

 Prestwick House

Instant Short Story Pack



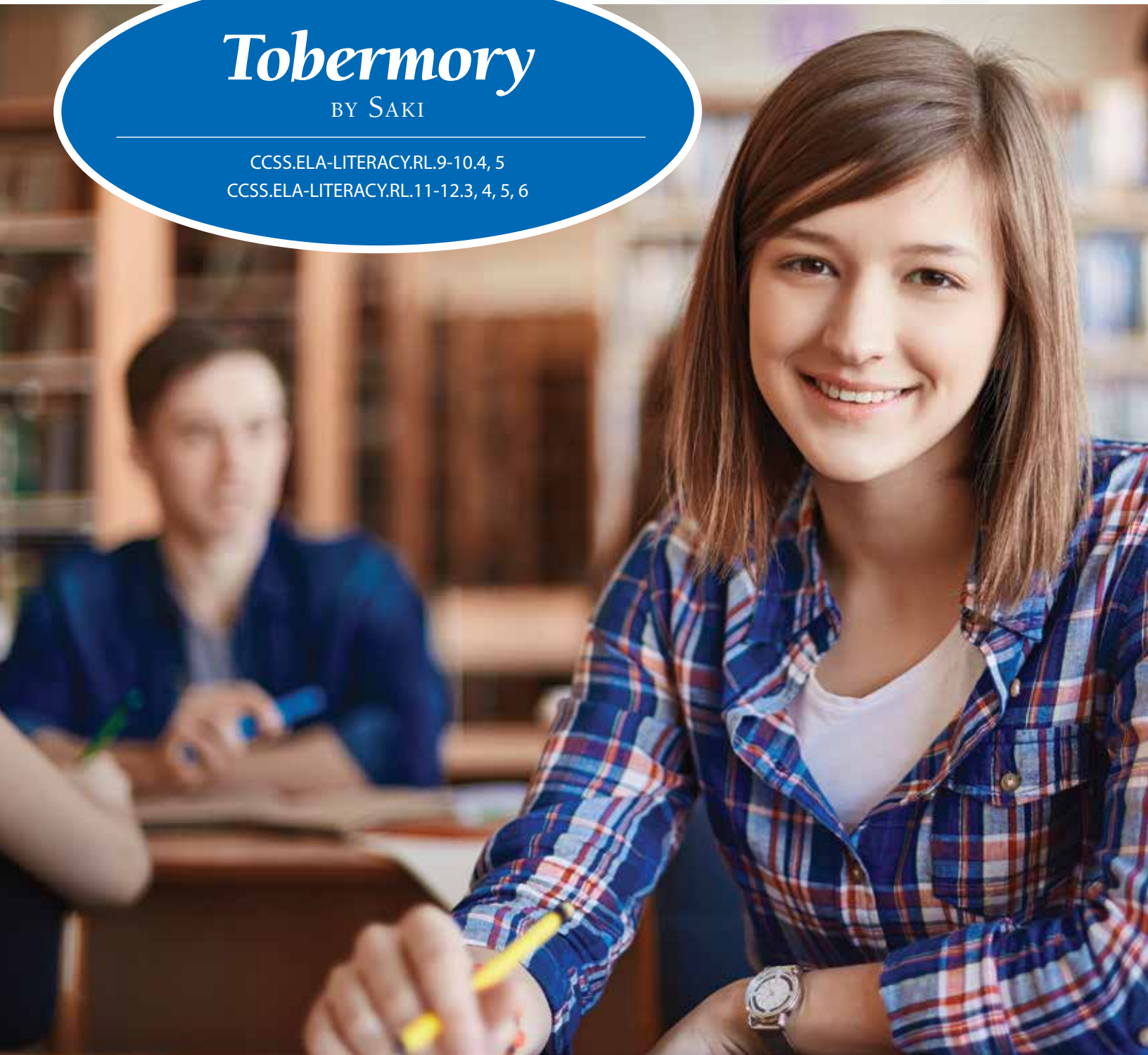
Each pack contains:

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

Tobermory

BY SAKI

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4, 5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3, 4, 5, 6



Objectives:

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

- analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (RL.11-12.3),
- analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4),
- analyze how an author's choices concerning...[whether]...to provide a comedic or tragic resolution contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact (RL.9-10.5; 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:

1-2 class periods

Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (3 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (8 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (1 page) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (6 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 Saki (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Saki'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.

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Tobermory

“Tobermory,” Saki’s delightful story about a mischievous cat, was first published in 1909 in *The Westminster Gazette*. In 1911, Saki included it in his collection *The Chronicles of Clovis*. As do many of Saki’s best-known works, “Tobermory” offers a satirical comment on the pretension and hypocrisy of Edwardian society.

