

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

6th Grade Short Story Stories

Thank You, Ma'am (by Langston Hughes)

She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o'clock at night, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance so, instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk, and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocketbook, boy, and give it here." She still held him. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "Yes'm." The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?" The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

By that time two or three people passed, stopped, turned to look, and some stood watching. "If I turn you loose, will you run?" asked the woman.

"Yes'm," said the boy.

"Then I won't turn you loose," said the woman. She did not release him.

"I'm very sorry, lady, I'm sorry," whispered the boy.

"Um-hum! And your face is dirty. I got a great mind to wash your face for you. Ain't you got nobody home to tell you to wash your face?"

"No'm," said the boy.

"Then it will get washed this evening," said the large woman starting up the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her.

He looked as if he were fourteen or fifteen, frail and willow-wild, in tennis shoes and blue jeans.

The woman said, "You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?"

"No'm," said the being dragged boy. "I just want you to turn me loose." "Was I bothering you when I turned that corner?" asked the woman.

"No'm."

"But you put yourself in contact with me," said the woman. "If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones."

Sweat popped out on the boy's face and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half-nelson about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room.

She said, "What is your name?"

"Roger," answered the boy.

"Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face," said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose—at last. Roger looked at the door—looked at the woman—looked at the door—and went to the sink.

Let the water run until it gets warm," she said. "Here's a clean towel."

"You gonna take me to jail?" asked the boy, bending over the sink.

"Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere," said the woman. "Here I am trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat and you snatch my pocketbook! Maybe, you ain't been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?"

"There's nobody home at my house," said the boy.

"Then we'll eat," said the woman, "I believe you're hungry—or been hungry—to try to snatch my pocketbook."

"I wanted a pair of blue suede shoes," said the boy.

"Well, you didn't have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes," said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. "You could of asked me."

"M'am?"

The water dripping from his face, the boy looked at her. There was a long pause. A very long pause. After he had dried his face and not knowing what else to do dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open. He could make a dash for it down the hall. He could run, run, run, run, run!

The woman was sitting on the day-bed. After a while she said, "I were young once and I wanted things I could not get."

There was another long pause. The boy's mouth opened. Then he frowned, but not knowing he frowned.

The woman said, "Um-hum! You thought I was going to say but, didn't you? You thought I was going to say, but I didn't snatch people's pocketbooks. Well, I wasn't going to say that." Pause. Silence. "I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if he didn't already know. So you set down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable."

In another corner of the room behind a screen was a gas plate and an icebox. Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse which she left behind her on the day-bed. But the boy took care to sit

on the far side of the room where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eye, if she wanted to. He did not trust the woman not to trust him. And he did not want to be mistrusted now.

“Do you need somebody to go to the store,” asked the boy, “maybe to get some milk or something?”

“Don’t believe I do,” said the woman, “unless you just want sweet milk yourself. I was going to make cocoa out of this canned milk I got here.”

“That will be fine,” said the boy.

She heated some lima beans and ham she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table. The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty-shop that stayed open late, what the work was like, and how all kinds of women came in and out, blondes, red-heads, and Spanish. Then she cut him a half of her ten-cent cake.

“Eat some more, son,” she said.

When they were finished eating she got up and said, “Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else’s—because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But I wish you would behave yourself, son, from here on in.”

She led him down the hall to the front door and opened it. “Good-night! Behave yourself, boy!” she said, looking out into the street.

The boy wanted to say something else other than “Thank you, m’am” to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but he couldn’t do so as he turned at the barren stoop and looked back at the large woman in the door. He barely managed to say “Thank you” before she shut the door. And he never saw her again.

Vocabulary

Plot Diagram for: “Thank You Ma’am”

Climax:

9. _____

8. _____

10. _____

THE TELL-TALE HEART by Edgar Allan Poe
1843

TRUE! --nervous --very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses --not destroyed --not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily --how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I

think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture --a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees --very gradually --I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded --with what caution --with what foresight --with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it --oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly --very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this, And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously--oh, so cautiously --cautiously (for the hinges creaked) --I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights --every night just at midnight --but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he has passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers --of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back --but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out --"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening; --just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief --oh, no! --it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself --"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney --it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel --although he neither saw nor heard --to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little --a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it --you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily --until, at length a simple dim ray, like the thread of the

spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open --wide, wide open --and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness --all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the sense? --now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eve. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! --do you mark me well I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me --the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once --once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eve would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye --not even his --could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out --no stain of any kind --no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all --ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock --still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, --for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled, --for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search --search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: --It continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness --until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale; --but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased --and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound --much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath --and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly --more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men --but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed --I raved --I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder --louder --louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! --no, no! They heard! --they suspected! --they knew! --they were making a mockery of my horror!--this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now --again! --hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!

"Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! --tear up the planks! here, here! --It is the beating of his hideous heart!"

Vocabulary

Plot Diagram for "The Tell-Tale Heart"

Climax:

9. _____

8. _____

7. _____

6. _____

5. _____

4. _____

Falling Action
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10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

“Monkey Man” by Walter Dean Myers

(1) The Tigros hit the ‘hood gradually, like the turning of a season. First we saw some tags scrawled on the wall near the Pioneer Supermarket. Then we heard that a kid on 141st Street got stabbed and they arrested a member of a gang called Tigros.

(2) “What’s that supposed to mean?” Fee asked. “What’s a Tigro, anyway?”

(3) I didn’t know. I didn’t even want to talk about gangs. Some people said – okay, it wasn’t some people, it was my uncle who runs the barbershop – Uncle Duke said that I had a bad attitude about Harlem.

(4) “You’re so anxious to leave you’re not even giving your homeland a chance,” he said.

(5) “Africa is my homeland,” I said.

(6) “That’s the easy answer, isn’t it?” he said. He was sweeping the floor of the shop. “Like running away from the neighborhood.”

(7) He was right, really. Fee, who is my main man, said that I had black skin and white dreams, that all I wanted to do was to get away someplace and be with white people

(8) I liked a lot of things about Harlem, especially the block, which was how we talked about 145th Street. There were good people on the block, but what I wanted was to be more than what I saw on the block. Uncle Duke said I could be more, but if I put Harlem out of my heart I could end up being a lot less, too.

(9) Yeah, well, I was ready to take my chances. What I wanted to do was to be a doctor and have a nice crib, and a Benz, the whole nine. Then the thing happened with Monkeyman.

(10) Monkeyman was always quiet. He was down with the books and everything, but he kept to himself a lot and didn't get into anybody else's business. We used to call him Monkeyman because sometimes he would go to the park, climb up into a tree, and sit up there and read all day. We weren't dissing him, we just gave him the tag and he seemed to like it, so it stuck.

(11) Anyway, the Tigros turned out to be a new gang that were trying to build a rep in the 'hood. They were biting all the stuff they read in the papers about wearing colors and flashing signs and whatnot. It wasn't a real big thing until they started terrorizing stores and then they beat up a lot of people and stabbed that one kid. After that you saw their tag all over the place, like stabbing a kid was something to be proud of.

(12) What usually happens when a new gang makes the scene is they jump bad as a posse for a while until they step too far and their leaders get busted. Then, when they realize that their reps and tattoos and colors don't keep them out of jail, they chill and their colors fade. But that hadn't happened yet with the Tigros. They were still wilding and messing with people and putting out squad tracts. A squad tract is when somebody messes with a posse and they let everybody know they're going kick his butt. When the word comes down that a gang is after you it's scary, and one of the reasons I wanted to leave the area.

(13) Okay, so here's what happened with Monkeyman and the Tigros. It started when one of the Lady Tigros got into a beef with Peaches. The Lady Tigros were just as bad as the dudes and one of them slapped Peaches in the face. Peaches and the girl got into it pretty good and Peaches won the fight. Then, on the way home, two of the Lady Tigros went after Peaches and one of them had a razor blade. Monkeyman was coming from school and had stopped off to buy a soda on the ave. He saw the girl trying to cut Peaches and he ran out and knocked the blade from the girl's hand. Bingo, the fight's over because neither off those two girls wanted to mess with Peaches without a blade and they weren't on their turf anyway. But one of the Lady

Tigros went to the same school as Monkeyman. She went back and told the Tigros and before you knew it everybody on the block was talking about how Monkeyman was in big trouble.

(14) There were signs painted on the walls – MONKEYMAN MUST DIE! and MONKEYMAN GOT TO FALL! It was all signed by the Tigros.

(15) Uncle Duke saw Monkeyman in the barbershop and told him to lay low for a while. Fee told him the same thing but everybody figured that Monkeyman was going to get beat up and maybe even worse.

