

"The Tail" by Joyce Hansen

ELA/Flanagan



NAME: _____

"The Tail" by Joyce Hansen
Vocabulary Warm-up Word Lists

Study these words from "The Tail." Then, apply your knowledge to the activities that follow.

Word List A

centuries [SEN chuh reez] *n.* time periods of one hundred years

Three centuries equals three hundred years.

elderly [EL dur lee] *adj.* old

My cat is fifteen years old; that's elderly for a cat!

entrance [EN trens] *n.* the way in to a place

The entrance to the theater was crowded with people trying to buy tickets.

filthy [FIL thee] *adj.* very dirty

That shirt is filthy with mud; you need to wash it.

hiking [HY king] *n.* an outdoor activity in which you walk in the countryside

I don't enjoy hiking because I get out of breath when I take long walks.

overlooking [oh ver LOOK ing] *adv.* with a view of

The window is overlooking the tracks so it is easy to see trains.

ridiculous [ri DIK yuh lus] *adj.* silly, almost unbelievable

He can't eat ten hot dogs; that's ridiculous.

stoop [STOOP] *n.* a set of steps in front of a building

It's hot inside; let's go sit on the stoop outside the door where it's cooler.

Word List B

annual [AN yoo uhl] *adj.* happening one time each year

June is the month for our annual end-of-the-year picnic.

blackmail [BLAK mayl] *v.* to threaten a person to make them do what you want

Go ahead and tell Mom that I was late; you can't blackmail me into doing your chores.

dimples [DIM puhlz] *n.* tiny hollow places on a person's cheek

You can only see her dimples when she smiles.

monstrous [MAHN struhs] *adj.* horrible and scary looking

When Tracy put on her Frankenstein costume she really looked monstrous.

obedience [oh BEE dee ens] *n.* doing what you are told to do

Obedience is important in class; always do what your teacher tells you to do.

responsibilities [ri spahn suh BIL i teez] *n.* things you have a duty to do

My after-dinner responsibilities include clearing the table and doing the dishes.

spasm [SPAZ uhm] *n.* a burst of emotion or activity, such as fear or laughter

When the cake went down the wrong way, it caused me to have a coughing spasm.

torment [TAWR ment] *v.* to bother or cause suffering

My sore throat hurts when I laugh, so don't torment me by telling me jokes.

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Vocabulary Warm-up Exercises

Exercise A Fill in each blank in the paragraph below with an appropriate word from Word List A. Use each word only once.

I love [1] _____ in the woods. When we stay in the city, however, I enjoy sitting on the [2] _____ in front of the [3] _____ to our house. From the steps [4] _____ the street, I can see everything that goes on. I clean them off before sitting down; they get [5] _____ with dirt. No sooner do I sit down than a man wearing a [6] _____ elephant costume walks by. Is it Halloween? Then, an [7] _____ lady, at least 90 years old, rides by on a skateboard. I think I could sit here for [8] _____ without ever getting bored!

Exercise B Decide whether each statement below is true or false. Circle T or F. Then, explain your answers.

1. It is an act of friendship to *blackmail* someone.
T / F _____
2. Breaking a rule is an example of *obedience*.
T / F _____
3. Most kittens look *monstrous*.
T / F _____
4. Putting out fires and saving lives are two of a fireman's *responsibilities*.
T / F _____
5. If you give a hungry person food, you *torment* that person.
T / F _____
6. A really funny joke can cause you to have a *spasm* of laughter.
T / F _____
7. *Dimples* are found on a person's face.
T / F _____
8. An *annual* event happens twice a year.
T / F _____

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Reading Warm-up B

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

“These are your responsibilities,” said my mother, looking sternly at my sister Rebecca and me. “First, the two of you must clean all your old stuff out of the attic. Then, you will help your father and me in the basement. Finally, the two of you will bring all the stuff over to the thrift shop.”

It was our annual spring-cleaning Sunday. That meant a full day of nonstop chores: cleaning, sweeping, sorting, and organizing. Rebecca and I knew that it was hopeless to object. Any lack of obedience would result in a week without dessert, or worse, permanent grounding. Nobody fooled around on spring-cleaning Sunday.

The only pleasure I had was the knowledge that the work would torment Rebecca more than it would me. She hates getting her hands dirty, let alone her precious face. Dirt might spoil those cute little dimples she was so proud of. Why would anyone be proud of little dents in her face? I’ll never understand Rebecca.

