



A Selection of Short Stories

Second and Third Year students must study a number of short stories.

*In the table below, you will see an extract and some associated themes in each short story.
All of these short stories can be used at Junior and Senior Cycle.*

'There Will Come Soft Rains' by Ray Bradbury

Animals took shape: yellow giraffes, blue lions, pink antelopes, lilac panthers cavorting in crystal substance. The walls were glass. They looked out upon color and fantasy. Hidden films clocked through well-oiled sprockets, and the walls lived. The nursery floor was woven to resemble a crisp, cereal meadow.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**FANTASY
NATURE**

'Everything Will Be OK' by James Hoe

The kitten is a scrawny thing with burrs and bits of wood caught in its coat where it still has fur, and pus coming out its eyes and nose. Its big baby head looks even bigger at the end of such a stick of a body. I found it in the woods at the end of my street where I play most days with my friends.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**LIFE
ADOLESCENCE
FAMILY
DEATH**

'The Long Walk' by George Layton

I loved it when my grandad took me out – just me and him. I never knew when I was going out with him. It just happened every so often. My mum'd say to me, 'C'mon, get ready. Your grandad's coming to take you out. Get your clogs on.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**RELATIONSHIPS
LOVE
FAMILY
DEATH**

'The Selfish Giant' by Oscar Wilde

One morning the Giant was lying awake in bed when he heard some music. It sounded so sweet to his ears that he thought it must be the King's musicians passing by. It was really only a little linnet singing outside his window, but it was so long since he had heard a bird sing in his garden that it seemed to him to be the most beautiful music in the world.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**SELF-INTEREST
REDEMPTION
CHILDHOOD**

'Seventh Grade' by Gary Soto

In the homeroom, roll was taken, emergency cards were passed out, and they were given a bulletin to take home to their parents. The principal, Mr. Belton, spoke over the crackling loudspeaker, welcoming the students to a new year, new experiences, and new friendships. The students squirmed in their chairs and ignored him, they were anxious to go to first period.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**FANTASY
NATURE
BULLYING**

'His First Flight' by Liam O'Flaherty

The young seagull was alone in his ledge. His two brothers and his sister had already flown away the day before. He had been afraid to fly with them. Somehow when he had taken a little run forward to the brink of the ledge and attempted to flap his wings he became afraid. The great expanse of sea stretched down beneath, and it was such a long way down -- miles down.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**SELF-BELIEF
COURAGE
RESILIENCE**

'The Landlady' by Roald Dahl

Billy Weaver had travelled down from London on the slow afternoon train, with a change at Swindon on the way, and by the time he got to Bath it was about nine o'clock in the evening and the moon was coming up out of a clear starry sky over the houses opposite the station entrance.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**MYSTERY
URBAN LIFE**

'The Story of the Hour' by Kate Chopin

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**LOVE
MARRIAGE
IDENTITY**

'The Lottery' by Shirley Jackson

The children assembled first, of course. School was recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty sat uneasily on most of them; they tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play, and their talk was still of the classroom and the teacher, of books and reprimands.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**TRADITION
HUMAN NATURE
SOCIAL ORDER**

'The Black Cat' by Edgar Allen Poe

This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**SUPERSTITION
GUILT
MANIPULATION**

'Janey Mary' by James Plunkett

Picking her way amongst the debris-littered wasteland upon which houses had once stood, she watched her shadow bobbing and growing with the uneven rippling of the ground. The light of the wintry sun rested wanly on everything and the sky was dizzily blue and fluffed a little with white cloud

THEMES INCLUDE:

**POVERTY
COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE**

'The Sniper' by Liam O Flaherty

He looked at the smoking revolver in his hand, and with an oath he hurled it to the roof at his feet. The revolver went off with a concussion and the bullet whizzed past the sniper's head. He was frightened back to his senses by the shock. His nerves steadied. The cloud of fear scattered from his mind and he laughed

THEMES INCLUDE:

**THE CYCLE OF
VIOLENCE
ISOLATION
WAR**

'Fall' by Emma Donaghue

Harnessed and pillowed in her pod as tight as an unborn, Annie waits. Gives herself up. Too late to uncurl, scramble out, escape this watery fate. Knees to double chin, she can't straighten so much as an elbow. Beyond all hope of an easy way out.

THEMES INCLUDE:

**FAITH
GENDER
IDENTITY**

Note: The above extracts might also be used as prompts for creative writing