

 Prestwick House

Instant Short Story Pack



Each pack contains:

- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide

The Blue Hotel

BY STEPHEN CRANE

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2, 3, 4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2, 3, 4, 5, 6



Objectives:

After completing the activities in this packet, the student will be able to:

- analyze the development of two or more themes or central ideas over the course of the text, including how they build on one another to produce a complex account (RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2),
- analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how characters are introduced and developed (RL.9-10.3; 11-12.3),
- determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text (RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4),
- analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including...language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful (RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4),
- analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall meaning and aesthetic impact (RL.11-12.5), and
- analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement) (RL.11-12.6).

Time:

3-5 class periods

Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (4 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (29 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (1 page) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (11 pages) – Activities and Graphic Organizers

✓ Teacher Answer Guide

Procedure:

1. Reproduce all handouts.
2. Distribute **Handouts #1** and **#2**.
 - Allow students to read the short biography of Crane (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Crane's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
 - Assign the story to be read for homework (might require 2 nights' reading) OR
 - Allow students to read the story in class and perform the two **As you read**...activities.
3. Distribute **Handout #3**.
4. Give students time to read the questions (approximately 5 minutes).
5. Review with students what each question is asking for and what type of information is required for a thorough answer (e.g., references to prior knowledge, quotations from the story, additional reading or research, etc.).
6. Distribute **Handout #4**.

Stephen Crane

The Blue Hotel

“The Blue Hotel” is one of Stephen Crane’s most famous stories. As is the case with many of Crane’s works, the surface simplicity of the plot and characters causes many readers to oversimplify their reading of the story. Keep in mind that the story takes place in the late 1800s. The owner of the hotel, Pat Scully, is proud of how modern the town is: A second railroad line is about to be opened, and in the spring, a line of electric street-cars is going to be installed. It is an industrial town with a “big factory.” The town also boasts four churches and a “smash-in’ big brick schoolhouse,” not the whitewashed clapboard building that serves as school, church, and town hall in the stereotypical village of the “Old West.”

Stephen Crane toured the American West and Mexico in 1895. The sketches he wrote and published largely comment on the similarities he found in the West and his own home locales. The states of Missouri, Nebraska, and Texas were a great deal tamer than the Wild West that may have existed fifty years earlier—or that may have existed only in legend. The difference between what he expected and what he found is the basis for this story, which has been called a study in fear. The reality is that the Swede’s fear that he is about to be killed is baseless.

“The Blue Hotel” was one of the many stories Crane wrote during the final years of his life when he was living in England. It was first published in two installments in *Collier’s Weekly* on November 26 and December 3, 1898. It was later included in the collection *The Monster and Other Stories* (1899). The story is a parody of sorts. In that sense, it is not very different from “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky.” However, instead of providing a contrast between the reality of the American West and common misconceptions of the Wild West, it uses those incorrect interpretations to explore the psychological reaction of a person who believes himself to be in danger when he is not.

It also explores the psychology of the “innocent” bystander.

As you read “The Blue Hotel,” look at Crane’s characteristic use of color and other sensory details to create vivid images in the minds of his readers. Then, contrast the realism of his descriptions with his failure to identify his characters by any means beyond their most superficial labels, the Easterner, the Swede, the cowboy, etc. Consider what effect Crane is trying to create—what ideas he might be exploring—by putting these Everymen into such a specific setting and circumstances.

Stephen Crane

The Blue Hotel

Lexile Measure: 840L

I

THE PALACE HOTEL at Fort Romper was painted a light blue, a shade that is on the legs of a kind of heron, causing the bird to declare its position against any background. The Palace Hotel, then, was always screaming and howling in a way that made the dazzling winter landscape of Nebraska seem only a gray swampish hush. It stood alone on the prairie, and when the snow was falling the town two hundred yards away was not visible. But when the traveler alighted at the railway station he was obliged to pass the Palace Hotel before he could come upon the company of low clap-board houses which composed Fort Romper, and it was not to be thought that any traveler could pass the Palace Hotel without looking at it. Pat Scully, the proprietor, had proved himself a master of strategy when he chose his paints. It is true that on clear days, when the great trans-continental expresses, long lines of swaying Pullmans, swept through Fort Romper, passengers were overcome at the sight, and the cult that knows the brown-reds and the subdivisions of the dark greens of the East expressed shame, pity, horror, in a laugh. But to the citizens of this prairie town, and to the people who would naturally stop there, Pat Scully had performed a feat. With this opulence and splendor, these creeds, classes, egotisms, that streamed through Romper on the rails day after day, they had no color in common.

As if the displayed delights of such a blue hotel were not sufficiently enticing, it was Scully's habit to go every morning and evening to meet the leisurely trains that stopped at Romper and work his seductions upon any man that he might see wavering, gripsack in hand.

Stephen Crane

The Blue Hotel

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5) How does the story's episodic structure and division into chapter-like sections affect the reader's appreciation of the story and contribute to its overall meaning?
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3; 11-12.3) For the most part, personal names of characters, when they are provided at all, are seemingly less important than phrases that identify characters. What does Crane achieve by identifying some of his characters as "the Easterner," "the cowboy," "the Swede," "the gambler," "women," etc., rather than giving each a name and a unique backstory and personality? What are the likely reasons that Crane would choose to portray character types rather than distinct characters?
3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4) What narrative effect does Crane achieve by combining unexpected elements in his metaphors and juxtaposing disparate images in his descriptions?
4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6) What point is Crane making when, at the moment the Swede is stabbed to death, he says, "a human body, this citadel of virtue, wisdom, power, was pierced as easily as if it had been a melon"?
5. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4) What does the Easterner mean when he says to the cowboy, "This poor gambler isn't even a noun. He is kind of an adverb"?
6. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2) Critics have interpreted "The Blue Hotel" as everything from a forerunner of twentieth-century modernism, to a tragedy, a dark comedy, and a melodrama. Explain what each contributes to the overall meaning of the story and the reader's appreciation of the Easterner's confession in section IX.

Theme or Overall Meaning:	Section IX				General Impression:
	Section VIII				
	Section VII				
	Section VI				
	Section V				
	Section IV				
	Section III				
	Section II				
	Section I				
		Summary/ Focus	Narrative Function	Thematic Function	