



Teaching the Short Story to Norwegian High School Students: A Window into Multicultural America

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1.0 Introduction

The practice of storytelling has been an important part of many cultures for as long as humans have existed. Before the development of literary, the oral narrative was often crucial for survival (Silko 1996: 268-269); in our modern times, it is still very present as a way of knowing the world, seeing how the world has evolved through centuries and taking lessons from past experiences.

For North Norwegians, storytelling, both oral and written are cultural aspects that are familiar. Our stories are often humorous, and also important for our cultural survival in ways we may not realize. The introduction of The Communicative Approach in the Norwegian Schools during the 1980's supports the practice of using stories and storytelling among teachers and students (Eikrem 21).

The purpose of my thesis will be to explore a variety of ways in where selected short stories can be used as pedagogical tools for helping Norwegian students in high school broaden their multicultural and historical understanding of the world. My purpose is not to define the short story as a genre per se, but rather explore some of the ways in which it can be meaningful to students. By looking at a limited selection of short stories by Alice Walker, Leslie Marmon Silko and Raymond Carver, my thesis will illustrate some of the ways in which student readers may be introduced to some of the challenges that face various races and classes in multicultural America. Raymond Carver says in his essay "On Writing", "It is the writer's particular and unmistakable signature on everything he writes. It is his world and no other. This is one of the things that distinguish one writer from another" (May 273). Leslie Marmon Silko, Alice Walker and Raymond Carver all write about what they know, their background are reflected in their stories. Therefore their stories provide an authenticity and credibility among students. Looking at writers who write from an insider's perspective will be meaningful for students in Norwegian schools. The students are given a unique insight into the diversity of cultures within the American society.

It is important that we have a broad understanding of storytelling, and not only relate it to cultures where written texts do not exist. In reality storytelling is a universal concept, storytelling is a cultural aspect that is familiar to many North Norwegians. We may not consider ourselves storytellers, but as humans we interact through language and stories. Walter Ong says: "Oral expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all, writing never without orality" (Ong 8). Orality has been seen as the primary communication tool for humans to

interact, and to acquire knowledge. However in the mainstream society there is a greater focus on the written texts and today even more so through electronic media (Ong 3). In Norwegian schools there was a great focus on the written text when teaching English as a foreign language, “Literature was considered superior to the spoken language” (Eikrem 16). This teaching method led to passive students, who were not able to communicate in English (Eikrem 17). However, the introduction of “The Communicative Approach” in Norwegian schools during the 1980’s promoted communication among teachers and students. It became important that the teacher provided learning situations that would promote communication. The Communicative Approach promoted communication but also suggested literature as a learning tool, focusing both on students’ communication skills, reading and writing skills (Eikrem 20-21). Literature can be used to expand students’ vocabulary and to increase their communicative skills through discussions of selected texts with other students as well as to give students a larger understanding of the English speaking world. Eikrem suggests that the short story as a genre is considered a manageable format where it is easy for the reader to become involved (Eikrem 38). Short stories are ideal to use didactically. Short stories introduce students to different cultures and world views through a manageable format.

Ruth Suckow noted that the short story was the genre best suited expressing America as a melting pot. “It was chaos, uneasiness, the diversity of American life that made short stories such a natural artistic experience (...) – a chaos so huge, a life so varied and so multitudinous that its meaning could be caught only in will-o-the-wisp gleams (...)” (Levy 42-43). Native American and African American storytelling are especially relevant when discussing America as a melting pot. Leslie Marmon Silko said that the beauty of the old way, the oral narrative, is that you can stop the storyteller, ask questions and have things explained (Hirsch 7). However the beauty with the written texts is that they challenge you as a reader to ask those questions and search for the answer yourself, thereby reflecting on the depth of the story, and it will also provide reflection of your own thoughts and beliefs which is important in developing an ability to think independently. Though the story is removed from its immediate context, it gives outsiders a unique insight into a different culture or society that they are unfamiliar with, and doing so breaking stereotypical ideas outsider might have about a culture. It also beneficial for those insiders who do not know their own traditions, this can lead to a greater acceptance and respect for different traditions and values.

1.1 Defining the Short Story

Although my purpose is not to define the genre, it is necessary to have a working definition before exploring the meaning of my chosen short stories.

Many literary critics of the short story genre believe that the development of the genre began with Edgar Allan Poe's review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* in 1842 (Levy 10). Poe considered the short forms supreme, because the unity of effect or impression is of great importance (Levy 13). Poe believed that in order to have "a single effect" it should not take longer than one and a half hour to read the story (Levy 22). Poe was one of the first who tried to define the short story. In his review Edgar Allan Poe describes the creative process of a short story writer;

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents – he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not the one preestablished design (May 61).

Poe's emphasizes one of the reasons teaching the short story is relevant from a didactic perspective. The short stories shortness appeal to students, it is seen as an achievable task for them to read a short story.

1.2 Influence of Storytelling

Although the short story is a relatively new genre in literary terms, however, its roots go back to storytelling, myths and folklore.

In Native American and African American cultures stories were not only told for enjoyment but had a significant importance for strategy of survival. In many Native American tribes, tales and stories survived as oral narratives. For instance, in ancient times, the Pueblo people depended on collective memory, and oral narrative, through generations as a strategy for survival (Silko 1996: 268). Oral traditions knew no boundaries, stories of the first Europeans, or stories about everyday life; "Everything became a story" (Silko 1996: 268).

Native American communities have used storytelling to explain the formation of landscape (Silko 1996: 269), this is not just common among Native American culture. In Norway we have tales regarding the formation of the landscape, establishing the universal tradition of storytelling through centuries. For instance, there is a mountain called “Toppen”, which has a hole in it, and the tale says that the Viking Tore Hund shot an arrow through the mountain, creating that hole, over a thousand years ago. The oral tradition is of high value of Native American tribes, as Simon Ortiz said it:

The oral tradition is not just speaking and listening, because what it means to me and to other people who have grown up in that tradition is that whole process...of that society in terms of its history, its culture, its language, its values, and subsequently its literature. So it's not merely a simple matter of speaking and listening, but living that process (L. B. Rouff 1990: 5).

