

Clements, Andrew. Room One A Mystery Or Two. Scholastic, Inc.: New York, 2006.

Reading Level: 5.1

Interest Level: 3-6

**Genre**

Family Fiction

Mystery & Detective Fiction

Realistic Fiction

School Stories Fiction

**Annotation**

When sixth grader Ted Hammond discovers a family hiding in an abandoned farmhouse, he uncovers their mystery and tries to help. Pair this with the drama of keeping his one room school open and you have not one but two mysteries to solve. Boy scout, paperboy and 4-H member, Ted is always prepared. Pair that with his penchant for mystery novels and you have one observant responsible kid. Then why does he have to steal food and bend the truth to take care of a homeless family he discovers at the Anderson place? Ted is torn between doing the right thing and keeping his promise. He discovers the plight of the Thayer family. After losing their dad and husband in Iraq, the family is on their way to a sister's home in Colorado when their car breaks down. The novel briefly touches on the emotional instability of the mom, as the kids try to cope with the problems of being homeless. Ted finally confides in his teacher and the entire town comes to the family's aide. Their efforts are too late because the mother recovers and gets in touch with her sister and who comes to their rescue. It's nice to think that this would happen. There are many service organizations around the country that provide such services and a lot of factual information is contained in this story. Many readers will be prompted to support these agencies if you are not doing it already.

**Booktalk**

Frindle, Lunch Money, Double Trouble In Walla Walla, The Holiday Concert, Janitor's Boy, Landry News, A Week in the Woods, Dogku and No Talking are all books written by one of my favorite authors, Andrew Clements. His realistic fiction is a staple on the Young Hoosier lists. This year's offering is Room One A Mystery or Two.

Imagine yourself at the Red Prairie Learning Center. All of the students are in the same classroom. There are four fourth graders, four eighth graders and you in Room One. You are the only kid in the sixth grade. You like to read mysteries and you belong to the 4-H Club. Every morning, before school, you deliver papers around the small Nebraska town of Plattsford. You know everybody in town and life is routine, almost boring, until you pass by the Anderson place. It's been abandoned for two and a half years. The grass is tall. The red barn is faded. You glance at the boarded up farmhouse and see a face in the upstairs window! You haven't been reading those mystery books for nothing. Now is the time to solve a real life puzzle. Did you see a ghost? Was there someone living in the old Anderson place? Should you call the police? Should you tell your teacher? Should you tell your parents what you know? Detective Ted Hammond pursues a mystery or two in this latest gem from the pen of Andrew Clements.

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## About The Author

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Andrew Clements grew up in Springfield, Illinois. He graduated Northwestern University and National Louis University before teaching in the Chicago Public Schools. He tried a career as a songwriter before he published his first novel Frindle. His most recent books are Dogku and No Talking. Room One has won the 2007 Edgar Allen Poe Award.

### Author Website

<http://www.andrewclements.com/>

### Good Conversations

Interview with the author

<http://www.goodconversations.com/index.htm>

Simon & Schuster Inc.

<http://www.simonsays.com/content/index.cfm?sid=183>

### Summary

Paperboy Ted Hammond passes an abandoned farmhouse and sees a face in the window. This mystery buff heads back to the farm to investigate and discovers a girl, her mother and brother hiding out. Torn between telling the authorities, Ted promises to keep their secret and provides the family with food until he can think of a way to get them back on their feet. He is forced to tell his teacher when she sees him coming from the Anderson farm. Mrs. Mitchell is uneasy about keeping his secret and when the sheriff swarms the house, Ted is sure his teacher betrayed him. The family escapes to another hideout and Ted finds them again and convinces April that they have to get her mom help. The town of Plattsford pulls together to welcome and provide help to this homeless family. But the mother is spooked into action by their discovery and contacts a relative who picks them up.

Throughout this mystery plays the drama of the school's future. With the enrollment continuing to dwindle, next year the school may be closed and the remaining nine students will be bussed two hours away to the closest school in the nearby town of Wheaton.

