

 Prestwick House

Instant Short Story Pack



Each pack contains:

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

The Open Window

BY SAKI (H. H. MUNRO)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2, 4, 5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4, 5



Objectives:

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

- determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details (RL.9-10.2.),
- analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4), and
- analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text...create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise (RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5).

Time:

3-5 class periods

Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (3 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (4 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (1 page) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (5 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 H. H. Munro (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Munro's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
 - Assign the story to be read for homework 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**.
7. Walk the class through Question 1, demonstrating that in order to address a complex issue, it is often helpful to divide it into smaller subtopics. Students can then use the ideas generated by each subtopic to build a complete and thoughtful answer to the full question.
8. Have students answer the questions.

Saki (H. H. Munro)

The Open Window

The story you are about to read is a frequently anthologized story. In many ways, it is more of a joke than a narrative with the typical rising action, climax, and denouement. Instead, this little piece has a set-up and a pay-off (or punchline).

It was first published in 1914 in *Beasts and Super-Beasts*, the last collection of short stories Saki compiled and published before his death. Because the story is primarily intended to make the reader laugh (or at least smile) at the end, many academics have trouble dealing with it. Like most good jokes, the story is character-driven with very little (if any) philosophical theme. At most, “The Open Window” gives its readers an opportunity for reflection about human nature and the contemporary society of pre-World War I England.

When you first read the story, simply go for the laugh. Don’t overthink the situation. *After* the first reading (*after* you’ve chuckled at poor Nuttel’s gullibility and shaken your head at Vera’s mischievousness), go back and consider how Saki crafted this story to perfect the effect it has. Granted, most of Saki’s stories are more fully developed and do explore ideas that might be called “themes,” but Saki’s original popularity came from his humor, his surprising twists, his technique of appearing to be going one direction and then suddenly changing course to arrive at a completely unexpected ending.

This technique is worth examining, and “The Open Window” is an excellent example to use for this examination.

Before you read:

Know something about the life of the author:

Hector Hugh Munro (aka H. H. Munro) was born in British Burma (now the Republic of the Union of Myanmar) on December 18, 1870. His father was an Inspector General for the Indian Imperial Police.

After his mother’s death because of a miscarriage, Munro was sent, with his brothers and sisters, to live with their grandmother and aunts in southwest England. The women maintained a strict household, and Munro and his siblings were educated at home by a governess. At the age of twelve, Munro was allowed to attend a local school and then a boarding school.

The father retired from his service to the Empire, and took his children on a tour of Europe.

Saki (H. H. Munro)

The Open Window

Lexile Measure: 1070L

“MY AUNT WILL BE DOWN presently, Mr. Nuttel,” said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen; “in the meantime you must try and put up with me.”

Frampton Nuttel endeavoured to say the correct something which should duly flatter the niece of the moment without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a succession of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing.

“I know how it will be,” his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to this rural retreat; “you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul, and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping. I shall just give you letters of introduction to all the people I know there. Some of them, as far as I can remember, were quite nice.”

Frampton wondered whether Mrs. Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction came into the nice division.

“Do you know many of the people round here?” asked the niece, when she judged that they had had sufficient silent communion.

“Hardly a soul,” said Frampton. “My sister was staying here, at the rectory, you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here.”

He made the last statement in a tone of distinct regret.

“Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?” pursued the self-possessed young lady.

“Only her name and address,” admitted the caller. He was wondering whether Mrs. Sappleton was in the married

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STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2) What hints of the story's outcome does Saki provide? Quote the lines or sentences that contain the clues.

2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) What overall effect does Saki achieve by encouraging the reader to suspect that the girl is creating a story?

3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4) What is the overall tone of this story? Explain briefly how Saki achieves this tone, citing examples from the text.

ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:

Saki (H. H. Munro), *The Open Window*

Question 1: What hints of the story’s outcome does Saki provide? Quote the lines or sentences that contain the clues.

STEP 1: Think about the outcome of the story: the casual return of the three hunters and Frampton Nuttel’s reaction. List the significant events and the bits of important exposition that lead to this outcome and that explain why Frampton Nuttel reacts the way he does. The following chart might help you visualize the progression of ideas.