African American storytelling resembles the Native American survival stories. When Africans were first brought to American they were not allowed to speak their native language nor practice their culture (M. L. Wilson 1). All they had left of their culture was the stories, which they told. They were able to tell these stories, as the plantation owner did not see any harm and he himself found them entertaining. Africans usually told many folktales, stories which involved animals. Many of the stories became a symbol of their identity, their past life versus their present. African folktales were not used as a form of entertainment alone, but offered guidance for survival. One example is the Brer Rabbit, who became a symbol of a small and weak animal, able to outsmart others with his wit (M. L Wilson 2). “Through storytelling, questions were answered, history was conveyed, and lifelong lessons were taught and learned” (M. L Wilson 1).

Many elements of orality have been translated to written form in the short story. Mary Louise Pratt states that short stories have been especially important in cultures where literacy is or has not been the norm (May 108). In fact Pratt believes that the influence of orality is why the modern short story flourished (May 108).

After the Second World War, American short story writers worked with themes concerning the American society and its changes. “Ethnic heritage was also becoming a very important element in the creative writing process. In the late 1960's a number of young writers initiated a black literary renaissance, reconciling their particular concerns with the demands of their craft” (Weaver 33-35). The short story was being used to introduce new regions or groups into an already established national literature. The short story could be used to break down taboos or

misconceptions of a culture or class, which could help change people's preconceived notions about different classes, genders or races (May 104).

2.0 Leslie Marmon Silko

Leslie Marmon Silko writes from a Native American perspective, specifically Laguna Pueblo. Silko was introduced to cultural folklore as a child by her grandmother Lilly and her aunt Susie, who passed down stories and memories from an entire culture. Inspired by the stories passed down from her grandmother and aunt, Silko started writing in college (Nichols 1997). Silko stated in an interview that she believes that some of her techniques in writing short stories may come from all the reading she did as a child. Silko stated that she was very interested in American authors, such as John Steinbeck, Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor, however, she comments that she does not know how influential they have been to her later work (Arnold 5-6). Silko is crossing two worlds, she was trained and influenced by "white" writers, however, much of her contemporary writing offer student readers a unique insight to the Laguna Pueblo culture and traditions. Silko offers a unique insight to a culture at the same time as she is aware of outsiders' perception or idea of Native Americans. There is a strong truth and believability to Silko's stories, which is manifested in the unity presented in her stories.

Leslie Marmon Silko's Laguna Pueblo identity is evident in the short stories presented here. Silko's short stories mirror Native American culture and tradition, and by portraying Native Americans as a minority in the American society she shows the injustice they have been exposed to for the last 400 years (R. Wilson and Olson 2).

2.1 "Lullaby"

Leslie Marmon Silko's short story "Lullaby" is a story about survival. In "Lullaby" Silko uses her characters to display that many Native American families struggled to adapt in a society that is becoming a western society and thereby becoming stranger to them. In "Lullaby" Silko questions the government's treatment of Native Americans and the consequences it has on many Native Americans. As outsiders it is difficult for people to comprehend the entire history. However, if we manage to see the similarities between the US government's treatment of Native Americans and the Norwegian government's treatment of the Sami people, we might gain a

greater understanding of the injustice Native Americans have been victims of. Native Americans were exposed to a government control, trying to undermine the Native American culture, and forcing western values upon them. In resemblance the Norwegian government tried to force the Sami people to forget their Sami culture and become Norwegians (*Det Store Norske Leksikon*: "Samer." Web Nov.2, 2010). In other words, there are similarities between the history of the Sami people and Native American history and by focusing on the similarities instead of the differences the story becomes more familiar to students. Themes portrayed in "Lullaby" are familiar because they resemble elements of Norwegian history as well.

In "Lullaby", Ayah, an old Native American woman contemplates her life, and on the tragic events that have come her way. "She was an old woman now, and her life had become memories" (Silko 2003: 2543). Ayah contemplates her son Jimmie, who died while serving in the army, which forces back memories of her children, Danny and Ella, who were taken away by 'white doctors'. Ayah and her husband Chato are getting older, and when Chato loses his job, they have to rely on government checks in order to survive. However, instead of using the money on food, Chato buys beer. Ayah, as usual goes to search for her husband at the bar, and eventually finds him on the side of the road. They sit down in the cold, Chato is drunk, and falls asleep. Ayah is thinking about her children and sings a song, a lullaby that her mother and grandmother used to sing for her when she was a child.

2.1.1 Intrusion of the Dominant White Society

Silko's "Lullaby" reveals how some Native American's life changed with the intrusion of government and the intrusion of western values. In "Lullaby" Silko writes from a Native American perspective, allowing Native Americans to tell their story, from their point of view, which provides a sense of realism to the short story. "Ayah could see that they wanted her to sign some papers, and Chato had taught her to sign her name. It was something she was proud of. She only wanted them to go, and to take their eyes away from her children" (Silko 2003: 2545). The government was oblivious to Native American culture and their inability to speak and understand English. Ayah, not knowing what she has signed is forced to give up her children. Native American culture has been a culture of primary orality, "passing down an entire culture by word of mouth" (Nichols 1997). "She hated Chato, not because he let the policeman and doctors put the screaming children in the government car, but because he had taught her to sign her name"

(Silko 2003: 2546). The English language contaminated their culture and life, and to Ayah it represents mistrust of the government and western values.

In “Lullaby”, Silko shows student readers how common it was that Native American children were removed from their families. Government agents were actually placed on several reservations in order to suppress Native American culture, and Native American children were punished for speaking Native American languages. Ayah remembers when her children visited them, “(...) she smiled at her instead and spoke cheerfully to Danny. When he tried to answer her, he could not seem to remember and he spoke English words with the Navajo” (Silko 2003: 2548). We see how, Native American children who were removed from their culture forgot where they came from, and became confused by the two different worlds. According to Wilson and Olson it was not uncommon that Native American children were removed from their families and sent to boarding schools. The US government’s intention was to integrate Native American children in a western society (R. Wilson and Olson 56-57). However, in “The Indian Welfare Act” of 1978 it was legislated that Native American children would no longer be removed from their family and into a non-Native American family, away from their culture and environment (R. Wilson and Olson 206).

