

O. Henry's
The Gift of the
Magi

and other stories

Student Learning Materials

Published by
The Office of English Language Programs
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20037
americanenglish.state.gov

In this publication, there are many links to other websites. These links to websites do not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of State of the site or the opinions presented therein.

Photographs © Shutterstock.com




THE FURNISHED ROOM

PRE-READING ACTIVITY 1: WORD SQUARES

“The Furnished Room” by O. Henry is a short story about a young man who rents a room in New York City. The story takes place in his furnished room. Several important vocabulary words will help in understanding this story.

Directions:

1. Before reading the story, study the chart of Word Squares below.

Word Squares (Example)	
<p>Write the word:</p> <p><i>looking-glass</i></p>	<p>Draw a symbol or picture:</p> 
<p>Translate the word into your native language):</p> <p><i>un miroir</i> (example in French)</p>	<p>Use the word in a sentence:</p> <p><i>A looking-glass was on the wall in the furnished room.</i></p>

2. Choose **two** new words from the glossary provided and make your own Word Squares using the empty charts on the next page.

Word	Definition
gas	A substance that is like air and was used for heating and lighting. It is dangerous when allowed to fill a room.
gaslight	A type of lamp that burns gas to give off light.
looking-glass	A mirror.
theater	A building where plays and musical programs can be seen. Plays are stories told in action with actors playing the characters in the story.
transient	A traveler or worker who stays in one location for a short time before moving on.
spirit	The soul of a dead person that appears to living people; a ghost.

Word Squares #1

Write the word:	Draw a symbol or picture:
Translate the word into your native language:	Use the word in a sentence:

Word Squares #2

Write the word:	Draw a symbol or picture:
Translate the word into your native language:	Use the word in a sentence:

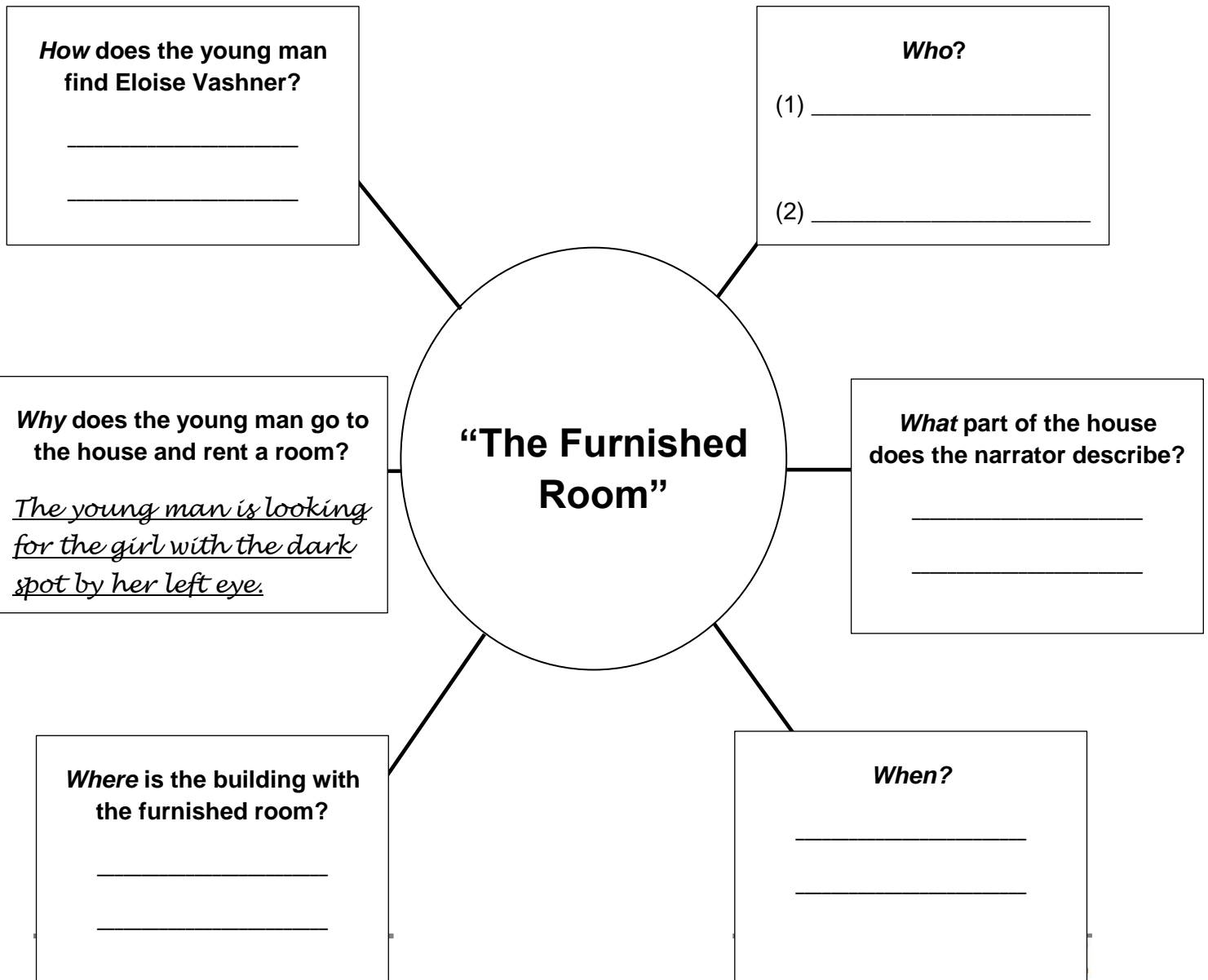
PRE-READING ACTIVITY 2: SUNSHINE OUTLINE