We began in the attic. Actually it wasn’t as terrible as I had feared. Apparently, we had gotten rid of most of the old junk during last year’s spring-cleaning event. We collected some bags of old clothes, swept out some cobwebs, and dusted the furniture. Rebecca had one spasm of fear when she thought she had broken a nail. Aside from that, she didn’t seem to mind her tasks.

Neither of us, however, was looking forward to working in the basement. The basement was petrifying, filled with monstrous shadows and creepy dark corners. When I was younger, Rebecca used to blackmail me with the basement. She would threaten to lock me in there if I didn’t obey her commands. Surprisingly, by the time we got downstairs, our parents were already finishing up. One quick drive to the thrift shop and this year’s spring cleaning would be over.

1. Underline the sentences that tell what the girls’ responsibilities are. Then, write a sentence naming one of your responsibilities.
2. Circle the words that tell what the annual event is. Then tell how often this family does this event.
3. Circle the words that tell what will happen if the sisters don’t show obedience. Then tell what obedience means.
4. Write a sentence telling why the work would torment Rebecca.
5. Circle the nearby words that tell in what part of the body dimples are found. Then tell what dimples are.
6. Underline the word that tells what type of spasm Rebecca had. Then tell what spasm means.
7. Underline the words that tell what monstrous things are found in the basement. Then write a sentence telling what else might appear monstrous to people.
8. Underline the sentence that tells how Rebecca used to blackmail her sister. Then tell what blackmail means.

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Vocabulary Builder

Word List

anxious gnawing mauled routine spasm vow

A. DIRECTIONS: **Synonyms** are words that are similar in meaning. Find and write a synonym for each vocabulary word. Then, use each synonym in a sentence that makes the meaning of the word clear. The first one has been done for you.

1. *gnawing*

Synonym: chewing

Sentence: Rodents have been chewing on the bark of this tree.

2. *mauled*

Synonym: _____

Sentence: _____

3. *vow*

Synonym: _____

Sentence: _____

4. *spasm*

Synonym: _____

Sentence: _____

5. *anxious*

Synonym: _____

Sentence: _____

6. *routine*

Synonym: _____

Sentence: _____

B. WORD STUDY: The Latin prefix *dis-* causes a noun to have the opposite of its meaning. Think about the meaning of *dis-* in each underlined word. On the line before each sentence, write T if the statement is true and F if the statement is false. Then, explain your answer.

1. _____ A person who is in discomfort does not feel well.

2. _____ If you are looking for something, you want it to disappear.

3. _____ To disconnect the television, you should plug it in.

Name _____ Date _____

Learning About Short Stories

The short story is a form of fiction. This chart outlines its basic elements.

Elements of Short Story	Examples
CHARACTERS The characters are the people or animals in the story.	A character's traits are his or her qualities, such as honesty. A character's motives are the reasons he or she acts, such as a desire to be liked.
PLOT The plot is the series of events.	The plot contains a conflict , or problem, between opposing forces. One or more characters must solve the conflict. An internal conflict takes place inside a character's mind, such as when a man struggles to make a decision. An external conflict is one in which a character struggles with an outside force.
SETTING The setting is the time and place of the story's action.	An example of setting might be a small village in England in the winter of 1765.
THEME The theme is a message about life.	A stated theme is expressed directly by the author, such as when a fable ends with the moral "Look before you leap." An implied theme is suggested by what happens to the characters, such as when a thief ends up in jail. The implied theme is that crime doesn't pay.

DIRECTIONS: The following are examples of short story elements. Underline the term that correctly identifies each.

- | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. A deer tries to survive a forest fire. | internal conflict | external conflict |
| 2. A character says, "Honesty is very important." | stated theme | implied theme |
| 3. A man always turns everything into a joke. | character trait | character motive |
| 4. Relax and make discoveries during a vacation. | theme | setting |
| 5. A man must find a way to return from outer space. | character | plot |

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Reading: Use Details to Make Inferences

When you **make inferences**, you make logical assumptions about something that is not directly stated in the text. To make inferences, use the **details** that the author provides.

Details in the text + What you know = Inference

Look at the details, shown in *italics*, in the following sentence.

Arnie *ran* to the mailbox *as fast as he could* to see if Jim's letter had *finally* arrived.

You can make two inferences from the details and from what you know.

- From *finally*, you can infer that Arnie has been waiting to hear from Jim.
- Because Arnie runs fast, you can infer that he is eager to get the letter.