### Point of View

This story is told in third person.

### Setting

This modern story is set in the small town of Plattsford, Nebraska. It is a small farming community that has seen more prosperous times. The plight of some of our farm communities is magnified in this novel.

### Themes

Always be prepared.

Life is one big mystery that we can solve.

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Farming is an honorable vocation.

There's always someone there to help, you don't have to be afraid to ask for help.

### **Conflict**

Ted Hammond discovers a homeless family living in an abandoned farmhouse. He is asked not to tell anyone. He is conflicted but agrees and helps by stealing food from his house to feed them. As he finds out more about them, Ted knows that they need more help than he can give. He wants to tell a responsible adult but does not want to go back on his word.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Ted convinces April that something must be done and he tells her he will bring his mother over to help. This is enough to jolt April's mom into action and they call a relative who comes to rescue them.

### **Main Characters**

Ted Hammond, mystery reader, Boy Scout, 4-H member and lone sixth grader

Mrs. Mitchell, teacher

Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, Ted's parents

April Thayer, homeless child

Artie Thayer, homeless child

Alexa Thayer, widow and mother

### **Discussion Questions**

Pre-reading

Have you ever had to bend the truth in order to accomplish a greater good?

Is it ever all right to lie? Is it ever all right to steal?

Chapter 1

Have you ever had a job? What was it and what were your responsibilities? Do you think Ted is a good worker? Tell why with examples.

Ted has labeled them leftovers? Why does this name fit?

Chapter 2

Why do you think the author titled the book Room One? Suggest another title.

Why are families leaving their farms?

What does 4-H stand for and what do members do in a 4-H club?

Chapter 3

What characteristics would a good detective need?

Should Ted tell an adult about his discovery? Why or why not?

Chapter 4

Are you a good observer? Could you describe a person well enough to make a police report?

Chapter 5

Why do you think cat burglars prefer black? What supplies could you get from your family kitchen to take to them? Could you sneak food without getting caught?

Chapter 6

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Why was April frightened when Ted called her Alexa? Why didn't Ted ask April more questions?

Chapter 7

Why does Ted describe Room One as a big aquarium?

Do you know as much about your teacher as Ted knows about his? (This should be a lively discussion!)

Chapter 8

Name a merit badge that you could earn. It does not have to be from the boy scouts or girl scouts but one similar to Ted's in this chapter.

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

How does one look guilty? How did Mrs. Mitchell know if a student was dishonest?

Chapter 11

What kinds of chores could you do around your school to help make it a better environment? Why couldn't Ted lie to Mrs. Mitchell?

Chapter 12

Should Mrs. Mitchell report the family to the authorities? Why or why not?

Is it okay to break a promise?

Chapter 13

How did Ted feel when he discovered the empty farmhouse?

Chapter 14

What caused Ted to jump to the wrong conclusion?

How did Ted act when he thought Mrs. Mitchell betrayed him?

What do you think he should have done instead?

Chapter 15

What are social services?

Why didn't Ted want to ask the police about "official business"?

Chapter 16

What clues did Ted notice?

Can you describe the special smell of the book in the attic?

Why did Ted think he and April could become friends?

Chapter 17

Why did Lucas say, 'Bout time this town died.' How does a town die?

Why do you think Mrs. Hammond was upset with Lucas?

Chapter 18

Why did the eight graders ignore Ted? Why was Josh friendly to Ted?

Chapters 19

How did Ted observation skills help him?

Chapter 20

How did Ted use the process of elimination to guess where the Thayer family had gone?

What did Ted mean when he states "that this person's nose was twenty miles long"?

Chapter 21

Why did Ted say that having a teacher for an assistant had its drawbacks?

Answer Ted's question. What does the Thayer family need?

Apply this to the tornado and flood victims from this summer. What do they need?

How can we help others? Make a list.

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Chapter 21

What did Ted’s mother and father say that encouraged him to continue helping April and her family?

Chapter 23

What is a giant goldfinch? Why did Ted compare himself to one? Why did he wish that he didn’t look like one at the end of this chapter?

