

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) filled in for one text — a finished plan students see before writing their own. *Tinted italic* = sample answers.

Text, group, and target

Text / author / edition	<i>“The Gift of the Magi” — O. Henry (1905). Public-domain short story.</i>
Group / period / dates	<i>Maya’s group · Period __ · Meetings __ & __</i>
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	<i>Opening through Della selling her hair and buying the watch chain (≈ paragraphs 1–20).</i>	<i>Tue · Leader: Maya</i>
2	<i>Jim arrives home through the closing “magi” paragraph — the double reveal (≈ paragraphs 21–end).</i>	<i>Thu · Leader: Devon</i>

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

Member	First job	Rotates to (next meeting)
<i>Maya</i>	<i>Questioner</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>
<i>Devon</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>
<i>Priya</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>	<i>Evidence tracker</i>
<i>Luis</i>	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Questioner</i>

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)).

Sample 3–2–1 notes: Priya, character choices lens

Name: *Priya* · Home group: *Maya's group* · Period ___ · Meetings ___ & ___ · Section: *"The Gift of the Magi," Chunk 2* · Expert lens: *Character choices*

What a finished prep looks like. Kit section 6 / Organizer A completed for one reader, so students can compare their notes to a strong model.

Questions <i>Is a gift that can't be used still the best gift?</i> <i>Why call them the "wisest" right after calling the trade unwise?</i>	3 · Important ideas <i>1. Jim sells his gold watch — his most prized possession — to buy Della combs.</i> <i>2. Della had already cut and sold her long hair to buy Jim a chain for that watch.</i> <i>3. Neither can use the gift they receive, yet both are moved, not angry.</i>
Vocabulary <i>coveted = wanted badly for a long time.</i> <i>the magi = the wise gift-bringers of the Christmas story.</i>	2 · Supporting details <i>1. When Jim sees Della's short hair he goes still — shock, not anger (the reveal). → His love isn't about her appearance.</i> <i>2. The combs Della had "coveted" are now useless without her hair (the reveal). → The gift's worth is in the sacrifice.</i>

1 · Summary in my own words

Both Della and Jim secretly sold their most treasured thing to buy the other a Christmas gift. The gifts can't even be used — but the love and sacrifice behind them is the real point.

Bring to the circle

My interpretation: *These details suggest the story measures love by what people give up, not by what they spend.*

Synthesis (two lenses): *The parallel sacrifices (plot) create the irony that proves the theme: value lives in the sacrifice, not the object. Text points: Della's haircut in Chunk 1 and Jim's sold watch in Chunk 2.*

After discussion: *My thinking became clearer once the group compared evidence.*

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.