

The Jilting of Granny Weatherall

Short Story by Katherine Anne Porter

FLORIDA

SUNSHINE STATE STANDARD

Reading Process

Benchmark LA.1112.1.7.5 Analyze a variety of text structures (e.g., comparison/contrast, cause/effect, chronological order, argument/support, lists) and text features (main headings with subheadings) and explain their impact on meaning in text.

NOTABLE QUOTE

“Human life itself may be almost pure chaos, but the work of the artist . . . is to take these handfuls of confusion and disparate things . . . and put them together in a frame to give them some kind of shape and meaning.”

FYI

Did you know that Katherine Anne Porter . . .

- was a distant relative of the frontiersman Daniel Boone?
- taught singing and dancing as a teenager to help support her family?

AuthorOnline

For more on Katherine Anne Porter, visit the Literature Center at ClassZone.com.



Katherine Anne Porter

1890–1980

Katherine Anne Porter has been called a “writer’s writer”; in her lifetime she was more popular with critics and her fellow writers than with the public. She wrote mostly short fiction, a form with which it was difficult to build a popular reputation. What’s more, all of her 27 short stories, including those technically classified as novellas (short novels), could fit into a single book. Still, Porter’s work is celebrated for its nearly flawless consistency and style. Each one of her stories is a polished gem reflecting a hard truth about human experience.

Survival and Resiliency She was born Callie Russell Porter on a scrappy dirt farm in central Texas, where she dreamed of becoming an actress. She had the good looks, the drive, and the talent for performing but lacked the stamina. A two-year bout with tuberculosis permanently dashed her dreams of acting. However, while recuperating at a sanatorium, Porter

befriended a journalist who helped her start writing for newspapers. Living in Denver in 1918, Porter was again stricken by illness, this time by the deadly flu epidemic that swept the globe after World War I, killing 550,000 people in the United States and at least 25 million worldwide. This second brush with death inspired an idea that was later to become part of her novella *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939). After her recovery, convinced of her true calling, Porter left Denver for the New York literary scene and the wider world.

Deep in the Heart of Texas Like many writers of her generation, Porter traveled widely, living in Mexico, Bermuda, Germany, Switzerland, and France, as well as New York for much of the 1920s and 1930s. Some of these places inspired her fiction: her time in Mexico enriched her first published story, “*Maria Concepción*” (1922), and several others, while pre–World War II Berlin informed “*The Leaning Tower*” (1944). But for the most part, foreign travel provided what Porter called a “constant exercise of memory” and brought her closer to her native land. Some of her best fiction—notably, “*Noon Wine*” (1937), “*Old Mortality*” (1939), and a series called “*The Old Order*” (1955)—takes place in Texas. Many of these stories, and “*The Jilting of Granny Weatherall*” (1929) in particular, include a dynamic grandmother based on Porter’s own who raised her until age 11 and exerted a strong influence. Porter even took her grandmother’s name after she divorced her first husband and began life on her own.



● **LITERARY ANALYSIS: STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

The very first paragraph of this story plunges readers directly into the thoughts of its protagonist. This literary technique, **stream of consciousness**, presents the flow of a character's seemingly unconnected thoughts, responses, and sensations. Rather than offering a logical account of events, it presents a series of associative connections, with one impression giving rise to another. This technique can be confusing to even the best readers; using these strategies will help:

- Remember that you are “inside” the main character’s thoughts—the depictions of people and events you find there may not be completely reliable.
- Look for quotation marks to determine when Granny is speaking aloud and when she’s not.
- Keep track of the twists and turns of Granny’s thoughts to understand what she is reacting to.

● **READING SKILL: CLARIFY SEQUENCE**

In this narrative, Porter shuffles together the past and the present to depict the distorted way Granny perceives the **sequence** of events. Porter achieves this effect in part through the use of **flashback**, in which she relates events that happened before the beginning of the story’s “now” time. As you travel through Granny’s memory, use a timeline to untangle the sequence of the main events in her life.

Jilting by George



*Examination by
Dr. Harry*

▲ **VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT**

Porter uses these words to take readers into the mind of a woman on her deathbed. Complete each phrase with a word from the list.

WORD	amethyst	dwindle	plague
LIST	assign	embroidered	

1. kept an elaborately _____ blanket on the sickbed
2. had a valuable _____ ring to pass on to her daughter
3. felt her time _____ as she got weaker and weaker

*What makes a
MEMORY linger?*

KEY IDEA That perfect first date. The humiliating moment you realized you had failed your driving test. The elated, screaming crowd jumping to its feet as the last seconds of the big game ticked away. Whether pleasant or painful, there are some **memories** you just can't shake. In this story, as Granny Weatherall lies on her deathbed, she's haunted by an event that still affects her almost as powerfully as it did when she experienced it as a young woman.

QUICKWRITE Write a paragraph about a memory of your own that you can still recall in crisp detail. What images, feelings, sounds, or smells come to mind? Why do you think this moment lingers in your memory?



THE *Jilting* of GRANNY WEATHERALL

Katherine Anne Porter

She flicked her wrist neatly out of Doctor Harry's pudgy careful fingers and pulled the sheet up to her chin. The brat ought to be in knee breeches.¹ Doctoring around the country with spectacles on his nose! "Get along now, take your schoolbooks and go. There's nothing wrong with me." **A**

Doctor Harry spread a warm paw like a cushion on her forehead where the forked green vein danced and made her eyelids twitch. "Now, now, be a good girl, and we'll have you up in no time."

"That's no way to speak to a woman nearly eighty years old just because she's down. I'd have you respect your elders, young man."

10 "Well, Missy, excuse me." Doctor Harry patted her cheek. "But I've got to warn you, haven't I? You're a marvel, but you must be careful or you're going to be good and sorry."

"Don't tell me what I'm going to be. I'm on my feet now, morally speaking. It's Cornelia. I had to go to bed to get rid of her."

Her bones felt loose, and floated around in her skin, and Doctor Harry floated like a balloon around the foot of the bed. He floated and pulled down his waistcoat and swung his glasses on a cord. "Well, stay where you are, it certainly can't hurt you."

A STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In lines 1–4, how does Porter create the effect that you, the reader, are "inside" Granny's mind? Explain how your intimacy with this character affects your impression of her.

ANALYZE VISUALS

What does this unusual portrait suggest about its subject's thoughts or state of mind? Explain, citing details.

1. **knee breeches:** short pants formerly worn by young boys.

“Get along and doctor your sick,” said Granny Weatherall. “Leave a well
20 woman alone. I’ll call for you when I want you. . . . Where were you forty years
ago when I pulled through milk-leg² and double pneumonia? You weren’t even
born. Don’t let Cornelia lead you on,” she shouted, because Doctor Harry
appeared to float up to the ceiling and out. “I pay my own bills, and I don’t throw
my money away on nonsense!”

She meant to wave good-by, but it was too much trouble. Her eyes closed of
themselves, it was like a dark curtain drawn around the bed. The pillow rose and
floated under her, pleasant as a hammock in a light wind. She listened to the
leaves rustling outside the window. No, somebody was swishing newspapers: no,
Cornelia and Doctor Harry were whispering together. She leaped broad awake,
30 thinking they whispered in her ear. **B**

“She was never like this, *never* like this!” “Well, what can we expect?” “Yes,
eighty years old. . . .”

Well, and what if she was? She still had ears. It was like Cornelia to whisper
around doors. She always kept things secret in such a public way. She was always
being tactful and kind. Cornelia was dutiful; that was the trouble with her.
Dutiful and good: “So good and dutiful,” said Granny, “that I’d like to spank her.”
She saw herself spanking Cornelia and making a fine job of it.

“What’d you say, Mother?”

Granny felt her face tying up in hard knots.

40 “Can’t a body think, I’d like to know?”

“I thought you might want something.”

“I do. I want a lot of things. First off, go away and don’t whisper.”

She lay and drowsed, hoping in her sleep that the children would keep out and
let her rest a minute. It had been a long day. Not that she was tired. It was always
pleasant to snatch a minute now and then. There was always so much to be done,
let me see: tomorrow.

Tomorrow was far away and there was nothing to trouble about. Things were
finished somehow when the time came; thank God there was always a little
margin over for peace: then a person could spread out the plan of life and tuck in
50 the edges orderly. It was good to have everything clean and folded away, with the
hair brushes and tonic bottles sitting straight on the white **embroidered** linen: the
day started without fuss and the pantry shelves laid out with rows of jelly glasses
and brown jugs and white stone-china jars with blue whirligigs³ and words painted
on them: coffee, tea, sugar, ginger, cinnamon, allspice: and the bronze clock with
the lion on top nicely dusted off. The dust that lion could collect in twenty-four
hours! The box in the attic with all those letters tied up, well, she’d have to go
through that tomorrow. All those letters—George’s letters and John’s letters and
her letters to them both—lying around for the children to find afterwards made
her uneasy. Yes, that would be tomorrow’s business. No use to let them know how
60 silly she had been once.

B **STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS**
How does the description in lines 25–30 reinforce the idea that you are listening in on Granny’s thoughts?

embroidered
(ēm’broi’dərd) *adj.*
decorated with stitched designs **embroider v.**

2. **milk-leg**: a painful swelling of the leg experienced by some women after giving birth.

3. **stone-china . . . whirligigs** (hwûr’î-gîgz’): jars made of thick pottery with blue spiral designs.

While she was rummaging around she found death in her mind and it felt clammy and unfamiliar. She had spent so much time preparing for death there was no need for bringing it up again. Let it take care of itself now. When she was sixty she had felt very old, finished, and went around making farewell trips to see her children and grandchildren, with a secret in her mind: This is the very last of your mother, children! Then she made her will and came down with a long fever. That was all just a notion like a lot of other things, but it was lucky too, for she had once for all got over the idea of dying for a long time. Now she couldn't be worried. She hoped she had better sense now. Her father had lived to be one
70 hundred and two years old and had drunk a noggin of strong hot toddy⁴ on his last birthday. He told the reporters it was his daily habit, and he owed his long life to that. He had made quite a scandal and was very pleased about it. She believed she'd just **plague** Cornelia a little. **C**

"Cornelia! Cornelia!" No footsteps, but a sudden hand on her cheek. "Bless you, where have you been?"

"Here, Mother."

"Well, Cornelia, I want a noggin of hot toddy." **D**

"Are you cold, darling?"

"I'm chilly, Cornelia. Lying in bed stops the circulation. I must have told you
80 that a thousand times."

Well, she could just hear Cornelia telling her husband that Mother was getting a little childish and they'd have to humor her. The thing that most annoyed her was that Cornelia thought she was deaf, dumb, and blind. Little hasty glances and tiny gestures tossed around her and over her head saying, "Don't cross her, let her have her way, she's eighty years old," and she sitting there as if she lived in a thin glass cage. Sometimes Granny almost made up her mind to pack up and move back to her own house where nobody could remind her every minute that she was old. Wait, wait, Cornelia, till your own children whisper behind your back!

In her day she had kept a better house and had got more work done. She
90 wasn't too old yet for Lydia to be driving eighty miles for advice when one of the children jumped the track, and Jimmy still dropped in and talked things over: "Now, Mammy, you've a good business head, I want to know what you think of this? . . ." Old. Cornelia couldn't change the furniture around without asking. Little things, little things! They had been so sweet when they were little. Granny wished the old days were back again with the children young and everything to be done over. It had been a hard pull, but not too much for her. When she thought of all the food she had cooked, and all the clothes she had cut and sewed, and all the gardens she had made—well, the children showed it. There they were, made out of her, and they couldn't get away from that. Sometimes she wanted to see
100 John again and point to them and say, Well, I didn't do so badly, did I? But that would have to wait. That was for tomorrow. She used to think of him as a man, but now all the children were older than their father, and he would be a child beside her if she saw him now. It seemed strange and there was something wrong in the idea. Why, he couldn't possibly recognize her. She had fenced in a hundred

plague (plāg) v. to annoy; harass

C STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS
Reread lines 47–73 and consider how Porter conveys the flow of Granny's thoughts. What idea triggers Granny's thoughts of death?

D CLARIFY SEQUENCE
Reread lines 61–77. Identify clues about the timing of Granny's father's "scandal" and subsequent death. What connection do you see between this memory and Granny's desire to "plague" Cornelia?

4. **noggin . . . toddy**: mug of a strong alcoholic drink.

acres once, digging the post holes herself and clamping the wires with just a negro boy to help. That changed a woman. John would be looking for a young woman with the peaked Spanish comb in her hair and the painted fan. Digging post holes changed a woman. Riding country roads in the winter when women had their babies was another thing: sitting up nights with sick horses and sick negroes and sick children and hardly ever losing one. John, I hardly ever lost one of them! John would see that in a minute, that would be something he could understand, she wouldn't have to explain anything! **E**

It made her feel like rolling up her sleeves and putting the whole place to rights again. No matter if Cornelia was determined to be everywhere at once, there were a great many things left undone on this place. She would start tomorrow and do them. It was good to be strong enough for everything, even if all you made melted and changed and slipped under your hands, so that by the time you finished you almost forgot what you were working for. What was it I set out to do? she asked herself intently, but she could not remember. A fog rose over the valley, she saw it marching across the creek swallowing the trees and moving up the hill like an army of ghosts. Soon it would be at the near edge of the orchard, and then it was time to go in and light the lamps. Come in, children, don't stay out in the night air.

Lighting the lamps had been beautiful. The children huddled up to her and breathed like little calves waiting at the bars in the twilight. Their eyes followed the match and watched the flame rise and settle in a blue curve, then they moved away from her. The lamp was lit, they didn't have to be scared and hang on to mother any more. Never, never, never more. God, for all my life I thank Thee. Without Thee, my God, I could never have done it. Hail, Mary, full of grace.⁵

I want you to pick all the fruit this year and see that nothing is wasted. There's always someone who can use it. Don't let good things rot for want of using. You waste life when you waste good food. Don't let things get lost. It's bitter to lose things. Now, don't let me get to thinking, not when I am tired and taking a little nap before supper. . . .

The pillow rose about her shoulders and pressed against her heart and the memory was being squeezed out of it: oh, push down the pillow, somebody: it would smother her if she tried to hold it. Such a fresh breeze blowing and such a green day with no threats in it. But he had not come, just the same. What does a woman do when she has put on the white veil and set out the white cake for a man and he doesn't come? She tried to remember. No, I swear he never harmed me but in that. He never harmed me but in that . . . and what if he did? There was the day, the day, but a whirl of dark smoke rose and covered it, crept up and over into the bright field where everything was planted so carefully in orderly rows. That was hell, she knew hell when she saw it. For sixty years she had prayed against remembering him and against losing her soul in the deep pit of hell, and now the two things were mingled in one and the thought of him was a smoky cloud from hell that moved and crept in her head when she had just got rid of Doctor Harry and was trying to rest a minute. Wounded vanity, Ellen, said a sharp voice in the top of her mind. Don't let your wounded vanity get the upper

E CLARIFY SEQUENCE

Why does Granny say that today, John would be a child compared to her? Record on your timeline the information you learn in this paragraph.

F GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread lines 143–147. Porter uses **repetition** as well as short clauses joined by the **coordinating conjunction** *and* to present the circular nature of Granny's thoughts.

5. Hail . . . grace: the beginning of a Roman Catholic prayer to the Virgin Mary.

hand of you. Plenty of girls get jilted. You were jilted, weren't you? Then stand up
150 to it. Her eyelids wavered and let in streamers of blue-gray light like tissue paper
over her eyes. She must get up and pull the shades down or she'd never sleep. She
was in bed again and the shades were not down. How could that happen? Better
turn over, hide from the light, sleeping in the light gave you nightmares. "Mother,
how do you feel now?" and a stinging wetness on her forehead. But I don't like
having my face washed in cold water! **G**

Hapsy? George? Lydia? Jimmy? No, Cornelia, and her features were swollen
and full of little puddles. "They're coming, darling, they'll all be here soon." Go
wash your face, child, you look funny.

160 Instead of obeying, Cornelia knelt down and put her head on the pillow. She
seemed to be talking but there was no sound. "Well, are you tongue-tied? Whose
birthday is it? Are you going to give a party?"

Cornelia's mouth moved urgently in strange shapes. "Don't do that, you bother
me, daughter."

"Oh, no, Mother. Oh, no. . . ."

Nonsense. It was strange about children. They disputed your every word. "No
what, Cornelia?"

"Here's Doctor Harry."

"I won't see that boy again. He just left five minutes ago."

"That was this morning, Mother. It's night now. Here's the nurse." **H**

170 "This is Doctor Harry, Mrs. Weatherall. I never saw you look so young and
happy!"

"Ah, I'll never be young again—but I'd be happy if they'd let me lie in peace
and get rested."

She thought she spoke up loudly, but no one answered. A warm weight on her
forehead, a warm bracelet on her wrist, and a breeze went on whispering, trying to
tell her something. A shuffle of leaves in the everlasting hand of God, He blew on
them and they danced and rattled. "Mother, don't mind, we're going to give you a
little hypodermic."⁶ "Look here, daughter, how do ants get in this bed? I saw sugar
ants yesterday." Did you send for Hapsy too?

180 It was Hapsy she really wanted. She had to go a long way back through a great
many rooms to find Hapsy standing with a baby on her arm. She seemed to
herself to be Hapsy also, and the baby on Hapsy's arm was Hapsy and himself and
herself, all at once, and there was no surprise in the meeting. Then Hapsy melted
from within and turned flimsy as gray gauze and the baby was a gauzy shadow,
and Hapsy came up close and said, "I thought you'd never come," and looked at
her very searchingly and said, "You haven't changed a bit!" They leaned forward to
kiss, when Cornelia began whispering from a long way off, "Oh, is there anything
you want to tell me? Is there anything I can do for you?"

190 Yes, she had changed her mind after sixty years and she would like to see
George. I want you to find George. Find him and be sure to tell him I forgot
him. I want him to know I had my husband just the same and my children and
my house like any other woman. A good house too and a good husband that I

G STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Describe the major event revealed by Granny's thoughts in lines 134–155. What is the significance of the dark smoke Granny sees covering the green, orderly fields when she recalls this event?

H STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

What clues in lines 156–169 reveal to readers how much Granny's condition is deteriorating?

6. **hypodermic**: injection.

loved and fine children out of him. Better than I hoped for even. Tell him I was given back everything he took away and more. Oh, no, oh, God, no, there was something else besides the house and the man and the children. Oh, surely they were not all? What was it? Something not given back. . . . Her breath crowded down under her ribs and grew into a monstrous frightening shape with cutting edges; it bored up into her head, and the agony was unbelievable: Yes, John, get the Doctor now, no more talk, my time has come.

200 When this one was born it should be the last. The last. It should have been born first, for it was the one she had truly wanted. Everything came in good time. Nothing left out, left over. She was strong, in three days she would be as well as ever. Better. A woman needed milk in her to have her full health. ❶

“Mother, do you hear me?”

“I’ve been telling you—”

“Mother, Father Connolly’s here.”

“I went to Holy Communion only last week. Tell him I’m not so sinful as all that.”

“Father just wants to speak to you.”

210 He could speak as much as he pleased. It was like him to drop in and inquire about her soul as if it were a teething baby, and then stay on for a cup of tea and a round of cards and gossip. He always had a funny story of some sort, usually about an Irishman who made his little mistakes and confessed them, and the point lay in some absurd thing he would blurt out in the confessional showing his struggles between native piety and original sin. Granny felt easy about her soul. Cornelia, where are your manners? Give Father Connolly a chair. She had her secret comfortable understanding with a few favorite saints who cleared a straight road to God for her. All as surely signed and sealed as the papers for the new Forty Acres. Forever . . . heirs and **assigns** forever. Since the day the wedding cake was not cut, but thrown out and wasted. The whole bottom dropped out of the world,
220 and there she was blind and sweating with nothing under her feet and the walls falling away. His hand had caught her under the breast, she had not fallen, there was the freshly polished floor with the green rug on it, just as before. He had cursed like a sailor’s parrot and said, “I’ll kill him for you.” Don’t lay a hand on him, for my sake leave something to God. “Now, Ellen, you must believe what I tell you. . . .”

230 So there was nothing, nothing to worry about any more, except sometimes in the night one of the children screamed in a nightmare, and they both hustled out shaking and hunting for the matches and calling, “There, wait a minute, here we are!” John, get the doctor now, Hapsy’s time has come. But there was Hapsy standing by the bed in a white cap. “Cornelia, tell Hapsy to take off her cap. I can’t see her plain.”

Her eyes opened very wide and the room stood out like a picture she had seen somewhere. Dark colors with the shadows rising towards the ceiling in long angles. The tall black dresser gleamed with nothing on it but John’s picture, enlarged from a little one, with John’s eyes very black when they should have been blue. You never saw him, so how do you know how he looked? But the man insisted the copy was perfect, it was very rich and handsome. For a picture, yes, but it’s not my husband. The table by the bed had a linen cover and a candle and

❶ STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Reread lines 189–203.

What has Granny decided about George? Trace the path of her thoughts from this decision to the memory of the birth of her child.

assign (ə-sīn') *n.* a person to whom property is transferred in a will or other legal document

a crucifix.⁷ The light was blue from Cornelia's silk lampshades. No sort of light
240 at all, just frippery. You had to live forty years with kerosene lamps to appreciate
honest electricity. She felt very strong and she saw Doctor Harry with a rosy
nimbus⁸ around him.

