

The Blanket

Unit 5



The Blanket Short Story by Floyd Dell

THE BLANKET

Floyd Dell (1887-1969)

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- respond to questions on a range of communicative purposes
- analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text
- examine how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text. Critique the plot development with respect to different aspects of the story
- distinguish between the connotative and denotative meanings of words, both similar and dissimilar denotations and their appropriate use in a variety of writing and texts
- demonstrate knowledge and application of parts of speech in oral and written communication in varying degrees of complexity
- comprehend and use contemporary idioms and proverbs in the different texts and in their speech
- apply editing and proofreading skills to a range of different texts and contexts

 Pre-Reading

- a) *Do you think the elders leave a lesson for the youngers at every step they take?*
- b) *What features do you think a good story should have?*

Note: An excellent example of the moral “As you sow, so shall you reap”.

It was a fine September night. A thin white moon rose over the valley. Peter, eleven years old, did not see the moon. He did not feel the cool September breeze blow into the kitchen, for his thoughts were fixed on a red and black blanket on the kitchen table.

The blanket was a gift from his dad to his Granddad... a going away gift. They said that Granddad was going away... that's why they called it “going away.”

Peter had not really believed that his dad would send Granddad away. But now—there it was—the going-away gift. Dad had brought it that very morning. And this was the last evening he and his Granddad would have with each other.

While-reading

Why is the blanket called the going away gift?

Together, the old man and the young boy washed the supper dishes. Dad had gone out... with that woman he was to marry. He would not be back for some time. When the dishes were finished, the old man and the boy went outside and sat under the moon.

“I'll get my harmonica and play for you,” the old man said. “I'll play some of the old tunes.”

But instead of the harmonica, he brought out the blanket. It was a big, double blanket.

“Now, isn't that a fine blanket?” said the old man, smoothing it over his knees. “And isn't your father a kind man, to be giving the old man, a blanket like this, to go away with? It costs something; it did—look at the wool in it! And warm it will be in these cold winter nights to come. There will be no other blanket like it up there.”

It was like Granddad to be saying that, he was trying to make it easier. Ever since they talked about “going away,” Granddad has said it was his idea. Imagine—leaving a warm house and friends to go to that building... that government place, where he would be with so many other old fellows, having the best of everything. But Peter had not really believed that dad would do it... until this night when he brought home this blanket.

“Oh. Yes, it's a fine blanket,” Peter said and got up and went into the house. He wasn't the kind to cry, and besides he was too old for that. He had just gone in to get Granddad's harmonica.

The blanket dropped to the floor as the old man took the harmonica. It was the last night they would have supper together. Neither the old man, nor the young boy had to say a word. Granddad played a few notes and then said, “You'll remember this one.”

While-reading

Why both the grand dad and the boy did not have a word to say?

The thin moon was high overhead, and the gentle breeze blew down the valley. The last time, Peter thought. He would never have Granddad play again. It was well that dad was moving to a new house away from here. He did not want to sit here outside on fine evenings, under a white moon, with Granddad gone. The music ended, and the two sat for two minutes in silence. Then Granddad spoke, “Here is something happier.”

Peter sat and looked out over the valley. Dad would marry that girl. Yes, that girl who had said she would try to be a good mother to him, and all that.

The tune stopped suddenly, and Granddad said, "It's a poor tune, except to be dancing to." And then, "It's a fine girl your dad is going to marry. He will feel young again with a pretty wife like that. And what would an old fellow like me do around the house... getting in the way... an old fool with all the talk about backaches and pains!

"And then there will be babies coming, and I don't want to be around listening to them cry all the hours of the night. No, it's best that I leave. Well, one more tune or two, and then we will get to bed, get some sleep. In the morning, I'll get my new blanket, and take my leave. Listen to this. It's a bit of a sad tune but a nice one for a night like this." They did not hear the two people coming down the road, Dad and the pretty girl with a hard bright doll like face. But they heard her laugh and the tune stopped suddenly.

Dad did not say a word, but the girl walked up to Granddad and said prettily, "I'll not be seeing you in the morning, so I came over to say good-bye. "It's kind of you," said Granddad, looking down at the floor; and then seeing the blanket at his feet, he bent down to pick it up. "And will you look at this," he said, sounding himself like a little boy. "Isn't this a fine blanket my son has given me to go away?"

"Yes," she said, "it's a fine blanket." She felt the wool again... and said, "A fine blanket indeed." She turned to Dad and said to him coldly, "Must have cost a pretty penny."

Dad cleared his throat... "I... I wanted him to have the best."

