

O. Henry's
The Gift of the
Magi

and other stories

Student Learning Materials

Published by
The Office of English Language Programs
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20037
americanenglish.state.gov

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HEARTS AND CROSSES

PRE-READING ACTIVITY 1: VOCABULARY ABOUT LIFE ON A RANCH

The story “Hearts and Crosses” is about a young couple, Webb and Santa. They manage a ranch in the state of Texas. A *ranch* is a farm where livestock are raised, such as cattle, sheep, and horses. This vocabulary activity will help you learn about life on a ranch.

Directions:

1. The left column contains words about life on a ranch. Each word comes with a picture to illustrate what it is.
2. Match the words in the left column with their definitions in the right column.
3. For each definition, fill in the blank with the number of the word it refers to. An example is given below.

Words	Definitions
1. Cowboy 	____ A state located in south-central United States
2. Cattle 	____ The main house on a ranch where the owner lives
3. Iron tool (branding iron) 	____ A man who rides a horse and whose job it is to take care of the cattle and horses
4. Ranch house 	____ A device that when heated burns a mark into the skin of the cow to show who owns it
5. Texas 	<u>6</u> ____ A person who is in charge of a group of cowboys
6. Foreman 	____ Cows, bulls and steers that are kept on a ranch for milk and meat

PRE-READING ACTIVITY 2: FOCUS ON SPECIFIC LANGUAGE FEATURES

In the story “Hearts and Crosses,” many verbs are in the simple past tense. In this activity, you will practice using this tense.

PART 1: FIND THE VERBS AND GUESS THE TENSE

Directions:

1. Read the following paragraph and underline the verbs that are in the simple past tense.

Webb Yeager moved his wide hat back on his head. He put his fingers in his yellow hair and moved it about. It now looked wilder than before. But this did not help him to think better. And therefore he also got another drink.

PART 2: RULES FOR ENGLISH VERBS IN SIMPLE PAST TENSE

Directions:

1. The simple past tense is used to talk about something that started and ended at a specified time in the past. Sentences in the simple past tense typically use past time phrases, such as *yesterday*, *last year*, *a few years ago*, *in 1997*, and *the day before*.
2. Study the following information about how to create the simple past tense and see some examples from the story. Find more examples in the story and write them down.

Regular verbs in the simple past add *-ed* to their base form. However, some verbs add only *-d* or change the ending a little.

General rules for regular verbs

If a verb ends in...	To make the simple past:	Examples
The letter e	Add <i>-d</i>	live → lived die → died
A consonant + y	Change y to i before adding <i>-ed</i>	try → tried cry → cried
One vowel + one consonant (but not w or y)	Double the consonant, then add <i>-ed</i>	jam → jammed commit → committed
Anything else (including w)	Add <i>-ed</i>	boil → boiled start → started finish → finished show → showed

Examples of sentences from the story containing regular verbs:

- Webb Yeager **moved** his wide hat back on his head.
- When the old man **died**, they **started** to call Santa the ‘cattle queen.’
- ...and someone **cried** out in the voice of woman and queen together: “Webb, oh, Webb!”

Irregular verbs do not follow the same rules as regular verbs. They have different forms in the simple past tense. They do not end with *-ed*. On the next page are some examples of irregular verbs in the simple past tense:

Verb		Simple past form
go		went
get		got
leave		left
send		sent
put		put
have		had
come		came

Sentences with irregular verbs from the story:

- He **put** his fingers in his yellow hair and moved it about.
- Then he **sent** me as far away from the ranch house as he could.
- The two friends **got** on their horses and **left** the little town.
- _____.
- _____.
- _____.
- _____.
- _____.
- _____.
- _____.

PART 3: FILL IN THE BLANKS

Part 2 explained how the simple past tense is formed and used examples from the story “Hearts and Crosses.” In **Part 3**, practice using some verbs from the story in the simple past.

Directions:

Fill in the blanks in each sentence. Using the verbs in parentheses (), fill in the blanks using the simple past tense form. The first sentence was done as an example.

1. In the middle of the night Santa went quietly out of the ranch house.
(go)
2. Later she _____ out with some strange iron tool in one hand. In the other hand she _____ something that held a small fire.
(come) (carry)
3. He _____ the same question he had asked almost a year ago.
(ask)
4. He _____ cowboys with him to help with the English cattle.
(have)
5. The horseman _____ the house.
(enter)
6. And now Santa _____ that white animal as cowboys catch cattle.
(catch)
7. The two men _____ to separate.
(prepare)
8. One day, a man named Bartholomew _____ at the Nopalito ranch house.
(stop)



WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 1: RELATIONSHIP NETWORK

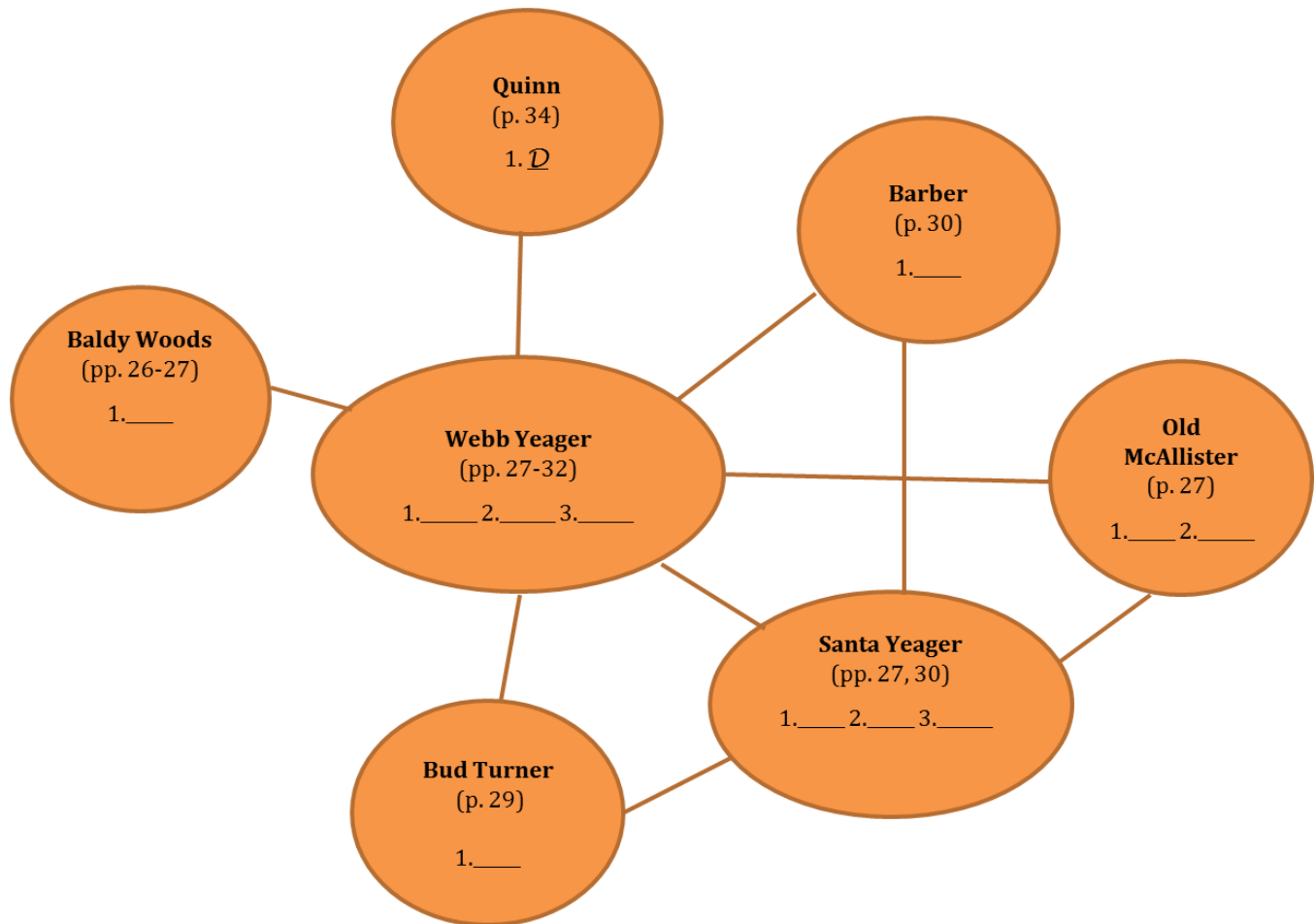
There are several characters in the story “Hearts and Crosses.” Each character has a specific role that connects him or her to the other characters. Some characters have several roles. This activity examines these roles.

Directions:

Match the roles with the characters in each circle of the Relationship Network on the next page. Fill in the numbered blank in each circle of the Relationship Network with a letter from the Role Description chart above. Some characters have more than one role in the story, as indicated by the number of blanks in the circles. Refer to the pages in parentheses to help to remember the roles of less important characters in the story. The role of Quinn is provided as an example.

Letter	Role in the Story
A	Daughter of Old McAllister
B	Foreman of the Seco Ranch
C	A cowboy who works for Santa and Webb at the Nopalito Ranch
D	Owner of the Seco Ranch
E	Nopalito Ranch's long-time business customer
F	Webb's old friend who used to work at the Nopalito Ranch
G	Father of Santa
H	Former owner of the Nopalito Ranch
I	The best foreman in the West
J	The "queen" of the Nopalito Ranch
K	Husband of Santa
L	Wife of Webb

RELATIONSHIP NETWORK



WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 2: MAKING A STORY STRUCTURE MAP

Like other stories written by O. Henry, "Hearts and Crosses" has an unexpected storyline surrounding the relationship between Webb and Santa. The Story Structure Map below follows the characters, setting, problem, resolution, and main events. It may help to develop an overview of the story.

