

 Prestwick House

Instant Short Story Pack



Each pack contains:

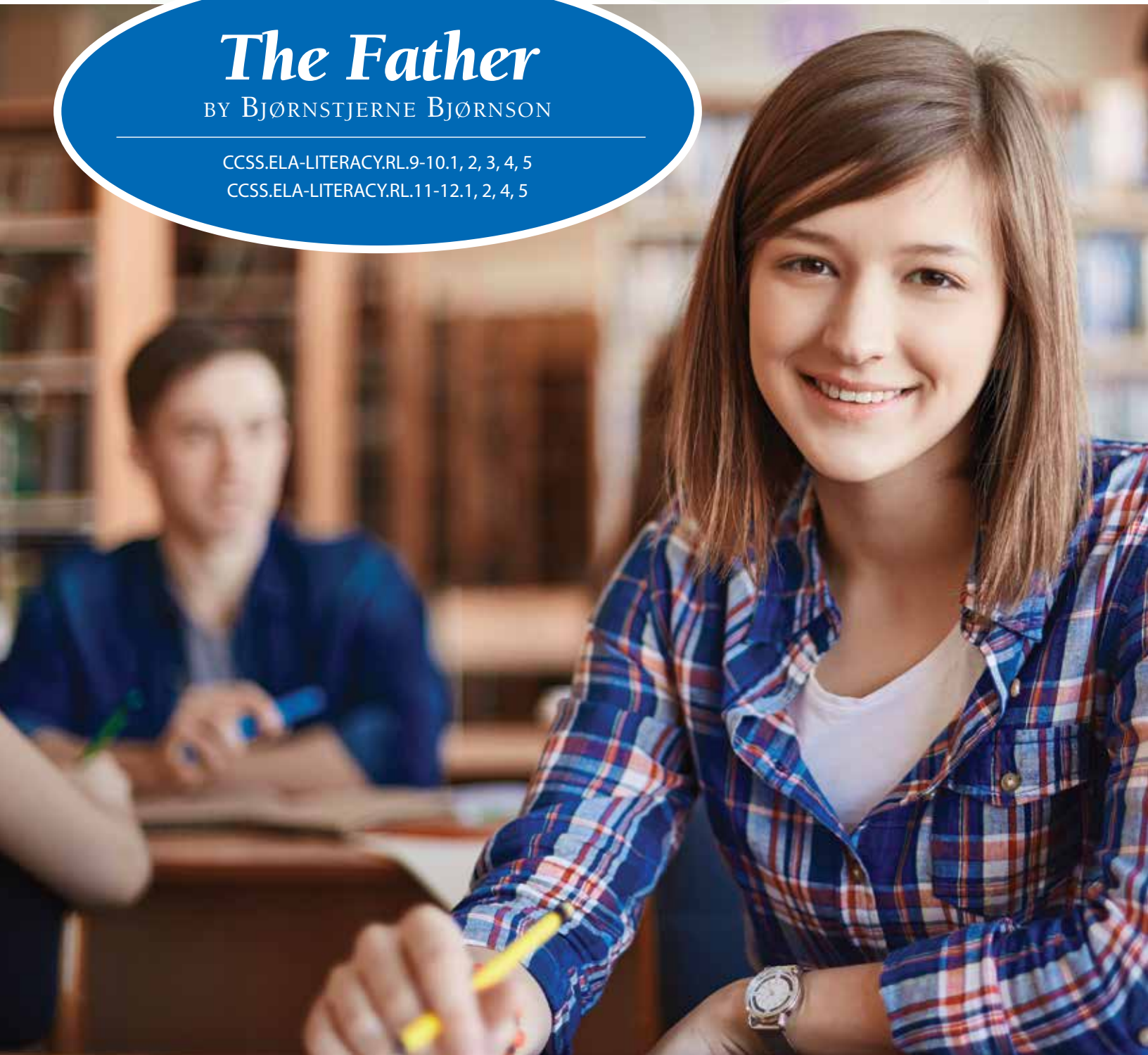
- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide

The Father

BY BJØRNSTJERNE BJØRNSON

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1, 2, 3, 4, 5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1, 2, 4, 5



Objectives:

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

- cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text (RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1),
- 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; 11-12.2),
- analyze how complex characters...develop over the course of a text,...advance the plot [and] develop the theme (RL.9-10.3),
- determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings (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:

1-2 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** (7 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 Bjørnson (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Bjørnson'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.).