The girl stood there, still looking at the blanket. "Mmmm... it's a double one, too."

"Yes," the old man said, "it's a double one... a fine blanket for an old fellow to be going away with."

The boy suddenly walked in the house. He could hear the girl, still talking about the expensive blanket. He heard his Dad get angry in his slow way. And now, she was leaving. As Peter came out, the girl turned and called back, "No matter what you say, he doesn't need a double blanket!"

Dad looked at her with a funny look in his eye.

"She is right, Dad," the boy said. "Granddad doesn't need a double blanket. Here, Dad," and held out a pair of scissors - "Cut it, Dad...cut the blanket in two."

Both of them looked at the boy, surprised.

"Cut it in two, I tell you Dad. And keep the other half!"

"That's not a bad idea," said Granddad gently. "I don't need such a big blanket."

"Yes," the boy said, "a single blanket is enough for an old man when he's sent away. We'll save the other, Dad; it will come useful later."

"Now what do you mean by that?" asked Dad.

"I mean," the boy said slowly, "that I'll give it to you, Dad when you're old and I'm sending you away."

While-reading

Why does Peter's dad get angry with the girl he is going to marry?

While-reading

Why does Peter ask his father to cut the blanket in two?

There was a big silence, and then Dad went over to Granddad and stood before him,,not saying a word.

But Granddad understood, for he put out his hand and laid it on Dad's shoulder. Peter was watching them. And he heard Granddad whisper softly "It's alright son. I knew you didn't mean it...." And then Peter cried. But it didn't matter because all three were crying together.

Post-reading

Why do all three Peter, dad and grand-dad cry at the end of the story?

Notes and comments

Floyd Dell was an American poet, novelist, playwright, literary editor and the author of several books. He began his literary career as a newspaper man. He first served as a reporter for the *Davenport Daily Times*, and then as editor of various papers. Through 1920's, he continued writing novels and poetry, and a number of books and articles based on various themes.

He retired in 1947, but continued writing during the remaining years of his life till 1969.

Theme

Taking great care of our values is the main theme. The Blanket is a sad and heart rending story. The story manifests greed, hypocrisy, the modern day callous attitude towards the elderly, and how at times our mean instincts can overtake our filial duties.

The masterly craftsmanship of Floyd Dell is evident in the fine structure of this tale. He makes an effective use of dialogue and has a superb prose style.

Glossary

Words	Meanings	Synonyms
breeze	a gentle wind	gust
coldly	in a way that is not friendly or enthusiastic	
harmonica	a musical instrument	
notes	a note is a single sound of a certain pitch and length made by the voice, or a musical instrument	
tune	musical notes put together in a pleasing order, a melody	
supper	light evening meal taken late in the evening	
whisper	to speak in soft sound, undertone	

Comprehension

a) Answer the following questions

1. Describe the conversation between Peter and Granddad at the beginning of the story.
2. Why was Peter's Dad sending Granddad away and where to?
3. Give the reason of the girl's mind change, who was marrying Peter's dad.
4. Was it a surprise when Peter asked his father to cut the blanket in two?
5. Peter's attitude towards his father and Granddad was unusual. Elaborate.
6. What moral lesson about human relationship do you learn from this story?
7. How would you describe the problems of the characters of the story?
8. What sort of person is Peter's father?
9. Examine how the author has developed and contrasted the points of view of different characters in the story. Critique the plot development with respect to different aspects of the story.

b) Tick (✓) the right statement and (X) the false one.

1. A thin gray moon rose over the valley.
2. The blanket was a gift from his dad to his Grandmother.
3. The young man and the little boy washed the supper dishes.
4. He wasn't the kind to cry, and besides he was too old for that.
5. The thin moon was high overhead, and the gentle breeze blew down the valley.
6. There was a low silence, and then Dad went over to Granddad and stood before him, not saying a word.

Oral Communication

Respond to questions on a range of communicative purposes.

- Ø Discuss in class the advantages and disadvantages of joint family system.
- Ø Survey the class to know how many students are living in nucleus family and how many in joint family.
- Ø Discuss what your reply would be to the fact 'why young people today do just what they like?' (refer to the text)

Inference

1. Do you think peaceful living depends in caring for the values?
2. "As you sow, so shall you reap". Do you agree?

Vocabulary and Grammar

a) Parts of Speech

Adjective: Adjectives are the words that modify or describe nouns and pronouns, providing more information about their qualities, states of being, or quantities.