An outline is a general plan of the story. The purpose of an outline is to help you understand the story better. This activity will help you think about the main parts of the story before you read it.

Directions:

1. Before reading the story, fill in the outline below.
2. Match the phrases in the boxes below to the questions in the Sunshine Outline. One box (**Who?**) requires two phrases.
3. Write these phrases under each question in the outline. A sample answer has been provided for the **Why** question.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the early 20th century• The furnished room in which the young man stays• The young man is looking for the girl with the dark spot by her left eye• A young man | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eloise Vashner, the woman with the dark spot by her left eye• New York's West Side• The young man smells the perfume of Eloise Vashner in the room |
|--|--|



WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 1: DRAWING THE SCENE

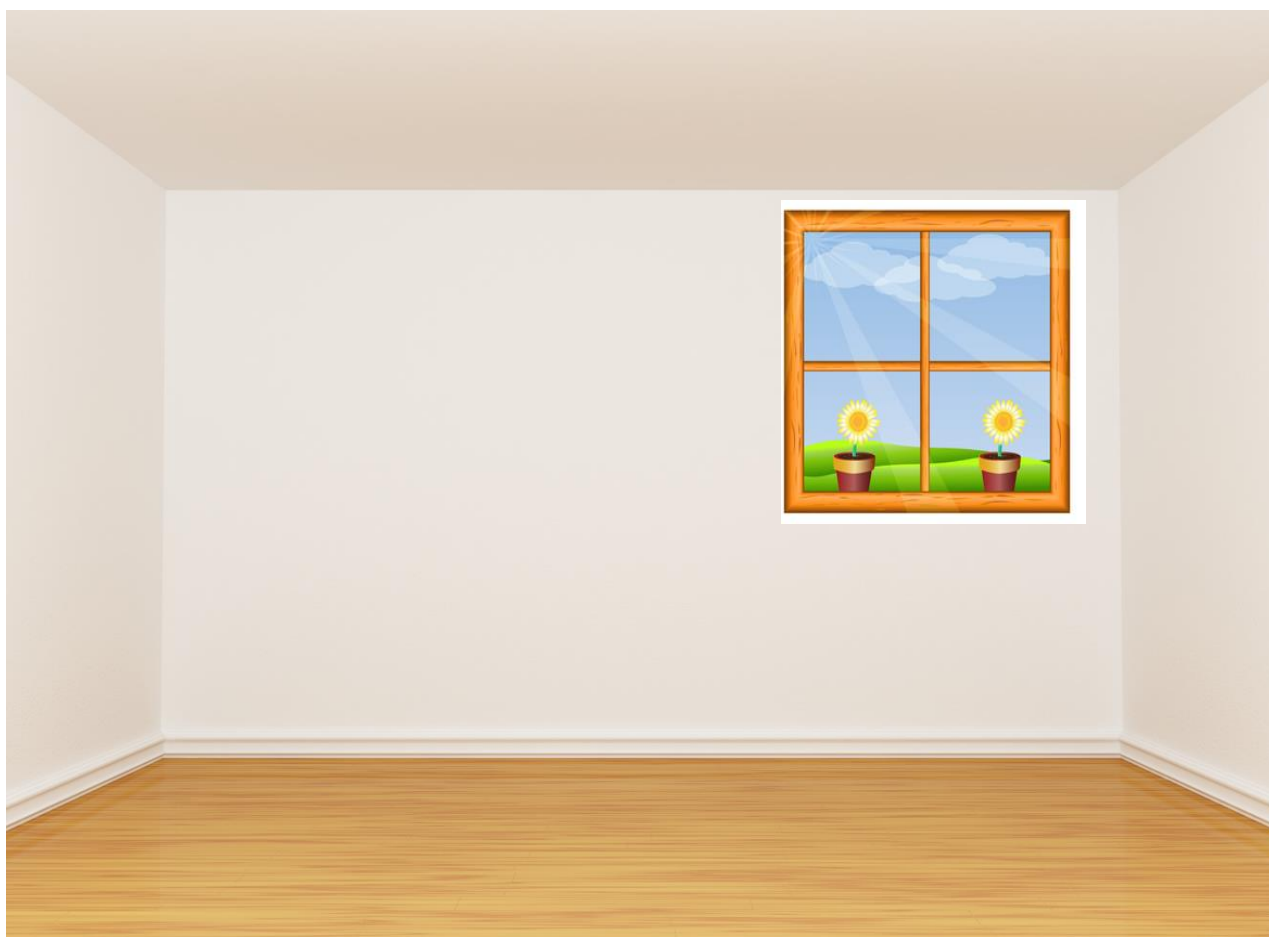
The story is set in a furnished room in an apartment building. On pages 21-24, the narrator describes this room with details that can help you picture the setting of the story.