Chapter 24

What made Ted chew off the erasers? How did Ted plan to stop the suspense?

Chapter 25

What would your parents say if you told them that they had to leave work and help a homeless family? Would they believe you? Who else would help you?

Chapter 26

Why do you think that no one was upset when the Thayer family did not appear? Would you have been upset? Why or why not?

Chapter 27

How do you think Alexa might have reacted to the parade? Why do you think the author wrote the phone call from April into this chapter? What if there was no call? How would the chapter end?

Post-reading questions

If we could help a homeless family, what could we do? Are there agencies in our community that support the homeless? What are they? Are there agencies in our community that help soldiers and their families?

**Anticipation Statements**

<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Kids are too young to help solve our society’s problems.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>One should always tell the truth.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Adults cannot be trusted.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Homeless people are everywhere.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>All schools are basically the same.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Sometimes promises have to be broken.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

<b>Vocabulary</b>	<b>Page</b>	
Population	2	all of the people who live in a certain area
Subscriptions	3	an agreement to purchase something over a period of time
Ventilation	7	the circulation of fresh air
Interlibrary	10	a system by which libraries can borrow books from other libraries
Windbreaks	15	something that breaks the force of wind, tree, wall or a hedge
Publicity	16	something designed to increase public awareness r interest
Weatherized	16	worn or damaged by exposure to the weather
Paddock	16	a small field near a house or stable with grazing for horses
Auctioneer	17	someone in charge of and announces the bids at an auction
Stakeout	19	the place where surveillance is carried out
Bulkhead	35	a wall built to hold back something like earth or water
Flustered	37	nervous or agitated
Demerits	38	a mark against someone, such as a student
Pentagon	44	a geometric figure with five sides
Suspicious	52	a belief that something wrong has happened
Acquaintance	57	someone who is known slightly
Gasket	61	a piece of material, usually rubber that makes a seal impenetrable
Trespassing	65	to go on someone's property without permission
Camouflage	70	something that is intended to hide
Brigade	73	a group of people organized to complete a task
Circumstantial	93	based on fact that allow a court to declare that someone is guilty without conclusive proof
Dismal	136	depressing
Bereaved	163	having lost a loved one through death
Epilogue	163	a short section at the end of a literary work
Casualty	167	a member of the armed forces who is killed during combat

### **Read Alikes**

These series are set in schools and involve student detectives.

Detective Stories- Series

*Down the Rabbit Hole* by Peter Abrahams

*Half-Moon Investigations* by Eoin Colfer

*Key Lardo: A Chet Gecko Mystery* by Bruce Hale

A New Detective Series

Sisters Grimm Series by Michael Buckley

*The Fairy Tale Detectives*

*Magic and Other Misdemeanors*

*Once Upon a Crime*

*The Problem Child*

*Tales From The Hood*

*The Unusual Suspects*

Homeless Fiction

*How To Steal A Dog* by Barbara O'Connor

More Andrew Clements

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If you liked this book, then you must read more Andrew Clements novels set in schools. This realistic fiction is mostly humorous with a good message. My favorite ones are as follows:

*Frindle*

*Janitor's Boy*

*Landry News*

*Last Holiday Concert*

*Lunch Money*

*School Story*

*Week in the Woods*

### **Read Aloud**

Pages 95-98

This is an action read in the middle of the story. Ted thinks his teacher has betrayed him but she calls the police and finds more details that make Ted worry about where his homeless family has gone.

Pages 117-119

Ted has to reexamine his detective work. He is worried that his mistake has placed the Thayer family in danger.