Types of Adjective	Definition	Example
Descriptive	Describes a noun's quality or characteristic	Red car, happy child
Quantitative	Indicates the quantity of a noun	Three dogs, some water
Demonstrative	Points out a specific noun	This book, that house
Possessive	Shows ownership or possession	My phone, their car
Interrogative	Used in questions to ask about a noun	What color, whose jacket
Indefinite	Refers to an unspecified noun	Any person, several options
Distributive	Refers to members of a group individually	Each student, every day
Comparative	Compares two nouns	Bigger house, more expensive car
Superlative	Compares three or more nouns	Biggest house, most expensive car
Proper	Derived from a proper noun and used to describe it	Chinese cuisine, Shakespearean play

Activity: Go through the following sentences and identify the type of adjective used in them.

1. Sara will clean her messy room today.
2. My sister brought some French pastries.
3. The miser lost all his money.
4. There haven't been sufficient crops to sell this year.
5. Collecting coins is an interesting hobby.
6. The boy did not have any soup.
7. There's no milk left in the bowl.
8. Either boy was present there.
9. This bag is heavier than the suitcase.
10. The food was delicious.
11. Whose pencil box is this?
12. These apples are pretty sweet.
13. Ali came second in the marathon.
14. I saw it with my own eyes.
15. What a splendid piece of art!
16. Emily Bronte was a Victorian novelist.
17. The Atlantic Ocean is the largest ocean in the world.
18. I did not find those books.

CONNOTATION VERSUS DENOTATION

Connotation refers to the personal and cultural meanings in addition to their primary, literal meaning of a word.

Denotation refers to the primary, literal meaning or the dictionary meaning of a word.

Connotation can be classified as positive connotation and negative connotation.

Denotation is not thus classified.

Connotation can change according to culture and personal experiences.

Denotation remains the same regardless of culture and personal experience.

Word: Cheap

- **Denotation:** Low in price. (literal meaning)
- **Connotation:** Negative - poor quality, stingy.

Word: Smart

- **Denotation:** Having or showing a high degree of intelligence. (literal meaning)
- **Connotation:** Can also mean stylish or fashionable depending on context.

Activity : For each sentence, choose the word in parentheses that best fits the context, considering both denotation and connotation.

1. The children were feeling very (excited/agitated) during the wait for Sana.
2. The old house had a very (aged/decrepit) appearance.
3. The aroma of freshly baked bread filled the air with a (pleasant/pungent) smell.
4. The detective gave the suspect a (stern/severe) look.
5. The athlete showed great (perseverance/stubbornness) in completing the race.

c) Proverbs

1. Easy come, easy go

This English proverb means that money is easily earned and just as easily spent or lost (on gambling, for example).

2. You can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs

It is impossible to do something good or accomplish an important task without encountering some problems or making some sacrifices.

3. The forbidden fruit is always the sweetest

Things that are prohibited seem very attractive or desirable.

4. If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours

If you do something to help me, I will do something to help you.

5. It's the tip of the iceberg

As everyone knows, only a small part of an iceberg is visible above the water. The rest is underwater.

6. Learn to walk before you run

Learn basic skills before you attempt to do something more difficult. For example, don't start to learn English with difficult subjects such as articles or gerunds. Start with easier material, slowly increase your knowledge, and gradually work toward studying more difficult topics.

7. First things first

The most important things should be done before everything else.

8. Don't bite off more than you can chew

Don't take on more work or responsibility than you can handle at one time.

9. It's better to be safe than sorry

Be careful and exercise caution - even if it seems unnecessary and it takes longer to complete something - and you will avoid potential problems that could arise later.

10. The early bird catches the worm

If you arrive early or do something before other people do it, you have a greater chance of succeeding.

11. Don't make a mountain out of an anthill (or molehill)

Don't make a minor problem or difficulty into a major one; don't exaggerate the significance of a small problem.

12. Where there's a will, there's a way

If your desire to accomplish something is strong enough, you will find a way to do it.

13. Always put your best foot forward

The meaning of this English proverb is that you should always try your best to make a good impression on others; show your best traits and qualities.

14. The squeaky wheel gets the grease

The person who complains the most or is most vocal about something that he needs is usually the one who receives help or attention

15. A rolling stone gathers no moss

The last proverb on our list has two meanings: 1) a person who is always moving - never living in one place very long - cannot be successful or make a lot of money, and 2) a busy person will not become stagnant but will remain creative and productive.

16. When in Rome, do as the Romans do

This proverb means that you should follow the local customs of whichever place you happen to be (even if it seems odd or unsavory).