"You look like a saint, Doctor Harry, and I vow that's as near as you'll ever
come to it."

"She's saying something."

"I heard you, Cornelia. What's all this carrying-on?"

"Father Connolly's saying—"

Cornelia's voice staggered and bumped like a cart in a bad road. It rounded
corners and turned back again and arrived nowhere. Granny stepped up in the cart
250 very lightly and reached for the reins, but a man sat beside her and she knew him
by his hands, driving the cart. She did not look in his face, for she knew without
seeing, but looked instead down the road where the trees leaned over and bowed
to each other and a thousand birds were singing a Mass. She felt like singing too,
but she put her hand in the bosom of her dress and pulled out a rosary,⁹ and
Father Connolly murmured Latin in a very solemn voice and tickled her feet. My
God, will you stop that nonsense? I'm a married woman. What if he did run away
and leave me to face the priest by myself? I found another a whole world better. I
wouldn't have exchanged my husband for anybody except St. Michael himself, and
you may tell him that for me with a thank you in the bargain.

260 Light flashed on her closed eyelids, and a deep roaring shook her. Cornelia, is
that lightning? I hear thunder. There's going to be a storm. Close all the windows.
Call the children in. . . . "Mother, here we are, all of us." "Is that you, Hapsy?"
"Oh, no, I'm Lydia. We drove as fast as we could." Their faces drifted above her,
drifted away. The rosary fell out of her hands and Lydia put it back. Jimmy tried
to help, their hands fumbled together, and Granny closed two fingers around
Jimmy's thumb. Beads wouldn't do, it must be something alive. She was so amazed
her thoughts ran round and round. So, my dear Lord, this is my death and I
wasn't even thinking about it. My children have come to see me die. But I can't,
it's not time. Oh, I always hated surprises. I wanted to give Cornelia the **amethyst**
270 set—Cornelia, you're to have the amethyst set, but Hapsy's to wear it when
she wants, and, Doctor Harry, do shut up. Nobody sent for you. Oh, my dear
Lord, do wait a minute. I meant to do something about the Forty Acres, Jimmy
doesn't need it and Lydia will later on, with that worthless husband of hers. I
meant to finish the altar cloth and send six bottles of wine to Sister Borgia for her
dyspepsia.¹⁰ I want to send six bottles of wine to Sister Borgia, Father Connolly,
now don't let me forget.

Cornelia's voice made short turns and tilted over and crashed. "Oh, Mother, oh,
Mother, oh, Mother. . . ."

7. **crucifix** (krōō'sə-fīks'): a cross bearing a sculptured representation of the crucified Christ.

8. **nimbus** (nīm'bəs): halo of light.

9. **rosary** (rō'zə-rē): a string of beads used by Roman Catholics to count their prayers.

10. **dyspepsia** (dīs-pēp'shə): indigestion.

amethyst (ām'ə-thĭst) *n.*
a purple form of quartz
used as a gemstone



Blue House (2004), Philip Hershberger. Encaustic on panel, 78" x 48". © Philip Hershberger

“I’m not going, Cornelia. I’m taken by surprise. I can’t go.”¹
 280 You’ll see Hapsy again. What about her? “I thought you’d never come.” Granny made a long journey outward, looking for Hapsy. What if I don’t find her? What then? Her heart sank down and down, there was no bottom to death, she couldn’t come to the end of it. The blue light from Cornelia’s lampshade drew into a tiny point in the center of her brain, it flickered and winked like an eye, quietly it fluttered and **dwindled**. Granny lay curled down within herself, amazed and watchful, staring at the point of light that was herself; her body was now only a deeper mass of shadow in an endless darkness and this darkness would curl around the light and swallow it up. God, give a sign!

For the second time there was no sign. Again no bridegroom and the priest
 290 in the house. She could not remember any other sorrow because this grief wiped them all away. Oh, no, there’s nothing more cruel than this—I’ll never forgive it. She stretched herself with a deep breath and blew out the light. ∞

1 STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS
 Reread lines 266–279.
 What is **ironic** about Granny’s response to the imminence of her death?

dwindle (dwɪnˈdl) v. to become steadily less; to shrink

Comprehension

1. **Recall** Which characters mentioned in the story belong exclusively to Granny Weatherall's past?
2. **Recall** Who is with Granny when she dies?
3. **Clarify** Who is Hapsy?