### **Book Activity 1**

*One Room Schoolhouse Quick Study*

After reading the novel, explore the world of one-room schoolhouses. Divide the class into five fact-finding groups. Using print and online resources, students will gather facts about one-room schoolhouses. Students should be able to contrast and compare these to the Red Prairie Learning Center in our novel. Use the facts to present their information to the rest of the class. They may choose to

1. Play a game that students would have played during this time period.
2. Create a model of a one-room schoolhouse.
3. Create an artifact from their research. (Slates, Hornbook, Abacus, Fountain Pen)
4. Model a lesson from this time period. (Spelling Bee)
5. Create a slide show using iMovie, Powerpoint or Keynote, of photos of one room schoolhouses collected from online resources.
6. Dress in a period costume and explain it.
7. Read one of the two fiction selections and take notes. Collect descriptions of the school, school day and lessons. Students should be able to report what these school days are like.

Materials:

Pencils, note cards

Multimedia program

Model Supplies

America's Story from America's Library (New York One Room School House)

[http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/es/ny/school\\_1](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/es/ny/school_1)

Avi. The Secret School. New York:Harcourt,,2001.

Bial, Raymond. One-Room School. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

Blackwell Museum

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This site from the Northern Illinois University College of Education is a wealth of information about one-room schoolhouses. The Blackwell Museum owns and operates a one room schoolhouse.

<http://www.cedu.niu.edu/blackwell/>

A Typical Day

<http://www.cedu.niu.edu/blackwell/oneroom/typicalDay.shtml>

About the Teachers

<http://www.cedu.niu.edu/blackwell/oneroom/aboutTeachers.shtml>

About the Students

<http://www.cedu.niu.edu/blackwell/oneroom/aboutStudents.shtml>

General Information provides links to valuable sites with more specific information about the buildings and equipment.

<http://www.cedu.niu.edu/blackwell/oneroom/generalInfo.shtml>

Graves, Kerry. Going to School in Pioneer Times. Blue Earth Books, 2002.

Kalman, Bobbie. A One-Room Schoolhouse. Mankato, Minnesota: Crabtree, 1994.

National Endowment for the Arts EDSITEMENT (lesson plans for teachers)

This is a great resource to teach about one-room schoolhouses. Explore the site and get a sample lesson plan for the entire school day. Find a link for furniture and equipment from the time period. I have tried to paste links to some of the specific topics.

[http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=319](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=319)

Furniture

PBS, The Evolving Classroom

[http://www.pbs.org/kcet/publicschool/evolving\\_classroom/furniture.html](http://www.pbs.org/kcet/publicschool/evolving_classroom/furniture.html)

One Room School House Center

<http://www2.johnstown.k12.oh.us/cornell/states.html>

Peck, Richard. The Teacher's Funeral: a Comedy in Three Parts. Dial Books, 2004.

### **Indiana Academic Standards**

4.1.17 Using primary and secondary sources\* and online source materials, construct a brief narrative about an event in Indiana history.

4.2.2 Use appropriate strategies when reading for different purposes.

4.2.5 Compare and contrast information on the same topic after reading several passages or articles.

4.4.2 Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view based upon purpose, audience, length, and format requirements for a piece of writing.

4.4.4 Use logical organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, and posing and answering a question.

4.4.5 Quote or paraphrase information sources, citing them appropriately.

4.4.6 Locate information in reference texts by using organizational features, such as prefaces and appendixes.

4.4.7 Use multiple reference materials and online information (the Internet) as aids to writing.

4.4.8 Understand the organization of almanacs, newspapers, and periodicals and how to use those print materials.

4.4.9 Use a computer to draft, revise, and publish writing, demonstrating basic keyboarding skills and familiarity with common computer terminology.

4.5.2 Write responses to literature that:

- demonstrate an understanding of a literary work.

- support statements with evidence from the text.

4.5.4 Write summaries that contain the main ideas of the reading selection and the most significant details.

4.5.5 Use varied word choices to make writing interesting.

4.5.6 Write for different purposes (information, persuasion, description) and to a specific audience or person.

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4.5.3 Write or deliver a research report that has been developed using a systematic research process (defines

the topic, gathers information, determines credibility, reports findings) and that:

- includes information from a variety of sources (books, technology, multimedia) and documents sources (titles and authors).

- demonstrates that information that has been gathered has been summarized.