17. Birds of a feather flock together

This proverb refers to people who have similar, overlapping interests, and how they often tend to be friendly or may be found together.

18. A stitch in time saves nine

This proverb refers to procrastination: it means that getting your work done ahead of time or completing some simple task earlier rather than later, will save you effort down the road.

19. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

This English proverb refers to the fact that everyone sees beauty differently, and what is ugly to one person may be beautiful to another.

20. Those in glass houses shouldn't throw stones

This proverb refers to hypocrisy: it means that you should not accuse someone of a charge that you yourself are guilty of.

21. Absence makes the heart grow fonder

This proverb means that you tend to have a fonder memory and feeling about someone or something after they have been gone for a period.

Activity : Use the above used proverbs in meaningful sentences.

Writing

Editing and proofreading skills to a range of different texts and contexts

Punctuation Grammar Spelling Writing Vocabulary

The Wallace Walking Club

The Wallace Walking Club is a recent addition to the Wallace Primary School healthy lifestyle campaign. The club promotes walking as an ideal way to exercise and enjoy the benefits of regular activity both staff and students. Our regular participants meet each day after lunch on the school oval. A variety of routes each lasting 20 minutes are enjoyed by the regular walkers. The two major benefits to members are improved health and the development of new relationships between students and staff and students of different year levels. The popularity of the club has developed throughout the term and is expected to continue for many months.



Source: Prim-Ed Proofreading and Editing Skills

Editing:

- **Focuses on the big picture:** Editing involves a broader look at the structure, clarity, and content of a text.
- **Improves overall quality:** Editors ensure the writing achieves its purpose effectively. They might:
 - **Refine the structure:** This could involve rearranging paragraphs, adding transitions, or improving the flow of information.
 - **Strengthen the argument:** In persuasive or informative writing, editors might check for logical flow of ideas, evidence, and clarity of the main point.
 - **Enhance language and style:** Editors might suggest improvements to sentence structure, word choice, and overall tone to make the writing more engaging or impactful.
 - **Fact-check and ensure accuracy:** This is especially important for academic or technical writing.

General Editing and Proofreading Tips:

- **Accuracy:** Check for typos, grammatical errors (subject-verb agreement, punctuation mistakes), and spelling inconsistencies.
- **Clarity:** Ensure the writing is clear, concise, and easy to understand. Eliminate wordiness and confusing sentence structure.
- **Consistency:** Maintain consistent style throughout the text, following guidelines like preferred punctuation (APA, MLA, Chicago) or voice (formal, informal).
- **Flow:** Read the text aloud to check for awkward phrasing or choppy sentences. Ensure a smooth and logical flow of ideas.

Editing for Different Text Types:

- **Formal Writing (Academic papers, Business reports):** Focus on proper grammar, formal vocabulary, and adherence to style guides. Check for logical arguments, referencing, and proper formatting.
- **Informal Writing (emails, blog posts, social media):** Maintain a conversational tone while ensuring clarity and avoiding slang or overly informal language. Check for appropriate emojis or hashtags depending on the platform.
- **Creative Writing (fiction, poetry):** Here, style takes center stage. Look for consistency in tone, voice, and point of view. Check for effective use of figurative language and adherence to specific literary elements.

Activity: (i) Read the paragraph below and identify the issues that would be addressed during the editing stage.

The weather was terrible yesterday. Rain poured down all day, making it impossible to go outside. It was so boring because I couldn't play with my friends. I ended up watching TV most of the day, which wasn't very exciting.

1. What issue might an editor address regarding the overall structure of the paragraph?
2. How could an editor improve the clarity of the writer's feelings?
3. Suggest an edit to make the language more engaging.

(ii) The following paragraph contains grammatical errors, typos, and formatting inconsistencies. Find and correct the mistakes as you would during the proofreading stage.

We went to the beach last weekend, it was a beautiful day. The sand was warm between our toes, and the waves crashed loudly against the shore. We built a sand castle and then went for a swim in the refreshing ocean water. Overall, it was a perfect experience!

Teacher's Note

- Encourage students to examine how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text and to critique the plot development with respect to different aspects of the story.
- Ask them to distinguish between the connotative and denotative meanings of words, both similar and dissimilar denotations and their appropriate use in a variety of writing and texts.
- Encourage them to demonstrate knowledge and application of parts of speech in oral and written communication in varying degrees of complexity.
- Ask them to comprehend and use contemporary idioms and proverbs in the different texts and in their speech.
- Motivate them to apply editing and proofreading skills to a range of different texts and contexts.