When the River Calls

A Novel Study

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TEACHING NOTES

WHEN THE RIVER CALLS

NOVEL STUDY

TEACHING NOTES

CHAPTERS 1 – 5

CHARACTERIZATION

Characters are who the story is about. We learn about them in two ways.
1. Dialogue (what they say)
2. Action (what they do)

CHAPTERS 6 – 10

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative language is when words are used in a way that is not literally accurate in order to create a special meaning or effect.

Study the figurative language chart below to learn the names of six kinds of figurative language.

FIGURE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Simile	A simile is a comparison between two unlike things that have something in common. A simile always uses the words *like* or *as* to make the comparison.	P. 39. *Then it raised an arm, pointing at me **like** the specter of doom.* P. 52. *I'm hungry **as** a baby bird.*
Metaphor	A metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things that have something in common. The comparison does not use *like* or *as*. Instead, it says that one thing *is* something else.	p. 36. *…the rafters above me **were** pillars of black night.*
Personification	Personification is when the author speaks of an idea, object, or animal as if it were a person.	P. 36. *The sun **hooked a** tentative **fingernail** over the edge of the horizon.*
Irony	Irony is saying one thing, but meaning the opposite.	P. 42. *"I can see you'll be **a lot** of help,"* I said sarcastically. (She really means he'll be no help at all.)
Hyperbole	Hyperbole is an exaggeration, usually to make a point.	P. 38. *What I saw stopped me **dead** in my tracks.* (She wasn't really dead.)
Litotes	Litotes is a deliberate understatement of something the reader knows could really be said in a stronger way.	P. 134. *We came to see how you're doing, Paul.* (Actually, she loves him, and was afraid he was in trouble.)

CHAPTERS 11 – 15

POINT OF VIEW

Point of view refers to which character the author uses to tell the story.

First Person Point of View: This is when the author writes as if s/he is a character in the story. First person can be recognized because the narrator uses the word "I". For example, *"I walked into the room, and discovered a dead body. Yelling in fear, I jumped out the window and ran!"*

Second Person Point of View: This is when the narrator speaks directly to the reader. For example, *"You walk into the room, and discover a dead body. Yelling in fear, you jump out the window and run!"* This point of view is hardly ever used in fiction.

Third Person Point of View: This is when the narrator is not actually in the story, but tells it as if looking over the whole thing from the outside. *"George walked into the room, and discovered a dead body. Yelling in fear, he jumped out the window and ran!"*

CHAPTERS 16 – 20

FORESHADOWING

Foreshadowing is when the author gives the reader hints and clues about what will happen next, though the reader does not always notice them at first. These hints can make the things that happen later ring true, so the reader might think, "Of course, I should have known!" Here's an example: *The little boy was enjoying a sunshiny day on the farm -- until he noticed a big dog looking at him. Suddenly, the air felt cold.* This would be foreshadowing if the dog attacks the boy later on.

CHAPTERS 21 – 25

CLIFFHANGER CHAPTER ENDINGS

It is important for authors to keep a reader interested in the story. One technique for doing this is to create suspense with *cliffhanger* chapter endings, which leave the reader wondering what will happen next. The name cliffhanger comes from a type of movie from the 1930's that sometimes ended with a character actually hanging over the edge of a cliff. To find out if the character would survive, the audience would have to come back to see the next movie.

CHAPTERS 26 – 30

FLASHBACK

Flashback is a storytelling technique used to show events that have happened before. It can be done through narration or dialogue. Below are four uses of flashback:

1. In a sequel it can remind the reader of something that happened in an earlier novel.
2. It can let one character bring another character up to speed on what has happened somewhere else in the story, or before the story has begun.
3. It can let the narrator tell the reader what has just happened when the author does not want to make it into its own scene. This helps keep the story moving forward quickly.
4. It can give information or background that helps the reader understand a setting (like the town of Fort Benton), a character (like Carson Tate) or a situation.

CHAPTERS 31 – 35

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE
(See information from Chapters 6 – 10 section.)

CHAPTERS 36 – 40

SETTING

Two categories of setting are:
1. Geographical Setting: This is where the story takes place. Depending on how specific the author makes it, it can be identified by such places as country, city, rural area, or even a particular building or a room in a house.
2. Chronological Setting: This is when the story takes place. Depending on how specific the author makes it, it can be identified by such time periods as a century, decade, year, month, day, or even a few hours within a day.

Setting is important because it affects how the characters will act. For instance, a story about a person trying to survive in a storm on a mountain cannot be the same story in the middle of a city. Because setting affects how people act, stories that take place on a Hutterite colony, or in a university, or in a drug den, or on a western ranch, or in the middle of a city, will have to be different from one another. Also, a story that takes place in modern times will have to be different, in some ways, than one that takes place long ago.

CHAPTERS 41 – 45

CHARACTER TYPES

There are different kinds of characters, and different ways of presenting them to the reader.

Kinds of character:

1. Flat: Flat characters are characters the author does not develop very much. They always act in the same predictable way. For example they may be good or evil, and everything they do will reflect that characteristic. Real people usually have a little of each in them. Good people sometimes do bad things, and evil people sometimes do good things, but flat characters usually behave in only one way. Flat characters can also be people like a butler, a nurse, a blabbermouth, a bragger, or any kind of person not developed beyond a single characteristic. You can usually sum up what these characters are like in one sentence.

2. Round: Round characters are more realistic and well developed. Like real people, they are complicated, and they do not always act in exactly the same way. They act like individuals, and can be full of surprises, doing things that you wouldn't expect. Because they are complex, it can be difficult to describe what these characters are like.

3. Static: Static characters can be **either flat or round**, but what makes them static is that they do not change in the story. The way they are at the beginning is how they are at the end. They have not learned lessons that change the way they act or think.

4. Dynamic: Dynamic characters are characters who change during the story. By the end, they are different than they were at the beginning. They may have learned something that changes the way they think or behave. The change can be good or bad. For instance a character who is prejudiced against a certain race of people might learn to value them as fellow human beings. Or maybe a person who has lots of fun and loves life could be turned into a sadder, quieter person because of some bad things that happen.

CHAPTERS 46 – 50

PLOT AND CONFLICT

Plot is the events that happen in a story. Plot is more about *what* happens than *why*.

One way to study plot is to look at **conflict,** because without conflict there cannot be much story. Conflict puts the **protagonist** against an **antagonist**.

Protagonist: This is the main character. This is the character who the story follows as he/she tries to accomplish a goal. The protagonist can be either good or evil.
Antagonist: This is the force that goes against the protagonist. An antagonist can be a person, society, or even something in the protagonist him/herself (like alcoholism or uncontrolled anger).

Three ways to name **Conflict**:
- **Person vs Person** (sometimes called *man against man*)
  - This is when another person is against the protagonist.
- **Person vs the Environment** (sometimes called man vs environment)
  - This is when nature (like storms), or society, or even fate is against the protagonist.
- **Person vs Him or Herself** (sometimes called man vs himself)
  - This is when the character is fighting something within him/herself, such as jealousy, alcoholism or anger. It could even be about someone who struggles to make decisions, and never gets anything done.

Four types of **Conflict:**
- **Physical** (as in a fight)
- **Mental** (to do with thinking, as in a game of chess, or trying to solve a mysterious crime)
- **Emotional** (Wrestling with feelings)
- **Moral** (As in trying to decide what is right or wrong, and whether to do right or wrong)

PLOT DIAGRAMS

Stories usually follow a pattern that can be shown in a diagram. The three parts of the plot diagram are

- **Exposition**: This is the introduction to the story. The reader finds out what is going on, and who the characters are.
- **Rising Action**: This is where the problems develop. The action gets more interesting and the problems get bigger.
- **Climax**: This is the point of the story where the emotional feelings are highest, or where the conflict peaks.
- **Falling Action**: When the action slows down, and events lead to the outcome of the conflict. Often this is not needed if the story ends right after the climax.
- **Denouement** (or Outcome): This is the closing off of the story, when everything is explained. All the loose ends are wrapped up and the reader finds out whether the protagonist wins or loses the conflict.

PLOT DIAGRAM 1: CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

The plot diagram is like a mountain climber. The exposition is the climber getting ready. For the rising action, the climber is going up the hill. The top of the hill is the climax. Then the climber falls off a cliff. This is the falling action. The denouement is when the climber hits the bottom, and it is all over.
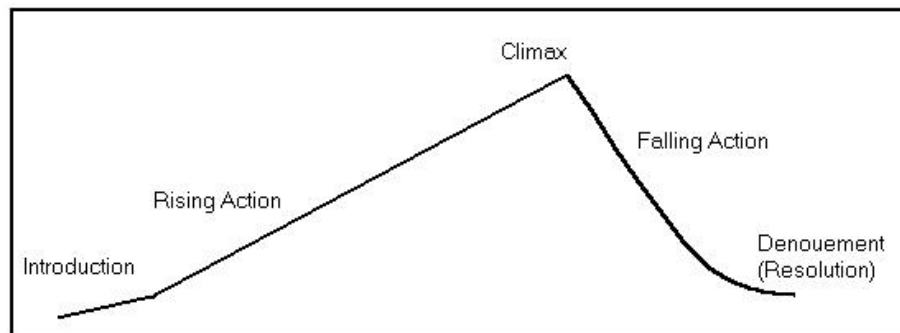
PLOT DIAGRAM 2: THE BOTTLENECK SHAPE

This is a simpler diagram. Every story must have three parts: a **beginning**, **middle** and **end**. It also has a climax, the point of highest interest, when the problems come to a head. This is usually just before the ending.
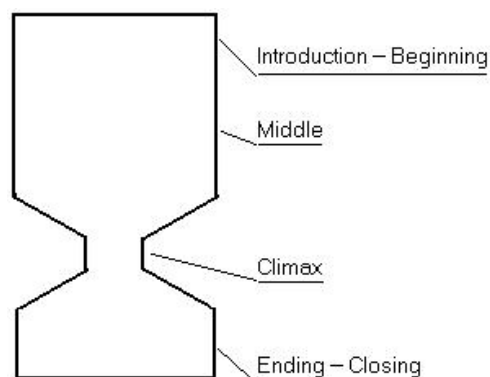
CHAPTERS 51 – 55

THEME

Theme is an **insight or idea about life** that the author examines in the story. Stories in which the themes are important are called **interpretive fiction**.

As an example, let's say an author writes a story about someone who is friendly and clever, but who lies all the time. The character might be very bright and successful; however, people eventually get fed up with the lying. Maybe the character ends up with no friends, and no job. The theme of such a story might be that even though lying can help a person get what she/he wants for a while, it leads to unhappiness and ruin.

Some themes running through *When the River Calls* deal with the treatment of Native people in early America, the harmful effects of abusing drugs and alcohol, the importance of faith to the Hutterites, Hutterite pacifism, and whether God can be trusted for guidance in life.

Not all stories have a **theme**. Some are written strictly for entertainment, and do not examine the concerns of real life. For example, some horror stories might be written just to give the reader a scare. An adventure story might be full of adventure and nothing more. Some mysteries are written only for the entertainment of catching a crook. Stories with no theme are called **escape fiction**.   All interpretive fiction has a theme; only some escape fiction has a theme.