- organizes information by categorizing it into multiple categories (such as solid, liquid, and gas or reduce, reuse, and recycle) or includes information gained through observation.

4.7.1 Ask thoughtful questions and respond orally to relevant questions with appropriate elaboration.

4.7.2 Summarize major ideas and supporting evidence presented in spoken presentations.

4.7.3 Identify how language usage (sayings and expressions) reflects regions and cultures.

4.7.15 Connect and relate experiences and ideas to those of a speaker.

4.7.5 Present effective introductions and conclusions that guide and inform the listener's understanding of important ideas and details.

4.7.6 Use logical structures for conveying information, including cause and effect, similarity and difference, and posing and answering a question.

4.7.7 Emphasize points in ways that help the listener or viewer follow important ideas and concepts.

4.7.8 Use details, examples, anecdotes (stories of a specific event), or experiences to explain or clarify information.

4.7.9 Engage the audience with appropriate words, facial expressions, and gestures.

4.7.12 Make informational presentations that:

- focus on one main topic.

- include facts and details that help listeners focus.

- incorporate more than one source of information (including speakers, books, newspapers, television broadcasts, radio reports, or Web sites).

4.7.13 Deliver oral summaries of articles and books that contain the main ideas of the event or article and the most significant details.

5.2.1 Use the features of informational texts, such as formats, graphics, diagrams, illustrations, charts, maps, and organization, to find information and support understanding.

5.2.3 Recognize main ideas presented in texts, identifying and assessing evidence that supports those ideas.

5.2.5 Distinguish among facts, supported inferences, evidence, and opinions in text.

5.4.3 Write informational pieces with multiple paragraphs that:

- present important ideas or events in sequence or in chronological order.

- provide details and transitions to link paragraphs.

- offer a concluding paragraph that summarizes important ideas and details.

5.4.11 Use logical organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, and stating and supporting a hypothesis with data.

5.4.4 Use organizational features of printed text, such as citations, endnotes, and bibliographic references, to locate relevant information.

5.4.5 Use note-taking skills when completing research for writing.

5.4.6 Create simple documents using a computer and employing organizational features, such as passwords, entry and pull-down menus, word searches, the thesaurus, and spell checks.

5.5.3 Write or deliver a research report that has been developed using a systematic research process (defines the topic, gathers information, determines credibility, reports findings) and that:

- uses information from a variety of sources (books, technology, multimedia) and documents sources (titles and authors).

- demonstrates that information that has been gathered has been summarized.

- organizes information by categorizing and sequencing.

5.7.1 Ask questions that seek information not already discussed.

6.4.2 Choose the form of writing that best suits the intended purpose.

6.4.3 Write informational pieces of several paragraphs that:

- engage the interest of the reader.

- state a clear purpose.

- develop the topic with supporting details and precise language.

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- conclude with a detailed summary linked to the purpose of the composition.
- 6.4.5 Use note-taking skills when completing research for writing.
- 6.5.4 Write responses to literature that:
  - develop an interpretation that shows careful reading, understanding, and insight.
  - organize the interpretation around several clear ideas.
  - support statements with evidence from the text.
- 6.5.6 Use varied word choices to make writing interesting.
- 6.5.7 Write for different purposes (information, persuasion, description) and to a specific audience or person, adjusting tone and style as necessary.
- 6.5.8 Write summaries that contain the main ideas of the reading selection and the most significant details.
- 6.5.3 Write or deliver a research report that has been developed using a systematic research process (defines the topic, gathers information, determines credibility, reports findings) and that:
  - uses information from a variety of sources (books, technology, multimedia) and documents sources independently by using a consistent format for citations.
  - demonstrates that information that has been gathered has been summarized.
  - demonstrates that sources have been evaluated for accuracy, bias, and credibility.
  - organizes information by categorizing and sequencing, and demonstrates the distinction between one's own ideas from the ideas of others, and includes a bibliography (Works Cited).

One Room Schoolhouses Notes  
Read and take notes including the following topics.