There is a sense of irony to the story. Ayah finds it ironic that Chato’s effort to establish western values, by learning English, eventually does not give him any advantage. “That had satisfied her. To see how the white man repaid Chato’s years of loyalty and work. All of Chato’s fine-sounding English talk didn’t change things” (Silko 2003: 2547). The irony is that though Chato tried to adapt to the western world by learning English and working for a white man, in the end it does not mean anything anymore. Nevertheless, Ayah represents a woman who has repeatedly been disappointed by white authority. She lost her son, her small children, even her husband suffered disappointment from white authority. “(...) at the first of the month they went to Cebolleta to ask the postmaster for the check; and then Chato would go to the bar and cash it” (Silko 2003: 2548). Even though Ayah is disappointed by the government, the irony to the story is that she is still dependent on them.

2.1.2 Survival Stories

In “Lullaby” Leslie Marmon Silko describes how many Native Americans were affected by the intrusion of government. “Lullaby” is a demonstration story, meaning that Silko uses the short

story to portray the injustices that Native Americans and their cultures experienced. Leslie Marmon Silko said that “I feel it is more effective to write a story like “Lullaby” than to rant and rave. I think it is more effective in reaching people” (Arnold 7-8). Silko’s stories create awareness among student readers, her stories manage to evoke empathy towards Native Americans and anger towards a society and their treatment of Native Americans. Silko’s use of literature when describing and portraying characters of Native American origin will reach a broader audience. Silko manages to reach the audience because of the authenticity of her stories. The themes portrayed in the story reflect history and the injustice many Native Americans experienced from the US government. “Lullaby” offer students an insight to how political and social issues have affected the American society. Knowing that “Lullaby” is written from an insider’s perspective provides an authenticity and credibility to Silko’s work.

Silko tells the story in her Laguna Pueblo tradition, using her stories about the Pueblo people to emphasize how many Native Americans have been victims of cultural genocide from the government. However, though she criticizes and questions the treatment of Native Americans, she still emphasizes their ability overcome adversity and keep their culture alive, some would say that each story is a ceremony of cultural survival (Brown 98-99). “The sun had gone down but the snow in the wind gave off its own light. It came back as thick tufts like new wool – washed before the weaver spins it. Ayah reached out like her own babies had, and she smiled when she remembered how she had laughed at them” (Silko 2003: 2543). “Lullaby” expresses some sense of hope and healing already in the beginning (Brown 102). Ayah cherishes her memories, even though her children are gone, she manages to remember all the joy they brought her.

In a way, Ayah’s story is a ceremony of her survival through these tragic events and it seems that Ayah’s spirit survives. “The earth is your mother (...), the sky is your father (...), rainbow is your sister (...), the winds are your brothers (...). We are together always, there never was a time when this was not so” (Silko 2003: 2549-2550). Ayah’s ceremonial survival is reflected in the lullaby that Ayah sings towards the end, emphasizing the oral narrative and her strong hope of survival. By introducing the lullaby towards the end, Silko discreetly emphasizes traditional Laguna Pueblo belief systems and their sympathetic attitude towards life, continuity and the earth. Many Native American cultures have traditionally had a harmonic relationship with nature and all living things (R. Wilson and Olson 3). The Pueblo people saw the earth as the Mother Creator of all things in the world, they also believed that when the dead become dust they again

join the Mother (Silko 1996: 265). Their beliefs emphasize their view of the earth and all living things as interconnected.

“Lullaby” is perceived both as criticism of the mainstream society, but is also a celebration of her Native American tradition. For Native Americans storytelling was used both as a survival tool but also to protect their cultural heritage and it has been important to pass on the oral narrative through generations. This is expressed in “Lullaby”, when Ayah at the end, sings the lullaby her mother and grandmother used to sing to her. “Lullaby” is a short story that expresses painful losses, but at the same time it is about survival through memories, stories and songs.

2.2 “Tony’s Story”

Silko’s “Tony’s Story” tells a story about the diversity among Native Americans and also within each tribe. Silko manages to balance between the contrast of life on the reservation and strong traditional beliefs, and an increasing influence by the mainstream society. “Tony’s Story” provides a broad cultural and historical context, the story offers a view of how traditions are important to some Native Americans but not to others. Silko reminds readers not to generalize Native American communities, but to remember that Native American people have a variety of beliefs, just as we as teachers in North Norway can remind our students that Norwegians have.

In “Tony’s Story” we meet Tony and his friend Leon, who has just returned from the army. During a festival, Leon is assaulted by a state policeman, and is not willing to accept what he considered as police harassment. Tony does not understand Leon’s talk about justice and rights, and tries to convince Leon to let the matter go. Tony has a dream where he sees a masked evil spirit, which he believes is the state policeman. The state policeman continues to follow the two boys. Tony is afraid of what might happen and puts on his arrowhead necklace for protection. Tony offers a necklace to Leon, but Leon rejects the necklace. One day, on their way to the sheep camp, they notice that they are being followed by the state policeman, the situation escalates and the policeman tries to force Tony and Leon off the road. Leon eventually stops the truck, as the policeman approaches Leon with a bat, Tony shoots him and tries to cover it up by burning the body. Leon is in complete shock about Tony’s actions, but Tony is convinced that the policeman was an evil spirit and that killing him was a necessity.

2.2.1 Collision of Two Worlds

In “Tony’s Story” Silko presents two Native American boys representing different values and a different outlook on the world outside of the reservation. Through stories told from Native American perspectives, Norwegian students are introduced to Native American history and the diversity among Native Americans. There is value in connecting the short story to actual historical events, as it breaks with the stereotypical Native American portrayed through media.

“Tony’s Story” deals with Native Americans returning to the reservation, with values influenced by the western society. In “Tony’s Story” Leon, who has just returned from the army is assaulted by a police officer at a festival. “He can’t do it again. We are just as good as them” (Silko 1981:125). Leon’s knowledge regarding human rights and equality is emphasized through this statement. Leon is upset about what he believes is an unjustified act by the police officer and he presents his case to the BIA. Many Native Americans served in the United States Army, and after the Second World War, many Native Americans settled in the cities when they finished their tour instead of returning to the reservations (R. Wilson and Olson 163). The urbanization of many Native Americans offered an insight to the mainstream society and many Native Americans were inspired by African Americans and their fight for equality during the 1960’s and fought for Native American’s right for justice and equality as well (R. Wilson and Olson 191-193). Leon may have been influenced and inspired by African American’s fight for equal rights, and therefore does not accept the policeman’s treatment of him. Native Americans were discriminated against in several parts of society, and it was not uncommon for Native American men to be harassed by state policemen (R. Wilson and Olson 187). By acknowledging Leon’s actions in the beginning and understanding his reaction to the police harassment, students will have a greater understanding of the injustice the Native Americans were victims of, and Leon’s need to fight it.

