

**Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum**  
 Lesson or Unit Plan for “The Story Without an End”  
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**“The Story Without an End” – Closure and Resolution**

<b>LESSON or UNIT PLAN for “The Story Without an End”</b>	
<b>Concept or Topic:</b> the importance of closure and resolution	<b>Suggested Grade Level(s)/Course:</b> American Literature – Junior English
<b>Subject:</b> Writing/Literature	<b>Suggested Time Frame:</b> 5 days/50 minutes per day Optional Day #6
<p><b>Objective(s):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--The students in junior American literature will define the 10 literary terms and concepts using their literature textbook glossaries or online literary dictionary with 100% accuracy to share with the class.</li> <li>--The students in junior American literature will discuss the five essential questions related to endings in film and literature with at least two partners and make one contribution per question.</li> <li>--The students in junior American literature will read Mark Twain’s “The Story Without an End” as a class with 95% accuracy with each student reading aloud at least one time.</li> <li>--The students in junior American literature will write an original narrative on a topic of their choosing that is 75% completed (<math>\frac{3}{4}</math> of a page) but does not contain an ending and is written with 90% accurate grammar, punctuation, and spelling.</li> <li>--The students in junior American literature will conclude the narrative for one other student’s writing that is at least one paragraph in length but does not exceed two paragraphs and is written with 90% accurate grammar, punctuation, and spelling.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Common Core State Standards:</b></p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5:</b> Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.</p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3:</b> Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E:</b> Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.</p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4:</b> Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)</p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5:</b> Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions</p>	

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should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grades 11-12 here.)

### Assessments:

**Formative Assessment #1:** define terms related to closure/resolution/narration

**Formative Assessment #2:** Group work – Essential Questions: (discuss in small groups then as a large group)

1. Why are endings essential? Do they make the story?
2. What makes a good ending? (cliffhanger, dance scene, jury verdict, etc.)
3. What is your favorite ending? Why?
4. How would you feel if your favorite movie or book ended differently than the ending you remember and prefer?
5. Why would an author eliminate an ending or create alternate endings?

**Formative Assessment #3:** identify a good or memorable movie/show or book ending (email to teacher as example)

**Summative Assessment Part #1:** write a narrative that is 75% complete (¾ page) – make sure it can lead up to an entertaining or open-ended conclusion with a variety of possibilities

**Summative Assessment Part #2:** write an original ending to the story of a classmate’s narrative – 1-2 paragraphs long

### Vocabulary (Tiers 2 & 3):

**Tier 2:** plot, action, cliffhanger, resolution, tension, narration

**Tier 3:** catharsis, closure, narrative structure, unreliable narrator (as it relates to resolution or lack thereof)

### Subject Area Integration:

English / psychology / science (how the brain works)

### Background Information Required for Lesson:

Mark Twain’s life – unconventional / writing for entertainment of the reader / other interesting Twain texts with unique structures (cover along with Mark Twain’s biography in previous classes/beginning of Mark Twain or Regionalism unit

*Psychology Today* article about closure: (focus on sections related to how closure prevents the mind from moving forward)

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.psychologytoday.com/blog/romantically-attached/201609/why-we-need-closure%3Famp>

### Materials:

computer and projector (memorable movie endings)

phones (students can use to send endings to teacher if time allows)

copies of “The Story Without an End”

copies of *Psychology Today* article – “Why We Need Closure”

loose-leaf paper

pens (one color for writing narrative & one color for writing ending – see each student’s contribution)

whiteboard

dry erase markers

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### Technology:

computer  
projector  
Internet  
YouTube

### Related Twain Quotes/Passages:

#### Twain’s stance on writing: ([twainquotes.com](http://twainquotes.com)) -cover during Twain introduction-

1. ...great books are weighed and measured by their style and matter and not by the trimmings and shadings of their grammar.  
- Mark Twain, a Biography
2. You can find in a text whatever you bring, if you will stand between it and the mirror of your imagination.  
- "A Fable"
3. A successful book is not made of what is in it, but of what is left out of it.  
- Letter to Henry H. Rogers, 26 - 28 April 1897
4. With the pen in one's hand, narrative is a difficult art; narrative should flow as flows the brook down through the hills and the leafy woodlands, its course changed by every boulder it comes across and by every grass-clad gravelly spur that projects into its path; its surface broken, but its course not stayed by rocks and gravel on the bottom in the shoal places; a brook that never goes straight for a minute, but goes, and goes briskly, sometimes ungrammatically, and sometimes fetching a horseshoe three quarters of a mile around, and at the end of the circuit flowing within a yard of the path it traversed an hour before; but always going, and always following at least one law, always loyal to that law, the law of the narrative, which has no law.

### Lesson Sequence:

#### Day #1:

**Hook/Intro:** play endings to *Psycho* and *Footloose* – Are these endings memorable? Why? (10 minutes)

#### Teaching of the Concept(s):

1. Elements of Narration: define terms from vocabulary section above (students define and share with the class) (15 minutes)
2. Essential Questions: following definitions of resolution and closure – students discuss questions in groups of three (10 minutes)
3. Essential Questions (continued): share answers and discuss with the large group (10 minutes)
4. Assign Homework: email memorable ending to teacher for tomorrow
5. Closure: play ending of *Gone with the Wind* (“After all tomorrow is another day.”)

#### Suggested Questions:

1. Why are endings essential? Do they make the story?
2. What makes a good ending? (cliffhanger, dance scene, jury verdict, etc.)
3. What is your favorite ending? Why?
4. How would you feel if your favorite movie or book ended differently than the ending you remember and prefer?
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### Learning Activity:

Pair and Share: essential questions

### Review/Closure:

1. Wrap-up/Group Discussion of Essential Questions
2. another memorable ending: final movie clip to end class

### Day #2:

**Hook/Intro:** play best endings sent in from students for homework (10 minutes)

### Teaching of the Concept(s):

1. *Psychology Today* article: “Why We Need Closure” - read important excerpts – students take turns (10 minutes)
2. Discuss *Psychology Today* article: see suggested questions below (10 minutes)
3. Pair and Share: discuss with one partner – Can literature affect our real lives? (5 minutes)
4. Read Aloud: “The Story Without an End” – read as a class (10 minutes)
5. speculate endings to story - What are the possibilities? (work with a partner) (5 minutes)

### Suggested Questions:

Article Discussion:

1. Does closure in our lives prevent us from moving forward?
2. What events in the real world still affect society because of their lack of closure? (i.e. Amelia Earhart, Tupac, Black Dahlia, Olympic/sports upsets)
3. Can closure in fictional texts and movies affect the readers and viewers in the same ways as real-life examples?

### Learning Activity:

Read *Psychology Today* article

Pair and Share

Read Aloud

### Review/Closure:

Ending: speculate the possible endings to “The Story Without an End” (with a partner)

### Day #3:

### Hook/Intro:

share student ideas for possible endings from yesterday’s reading (7 minutes)

### Teaching of the Concept(s):

1. Reading Review: review “The Story Without an End” – What has happened so far? (catch up students who were absent) (5 minutes)
2. Read Aloud: finish reading “The Story Without an End” (35 minutes)

### Suggested Questions:

Read Aloud:

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1. Sticky situations: What would go through your mind if you were in John Brown’s shoes? (pair and share then share out)
2. Why didn’t Mark Twain provide an ending? (possible answers: frustrate the reader, force us to delve into our imagination, ran out of ideas, ran out of time) (pair and share then share out)

### **Learning Activity:**

Read Aloud – Suggested Questions/Critical Thinking

### **Review/Closure:**

Evaluate the story’s last line: “It is the reader’s privilege...”

--Is it a privilege to have the opportunity to make up our own ending or do we want the ending written for us by the writer?

### **Day #4:**

#### **Hook/Intro:**

Playing into Twain’s Humor: 1-2 jokes with surprise endings (have students bring in examples) (5 minutes)

#### **Teaching of the Concept(s):**

1. Identifying Narrative Concepts in “The Story Without an End”: (plot line – exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution) – How do the elements build to the resolution? (30 minutes)
2. Present Assignment: write your own narrative/guidelines/requirements
3. Narrative: students will use plot line to write their own narrative for the rest of class (12 minutes)

#### **Suggested Questions:**

What is the purpose of exposition? Why did Twain set up his story the way he did?

Who is important in “The Story Without an End”?

What is the purpose of the rising action/falling action? How do these create expectations for the reader?

Is there a climax?

Can the resolution and climax be the same?

#### **Learning Activity:**

Plot Line: narrative elements

Narrative Writing: story should be  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a page long

#### **Review/Closure:**

final class joke with surprise ending

### **Day #5:**

#### **Hook/Intro:**

teacher reads original story without an ending – students propose endings (10 minutes)

#### **Teaching of the Concept(s):**

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1. Review Effective Endings: cliffhangers, 12<sup>th</sup> inning grand slam, shocking twist – student contributions (10 minutes) –suggested questions below-
2. students reread their narratives (5 minutes)
3. switch narratives with a partner
4. partner writes ending of narrative (1-2 paragraphs) (15 minutes)

### **Suggested Questions:**

Since first introducing the importance of endings, what endings have stood out to you or come to you during this unit?

Why is this ending effective for you?

### **Learning Activity:**

complete narrative for your partner

### **Review/Closure:**

Students will read narratives. (A third student who did not write the narrative will read out loud to add to the surprise of the narrative.)

**Day #6:** (continue reading narratives, if needed or desired)

### **Homework:**

Day #1: email memorable ending to teacher for tomorrow’s class

Day #4: write narrative –  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a page in length

### **Strategies for Exceptional Students:**

Have students look up memorable endings while class discusses essential questions. Have students pair with lower-performing students to consider endings for partner’s narratives.

### **Suggested Follow-Up Activities:**

#### **Collaborative Narrative:**

1. have students write for two minutes
2. pass on narrative
3. add to narrative before passing it on again (two minutes each turn)
  - practice continuing a story with many authors
  - follow many trains of thought and make them cohesive

#### **Adventures of Huckleberry Finn:**

1. read synopsis
2. have students guess the ending
3. reflect on choices at certain points of text, including at the end
  - Were they right?
  - Were they wrong?
  - How was your ending different from the actual ending?
  - Which did you like best?
  - Was Mark Twain’s ending effective?