



Riley's 2.4 Short Stories in Context

Short Story Excerpt

On Christmas Eve, 2015, we drove my father's car—as best I can recall by looking at pictures on the Internet, it was about a 2004 Ford Taurus—to my grandfather's house and parked it in the one-lane driveway behind Grandpa's car. During the course of that joyful evening, a soft, deep snow started to fall and by about midnight about eight inches of the fluffy stuff had covered streets, cars, and everything. About 11 pm, someone looked out and saw the problem. Blizzard or not, we had to do something.

When we realized that the snow had fallen so much and was still coming, Dad scrambled to get us home before we were completely snowed in. The idea of staying safely put at Grandpa's house was never considered, because any smart boys aged 10, 8, 6, and 4 all knew that Santa could not come unless we were safely sleeping in our beds. That is what we had been told for many years, and we believed it. We had to get home for Christmas to work.

But there was another problem. The car was out of gas and was blocking Grandpa's car in the driveway. A phone call was made to the town's Petro Canada gas station, but there was no answer at this hour on Christmas Eve. The same was true at the local Mac's. After several more calls, someone finally answered at the Esso station in town, and Dad set out down the hill towards the centre of town about two miles away in the deep snow carrying my Grandfather's empty 5-gallon gas can. Hours went by, and finally my father—all 140 pounds of him—appeared hauling the gas can up the hill through the ever-deepening snow.

Riley, I see here how you've indicated the change in setting (time period) to shift the context of the story for the purpose of this assignment. Perfect.

Nice detail! You changed the make and model of the car to fit the new context.

I noticed that you included some of the original wording and paragraphs from the story to help your reader understand the changes in context. Great idea.

Great details, Riley. You've added in the names of some modern gas stations to update the story.

Gas was then emptied into the old Ford (just a couple of gallons to get us by), and the car was shovelled out and sent on its slow journey through the snowy streets home.

Interesting change to the story. I look forward to hearing your reasons for changing this detail—from a full gas can to just a couple of gallons—in your explanatory paragraph.

When we asked my father to retell this story to us on Christmas morning, he told us that when he arrived at the Esso station, a young man, maybe 20 years old, was behind the counter. He would have been working Christmas Eve whether my dad came in to buy gas or not, but my dad felt sorry for him anyway, working so late on a holiday. So when he slid the money over the counter for the two gallons he'd purchased, he slipped the guy an extra twenty dollars and told him, "Merry Christmas." Knowing my father, he didn't wait for the guy to thank him. That wasn't really the point.

This paragraph really shows how the story has changed because of your shift in time period. It's interesting that the father still tried to be as generous as possible, but in a way that fit the modern time period.

Explanatory Paragraph







I decided to change the when of the story by shifting the setting from 1958 to 2015 to see what kind of impact that would have on the story. The first obvious change I knew I needed to make (being a fan of cars) was to the make and model of car the father drove. I figured the dad was pretty careful with his money, so it wouldn't be a fancy or expensive car, and it would probably not be brand new. I also wanted to think of a car that wouldn't have four-wheel drive or high clearance, so it would make sense that it was stuck in the snow. That's why I chose the 2004 Ford Taurus.

Check to make sure you have a nice variety of sentence beginnings and sentence lengths to create fluency in your paragraph.

The next change I knew I had to make was to the part about calling the gas station owner up on Christmas Eve to get him to open the station. That wouldn't happen in modern day. First, it would probably be impossible to find the owner's phone number, and second, there would be no reason to do that. Most gas stations these days, especially ones owned by big companies, wouldn't be closed on Christmas Eve. So I changed the names of the gas stations in town, and instead of having the dad fill up the gas can all the way (out of fairness to the owner), I just had him give the kid working behind the counter a tip. That seemed more realistic to me. I figured, there are still generous people like the narrator's dad in modern day, but they are just generous in different ways.

You really thought through the details of the car to make sure it fit the story. Nicely done!

2.4 Short Stories in Context

Value	Ideas and Impressions	Presentation
 Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Your exploration of context in the short story is <i>insightful</i> and <i>complex</i> . <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> You provide <i>precise details</i> to illustrate your understanding of context.	<input type="checkbox"/> Your presentation is <i>skillfully</i> organized. <input type="checkbox"/> You use sentence variety <i>skillfully</i> and <i>fluently</i> in your explanatory paragraph.
 Proficient	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Your exploration of context in the short story is <i>thoughtful</i> and <i>detailed</i> . <input type="checkbox"/> You provide <i>specific details</i> to illustrate your understanding of context.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Your presentation is <i>effectively</i> organized. <input type="checkbox"/> You use sentence variety <i>confidently</i> and <i>effectively</i> in your explanatory paragraph.
 Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Your exploration of context in the short story is <i>appropriate</i> . <input type="checkbox"/> You provide <i>appropriate details</i> to illustrate your understanding of context.	<input type="checkbox"/> Your presentation is <i>sufficiently</i> organized. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> You use sentence variety <i>adequately</i> in your explanatory paragraph.
 Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Your exploration of context in the short story is <i>unclear</i> and/or <i>vague</i> . <input type="checkbox"/> You provide <i>inadequate</i> or <i>inappropriate details</i> to illustrate your understanding of context.	<input type="checkbox"/> Your presentation is <i>insufficiently</i> organized. <input type="checkbox"/> You use sentence variety <i>inadequately</i> in your explanatory paragraph.
 Resubmission Needed	Your attempt to respond is <i>insufficient</i> . Contact your teacher to discuss suggestions for improvement and resubmission of your work.	
TOTAL: 23/30 = 77%	17/20	6/10
 Assessment	<p>Areas of strength: Riley, you did such an impressive job of changing the details of the story to fit the new modern setting. From the make and model of the car to the details about the gas station, you really thought about how the story needed to be altered.</p> <p>Might I suggest: You kept a great deal of the original wording from the story here. I would have liked to have seen you change the story a bit more to really show the impact of the new context. In your explanatory paragraph, you could've included a bit more variety in your sentence lengths and sentence beginnings to create even more fluency in the writing.</p>	