Tony, who has lived on the reservation his whole life, does not understand Leon’s need for justice and notices a “whiter” Leon “He grabbed my arm and held it tight like a white man” (Silko 1981:124). This emphasizes the difference between the boys. Leon has been in the army and has seen a world outside the reservation. Tony has never been off the reservation and his knowledge comes from old Teofilo’s stories. It is therefore not unreasonable that Tony believes that the policeman is an evil spirit, because he concludes on the basis of his own knowledge. Tony reinforces his beliefs by wearing his arrowhead necklace for protection against the evil spirit. Tony then offers an arrowhead necklace to Leon, but Leon gives his back to Tony: “You

don't believe in that, do you?" (Silko 1981: 127). Throughout the story we are given explanations regarding their differences. Tony, who has never lived off the reservation, is dedicated to his values and the stories he has been told by Teofilo. Leon, influenced by the skepticism of the mainstream society rejects this interpretation.

As readers we are surprised when the calm and quiet Tony kills the policeman. There is a sense of irony to this short story, Leon the troublemaker who threatens to kill the policeman becomes a passive witness when the usually careful and passive Tony kills the policeman (Ruoff 1978: 6). However, Silko's main goal with the story is not only to shed light on the injustice of reservation life, but also the diversity among contemporary Native Americans.

2.2.2 Native American Beliefs and Traditions

Leslie Marmon Silko imports several Native American traditions or myths quite subconsciously into the story. It is important to mention that Native American tribes have different beliefs and traditions. When analyzing "Tony's Story" students are given insights to Tony's beliefs and knowledge and by understanding Tony's beliefs students might understand his actions. "(...) and then I knew why the drought had come that summer" (Silko 1981:126). Tony's knowledge comes from old stories and according to old pueblo mythology, the drought is an omen that something terrible will happen or has happened (Ruoff 1978: 6), Tony therefore searches for explanations within his knowledge that can explain the drought.

Tony begins to re-live his dream about the evil spirit and begins referring to the policeman with the pronoun *it*. "We've got to kill it Leon. We must burn the body to be sure" (Silko 1981: 128). When Tony dreams about an evil masked spirit after the policeman has harassed the two boys, he immediately concludes that the dream is warning him about an evil spirit, who Tony believes has embodied the police man. As the policeman follows them and continues to what Tony and Leon perceive as threatening behavior, readers experience a change in Tony. When Tony has killed the policeman, he calmly tells Leon "Don't worry everything is O.K now, Leon. It's killed. They sometimes take on strange forms" (Silko 1981:129 and Ruoff 1978: 7). Tony is convinced that he has killed an evil spirit using the pronoun *it*, and explaining to Leon that evil spirits come in different shapes and forms. Tony has never lived off the reservation and his only knowledge comes from old Teofilo's stories, it is therefore natural for Tony to search for answers based on his knowledge from his culture and its tradition.

Contrary to Tony, Leon does not believe Teofilo's stories and is therefore shocked when Tony kills the police man. Tony shoots the police officer, Leon is confused and shocked by Tony's actions; "Tony! You killed him – you killed the cop" (Silko 1981:129). In order to understand Tony's actions, we need to understand or know of his cultural values. In every part of the world people have different beliefs and perceptions of the world. Tony and Leon have a different perception regarding the events that occur. Neither one is more right or wrong than the other; however, for non – Native people it is more difficult to understand Tony's beliefs than it is to understand Leon's rejection of them. However by rejecting the single story, and understand that Tony is not representative to all Native Americans, students are able to reach a broader understanding of Native Americans, and the diversity among them. The Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie said that just because she had read an American novel in which a character was a serial killer that would not make him a representative for all Americans (Adichie: "The Danger of a Single Story", Web Oct 27, 2010). In other words we should not generalize a whole nation or community based on one event, or one person, one should always remember the diversity among humans and not stereotype based on one character or one novel. Therefore Silko's portray of Tony and Leon and their differences show students that neither Tony nor Leon is a portrait of a "typical Native American boy". "Tony's Story" expresses the diversity among Native Americans, and helps outsiders respect the different believes within Native American communities and prevent outsiders from generalizing Native Americans and their various beliefs.

Leslie Marmon Silko said in an interview that when writing short stories she never knows how much she imagines and how much of her stories that are based on stories she was told as a child (Arnold 6). In regards to "Tony's Story" she draws on oral stories of an actual experience. She says about "Tony's Story", "I sat down and wrote this story, and in the story I took it from a very special point of view, Tony's point of view, and I thought at the time that I was inventing this whole thing with the witch" (Arnold 6). However, it turns out that when Silko was a child she was told this story by her father, about the Indian who killed a state policeman. Silko remembered her father telling the story, but believed that she had invented and incorporated the witch in the story. After investigating, Silko found that the Indian on trial for killing the state policeman, believed that the policeman was a witch, and that was also his defense in the trial. Silko, herself has concluded that since she was four years old when this incident happened she could not have read about it in the papers. She remembered her dad telling her the story. "They put the cop's body in the car and they set the car on fire and later on when people went and

found the remains all that was left of that cop would fit in a shoebox” (Arnold 6-7). Silko’s “Tony Story” becomes a testament to the importance and power of Native American storytelling and how much the oral narrative was a part of her everyday life. The reality in Silko’s stories might make them more appealing to students, since her stories can be related to an actual historical event. In order for students to understand that elements used in “Tony’s Story” reflects the government discrimination but also emphasizes culture, tradition and diversity it is important that they acquire knowledge about Native American and their situation in USA. When educating students about Native Americans, teachers should use a diversity of literature and other learning tools in order to emphasize the diversity among Native American tribes and among people of Native American ancestry. However, it is important to mention that though Silko writes from a Native American perspective in general she more specifically writes from a Laguna Pueblo perspective. It is important to emphasize that there are over 500 Native American tribes, and many different Native cultures and languages so we do not continue to generalize all Native Americans. At the same time, it is possible to recognize some common patterns that separate them from the larger American society (R. Wilson and Olson 5 and 14 – 15). If educators succeed by providing different materials and stories they limit students need to stereotype Native Americans.

