Creative Writing 20 - Polished Short Story Assignment

Polished Writing Assignment: write a short story of approximately 5-7 pages with an interesting plot and well-developed characters. Review the rubric and ensure that all criteria are present prior to handing your story in. We will be working on this short story in stages, which are:

Stage 1: work on the 'skeleton' of the story by jotting down a brief outline.

Beginning	Middle	End
A) Engage reader's attention	E) Develop the characters through specific actions, dialogue, description, and concrete sensory details	H) Develop the plot intensity to a climax
B) Give details about the setting	F) Introduce plot complications through conflict	I) Resolve the conflict
C) Introduce the main characters, and establish the point of view	G) Add stylistic devices – figures of speech, imagery, etc.	J) Reveal the final outcomes
D) Set the plot in motion with an event or situation that initiates the conflict		K)Make the significance clear to the reader

Stage 2: . Write a three page short story that has a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Stage 3: In addition to the revision questions on your initial fiction handout, review the following questions and decide what you need to focus on in stage 3.

1. Does this story's beginning name the main characters and initiate the conflict? Does it give details about the setting?
2. Does the story have a clear point of view? Is the point of view developed consistently?
3. Is the plot developed with complications shown by specifics actions and events?
4. Does the story use dialogue and concrete sensory details to create complex characters?
5. Does the story use imagery to make the story come alive?
6. Does the story's end include a climax? Does it resolve the story's conflict and show the significance of the events?

Stage 4: add the 'muscle' and 'flesh' of the story. In class activities will focus on developing dialogue and adding descriptive details. Have your rough draft printed and be ready to work into it in class.

Stage 5: revise again. This time special emphasis should be on flow and mechanics. if any plot details can be cut, they should be, and if something is missing then a scene or two may be added as needed.

Stage 6: review rubric and ensure you've covered all of the following:

Characters
Name your characters and clearly describe them. Readers should be able to identify them.

Conflict
It should be clear what conflict the main character faces and why it is a problem. Decide if it is an internal or external conflict. It is typically introduced in the beginning of the story.

Plot
Organize your story so that it clearly moves from beginning to end in a logical sequence. The climax should be gripping, and all the loose ends should be tied up in the conclusion.

Setting
Use vivid, descriptive, words to 'show' vs. 'tell' when and where the story takes place.

Theme
Upon completing the story, reflect to ensure a theme is woven into the story. What is the overall lesson this story teaches?

Point of View
Choose a point of view (typically first or third person). Stick to this point of view throughout your story.

Tone
Upon completing your story, reflect to see if an overall mood or tone could be used to clearly describe parts of your story. Revise, as necessary, to ensure this is present.

Style
Upon completing your story, reflect to see if your voice is used consistently within the story to reinforce purpose and connect with audience. Have a friend or family member read your story and give you feedback about this.

Dialogue
Use dialogue to bring your characters to life. Be sure that it is always clear which character is speaking and pay attention to dialogue tags.

Description
Employ creative details and/or descriptions that bringing the story to life.

Mechanics
Proofread to ensure there are no errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics.

Requirements
5-7 pages double spaced
Font: size 12 and Times New Roman.

Short Story Rubric

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1-0
Character	The main characters are fully developed, including being named and clearly described. Readers understand and could accurately describe the characters.	The main characters are named and described. Most readers would have some idea of what the characters looked like.	The main characters are named, but not developed. The reader knows very little about the characters.	There is little to no character development.
Conflict	It is very easy for the reader to understand the problem the main character faces and why it is a problem.	It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem the main character faces and why it is a problem.	It is either difficult to see the problem the main character faces or it is not clear why it is a problem.	It is not clear what problem the main character faces.
Plot	The story is well organized. One idea or scene follows another in a logical sequence. The solution to the main problem follows a gripping climax, is logical, and there are no loose ends.	The story is pretty well organized. One idea or scene may seem out of place. The solution to the character's problem follows a climax, and is fairly logical.	The story is a little hard to follow. There may/may not be a clear climax. The solution to the character's problem is a little hard to understand.	Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged. No solution is attempted or it is impossible to understand.
Setting	Many vivid, descriptive words are used to tell when and where the story took place. The setting is well developed!	Some vivid, descriptive words are used to tell the audience when and where the story took place. The setting is developed.	The reader can figure out when and where the story took place, but the author didn't supply much detail. The setting needs further development.	The reader has trouble figuring out when and where the story took place. There is no setting development.
Theme	Complex themes evident in story.	Clear theme evident with a beginning, middle and end of the story.	Theme is weak; lacks plot development.	Theme is difficult to determine.
Point of View	One point of view was used consistently throughout the story.	Point of view is fairly consistent.	Point of view changes several times throughout the story.	What is the point of view?
Tone	Writer uses words very effectively to establish mood and tone	Writer uses words well to establish mood and tone	Writer is beginning to use words to share feelings with the reader, but more emotion is needed	Writer has difficulty sharing feelings with the reader
Style	Voice is used to reinforce purpose and connect with audience	Voice is heard frequently.	Voice is either unclear or inconsistent	Voice is inappropriate
Dialogue	There is an appropriate amount of dialogue to bring the characters to life and it is always clear which character is speaking.	There is too much dialogue in this story, but it is always clear which character is speaking.	There is not quite enough dialogue in this story, and it is only sometimes clear which character is speaking.	It is no clear which character is speaking.
Description	The story contains many creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to bringing the story to life.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions that contribute a fairly lifelike story.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions, but they are ineffective or distract from the story.	There is little evidence of creativity and description in the story.
Mechanics	The story contains no errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics.	The story contains few minor errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics.	The story contains many and/or serious errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics, which may interfere with reading.	The story contains so many errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that errors block reading.
Requirements	All of the written requirements (typed, double spaced, #of pages, font, margins) revisions, were met.	Most (about 80%) of the written requirements were met.	At least 50% of the written requirements were met, but several were not.	Less than 50% of the requirements were met.

Finch Opening: Analysis

Finch, at the apartment door, breathing heavy from five flights of stairs, taken fast. The message that'd brought him from the station was already dying in his hand. Red smear on a limp circle of green fungal paper that had minutes before squirmed clammy. Now he had only the door to pass through, marked with the gray caps' symbol.

239 Manzikert Avenue, apartment 525.

An act of will, crossing that divide. Always. Reached for his gun, then changed his mind. Some days were worse than others.

A sudden flash of his partner Wyte, telling him he was compromised, him replying, "I don't have an opinion on that." Written on a wall at a crime scene: *Everyone's a collaborator. Everyone's a rebel.* The truth in the weight of each.

The doorknob cold but grainy. The left side rough with light green fungus.

Sweating under his jacket, through his shirt. Boots heavy on his feet.

Always a point of no return, and yet he kept returning.

I am not a detective. I am not a detective.

Inside, a tall, pale man dressed in black stood halfway down the hall, staring into a doorway. Beyond him, a dark room. A worn bed. White sheets dull in the shadow. Didn't look like anyone had slept there in months. Dusty floor. Even before he'd started seeing Sintra, his place hadn't looked this bad.

The Partial turned and saw Finch. "Nothing in that room, Finch. It's all in here." He pointed into the doorway. Light shone out, caught the dark glitter of the Partial's skin where tiny fruiting bodies had taken hold. Uncanny left eye in a gaunt face. Always twitching.

Protagonist, foregrounded in a sentence that exemplifies the terse style

Anchor: tangible physical location, a setting that will be returned to and thus made specific

Intentional Dissonance: "cold" things often associated with "smooth"

Denial infers someone thinks he is

Note that there is no need to show Finch turning the knob and opening the door.

Introduction of another major character—in all, 5 major characters already referenced by first page/ninth paragraph

Partial color theme: muted, leeches color from scene: "black," "pale," "dusty," "white," "dull."

- Economy of language without sacrificing meaningful description
- Use of sentence fragments to reduce distance from protagonist's point of view and to increase tension

Came in a hurry—urgency—and told where he came from

Strange message—this is not Contemporary Earth Prime

Gray caps introduced in paragraph 1

Close-in on Finch's POV

Introduction of Finch's partner by paragraph 4, and use of very short flashback to provide history, texture

Suggestion of factions within the city, and of consequences ("crime scene")

Supports strangeness of setting

Further evidence of Finch's stress, meant to make the reader feel it; "heavy" to also support "weight of each" above

This has happened before; Finch has endured this before, more than once

Intentional banality of room to allow focus on characters and and their strangeness

Introduction of Finch's girlfriend on Page 1—but not over-emphasized so the focus remains on the tension of the main situation

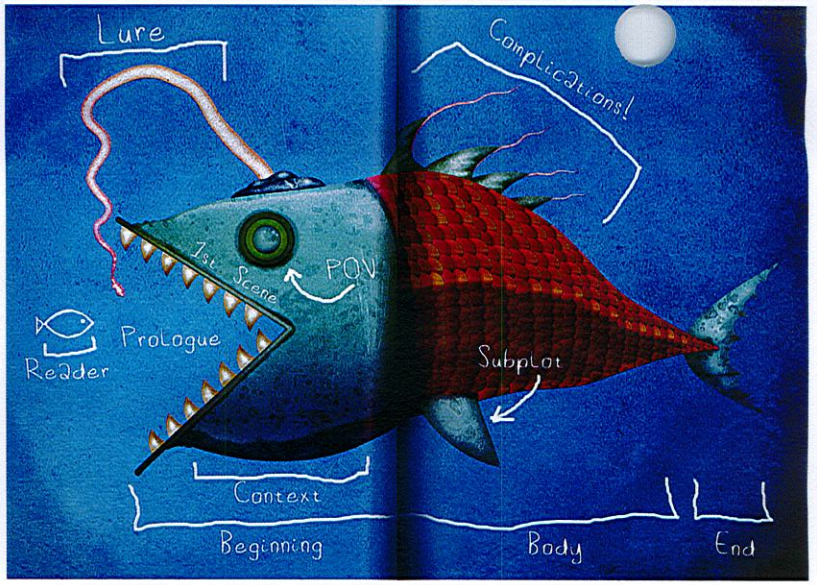
By now multiple fungal references mean this descriptor should seem less strange to the reader

Short Story Outline

Beginning	Middle	End
A)	E)	H)
B)	F)	I)
C)		J)
D)	G)	K)

← COMPLICATION

CHARACTERS →



HOOK

1st SCENE

P.O.V.

Beginning

Body

End

SETTING: