

Plan a circle: “The Gift of the Magi”

O. Henry (1905) · public-domain short story · grades 7–10 · ~1 week / two meetings. Rights: Public domain.
Kit section 5 (group agreement & calendar), scaffolded for this text. Students fill the group, calendar, and roles.

Text, group, and target

Text / author / edition	“The Gift of the Magi” — O. Henry (1905). _____ (edition)
Group / period / dates	
Grade / TEKS target (p. 3)	Grade 8 · §110.24 — 7(A): theme through characters/events; 6(C,D): support inferences; 1(D): student-led discussion.
Learning intention	We are learning to explain how the characters' choices reveal a theme about love and value.
Success criteria	I bring one open question, cite two details with paragraph numbers, respond to a peer, and name how my thinking changed.

Reading map & calendar

Chunk	Read through	Meeting date · leader
1	Opening through Della selling her hair and buying the watch chain (≈ paragraphs 1–20).	
2	Jim arrives home through the closing “magi” paragraph — the double reveal (≈ paragraphs 21–end).	

Members & first-meeting jobs (p. 7 roles)

Member	First job	Rotates to (next meeting)

Text-specific discussion questions (open — more than one answer)

- **Predict:** After Della counts \$1.87 the day before Christmas, what will she risk to give Jim a worthy gift? What clue supports your guess?
- **Question:** Why might the narrator step in to compare Della and Jim to the magi? How does that change how we judge their choices?
- **Clarify:** What does the narrator mean that they “most unwisely sacrificed the greatest treasures”? Is it really unwise?
- **Summarize:** Each sold the one thing the other’s gift was meant for — restate that irony in order, without opinion.
- **Interpret the theme:** How do their choices reveal what the story says about love versus money? Use two details.

Optional Jigsaw lenses (p. 4): *Character* (Della’s and Jim’s choices) · *Plot* (the parallel sacrifices, twist ending) · *Language* (the intruding narrator) · *Theme* (value isn’t material) · *Point of view* (the narrator’s direct address (5th reader)).

Reading notes: "The Gift of the Magi"

Name: _____ · Home group: _____ · Section: "The Gift of the Magi," _____ · Expert lens: _____

Everyone prepares. Read the whole assigned section. Write or draw three important ideas, two supporting details with locations, and one summary in your own words. Keep interpretation separate from summary.

Questions

What needs clarification?
What could the group explore?

3 · Important ideas

Character choices, conflicts, themes, or central ideas.

1.

2.

3.

Vocabulary

Word + location + meaning or clue.
Mark anything still uncertain.

2 · Supporting details

Short quote or accurate paraphrase + page/paragraph + what it shows.

1.

2.

1 · Summary in my own words

Bring to the circle

My interpretation: These details suggest _____

Synthesis (connect two lenses): _____

After discussion: My thinking changed / became clearer because _____

TEKS evidence: 6(C,D) supported inference; 7(A) theme through characters/events; 1(D) response to a peer. · Pair with the PlotPoint "The Gift of the Magi" room.