However, “Tony’s Story” is not the only story inspired by storytelling in her local community. “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” is a good example of Silko’s inspiration of contemporary storytelling.

2.3 “The Man to Send Rain Clouds”

Leslie Marmon Silko first wrote and published the short story “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” in 1969 (Arnold (introduction) xv). The short story is also included in *Storyteller*, published in 1981. “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” is, like “Tony’s Story” based on an actual story, Silko, again draws on oral stories of actual events. “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” is inspired by an event on the Pueblo community, where they found old Sorsino dead at sheep camp. Silko’s grandmother told her that the priest was upset, because they had given the old man a traditional burial and they had not told the priest. Silko, inspired by her grandmother’s story about old Sorsino wrote “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” (Seyersted 26).

In “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” readers witness the collision of two different worlds regarding the burial of old Teofilo. When Leon and his brother in law Ken finds old Teofilo dead at the sheep camp they practice their cultural tradition by painting the old man’s face.

Across the brown wrinkled forehead he drew a streak of white and along the cheekbones he drew a strip of blue paint. He paused and watched Ken throw pinches of corn meal and pollen into the wind that fluttered the small grey feather. The Leon painted with yellow under the old man’s broad nose, and finally, when he had painted green across the chin, he smiled (Silko 1981:182-183).

Leon and Ken do not show any interest in telling the priest that old Teofilo is dead. When encountering the priest who asked if they had found old Teofilo, Leon replies, “Everything is O.K. now” (Silko 1981:183). It might be a conscious decision not to tell the priest in order to continue the burial in a Pueblo tradition and not have the burial in a Christian tradition. In “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” Silko describes the pueblo community as a family, supporting each other in times of need. When Ken and Leon arrive home with Teofilo, their friends helped to dig the grave and the women brought food to the gravediggers and the household. As the funeral took place, Louise expressed a wish to have the priest sprinkle some holy water for Teofilo so he would not be thirsty. The priest is upset when Leon asks him if he can sprinkle some holy water over old Teofilo because the Christian rites regarding a funeral have not been followed. However, when Leon is about to leave, the priest goes with him. The funeral came to an end, and Leon was happy about the sprinkling of the holy water: “Now the old man could send them big thunder clouds for sure” (Silko 1981:186).

2.3.1 Native American Beliefs vs. Christian Beliefs

In “The Man to Send Rain Clouds,” Silko offers readers an insight to a community of a diverse cultural population. Silko shows how the cultural diversity divides the community of Native Americans and Catholics.

From the time of European contact Native Americans were introduced to Christianity, and during the 19th century government agents were placed on the reservation to help local missionaries to suppress Native American religions and have Native Americans embrace Christianity (R. Wilson and Olson 51 and 56). In order for students to understand the injustice against Native American teachers can emphasize the similarity towards the Sami people’s experience in Norway. During the 18th century Thomas von Westen helped to initiate the process

of forcing the Sami population into a strict Lutheran faith, pietism. He wanted to remove what many believed was witchcraft (*Det Store Norske Leksikon*: “Thomas von Westen.” Web: Nov. 2, 2010). The missionary work among the Sami people continued with Lars Laestadius and this led many Sami communities to lose their religious traditions (*Det Store Norske Leksikon*: “Samer.” Web: Nov. 2, 2010). During the 1850’s the Norwegian government concluded that all Norwegian schools were to practice the Norwegian language, including schools in Sami populated areas, forcing Sami children to practice the Norwegian language. This politic continued for almost a century. However, the Sami people did not approve of the Norwegian government’s politics and at the beginning of the 20th century, Isak Saba was chosen by the Sami people to represent the Sami people’s interests as a member of the Norwegian Parliament. After the Second World War, the Norwegian government gained a more reflected idea of the Sami people’s right as an ethnic minority. The Norwegian government therefore made several resolutions for the Sami people to have their freedom. They wanted to make it possible for the Sami people to carry on and cherish their traditions as a minority culture within the Norwegian society (*Det Store Norske Leksikon*: “Samer.” Web: Nov. 2, 2010). Native Americans likewise experienced a severe loss of language and native religions. Native Americans were protected with the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, which concluded that Native American values could legally be portrayed again (R. Wilson and Olson 206). My analysis of “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” is a good example of this.

In “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” they paint old Teofilo to prepare him for his journey and they also ask the priest to sprinkle holy water so he will not be thirsty. The priest is at first very upset, because the Native Americans have not performed the proper rites for a Christian burial, and he therefore cannot sprinkle holy water over old Teofilo. “You know I can’t do that Leon. There should have been the Last Rites and a funeral mass at the very least” (Silko 1981:185). In many Native American traditions the funeral is a ceremony for the spirits next life, death is in many Native American tribes seen as the beginning of a spirits journey. They therefore performed rites that would prepare the soul for the afterlife (Nordin 2010). Nevertheless the priest agrees to sprinkle holy water at the funeral, though it is evident that the priest does not understand these rituals, and also questions their intentions. “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” shows that though Native Americans have been influenced by western values and way of life, they still try to maintain different aspects of their Native American traditions and values.

2.3.2 Acceptance of Differences

“The Man to Send Rain Clouds” expresses the collision between two different cultures. “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” is manifested in the Laguna Pueblo belief of the circle of life. They believe that when you die, your spirit moves on (Nordin 2010). That is why Louise wanted the priest to sprinkle holy water so Teofilo would not be thirsty, indicating that his soul, or spirit will survive. In some ways Silko’s techniques in “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” resembles some used in “Lullaby,” where the importance of the story itself becomes more important than the techniques used in writing short story. The stories manifest Native American cultures, their hope, and their beliefs in the form of survival stories; however “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” also shows a western world, represented by a priest, struggling but trying to show a greater acceptance of Native American tradition.