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

The Father

“The Father” is quite possibly your first encounter with Norwegian author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. In his own country, however, as well as across Europe, he was quite famous, and his plays, poems, and short stories were what we would consider bestsellers. In 1903, he became the first Norwegian to be awarded a Nobel Prize. While his poems, plays, and novels were popular and well known throughout Scandinavia, Bjørnson achieved widespread international fame for his short stories, especially his early “peasant idylls,” which portray hardship, rugged perseverance, and tragedy. “The Father” is an excellent example of this kind of peasant tale.

As is often the case with short fiction, “The Father” is deceptive. It is short and—on its surface—tells a simple tale. William Morton Payne, a literary critic who translated several of Bjørnson’s novels into English, calls the story “the supreme example of Bjørnson’s artistry... a literary gem of the purest water.”

As you go through the story, read deeply into Thord Överaas’s conversations with the priest; pay close attention to his words and to the priest’s replies. Note the structure of the story and the number of visits, as well as their timing and purpose. Payne commented that this story reveals “the tragedy of a lifetime.” Think about how this quotation truly applies to such a series of simple incidents.

Try to look beyond Thord’s quietness to the depth and variety of emotion the man is probably experiencing in each of his visits. Examine how the commonplace events in this brief story go beyond the narrow time and place of the action and apply to people and their lives everywhere, and you will understand why “The Father” has been heralded as revealing the genius of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson.

Before you read:

Know something about the life of the author:

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was born on December 8, 1832, in Kvikne, a village about 230 miles north of Oslo, Norway. He is known by English readers primarily for his short stories, but during his life and in his country, he was best known for his poetry and drama. As a playwright, he was as well known and respected as his friend and fellow playwright, Henrik Ibsen.

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

The Father

Lexile Measure: 730L

I

THE MAN WHOSE story is here to be told was the wealthiest and most influential person in his parish; his name was Thord Överaas. He appeared in the priest's study one day, tall and earnest.

"I have gotten a son," said he, "and I wish to present him for baptism."

"What shall his name be?"

"Finn,—after my father."

"And the sponsors?"

They were mentioned, and proved to be the best men and women of Thord's relations in the parish.

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest, and looked up. The peasant hesitated a little.

"I should like very much to have him baptized by himself," said he, finally.

"That is to say on a week-day?"

"Next Saturday, at twelve o'clock noon."

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest,

"There is nothing else;" and the peasant twirled his cap, as though he were about to go.

Then the priest rose. "There is yet this, however," said he, and walking toward Thord, he took him by the hand and looked gravely into his eyes: "God grant that the child may become a blessing to you!"

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

The Father

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1) What special privileges does Thord ask of the priest? What clues does the text provide to suggest that these are, indeed, special privileges?
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) What effects does Bjørnson achieve by using primarily dialogue with minimal narrative intrusion to tell this story?
3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4) At Thord and the priest's final encounter, the priest expresses surprise:

‘Are you out walking so late?’

To which, Thord replies,

‘Ah, yes! it is late.’

Consider what transpires during this meeting and explain the full significance of Thord's response.

4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3) In what way(s) does Thord change through the course of the story? What theme is suggested by Thord's development?
5. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2) What thematic and narrative purposes are served by Bjørnson's frequent use of the number three? What symbolic significance might the number three hold? How does a symbolic understanding of the number three alter the meaning of the story?

ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, *The Father*

Question 1: What special privileges does Thord ask of the priest? What clues does the text provide to suggest that these are, indeed, special privileges?

STEP 1: Use the first column of the chart below to list the specific requests.

STEP 2: In the second column, explain what is exceptional about each request.

STEP 3: Examine the context of each request. In the third column of the chart, quote the words and phrases that describe each request, how it was made, and how it was received by the priest.

STEP 4: The material you note in parts 2 and 3 should give you enough information to answer Question 1.

Literal Requests	Special Privilege Implied	Context, Textual Support
1. For son to be baptized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<p>“Is there anything else?” inquired the priest, and looked up. The peasant hesitated a little.</p> <p>“I should like very much to have him baptized by himself,” said he, finally.</p>
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
3. To post the son's wedding banns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	