DIRECTIONS: As you read "The Tail," find details that help you make three inferences. Write two details and your logical inference in each row of boxes below.

A.

Detail:	Detail:	Inference:
----------------	----------------	-------------------

B.

Detail:	Detail:	Inference:
----------------	----------------	-------------------

C.

Detail:	Detail:	Inference:
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"The Tail" by Joyce Hansen
Literary Analysis: Characterization

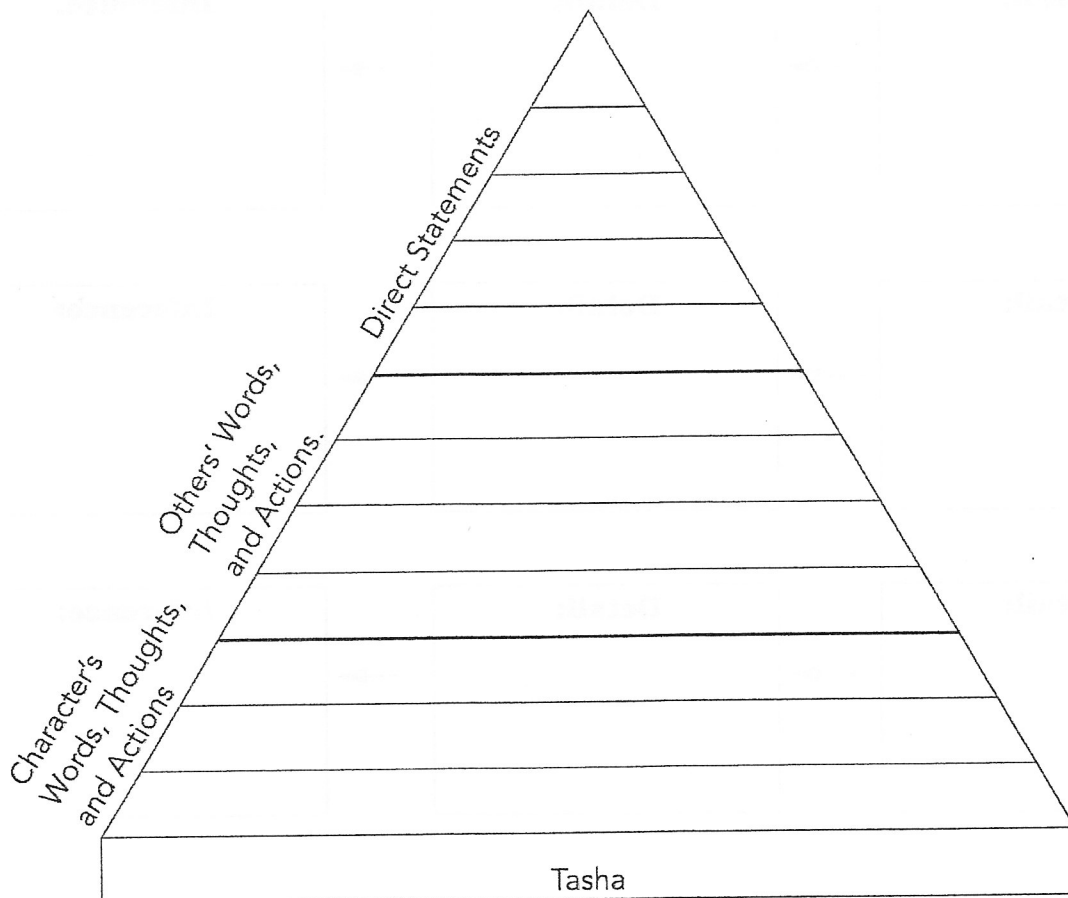
Characterization is the way writers develop and reveal information about characters.

- **Direct characterization:** a writer makes direct statements about a character.
- **Indirect characterization:** a writer suggests information through a character's thoughts, words, and actions as well as what other characters say and think about the character.

In this passage from "The Tail," the writer uses Tasha's thoughts to give an indirect characterization that Junior is cute, but very troublesome.

Junior held her hand and stared up at her with an innocent look in his bright brown eyes, which everyone thought were so cute. Dimples decorated his round cheeks as he smiled and nodded at me every time Ma gave me an order. I knew he was just waiting for her to leave so he could torment me.

DIRECTIONS: In each part of the pyramid below, jot down direct statements as well as Tasha's and other characters' words, thoughts, and actions that tell about Tasha in "The Tail."