Directions:

Complete the Story Structure Map by filling in the blanks with information from the story. Write down the problem in the story and complete events two to five.

Story Structure Map

Title:

Hearts and Crosses

Main Characters:

*Webb Yeager and Santa McAllister
Yeager*

Setting:

*The Nopalito Ranch and the Seco
Ranch in Texas*

Problem (pp. 26-28):

Webb _____.

Events

1. At the restaurant (pp. 26-27)

*Webb drank with Baldy and got
some ideas from him.*



2. At the Nopalito Ranch (p. 30)

Webb disagreed
_____.



3. At the Nopalito Ranch (p. 31)

Webb left
_____.



6. Resolution (p. 33-34):

*Webb saw the heart and cross sign
on the cow and hurried back to the
Nopalito Ranch.*



5. At the Nopalito Ranch (p. 33)

Santa marked
_____.



4. At the Nopalito Ranch (p. 32)

Santa was contacted
_____.

POST-READING ACTIVITY 1: FOLLOW THE HEART AND CROSS SIGN

In this story the sign of a heart with a cross is used as a symbol of love from Santa to Webb. This heart and cross sign is mentioned several times throughout the story. Each time the sign is mentioned, it is associated with a special moment or event. Noticing the situations where the sign is mentioned in the story will help you see the love between Webb and Santa.

Directions:

1. Read the story and underline the words whenever the heart and cross sign is mentioned.
2. In the column **Moment When the Sign Is Mentioned**, complete the sentences with information about that moment in the story.

Page Number	People Involved	Moment When the Sign Was Mentioned
p. 28	Baldy and Webb	Webb and Baldy talked about the sign when they <u>stopped to say goodbye at Dry Lake.</u>
p. 29	Santa and Webb	Santa sent the sign to Webb when she _____ _____.
p. 34	Quinn and Wilson	Quinn noticed the sign on the white cow after Webb _____.



POST-READING ACTIVITY 2: CHARACTER TRAIT WEB

Santa and Webb are the two main characters in the story. Each character in this story has qualities or features. We usually describe these qualities with descriptive words called *adjectives*. This activity will help you study some adjectives that can be used to describe and analyze characters.

PART 1: DESCRIPTIVE WORDS

Directions:

1. Study the adjectives and their definitions in the table below.

Adjective	Definition
nice, kind	Wanting and liking to do good things and bring happiness to others
serious	Not joking or funny
broad-minded	Willing to accept opinions that are different from your own
unfriendly	Not friendly, not showing kind or friendly feelings
honest	Not hiding the truth about someone or something
funny	Causing laughter
stupid	Lacking the ability to learn and understand things
mean	Not kind to people, cruel
friendly	Nice, warm, and helpful to others
stubborn	Refusing to change your ideas
smart	Intelligent and very good at learning
deceptive	Likely to make someone believe something that is not true

2. Match the **positive** adjectives in the left column with the **negative** adjectives that have the *opposite* meaning in the right column. Draw lines to connect the adjectives in each pair. An example is given.

Positive +	Negative -
nice, kind	stubborn
friendly	unfriendly
funny	deceptive
smart	stupid
broad-minded	mean
honest	serious

PART 2: CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Directions:

1. Read the story again. This time focus on the qualities of the main characters.
2. Fill in the **Character's Qualities** boxes with at least one adjective describing the character's actions. The first "Character's Qualities" box describing Webb Yeager's actions has been completed as an example. Use adjectives from **Part 1** of this activity.

	Character's Actions	Character's Qualities
Webb Yeager	"Goodbye, Baldy," said Webb. "I'm glad I saw you and had this talk." (p. 29)	<i>kind/friendly</i>
	Webb says to Old McAllister: "And now you can start killing me. You have plenty of time. I haven't anything to fight with." (p. 29)	
	"I was wrong," said Webb Yeager. "I was a – and he named a small animal with a bad smell, an animal no one likes." (p. 34)	

3. Do the same analysis for the other main character, Santa. Fill in the **Character's Qualities** boxes with at least one adjective describing her actions.

	Character's Actions	Character's Qualities
Santa Yeager	"It's our sign," she said. "Hearts and crosses. To love and to suffer – that's what they mean." (p. 29)	
	"Let's say no more about it. What are you waiting for, Bud?" (p. 30)	
	"I wish you success," she said, with a sudden coldness. (p. 31)	