In “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” Silko questions peoples’ ability to accept and not judge cultures they have no insight to. The catholic priest condemns the non-catholic burial of old Teofilo. Even though the priest agrees to sprinkle the holy water, he still seems to have reservations about it. The priest starts to speculate if it is actually old Teofilo lying there, “wondering if it wasn’t some perverse Indian trick – something they did in march to ensure a good harvest – wondering if maybe old Teofilo was actually at sheep camp corralling the sheep for the night” (Silko 1981:185-186). The priest clearly has some prejudice against Native American cultures and is probably uncomfortable with what is unfamiliar and strange to him. The priest’s views represent many common notions non-Native Americans may have regarding Native American cultures, traditions and rituals. As the priest sprinkles the holy water, he is taken back, the surroundings and the situation reminded him of something, “he tried to remember what it was, because he thought if he could remember he might understand this” (Silko 1981:186). The priest is probably referring to a normal Christian burial, which resembles the Laguna Pueblo burial except the Last Rites. The priest is too occupied distancing the Christian tradition from the Native American, and are not able to accept the differences between the two different cultures. Silko accentuates that everyone has a different perception of the world and what is beyond it, the goal must therefore be to respect each other’s differences.

The Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie said that when you show a people one thing and only one thing over and over again, then that is what they become (Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story.” Web Oct. 27, 2010). There are many stereotypes tied to the Native Americans, created by popular images. Silko manages to tell stories from a Laguna Pueblo perspective and

thereby breaking stereotypical ideas of Native Americans that has been presented to the mainstream society. Her commitment to her background gives her stories credibility. By looking at Silko's stories, her portrayal of Native American culture, students will have a greater understanding of Native American history and culture. In addition students can discover similarities between Native American history and culture and the Sami people in Scandinavia, which are a familiar cultural community to North Norwegians. Silko said in an interview that the most important thing for a writer is

to always remember where he or she has come from, and to always remember one's own experiences, and to be true...or at least not to forget that the eyes that you've seen these people and these things with and the words that you use and the feelings you are putting into the work are yours, and they are coming from your origin, they are coming from your ancestors (...) (Seyersted 20).

This quote reflects Silko's importance of staying true to her Laguna Pueblo background, and telling her stories the way her ancestors would have. Walker like Silko has been acclaimed for her abilities to use orality in her literature. Walker does this by speaking directly to the reader, which we obviously see in "Everyday Use" and "How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy" told by first person narrators. Alice Hall Petry says that "The oral quality of Walker's stories is as old as folk tales, ballads, and slave narratives and as new as Joan Didion" (Petry 43). Walker, like Silko manages to balance the traditional and the contemporary when writing her short stories.

3.0 Alice Walker

Alice Walker is an African American poet, novelist, essayist and short story writer. Walker has been a prominent figure in challenging social relationships and stereotypes. She won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *The Color Purple* in 1983. Her work deals with people in economic hardships, racial terrorism, and the portrayal of African American life and culture. Walker was born in 1944, in Georgia as the youngest of eighth children. She grew up in a poor household where she learned to appreciate nature and where she was allowed to explore her artistic nature. Walker attended the only high school open to blacks in segregated Eatonton, Georgia. She went on to attend college at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia in 1961 where she quickly became involved with the Civil Rights Movement. Walker transferred to Sarah Lawrence College in

1964 in order to pursue her writing. Alice Walker and her writing have become a symbol of African American women, and a figure of modern American literature (*Alice Walker's Garden*. Web Nov. 4, 2010).

Alice Walker's writing has to a large degree focused on black women. *In Love and Trouble* a short story collection from 1973, her short stories focus on black women who struggled, but sustained life. Her short story collection *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* published in 1981 was a natural evolution from *In Love and Trouble* (*Alice Walker's Garden*. Web Nov. 4, 2010). Alice Walker is inspired by her background, and she uses her own knowledge when writing short stories, for instance her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. From a didactic point of view, the introduction of the author and her background can help student readers understand the author's connection to her stories. Therefore knowing and understanding where the author comes from, her stories will have a greater credibility among students.

3.1 "The Welcome Table"

In "The Welcome Table" Walker manages to portray the racism and segregation that many African Americans experienced. "The Welcome Table" is a perfect introduction to an historical and cultural look at African Americans, and their fight for equality in USA. By presenting plot summaries as an introduction to an analysis of a short story, students are able to understand the chain of events that occur. When teaching students to summarize stories, their ability to reflect and understand the story increases.

An old black woman in her Sunday dress is on her way to church; however, when she enters the church she is met by a cold stare from the crowd: "And they all gazed nakedly upon their own fear transferred; a fear of the black and the old, a terror unknown as well as of the deeply known" (Walker 1984:81). The women and men in the church seem upset and disgraced by this old black woman. They tried to ask the old woman to leave, but eventually they threw her out. As the old woman walked on the side of the road, she saw Jesus. The old woman and Jesus walked together. The next day, the people from the church heard that the old woman was dead.

3.1.1 Segregation and Racism

“She was angular and lean and the color of poor gray Georgia earth, beaten by king cotton and the extreme weather” (Walker 1984:82). The quotation expresses the hardship Africans had to face since being brought to America as slaves. When Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States of America, his anti-slavery attitude split the country in two. The South opposed Lincoln’s anti-slavery attitude. The passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 abolished slavery. In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was added to the Constitution, which gave blacks in America full citizenship and in 1870 the Fifteenth Amendment made it illegal to deny black men to vote. However, the Jim Crow Laws restricted the African Americans’ new found freedom and their road to equality (Sylvester 1998).

Black and whites were to be separated, but equal. At least that was the slogan used among those who supported segregation. In 1896, in the case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court ruling gave the South permission to continue suppressing blacks. They formalized their separate but equal politics (Bloom 44-45). However, services and facilities provided for colored people were usually underfunded. In educational institutions particularly equal conditions were never approached (Bloom 43-45). In order for students to have a greater understanding of “The Welcome Table” it is important that they are familiar with the history that influenced Walker to write “The Welcome Table”. “The Welcome Table” is a story that will expand students’ knowledge regarding African American history, portraying how segregation influenced people’s everyday life.

