2: STORY DEVELOPMENT

“The Gift of the Magi” is a story, a narrative account of an event. When authors write narratives, they usually use a similar structure to develop the story. First, they describe when and where the story takes place. They introduce the main characters. This is called the **Set-Up**. Then a problem is introduced, and the characters must decide what to do. This is the **Problem**. Once the characters decide how to solve the problem, a conflict can develop if the plan does not go well. This is called the **Conflict**. At the end of the story, the problems and conflicts are resolved. This is the **Resolution**. The next activity will help you to see the narrative structure of this story.

Directions:

As you read “The Gift of the Magi,” stop after the pages mentioned below and answer the questions about the set-up, problem, conflict, and resolution in this story.

Start Here 



WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 3: DESCRIBING DELLA'S HAIR

In "The Gift of the Magi," Della's hair plays an important role. In this activity, think about the words the narrator uses to describe Della's hair. This activity will help you to imagine what Della's hair looks like.

Directions:

As you read, find words and phrases that describe Della's hair.

In the column **Before the haircut**, write words that describe Della's hair *before* her haircut.

In the column **After the haircut**, write words that describe Della's hair *after* her haircut.

Based on these descriptive words and phrases, draw a picture of Della's hair around the faces below.

Some examples of words and phrases are provided.

	BEFORE THE HAIRCUT	AFTER THE HAIRCUT
Descriptive words and phrases from the text	- <i>silky</i>	- <i>looks like a school boy</i>
Drawing Della's hair		

POST-READING ACTIVITY 1: THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

To understand “The Gift of the Magi,” it is important to remember the order in which events happen in the story. In this activity, put the major events of the story in the order in which they occur.

Directions:

- ✓ In the list below, the major events from “The Gift of the Magi” are in the first column, but they are not in the correct order.
- ✓ Read the story.
- ✓ Reorder the events to match what you learned in the story. The first event has been completed for you as an example. Now find the second event of the story in the column ***Event from the Story*** and write “2” in the second column ***Order***. Continue ordering all the events.

Event from the Story	Order
a. Della shops for Jim’s Christmas present.	
b. Jim sees Della’s haircut.	
c. Della gives Jim his Christmas present.	
d. Della decides to sell her hair.	
e. Jim gives Della the combs.	
f. Della buys a watch chain for Jim.	
g. Della has saved only \$1.87 to buy Jim a Christmas present.	1
h. Jim arrives home from work.	
i. Della sells her hair for \$20.	



A comic strip tells a story using a series of drawings or images in boxes.

Directions:

- ✓ Create a comic strip to show how Della and Jim are feeling at different points in the story. Use a website or online comic-strip generator (for example: www.ToonDo.com or <http://stripgenerator.com/strip/create/>) to create your comic strip.
- ✓ Three scenes from the story are listed below. Include these three scenes in your comic strip. Make sure to include pictures of Della and Jim where appropriate.
- ✓ Draw a *thought bubble* above the character(s) in each scene. Write inside the bubble what you imagine the characters was feeling or thinking at that point in the story.
- ✓ If the Internet is not available, you can also draw your comic strip on paper.



Scene 1: Della has just returned home after getting her hair cut. (p. 4)	Scene 2: Jim returns to the apartment. He is outside the door with his present for Della. (p. 4)	Scene 3: Jim and Della exchange gifts. (pp. 5-6)