

Sherwood Anderson's *Death in the Woods*

Day 2 (*Time required: 45-55 mins.*)

One Story, Two Points of View

Before reading the following stories to the class, tell them that both are written from the point of view of a first-person ("I") narrator, and both stories are about the same event. Ask students to observe differences between the stories as they listen. **online at <http://www.ohioreadingroadtrip.org/anderson.htm>**

Jamie's story:

"My grandparents met at a high school dance in the 1940s. My grandmother said that at first, she didn't think she would like my grandfather because he wasn't a very good dancer. Then she realized that he was only nervous. So she said that she didn't want to dance anymore and they sat down. I guess that's when they realized they had a lot in common. My grandfather said that he remembers the way she laughed at his jokes that night."

Grandpa's story:

"I met my wife at the Spring Fling Dance in April of 1946. We both went to Central High School but I didn't know her before the dance because I was a senior and she was a junior. We didn't have any classes together. Anyway, I saw her standing with her friends. She had a smile that lit up the whole gymnasium. I asked her to dance, but the music was loud. What I really wanted to do was talk to her, so I was glad when she said that she was tired of dancing. It turns out that she and I both had many brothers and sisters, and we liked all the same movies. She was easy to talk to. I'll never forget the way she threw her head back and laughed at my jokes. I knew she meant it and that she wasn't just laughing to be polite. That was the night I started to fall in love with her."

Ask students these questions:

- What details do the stories have in common?
- Which story is more specific? Why?
- What are some reasons why Jamie's story does not contain all of the details that Grandpa's story has?
- In what other ways is point of view different if the person telling the story is actually in the story and not just someone who has heard the story told many times?

Ask students to write a paragraph to answer the following questions:

- Which is the story you would rather hear? Why?
- Which of the two stories is the better one? How do you define "better" in this case?

Qualities of Good Storytellers

On the board, write “Qualities of Good Storytellers.” Ask students to scan their paragraphs, looking for things that drew them into the story. Write main ideas on the board. Then ask them to think about other stories they know and how their tellers also help to “pull” listeners into the stories. Add these qualities to the list on the board as well. (Possible student answers include visual description, suspense, humor, use of details, etc.)

Homework

- Ask students to choose a story to tell. It can be the story already shared with the class/small group, or it can be a different story.
- Ask students to jot down a list of ideas, create an outline, or write a paragraph of details from the story in order to jog their memories.

They should not yet write their stories, as more directions will follow. If students cannot immediately think of a story, ask them to spend some time talking to parents, other adults, or friends about a story that is often told when friends or family get together. Students should take notes about the people and events in the story, and they should bring those notes to class.