(16) “You know any karate or anything?” I asked Monkeyman when I ran into him on the corner.

(17) “I read a book on it once,” he said.

(18) “That’s not good enough,” I said.

(19) He shrugged and gave me this little grin. Okay, let me back up a little. Monkeyman is six feet tall, maybe even six feet one, and thin. He plays a little ball but he’s really not kicking hoops and he’s kind of mild-looking. He’s not a lame or anything like that but he’s more down with his mind than his hands. So we worried about him.

(20) “We need to get together and help Monkeyman,” Peaches said.

(21) “That’s hip,” Fee said. “It’s hip to help a brother in trouble and everything, but what you’re talking about is getting a posse together to go down with the Tigros and that’s heavier than it is hip.”

(22) “We can tell the police,” Peaches said.

(23) “A guy I know went to the police when he got into trouble with a number runner,” I said. “The numbers runner said he was going to cut him a new place to pee from. He went to the police and the police told him they couldn’t do anything until something happened.”

(24) “They’re into cutting people,” Peaches said. “That’s serious.”

(25) “Yo, Peaches, I didn’t know you were sweating Monkeyman,” Fee said.

(26) “Lighten up, lame,” Peaches came back with her quick mouth. “Monkeyman had the heart to help me when I needed some help. If you don’t have the heart to help him that’s cool, but don’t try to finesse it off like it’s no big thing.”

(27) “He needs a gun,” Fee said. “That’s the only thing they respect.”

(28) Just blow the word and I was ready to split. From a scrap in the street the jam was jumping to nines. On the way home I tried thinking about what Monkeyman could do. If the Tigros

came on him and just beat him up it would be cool. I mean, that was sick but it was better than being cut or shot. And the thing was that a lot of kids were talking about being down with gangs and trying to make themselves large by going to whack city and offing somebody. That was the danger big-time. To me it was like some moron jumping off a big building and styling for the camera on the way down. They would be throwing away their life, and taking somebody else's life for some moment they 2 imagined would happen. This craziness filled my nightmares. And it might have been sad but the truth was that I was glad it was Monkeyman on the line, d not me.

(29) Two weeks passed from the time that Monkeyman had stopped the girl from cutting Peaches and it looked as if things might blow over without anyone getting hurt. Then a guy called Clean entered the picture.

(30) Ralph J. Bunche is the best school in the 'hood but every so often we get in a guy who doesn't fit. That's what Clean was. He wasn't a big dude, more small and wiry. He wore his pants low in hip-hop style with about four inches of his shorts showing. You're not allowed to style down in the school but he kept at it and the hallway teachers got on his case. He told everyone he was from L.A. and used to run with the Crips, but Fee peeped his school record and the dude was really from some place in California called Lompoc.

(31) Clean hooked up with some folks who told him about the Tigros posse. Check this out, to get into the Tigros you either had to slash a saint in public, meaning cut somebody who wasn't involved in nothing, just walking down the street, or making something that was foul righteous. According to the Tigros posse, since Monkeyman had messed with them and that was foul, getting even with him was making it righteous.

(32) It got around in the cafeteria that Clean was going to do up Monkeyman. Peaches was still trying to settle things peacefully.

(33) "Let's just go up to the dude and see if we can talk a hole in his ego or whatever else it takes," she said. "Because I got to be watching Monkeyman's back the same way he turned out for me."

(34) A few other kids said they were willing to try to talk to Clean. But the truth is that some dudes you can talk to and some you can't. In the first place Clean was not into brain surgery. I mean, his favorite sentence was "Huh?" Clean was in a class called ZIP. ZIP was supposed to stand for Zoned for Individual Progress, but all the kids called it the Underground Railroad because it was the last stop you made before you dropped out of high school.

(35) Okay, besides Clean not being a brainiac he was also like nine shades of serious whack. He was the kind of kid who made you wonder what his mama had been smoking when he was in the womb. But, hey, give it a shot, right?

(36) We found him on the street, and Peaches took the first shot at Clean. “So,” she said, “there’s no use in us, as young black brothers and sisters, getting into the same violence thing that’s killing us off and messing up our dreams. If we can’t respect each other, how are we going to expect people to respect us?”

(37) “He messed with the Tigros so he got to be messed up!” Clean answered.

(38) “Why?” came out of me before I could stop it.

(39) “Because that’s the way it goes!” Clean said. “He got to be messed up!”

(40) I could see that Clean was getting off with everybody standing around trying to cop a plea for Monkeyman. We split the session and I was still hoping that things would blow over. For Monkeyman’s sake and for Peaches’ sake, too.

(41) The next day Clean got busted bringing a knife to school. If you bring any kind of weapon to Bunche it means an automatic suspension and then you have to go through the bring-in-your-parents bit to get back in. When Mr. Aumack, the principal, called the police, Clean got mad and walked out of the school. But before he left he sent word that he’d be waiting for Monkeyman when we got at three-fifteen.

(42) Three-fifteen came. When we looked out of the windows, we saw about a dozen Tigros outside. They were all wearing their black do-rags and some of them had jackets with their tag on them.(43) Mr. Aumack called the police again and in a few minutes the whole block was filled with squad cars. Their lights were flashing and police were snatching everybody wearing Tigros gear. One of the Tigros spotted Monkeyman and got up in his face. He said, “When we catch you we’ll cap you.”(44) “How about tomorrow night, eleven o’clock in Jackie Robinson Memorial Park?” Monkeyman said.(45) “Bet!” the Tigros dude said. “Tomorrow night in the park. Be there, sucker, and wear something that’s going to look good at the autopsy.”

(46) “And bring your whole posse,” Monkeyman said.(47) Whoa. Monkeyman had called out Tigros big-time. I grabbed his arm and we started walking away.(48) If you’re going to get into somebody’s face you got to know they got a mind somewhere behind their eyebrows. Then maybe they’ll do some heavy thinking and settle for a chill pill.(49) “What you doing, Monkeyman?” I asked.

(50) “What’s got to be done,” Monkeyman said. “Just what’s got to be done.”(51) The word bounced around: Be in the park to catch the go-down at eleven. Some kids said they didn’t want any part of it.

(52) “Let’s kidnap Monkeyman,” Fee said. “He don’t show and nothing can happen.”

(53) It was all gums and teeth because nobody really knew what to do. I was all for dropping a dime to 911 but everyone else said no.

(54) “I’m going to be at the park,” Peaches said.(55) Fee said he would be, too. So did Tommy Collins, Debbie, LaToya, Jamie, and me. I didn’t want to show, but Peaches made it clear that anybody that didn’t would be punking out.(56) We hadn’t seen Monkeyman all day and rumors were that he had left town.(57) “Maybe he’ll show at the last minute with an Uzi and start blowing away all the Tigros,” LaToya said.(58) Nobody said anything when we headed up the hill to the park. I wondered if everybody else could hear their heart beating. I was wearing my sneakers, ready to run if I had to.(59) When we got to the park there were maybe twenty-five guys in their Tigros gear and ten girls.(60) My knees got real loose and I was having trouble swallowing.(61) “Where Monkeyman?” Clean asked. He was wearing a heavy jacket and had his hands in his pockets. “Where Monkeyman?”(62) “We thought he was here,” Fee said. I noticed Fee’s voice was kind of high.(63) We waited for another ten or fifteen minutes with all the Tigros posse calling us suckers and stuff like that. I was hoping they didn’t turn on us.(64) “Yo, here he come now!” A girl pointed toward the uptown side of the park. “Who he got with him?”(65) I turned and I saw Monkeyman coming down the street. He had a man and a woman with him. The man looked old. Monkeyman brought them right over to where we were and I recognized his grandfather. I didn’t know the woman.(66) “Hey, this is my grandfather,” Monkeyman said. “His name is Mr. Nesbitt. 4

And this is my godmother, Sister Smith.”(67) “What you bring them for?” Clean said, edging closer to Monkeyman.(68) “They came to see you mess me up!” Monkeyman said.(69) He took off his jacket as if he meant to fight Clean. For a moment I thought maybe it would be a fair fight. But then Monkeyman took off his shirt and just stood there in his bare skin and held his hands out and his head to one side.(70) Clean didn’t know what was happening. He looked around.(71) “Kick his butt!” one of the Tigros called out. “Waste him!”(72) Clean took his hands out of his pockets and started circling Monkeyman, but Monkeyman didn’t move. Clean hit him in the back of his head and he didn’t say nothing.(73) “Please don’t do that, boy,” Monkeyman’s grandfather said. “He made us promise not to help him, but please don’t do that.”(74) “We’ll kick your butt, too,” a girl said.(75) Everybody turned and looked at her and she held out her chin like she didn’t even care. But she didn’t say anything else.(76) Monkeyman’s godmother was praying.(77) It was dark but there was a moon out and the park lights were on. More people came into the park to see what was going on. What they saw was Monkeyman standing with his arms outstretched and Clean hitting him. He hit him in the face

a couple of times and an old man asked, "What's going on?"(78) "That's the Tigros gang," Fee said. "They're beating up Monkeyman because he stopped one of their girls from slashing somebody in the face."(79) "I ought to kill you!" Clean shouted.(80) "They just waiting for the police to come," another Tigros guy said.(81) It grew quiet. There had to be fifty people watching now, watching Clean standing in front of Monkeyman, not knowing what to do, watching the rest of the gang not knowing where to take it, watching Monkeyman with his arms still out from his sides, his nose bleeding, his body quivering from the pain and from the growing cold. The high streetlamps outside the park cast a pale glare on Monkeyman's dark skin. The shadow on the ground, of Monkeyman's body being offered up for a beating, was long and thin and disappeared into the shifting knot of people watching.(82) "That's what's wrong with the neighborhood now," a man said. "We got it hard enough without this kind of thing."(83) "He ain't nothing but a punk." A short, squat guy stepped out from the Tigros group. "If he don't fight, he a punk!"(84) The Tigros were outnumbered now, and began drifting off. When they got down to the last five or so someone yelled that the cops were coming and they all ran.(85) Monkeyman put on his shirt. His grandfather put his arm around him and they started out of the park. The wind picked up a little and I began to shiver. Around me others were slowly starting to move and I pulled my jacket shut and started home.(86) I saw Monkeyman two days later.(87) "You were wrong," I said. "You took a chance and you could have been killed."(88) "I was hurt," Monkeyman said. "I was hurt but they were wrong, not me."(89) "What if they had killed you?" I said.(90) He just looked at me. "I know," he said. "I know."(91) He said it with a sadness that just got all into me. He had been looking down but now Monkeyman looked up, right into my eyes, as if he expected me to say something that was right for the moment. I couldn't think of anything.(92) "Yo, Monkeyman, what did you think was going to happen that night?" I asked.(93) "I just thought that some people were going to show wrong, and some others were going to show right," he said. "No matter what happened to me, everybody was going to know the difference."(94) I couldn't see it. I wouldn't have let them beat on me like that. What I would have done I don't know.(95) It didn't end there. Three weeks later another guy in the Tigros stabbed Monkeyman in the back. Monkeyman was in the hospital for three weeks, hanging on between life and death, but finally he made it.(96) The guy who stabbed Monkeyman had been arrested before for possession of drugs and was on parole. They gave him ten to fifteen years for attempted murder. So Monkeyman got hurt and the guy that hurt him would be in jail until he wasn't a kid anymore.(97) It was all so scary. All so sad.(98) I went to visit Monkeyman in the hospital. We talked about what was going on in the school, and

what was going on around the 'hood.(99) "Man, I can't wait to go to college," I said. "I need to put some serious distance between me and 145th Street. How about you?"(100) "I got accepted at an art school in Pittsburgh," he said. "When I get finished I'll probably come back and open a studio or something. How about you?"(101) "I don't know," I said. "When I get to be a doctor maybe I'll come back and take care of guys like you."(102) Monkeyman grinned.(103) When I left I looked back over everything that had happened. What he did in the park wasn't smart. As a matter of fact it was dumb. Maybe. But as Peaches always said, when you have a friend like Monkeyman, somebody has to watch his back. I thought about what had happened in the park for months afterward. That night in the park Monkeyman had seemed so small, but now, in my mind and in my heart, he has grown. Yeah, Monkeyman.

Vocabulary

Plot Diagram for "Monkey Man"

9. _____
8. _____
7. _____
6. _____
5. _____
4. _____
3. _____
2. _____
1. _____

Rising Action
←

Climax:

Falling Action
→

10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____

Resolution:

Exposition

Protagonist:
Antagonist:
Setting – Time:
Conflict:

Author's Theme:
Symbolism:

***The Lady, or the Tiger?* By Frank R. Stockton**

In the very olden time there lived a semi-barbaric king, whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbors, were still large, florid, and untrammelled, as became the half of him, which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and, withal, of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing, and, when he and himself agreed upon anything, the thing was done. When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial; but, whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits, he was blander and more genial still, for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight and crush down uneven places.