Directions:

1. As you read pages 21-24, underline the items found in the room. Write the names for these items in the box below. An example is provided.
2. Draw the items described in the text in the room picture below. An example of *windows* has already been drawn. If you do not know what an item looks like, search for an image of it on the Internet.

Items in the room

Windows



WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 2: SENSORY IMAGES

In “The Furnished Room,” the narrator describes what the main character (the young man) sees, hears, smells, and touches in his rented room. These details help the reader visualize the room. This activity asks you to picture the setting of the story.

Directions:

1. Stop reading at the end of **page 22**. Fill in the chart with the words that O. Henry uses to describe what the young man sees, hears, smells, or touches in the room. Details from page 21 have been completed as an example.
2. Continue reading.
3. Repeat these steps for **pages 23 and 24**. If there is no reference to any of the senses for a specific page, put an X in the box.

Page	See	Hear	Smell	Touch
21	<i>bed 2 chairs 2 windows looking-glass pictures</i>	<i>The room is “telling” the young man its history.</i>	X	<i>chair</i>
22				
23				
24				

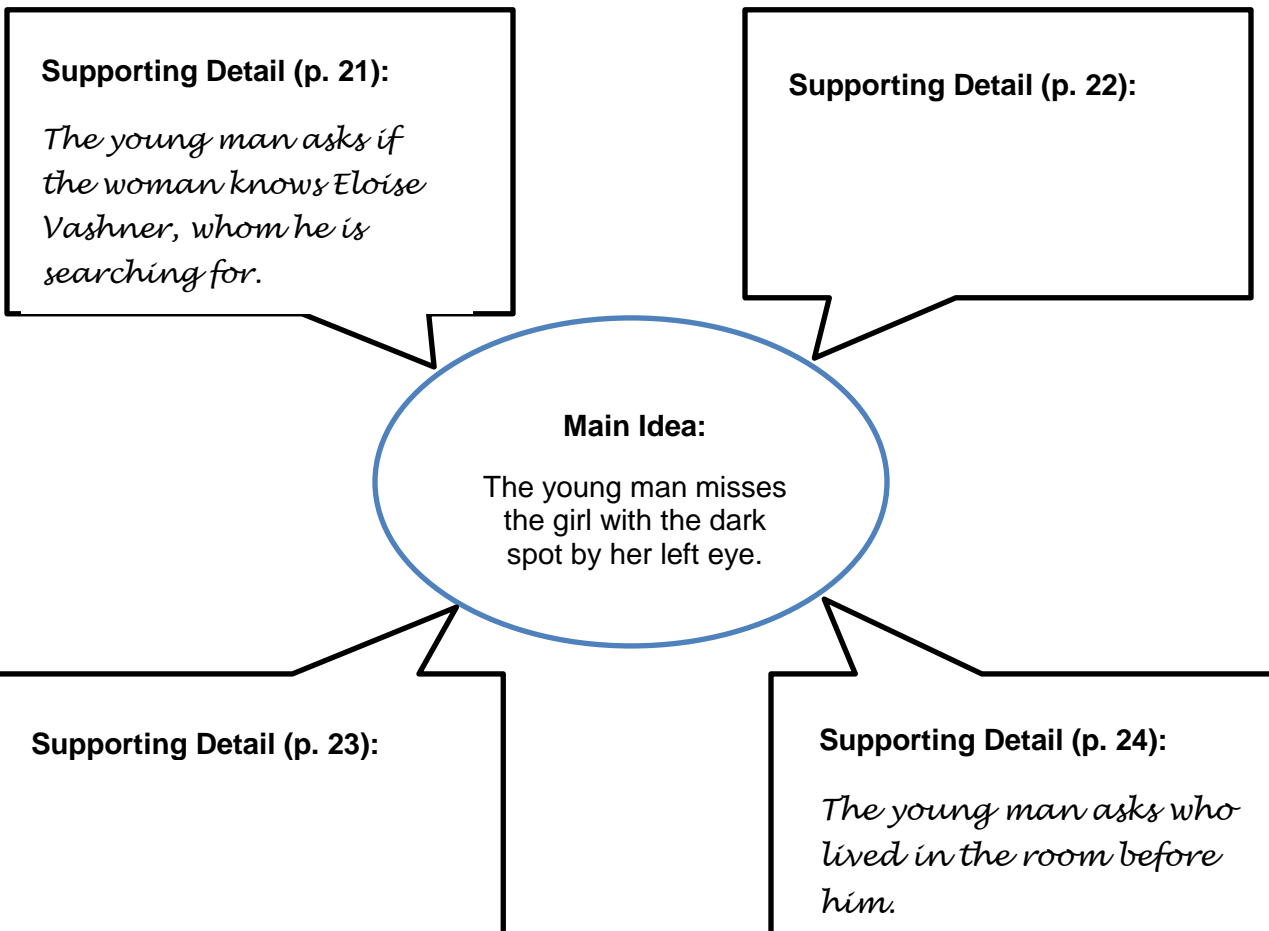
POST-READING ACTIVITY 1: MAIN IDEA AND SUPPORTING IDEAS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

This activity will help you to see the connection between the main idea and the details in the story “The Furnished Room.”

Directions:

1. After reading, think about the main idea of the story: The young man misses the girl with the dark spot by her left eye.
2. Find two details in the story to support this main idea using the page numbers in parentheses in the Graphic Organizer below. Write one supporting detail in each of the boxes in the graphic organizer. The supporting details can be a single word or a short phrase. Two supporting details have already been completed as an example.

Graphic Organizer