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"The Tail" by Joyce Hansen
Literary Analysis: Characterization

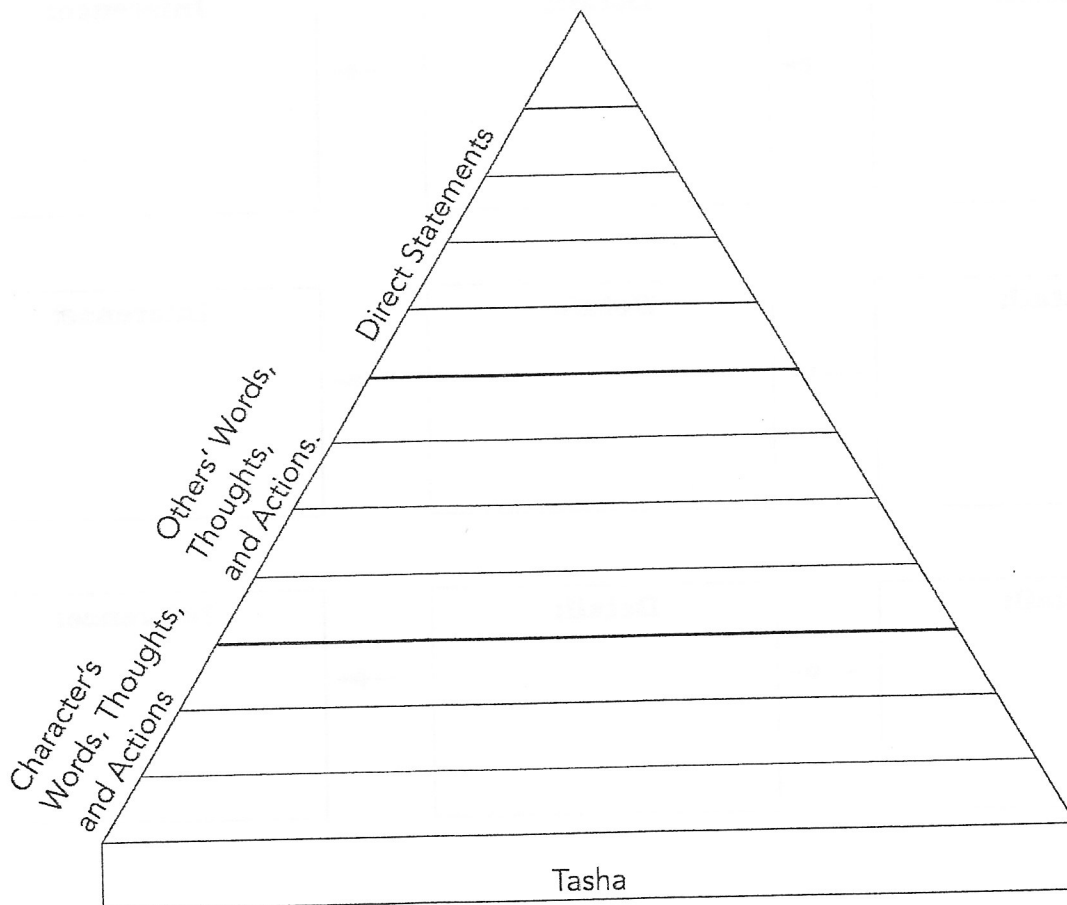
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Enrichment: The Cloisters

In “The Tail,” Tasha offers to take Junior to the Cloisters Museum. This Manhattan museum overlooks the Hudson River. It contains medieval and Renaissance art.

DIRECTIONS: Use library or Internet resources to find out more about the Cloisters. Information can also be found in a New York City guidebook or a book about medieval art or museums. Focus on the Cloisters' famous set of woven tapestries titled The Hunt of the Unicorn. On the lines below, write three facts about the Cloisters and three facts about the Unicorn Tapestries. Then, use these facts to write two or three paragraphs telling what Tasha and Junior might experience in a visit to the Cloisters.

Facts About the Cloisters

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Facts About the Unicorn Tapestries

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page, possibly from a composition book. The edges of the paper are slightly irregular, suggesting it might be a scan of a physical document. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

Story Map

Instructions: Fill in the boxes to show how your story developed.

Name: _____

Characters:

Setting:

Problem:

Title:

Author:

How the Characters Tried to Solve the Problem:

Solution: