

## LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE - LITERARY RESPONSE

Before you can begin drafting your piece, you need to have a detailed understanding of the short story you have selected.

### Complete the following:

1. Ensure you have read a handful of short stories so that you can make an informed decision.
2. Select your preferred/favourite short story
3. Dot point the events of the story from beginning to end.
4. Write down who the main character is, which the story is centered around
5. Write down other characters that appear/are involved
6. Identify the tension in the story, and whether it is resolved or not
7. Read the study guides which will provide you with key information such as:
  - A synopsis of your story

Cross country is a story told in the first person, the internal monologue of Rebecca, she is trying to find information about her ex following they break up.

Rebecca's work friends call her however they all beat around the bush and avoid the reason for her absence. She informs her colleague that she is joining a running club, she does this so that she will encounter her ex. She ponders on the idea of joining a running club and the fact that she needs to buy new running shoes Rebecca is shook by a call from her boss informing her that she must return to work on Monday.

- Themes
- Questions to consider
- Author background information/context

### 8. Annotate your short story for literary techniques

Key things to look out for:

- Similes
- Metaphors
- Adjectives/descriptive language
- Adverbs
- Examples of how the author creates tension = conveying character emotion through action (show, don't tell method)

## **CHOSEN STORY - CROSS COUNTRY TIMELINE**

- Begins with a monologue
- Reflection on her break-up
- [Rebecca] begins to google him, thinking about how she is able to gain contact with him
- As she finds information about him she lets her mind wonder and speculates reasons as to why he has not finishes his thesis.
- She ponders the ways in which he has bettered himself since break up
- Flashback to their conversation
- She talks to Julie from work about running
- She fantasises about bumping into him whilst running
- She worries about the little things regarding running
- She gets a final call from her boss telling her that she does not have any more sick leave left and must return to work by Monday
- She gets side tracked during the call and reminisces on old times.

- She realises its U14's and shuts down

## CHARACTERS

Rebecca - Dumpee

Rebecca's Ex-Boyfriend - Dumper

Julie - Colleague

Rebecca's Boss

## TENSION IN STORY

The tension in the story is Rebecca's break-up, she is recovering from the break-up, quite poorly however which results in her spiraling. It is not relieved, in fact right the end it is heightened and Rebecca turns off the computer and the story abruptly ends quite anti climatically.

## STORY IDEAS

- One week after breaking up at psychiatrist office discussing relationship
- Rebecca returning to work and spiraling
- Rebecca goes to a bar after realising the mistake she made, becomes intoxicated and drives to his house, on the way however she crashes, story ends
- Rebecca is pregnant

## STATEMENT OF INTENTION

- Which characters does your scene focus on? Why?
- What theme/issue are you exploring in your scene? why have you chosen this - link to authors original intentions and mine
- How have you tried to emulate the authors writing style? Provide evidence from your piece - link to theme

Cross-Country is the internal monologue of a woman named Rebecca following her relationship breakdown. The short story explores the way in which she is coping, her social isolation and lack of order in life before having two hits of reality; she must return to work on Monday, she has been looking at the wrong cross country team, therefore not keeping tabs on her ex. I have chosen to write a prologue to the story which is quite close to the story, within days before. Initially however I wanted to do an epilogue but seeing as Rebecca shows so much promise and progress towards the end of the story it did not seem fitting to have this scene at the end following her epiphany. The story I have chosen to tell is Rebecca attempting to seek help for her "addiction" and support through her "withdrawals."

Given that my selected story is an internal monologue I have chosen to focus on Rebecca as well as her ex partner briefly and the addition of a new character, a psychiatrist. I have chosen to add another character in order to reveal the abnormality of her behaviour through contrast and to somewhat alienate her from the audience.

One theme that I shall be continuing to explore is that of isolation and the feeling of loneliness, in particular the effects in which they have on the mind. I have chosen to do this seeing as Kennedy already explores the deterioration of Rebecca due to being alone "Your partner leaves...". Kennedy goes on to list the ways in which Rebecca is alone, outlining her decline. My intention is to try to explain the decline of Rebecca's relationship given that it is not included in the Kennedy's story. I have chosen to explore this idea due to the fact that Rebecca somewhat gains closure at the end of the story however we as the reader do not see what happened in order to cause the breakdown initially. Therefore, I too have omitted the actual breakup and instead recounted Rebecca's first step in dealing with her break-up.

In an attempt to emulate the writing style of Cate Kennedy I have created a metaphor in order to establish the extent of Rebecca's pain. The metaphor I've used is a drug dependency, this is also explored by Kennedy as Rebecca's life is sent into a tail spin following her break up. In the opening of Kennedy's story, she starts with a rhetorical statement "It's the language that gets you" which is something that I too have aimed to do, "You see the thing about heartbreak..." it speaks directly with the reader and closes the social distance between reader and author due to the deceased formality.

One week after break up at psychiatrist office discussing the relationship

- Description of the office —> metaphor about loneliness to open
- Rebecca is a little cloudy and withdrawn
- The psychiatrist keeps asking questions and she zones out

You see the thing about heartbreak is that you're in a constant state of wanting to return to something that you can't have, something that you shouldn't have, someone that you shouldn't have. I know he's bad for me, he's made me an addict and he's the drug I just can't get enough of. Just like a drug every time I get my hit the withdrawals are the hardest part, I mean just take a look at my life right now. The links, they're gone and I'm unable to mend them, nothing I do can fix the way in which he feels. The walls of the writing room are gloomy I'd even go as far to say eerie, I feel the other patients looking at me, judging me like a thousand eyes are watching me and every move I make, this however is true; colleagues, friends, family and even Danny's family. They're all watching me to see how I'm doing but not doing anything, merely pondering in from the outside. I catch a glimpse of the magazines on the table, the ones that he and I would always mock together, well I suppose it was mainly him mocking me for reading them. Isn't it strange how in a room full of people and I still feel alone. I'm not the kind of person to be alone, I feel like I'm drowning in an ocean of falsehood and uncertainty. Danny was my everything, my rock he kept me grounded when everything else in my life was up in the air. Now, looking back I can see we were like chalk and cheese, but I didn't want to see it. I just never thought he'd leave, I'm grieving him which I know sounds silly, but I feel like a part of me is missing and it's him, he's gone and I just need one more hit. "Rebecca, Bec Beccc" she pulls me from my reminiscing and as if a newborn my senses come alive and I feel more aware than I have since...well him.

"So what can I do for you Rebecca, how's Danny?" Danny. One word. That I am just not ready to hear. "Well...that's why I'm here I suppose". She gives me a reassuring nod and it's as if I have someone to trust, to vent to, finally. "We just weren't working, it's amazing the way that I viewed things, with such a limited perspective, only seeing what I needed to". "What do you mean by that?, only seeing what you wanted?" she asks, softly not to pry but instilling confidence in me unlike my vulturous friends and family, only asking me to tick off a box. "He never put me first, but I never said anything I just let him do it". Admission, the first step to recovery. "I think that you obviously relied on him more than he did on you and now that has resulted in a withdrawal like symptoms for you". Well isn't that the truth, all of those years together it was always me; moving work, deciding where to eat, cooking, cleaning. "So Bec If you can see all the faults in the relationship what wasn't it you to break it off?" It's the questions that get you, the ones with merit that you just can't bring yourself to speak. I search for words but I am unable to utter a single one, I just stare at her with agony in my eyes.