Among the borrowed notions by which his barbarism had become semified was that of the public arena, in which, by exhibitions of manly and beastly valor, the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.

But even here the exuberant and barbaric fancy asserted itself. The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energies of the people. This vast amphitheater, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance to interest the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the king's arena, a structure which well deserved its name, for, although its form and plan were borrowed from afar, its purpose emanated solely from the brain of this man, who, every barleycorn a king, knew no tradition to which he owed more allegiance than pleased his fancy, and who ingrafted on every adopted form of human thought and action the rich growth of his barbaric idealism.

When all the people had assembled in the galleries, and the king, surrounded by his court, sat high up on his throne of royal state on one side of the arena, he gave a signal, a door beneath him opened, and the accused subject stepped out into the amphitheater. Directly opposite him, on the other side of the enclosed space, were two doors, exactly alike and side by side. It was the duty and the privilege of the person on trial to walk directly to these doors and open one of them. He could open either door he pleased; he was subject to no guidance or influence but that of the aforementioned impartial and incorruptible chance. If he opened the one, there came out of it a hungry tiger, the fiercest and most cruel that could be procured, which immediately sprang upon him and tore him to pieces as a punishment for his guilt. The moment that the case of the criminal was thus decided, doleful iron bells were clanged, great wails went up from the hired mourners posted on the outer rim of the arena, and the vast audience, with bowed heads and downcast hearts,

wended slowly their homeward way, mourning greatly that one so young and fair, or so old and respected, should have merited so dire a fate.

But, if the accused person opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady, the most suitable to his years and station that his majesty could select among his fair subjects, and to this lady he was immediately married, as a reward of his innocence. It mattered not that he might already possess a wife and family, or that his affections might be engaged upon an object of his own selection; the king allowed no such subordinate arrangements to interfere with his great scheme of retribution and reward. The exercises, as in the other instance, took place immediately, and in the arena. Another door opened beneath the king, and a priest, followed by a band of choristers, and dancing maidens blowing joyous airs on golden horns and treading an epithalamic measure, advanced to where the pair stood, side by side, and the wedding was promptly and cheerily solemnized. Then the gay brass bells rang forth their merry peals, the people shouted glad hurrahs, and the innocent man, preceded by children strewing flowers on his path, led his bride to his home.

This was the king's semi-barbaric method of administering justice. Its perfect fairness is obvious. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady; he opened either he pleased, without having the slightest idea whether, in the next instant, he was to be devoured or married. On some occasions the tiger came out of one door, and on some out of the other. The decisions of this tribunal were not only fair, they were positively determinate: the accused person was instantly punished if he found himself guilty, and, if innocent, he was rewarded on the spot, whether he liked it or not. There was no escape from the judgments of the king's arena.

The institution was a very popular one. When the people gathered together on one of the great trial days, they never knew whether they were to witness a bloody slaughter or a hilarious wedding. This element of uncertainty lent an interest to the occasion which it could not otherwise have attained. Thus, the masses were entertained and pleased, and the thinking part of the community could bring no charge of unfairness against this plan, for did not the accused person have the whole matter in his own hands?

This semi-barbaric king had a daughter as blooming as his most florid fancies, and with a soul as fervent and imperious as his own. As is usual in such cases, she was the apple of his eye, and was loved by him above all humanity. Among his courtiers was a young man of that fineness of blood and lowness of station common to the conventional heroes of romance who love royal maidens. This royal maiden was well satisfied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree unsurpassed in all this kingdom, and she loved him with an ardor that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceedingly warm and strong. This love affair moved on happily for many months, until one day the king happened to discover its existence. He did not hesitate nor waver in regard to his duty in the premises. The youth was immediately cast into prison, and a day was appointed for his trial in the king's arena. This, of course, was an especially important occasion, and his majesty, as well as all the people, was greatly interested in the workings and development of this trial. Never before had such a case occurred; never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of the king. In after years such things became commonplace enough, but then they were in no slight degree novel and startling.

The tiger-cages of the kingdom were searched for the most savage and relentless beasts, from which the fiercest monster might be selected for the arena; and the ranks of maiden youth and beauty throughout the land were carefully surveyed by competent judges in order that the young man might have a fitting bride in case fate did not determine for him a different destiny. Of course, everybody knew that the deed with which the accused was charged had been done. He had loved the princess, and neither he, she, nor any one else, thought of denying the fact; but the king would not think of allowing any fact of this kind to interfere with the workings of the tribunal, in which he took such great delight and satisfaction. No matter how the affair turned out, the youth would be disposed of, and the king would take an aesthetic pleasure in watching the course of events, which would determine whether or not the young man had done wrong in allowing himself to love the princess.

The appointed day arrived. From far and near the people gathered, and thronged the great galleries of the arena, and crowds, unable to gain admittance, massed themselves against its outside walls. The king and his court were in their places, opposite the twin doors, those fateful portals, so terrible in their similarity.

All was ready. The signal was given. A door beneath the royal party opened, and the lover of the princess walked into the arena. Tall, beautiful, fair, his appearance was greeted with a low hum of admiration and anxiety. Half the audience had not known so grand a youth had lived among them. No wonder the princess loved him! What a terrible thing for him to be there!

As the youth advanced into the arena he turned, as the custom was, to bow to the king, but he did not think at all of that royal personage. His eyes were fixed upon the princess, who sat to the right of her father. Had it not been for the moiety of barbarism in her nature it is probable that lady would not have been there, but her intense and fervid soul would not allow her to be absent on an occasion in which she was so terribly interested. From the moment that the decree had gone forth that her lover should decide his fate in the king's arena, she had thought of nothing, night or day, but this great event and the various subjects connected with it. Possessed of more power, influence, and force of character than any one who had ever before been interested in such a case, she had done what no other person had done,--she had possessed herself of the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the two rooms, that lay behind those doors, stood the cage of the tiger, with its open front, and in which waited the lady. Through these thick doors, heavily curtained with skins on the inside, it was impossible that any noise or suggestion should come from within to the person who should approach to raise the latch of one of them. But gold, and the power of a woman's will, had brought the secret to the princess.

And not only did she know in which room stood the lady ready to emerge, all blushing and radiant, should her door be opened, but she knew who the lady was. It was one of the fairest and loveliest of the damsels of the court who had been selected as the reward of the accused youth, should he be proved innocent of the crime of aspiring to one so far above him; and the princess hated her. Often had she seen, or imagined that she had seen, this fair creature throwing glances of admiration upon the person of her lover, and sometimes she thought these glances were perceived, and even returned. Now and then she had seen them talking together; it was but for a moment or two, but much can be said in a brief space; it may have been on most unimportant topics, but how could she know that? The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess; and, with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door.

When her lover turned and looked at her, and his eye met hers as she sat there, paler and whiter than any one in the vast ocean of anxious faces about her, he saw, by that power of quick perception which is given to those whose souls are one, that she knew behind which door crouched the tiger, and behind which stood the lady. He had expected her to know it. He understood her nature, and his soul was assured that she would never rest until she had made plain to herself this thing, hidden to all other lookers-on, even to the king. The only hope for the youth in which there was any element of certainty was based upon the success of the princess in discovering this mystery; and the moment he looked upon her, he saw she had succeeded, as in his soul he knew she would succeed.

Then it was that his quick and anxious glance asked the question: "Which?" It was as plain to her as if he shouted it from where he stood. There was not an instant to be lost. The question was asked in a flash; it must be answered in another.

Her right arm lay on the cushioned parapet before her. She raised her hand, and made a slight, quick movement toward the right. No one but her lover saw her. Every eye but his was fixed on the man in the arena.

“He turned, and with a firm and rapid step he walked across the empty space. Every heart stopped beating, every breath was held, every eye was fixed immovably upon that man. Without the slightest hesitation, he went to the door on the right, and opened it.”

Now, the point of the story is this: Did the tiger come out of that door, or did the lady?

The more we reflect upon this question, the harder it is to answer. It involves a study of the human heart which leads us through devious mazes of passion, out of which it is difficult to find our way. Think of it, fair reader, not as if the decision of the question depended upon yourself, but upon that hot-blooded, semi-barbaric princess, her soul at a white heat beneath the combined fires of despair and jealousy. She had lost him, but who should have him?

How often, in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror, and covered her face with her hands as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger!