POST-READING ACTIVITY 2: THE MAIN CHARACTER AND YOU


“The Furnished Room” is a sad story. You can understand how the young man feels when you read the narrator’s description of this character. This activity will help you think about the variety of emotions the young man experiences as the story progresses.

Directions:

1. In the chart below, five different events from the story are listed in the first column. Read these events.
2. In the second column, draw an emoticon to show how the young man feels about each of these events in the story.
3. In the third column, describe how these events make you feel and why (see example).

Possible words and emoticons to describe feelings

Happy 	Hopeful 	Sad, disappointed 	Angry 	Surprised 	Confused 
--	--	--	--	--	---

Event	How does the young man feel?	How do I feel? Why?
1. When the woman who owns the house took the young man to see the room... “There were places in the wall made, perhaps, to hold flowering plants. If this were true, the plants had died long before this evening. The air was bad; no flowers could have lived in it for long.” (p. 20)	 disappointed	<i>This makes me feel sad, too. My home is a happy place. It makes me sad because the young man will live in a depressing place.</i>
2. When the young man asks the owner of the house if she knew Eloise Vashner... “A young girl—Eloise Vashner—do you remember her? Has she ever been in this house?” (p. 21)		
3. When the woman replies that she does not know Eloise Vashner... “No, I don’t remember the name. Theater people change names as often as they change their rooms. They come and they go.” (p. 21)		

<p>4. When the young man smells the flower mignonette... <i>“Then suddenly, as he rested there, the room was filled with the strong, sweet smell of a flower, small and white, named mignonette.”</i> (p. 23)</p>		
<p>5. When the young man looks around the room for a sign of his long-lost love... <i>“He found many small things, left by many who had used the room. But of her, who may have been there, whose spirit seemed to be there, he found no sign.”</i> (p. 24)</p>		