Location	Equipment	Building	Students	Teachers

## Book Activity 2

### *Read Aloud With Literature Response*

Materials:

Journals, Pencils

4-5 class sessions

School Tales The Hoosier Schoolmaster by Edward Eggleston

<http://www.schooltales.net/hoosierschoolmaster/>

Read aloud the excerpts from the Hoosier School Master. This is a story written in dialect, set in a fictional town in Indiana during the 1850's. After reading about this one room schoolhouse have students compare and contrast this school to their own school by writing in their journals. Students may share their writings via conferencing with their teacher, sharing with a partner or by reading it aloud to the class. Vary the sharing methods after each read aloud. If you can find a print copy of the book read it and share the battle for Christmas vacation. It is humorous and tells how the students take over the school and keep the schoolmaster out in order to have the Christmas holiday out of school. You may also find it as an e-book. Download this e-book for free from Project Gutenberg.

The Hoosier Schoolmaster by Edward Eggleston

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/15099>

#### **More Resources**

If you want to immerse yourself in this melodrama, please note that this was made into a movie twice. There is a 1924 movie and a 1935 movie. Each movie is black and white and while I don't think students will enjoy it, teachers might get a hoot out of it. Search for The Hoosier Schoolmaster.

Several students may want to learn more about Sherlock Holmes

#### **Sherlock Holmes**

##### **Web Resources:**

**221 Baker Street (lists all of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes works)**

<http://221bakerstreet.org/>

The Adventure Games of Sherlock Holmes (demo)

<http://www.sherlockholmes-thegame.com/en/sh/>

Big Fish Games (one free hour of play)

<http://www.bigfishgames.com/download-games/3396/the-lost-cases-of-sherlock-holmes/index.html>

Learn more about homelessness and how you can make a difference. Encourage a student service-learning project.

#### **Family Homelessness**

##### **Web Resources:**

National Alliance To End Homelessness

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/>

Hear Us

<http://www.hearus.us/default.htm>

National Center on Family Homelessness

<http://www.familyhomelessness.org/>

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## **Fight Poverty**

<http://www.fightpoverty.mmbrico.com/consequences/homeless.html>

### **Indiana Academic Standards**

4.5.2 Write responses to literature that:

- demonstrate an understanding of a literary work.
- support statements with evidence from the text.

4.7.15 Connect and relate experiences and ideas to those of a speaker.

5.5.2 Write responses to literature that:

- demonstrate an understanding of a literary work.
- support statements with evidence from the text.
- develop interpretations that exhibit careful reading and understanding.

6.5.4 Write responses to literature that:

- develop an interpretation that shows careful reading, understanding, and insight.
- organize the interpretation around several clear ideas.
- support statements with evidence from the text.

6.5.6 Use varied word choices to make writing interesting.

### **Across The Curriculum**

Social Studies Have students make and use slates for a lesson

Social Studies Have students participate in an old fashioned spelling bee

Art Have students create a hornbook to use in class

Physical Education Have students play a game from the pioneer era

Music Have students listen to and sing songs from the pioneer time period

### **Indiana Academic Standards Met by the Hoosier Book Award Program**

4.2.2 Use appropriate strategies when reading for different purposes.

5.3.2 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

5.3.3 Contrast the actions, motives, and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.

6.2.3 Connect and clarify main ideas by identifying their relationship to multiple sources and related topics.

6.3.5 Identify the speaker and recognize the difference between first-person (the narrator tells the story from the "I" perspective) and third-person (the narrator tells the story from an outside perspective) narration.

6.3.8 Critique the believability of characters and the degree to which a plot is believable or realistic.

6.3.9 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

### **Bibliography**

Follett Library Resources

<http://www.flr.follett.com/>

Good Conversations by Tim Podell

<http://www.goodconversations.com/index.htm>

Indiana Academic Standards

<http://www.doe.state.in.us/standards/welcome.html>

Project Gutenberg

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<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/15099>  
School Tales in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Literature  
<http://www.schooltales.net/>

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