At the beginning of the story there is a narrator with limited insight as he/she guesses what the reverend says, “The reverend of the church stopped her pleasantly as she stepped into the vestibule. Did he say as they thought he did kindly, ‘Auntie, you know this is not your church?’ As if one could choose the wrong one” (Walker 1984: 83). This narrator with limited insight could represent the congregation’s attitude. The congregation judges the old woman based on a generalized assumption regarding black people. The narration mirrors the attitudes the old woman is met with by the congregation, as the narrator only guesses what the old woman says or thinks based on stereotypical attitudes towards black women. When looking at her, the congregation saw a cook, a maid or mistresses, professions that resemble the jobs slaves were restricted to. The congregation also judge the old black woman based on their own fears, and therefore have the men throw the old woman out of the church. Walker’s irony is apparent when she states “As if one could choose the wrong one” (Walker 1984:83), emphasizing that in the eyes of God they are all equal regardless the color of their skin.

It would be interesting to challenge student readers to explore the narration of the short story and learning the terminology used when analyzing literature. After the old woman is thrown out of the church the narration seems to shift. It seems that the narrator now, is more omniscient than he or she was in the prior paragraphs. “Except that he was not carrying in his arms a baby sheep, he looked exactly like the picture of him that she had hanging over her bed” (Walker 1984: 85). The narrator reveals what the old woman is thinking and seeing. The old black woman started walking, when she saw Jesus coming down the highway. The old black woman followed Jesus and she told him how the people in the church had treated her. She walks past her house without even noticing. She walked with Jesus, singing some old spirituals. In this story Walker portrays Jesus with flaws; he does not know that the old woman has stolen the picture. “She broke the silence once more to tell Jesus how glad she was that he had come, how she often looked at his picture hanging on her wall (she hoped he didn’t know she had stolen it) over her bed, and how she never expected to see him down here in person” (Walker 1984: 86). Walker uses Jesus not only as a symbol of imperfection, but also as a symbol of faith and equality, emphasizing that people are people regardless the color of their skin. The congregation is too occupied with seeing the color of the old woman’s skin and maintaining the separation between the races, than see a human being seeking the comfort of the same God. “The Welcome Table” not only expands students’ knowledge about African American history, the short story also evokes a sense of empathy among students. The short story will provide an interesting discussion about morals or lack of them, discrimination, and how quick people are to judge other people based on their differences. It would be interesting to relate this thematic towards the Norwegian society, which are becoming more multicultural, in order to see if students are able to discuss whether or not we discriminate and judge people based on the color of their skin or religion.

“The Welcome Table” could be considered a demonstration story; Walker manages to create a short story that is able to enlighten a broader audience of the life of ordinary black people in a society where they were not welcomed. Though readers are familiar with African Americans fight for equality from a historical perspective, “The Welcome Table” offers a unique view of the life of an old black woman and the American society (here represented through the congregation) as an oppressor towards her. The historical context of this story will create an interest, not only for the short story, but also to the history behind the story.

“The Welcome Table” is a tragic story in many ways, however, the human and imaginative spirit which seems to be central in both Leslie Marmon Silko’s short stories and Alice Walker’s short stories seem to survive. The old black woman, who is tossed out of the church, does not seem to

be devastated by it. She sings, walks with Jesus, even though she dies we believe her spirit lives on. Walker suggests that life goes on, and that this was just an episode that will soon be forgotten, if not already. “The people in the church never knew what happened to the old woman; they never mentioned her to one another or to anybody else” (Walker 1984: 86-87). This is manifested in the countless experiences where many African Americans were exposed to discrimination. During the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960’s, many African Americans participated in demonstrations about the discrimination they were victims of. Their efforts resulted in an improvement for many African Americans in the USA. In 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act which prohibited discrimination based on sex and race. The act banned segregation and it would be brought legal actions against segregation (*The National Archives*. Web, access date: Nov. 11, 2010 and D. Simon 2002). However, though manifested in the law, discrimination continued and so did the riots. With the Voting Rights Act signed into law in 1965 that stated that every American citizen no matter race or color were given the right to vote, a new era began (Bloom 184 and 221 and D. Simon 2002).

3.2 “Everyday Use”

“Everyday Use” is a continuation of the themes emphasized by Walker in “The Welcome Table.” “Everyday Use” expresses the new assertiveness among black people as a result of the Civil Rights Movement, in addition it reflects on the different aspect of the movement. “Everyday Use” is likely set in the 1960’s, when the Civil Rights Movement roared throughout the country and African Americans tried to define their cultural identity (White 2001). In “Everyday Use” readers are reminded of the past, Mama says “I never had an education myself. After second grade the school was closed down. Don’t ask me why: in 1927 colored asked fewer questions than they do today” (Walker 1984: 50). The segregation laws stated that blacks and whites were to be separated, but equal. In reality the equality between races did not exist. For instance, educational institutions for blacks were usually underfunded (Bloom 43-45). However, during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950’s and 1960’s black people became more involved and dared to stand up for equal rights and ask the questions they did not ask in 1927 (Bloom 132). In “Everyday Use” we see the ramification the Civil Rights Movement had, especially on the younger African American generation, represented with Wangero/Dee. “Everyday Use” can be used as an introduction to cultural and historical discussion regarding the Civil Right Movement and themes such as heritage and identity. Students can be asked to compare Maggie

and Dee in order to explore similarities or differences regarding their views of their own identity and importance of heritage. “Everyday Use” raises questions regarding our own heritage and identity, and how or if our ancestors have affected our lives today.

3.2.1 Heritage and Identity

In “Everyday Use” identity and heritage become central issues, especially for Wangero/Dee. Walker questions people’s ability to reflect on their heritage, where are we from and in what way does this reflect our identity? Walker also emphasizes the importance of remembering the past as a part of who we are. In “Everyday Use”, Walker criticizes African Americans that embraced their African heritage, and doing so rejecting their American heritage, because for many it represented pain and injustice (White 2001). Through this short story student readers are introduced to a historical context where the diversity among African Americans are portrayed. In “Everyday Use”, Walker uses the two sisters to balance a superficial attitude towards heritage with an attitude that takes seriously the continuation of heritage.

When Dee arrives, she is wearing a long yellow dress and gold earrings and presents herself to her mother as Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo. When Mama asks why Wangero/Dee changed her name, she responds “I couldn’t bear it any longer, being named after people who oppress me” (Walker 1984: 53). Mama tells Wangero/Dee that her name goes back generations, but Dee is tired of listening. Dee has embraced her African identity. During the Civil Right Movement, the Black Power Movement flourished encouraging blacks to embrace their African heritage (*Black Power Movement*. Web, Sept. 24, 2010).