But how much oftener had she seen him at the other door! How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady! How her soul had burned in agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman, with her flushing cheek and sparkling eye of triumph; when she had seen him lead her forth, his whole frame kindled with the joy of recovered life; when she had heard the glad shouts from the multitude, and the wild ringing of the happy bells; when she had seen the priest, with his joyous followers, advance to the couple, and make them man and wife before her very eyes; and when she had seen them walk away together upon their path of flowers, followed by the tremendous shouts of the hilarious multitude, in which her one despairing shriek was lost and drowned!

Would it not be better for him to die at once, and go to wait for her in the blessed regions of semi- barbaric futurity?

And yet, that awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!

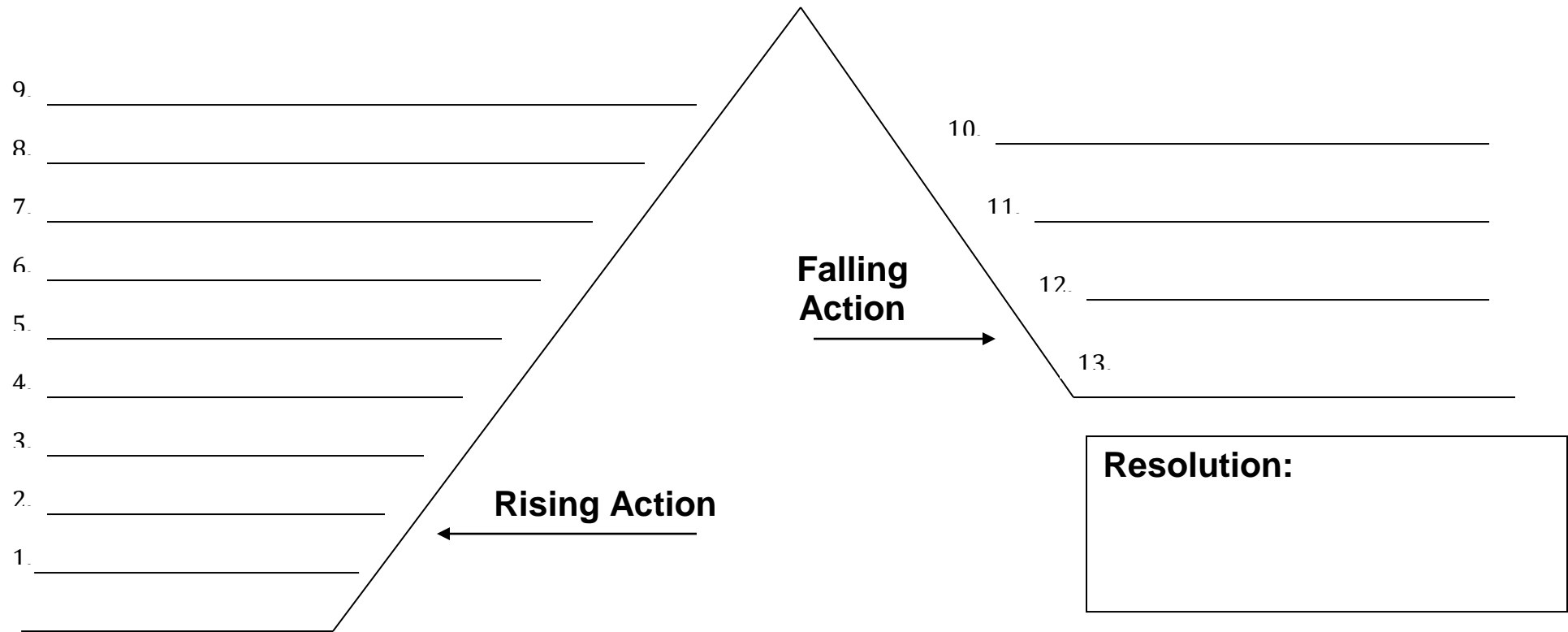
Her decision had been indicated in an instant, but it had been made after days and nights of anguished deliberation. She had known she would be asked, she had decided what she would answer, and, without the slightest hesitation, she had moved her hand to the right.

The question of her decision is one not to be lightly considered, and it is not for me to presume to set myself up as the one person able to answer it. And so I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door,--the lady, or the tiger?

Vocabulary

Climax:

Plot Diagram for "The Lady or the Tiger"



Exposition
Protagonist:
Antagonist:
Setting – Time:
Setting – Place:
Internal Conflict:
External Conflict:

Author's Theme:
Symbolism:
Foreshadowing:
Irony:

Name _____