Literary Analysis

4. **Clarify Sequence** Using your timeline, retell the key events of Granny's life in chronological order. Which events mark the best and worst of Granny's life? Explain, citing Granny's own thoughts and feelings about each event.
5. **Make Inferences About Character** Go back through the story, noting thoughts and **memories** that linger in Granny's mind. What do they reveal about the kind of person she is? Record your answers in a chart like this one.

<i>Granny's Thoughts</i>	<i>Character Traits Revealed</i>
<i>"It was good to have everything clean and put away ... nicely dusted off." (lines 50–55)</i>	<i>She likes putting things in order and having control in life.</i>

6. **Analyze Stream of Consciousness** Porter uses stream of consciousness to dramatize Granny's interior life. What effect does this approach have on her readers? For example, how might your reaction to the story have been different if Porter had presented the same events in a more traditional narrative? Cite specific examples from the story in your response.
7. **Interpret Symbolism** Consider Granny's final act of blowing out the light. What might this symbolize? Given what you know about her character, do you see it as an act of resignation or one of defiance? Support your answer.
8. **Analyze Theme** Which of the following statements best expresses the theme Porter conveys in this story? Support your choice with evidence from the text.
 - There is no deed so wrong it can't be forgiven.
 - In youth we are all foolish; with age comes true wisdom.
 - Life does not provide the answers or reassurances that people want, even at the moment of death.

Literary Criticism

9. **Critical Interpretations** Novelist Reynolds Price asserts that Porter's stories are "lethal to the most widely cherished illusions of the species"—in other words, they destroy our sentimental notions about things like romance, self-regard, and parenthood. What "cherished illusions" does Porter destroy here? What truths does she portray instead? Support your answer.



SUNSHINE STATE STANDARD
Reading Process
Benchmark LA.1112.1.7.5 Analyze a variety of text structures (e.g., comparison/contrast, cause/effect, chronological order, argument/support, lists) and text features (main headings with subheadings) and explain their impact on meaning in text.

Reading-Writing Connection

WRITING PROMPT

USE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS Katherine Anne Porter wasn't the only modernist to experiment with stream of consciousness; T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and William Faulkner all used it to explore the intricacies of the human mind. Some writers use it today. Now you'll get a chance to try it for yourself. Write a **three- or four-paragraph narrative** in stream of consciousness, depicting the thoughts and impressions of a character having a particular experience. You can either write about yourself or create a fictional character.

SELF-CHECK

A compelling narrative will . . .

- give readers a clear sense of the character's traits
- indicate the situation that sparks the character's thoughts
- show meaningful connections among thoughts and emotions
- have a point—an overall reason for revealing the connections

GRAMMAR AND STYLE

CRAFT EFFECTIVE SENTENCES Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 994. Porter skillfully crafts her prose in "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" to depict Granny's interior life—her secret longings, wishes, and memories. Through her use of **repetition** and the **coordinating conjunction** *and*, Porter reveals Granny's circular thoughts and hazy memories.

Then Hapsy melted from within and turned flimsy as gray gauze and the baby was a gauzy shadow, and Hapsy came up close and said, "I thought you'd never come," and looked at her very searchingly and said, "You haven't changed a bit!"
(lines 183–186)

Notice the dreamlike quality of the sentence; with its many *and*'s linking the images as well as its repetition of *gauze* and *gauzy* and related terms *flimsy* and *shadow*.

PRACTICE The following passage presents a character's thoughts as they might appear in a traditional third-person narrative. Rewrite the paragraph as a third-person stream of consciousness.

Ron walked down the street whistling, his hands shoved deep into his pockets. He squinted up at the weak rays fighting to break through the winter cloud cover. When his gaze returned to street level, he almost tripped over his own feet. Abby was walking toward him.

"I wonder if she'll even recognize me," Ron thought to himself, quickening his pace and trying to clear his face of emotion.



SUNSHINE STATE STANDARD Writing Process

Benchmark LA.1112.3.4.4 Grammar and usage, including but not limited to parts of speech, verb tense, noun/pronoun agreement, subject/verb agreement, pronoun/antecedent agreement, parallel structure, modifier placement, comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs, and unintended shift in person or tense.



For prewriting, revision, and editing tools, visit the **Writing Center** at ClassZone.com.