The story provides an excellent example of Saki’s simple yet elegant style and his sarcastic wit. Throughout the body of Saki’s *Chronicles*, Clovis is portrayed as both bitter and malicious. The comment he makes at the end of “Tobermory” is an example of the bite of Clovis’s tongue and his aptness to utter inappropriate comments. Saki rewrote the original story to include Clovis, who was missing from the version published in 1909. Because he included “Tobermory” in his short story collection, it is likely that Saki intended to suggest that the cat, too, is somewhat more than merely mischievous in the revelations he makes about the people at the weekend party.

As is often the case with satire, the biting humor is the point. If we need to look for a theme, that theme is probably to be found in the traits or customs being satirized. Saki, however, adds another level of criticism to his satire. As we, the readers, chuckle at the characters’ embarrassment and at the deaths of both the cat and its teacher, we also must step back and admit our own brutality—that we take pleasure in other people’s harm.

Don’t overthink this story—Saki surely wanted readers to enjoy it and accept the premise of science gone awry. Tobermory, the talking, intelligent, gossipy cat, ends up dead, but not before he has revealed the self-important guests as nothing more than petty, amoral back-biters.

Before you read:

Know something about the life of the author:

Hector Hugh Munro (aka H. H. Munro, Saki) 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

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Tobermory

Lexile Measure: 1260L

IT WAS A chill, rain-washed afternoon of a late August day, that indefinite season when partridges are still in security or cold storage, and there is nothing to hunt—unless one is bounded on the north by the Bristol Channel, in which case one may lawfully gallop after fat red stags. Lady Blemley's house-party was not bounded on the north by the Bristol Channel, hence there was a full gathering of her guests round the tea table on this particular afternoon. And, in spite of the blankness of the season and the triteness of the occasion, there was no trace in the company of that fatigued restlessness which means a dread of the pianola and a subdued hankering for auction bridge. The undisguised open-mouthed attention of the entire party was fixed on the homely negative personality of Mr. Cornelius Appin. Of all her guests, he was the one who had come to Lady Blemley with the vaguest reputation. Someone had said he was "clever," and he had got his invitation in the moderate expectation, on the part of his hostess, that some portion at least of his cleverness would be contributed to the general entertainment. Until tea-time that day she had been unable to discover in what direction, if any, his cleverness lay. He was neither a wit nor a croquet champion, a hypnotic force nor a begetter of amateur theatricals. Neither did his exterior suggest the sort of man in whom women are willing to pardon a generous measure of mental deficiency. He had subsided into mere Mr. Appin, and the Cornelius seemed a piece of transparent baptismal bluff. And now he was claiming to have launched on the world a discovery beside which the invention of gunpowder, of the printing press, and of steam locomotion were inconsiderable trifles. Science had made bewildering strides in

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*Tobermory***STUDENT QUESTIONS:**

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6) What clues does Saki provide in the opening paragraphs to alert the reader that this is a comic story, not to be taken seriously?
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4) What probable association is Saki suggesting when he mentions the “element of embarrassment in addressing...a domestic cat” on “equal terms”? What is the most probable reason for this association?
3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3) Who or what are the primary targets of this story’s satire? What clues does Saki provide to suggest this?
4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) In what way(s) is the end of the story—the deaths of both Tobermory and Appin—ironic? How is Clovis’s closing comment especially comic?

Question 2: What probable association is Saki suggesting when he mentions the “element of embarrassment in addressing... a domestic cat” on “equal terms”? What is the most probable reason for this association?

STEP 1: Identify the two related issues that the sentence in question suggests. The following chart will help you identify the issues and organize the other information you will need to collect in order to answer this question.

Apparent Issues	Characteristics Specific to Story	Significance or Implication of Characteristics / Key Word(s)	Possible Associations
Somehow there seemed an element of embarrassment in addressing... a domestic cat of acknowledged mental ability. It's embarrassing to be talking to an animal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not just any animal, but a cat. • Not just any cat, but a house cat, a “domestic” cat. • Not just any house cat, but an intelligent one. 		
[Somehow there seemed an element of embarrassment in addressing] on equal terms [a domestic cat]...			



STEP 2: Carefully think about each issue that you identified in STEP 1 and consider whatever details or particularities Saki provides in the sentence to make these issues specific to this story.

STEP 3: Next, consider why these particularities are important. What sense or meaning beyond the obvious issues of STEP 1 do these specifics contribute? What key word or words help Saki convey these subtle meanings?

STEP 4: Consider ideas implicit in both issues. You should now be able to build an insightful and supportable answer to the question.