Wangero/Dee has a newfound joy and delight for her home, the furniture and materials with a connection to prior generations. “Everything delighted her. Even the fact that we still used the benches her daddy made for the table when we couldn’t afford to buy chairs” (Walker 1984: 55). In “Everyday Use”, Dee’s effort to embrace her African heritage seems superficial, Dee wants heirlooms that artistically would suit her apartment, she seems more interested in the artistic aspect than the history behind the heirlooms. “I can use the churn top as a centerpiece for the alcove table, she said, sliding a plate over the churn, and I’ll think of something artistic to do with the dasher” (Walker 1984: 56).

However, a difficult situation occurs when Wangero/Dee brings out two quilts that she wanted to take with her. Her mother told her that those quilts belonged to Maggie and offered

Wangero/Dee two different quilts. Wangero/Dee responded, “I don’t want those. They are stitched around the borders by machine” (Walker 1984: 57). Mama then says that she had already promised them to Maggie. “Maggie can’t appreciate these quilts! She said. She’d probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use” (Walker 1984: 57). There is some irony connected to Wangero/Dee’s statement that Maggie can’t appreciate these quilts, when it seems that Wangero/Dee only wants them to display her African heritage. Wangero/Dee has changed her name and her clothes in order to connect to her African roots, and she comes across as superficial and desperate. The irony to the story is that Maggie and Mama and not Wangero/Dee are in connection with their real heritage, maintaining a craft that has survived through generations. Maggie said that Wangero/Dee could have the quilts, because she (Maggie) knew how to make them. She could remember her grandma through the craft of making quilts. Maggie in contrast to Wangero/Dee knows her heritage, and does not have a superficial attitude towards it. Maggie, with her ability to make quilts, is part of keeping the heritage alive and able to pass down the craft to another generation. The tradition and the stories relating to their ancestors and their craft will live on through Maggie. She will put them to everyday use, but with the heritage from her grandmother she can make new ones, whereas Wangero/Dee cannot. Wangero/Dee was furious, and told her Mama that she doesn’t understand, that these quilts are her heritage. After Wangero/Dee left, “the two of us sat there just enjoying, until it was time to go in the house and go to bed” (Walker 1984: 59). This argument between Wangero/Dee and Maggie and Mama teaches us that we should cherish traditions, knowledge, stories and lessons past generations have taught us. We should remember the craft and the people behind the material things and not what you want them to represent.

3.2.2 Importance of True Heritage

David White suggests that Walker uses the quilts and the churn to show Mama’s bond and understanding of her heritage. Walker emphasizes the importance of her heritage, being both African and American and celebrating that (White 2001). White also suggests that Wangero/Dee is influenced by the Black Power movement, in changing her name and the way she dresses. “I couldn’t bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me. You know as well as me you was named after your aunt Dicie, I said” (Walker 1984:53). However, Walker is not condemning the Black Power movement, but suggests that one should respect the hardship

previous generations had to endure, and not forget that they are part of American history and American culture as well as African (White 2001).

“Walker is arguing that the responsibility for defining African American heritage should not be left to the Black Power movement. African Americans must take ownership of their entire heritage, including the painful, unpleasant parts” (White 2001). In “Everyday Use” Maggie becomes in many ways a symbol of survival. White suggests that Maggie’s burn scars are symbolic for the scars that many African Americans carry (White 2001). Maggie’s burn scars has in many ways isolated her from the society (White 2001). “Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: she will stand in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs (...)” (Walker 1984: 47). Maggie, who is to a degree in the shadow of the academic success of her sister, is in contrast to her sister able to carry the arts and craft traditions of past generations. Maggie seems to be more aware of her true identity and heritage than her sister Wangero/Dee. Maggie as her ancestors sees the everyday use in her crafts, while her sister is more concerned with the artistic aspect of the heirlooms.

Through “Everyday Use” student readers are introduced to diversity in the American society and African American community. Students are not only introduced to the diversity within the African American society, Walker also raises questions regarding past generations influence of our identity. It is interesting for students to see that not all African Americans have the same view regarding their lives, thoughts and beliefs. In addition Walker writes from an insider’s perspective providing a unique insight to the affect the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement had on African Americans. “Everyday Use” also challenges students to see past the written word and be able to see the meaning behind them, relating the short story to the history. Stories of past generations are central in order for new generations to know their heritage and traditions that have been a part of the community.

3.3 “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy”

Alice Walker’s short story “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy” was published in the short story collection *You Can’t Keep a Good Woman Down* in 1981 (Alice Walker’s Garden. Web, Nov. 4, 2010). “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy” does not deal as closely with the Civil

Right Movement and segregation as “The Welcome Table” and “Everyday Use.” However, this short story raises questions about the situation for African Americans in the American society, reinforcing that the past will not be forgotten and questioning whether or not the present has improved for many African Americans.

In “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy” a young black girl becomes the mistress of white lawyer who is also her mother’s boss. Through her affair the young girl is introduced to a new and wealthier world. She was raised by a single mother, who worked as a maid in order to have food on the table: “I work in private homes she would say, and that sounded nicer, she thought, than saying ‘I’m a maid’” (Walker 1982: 22). The narrator’s mother’s job represents what was considered a typical job for slaves in the 18th and 19th century. Though the laws of segregation were no longer valid, a separation between the races was still present, there was an economic separation between the races (Bloom 17-18). Walker emphasizes the fact that blacks were still discriminated against after the Civil Right Movement, working poorly paid jobs and living in poor neighborhoods (Bloom 217-218), “It was nothing for a girl or a woman to be raped. I was raped myself, when I was twelve, and my Mama never knew and I never told anybody. For what could they do? It was just a boy passing through. Somebody’s cousin from the North” (Walker 1982: 23). There is a feeling of helplessness as the narrator accepts her rape, not believing that she can do anything about it, not knowing or not believing in the laws she is now protected by. The feeling of helplessness and ignorance play a central part throughout the story.

He took me to his law office, a big office in the middle of town, and he started asking me questions about ‘how do you all live?’ and ‘what grade are you in?’ and stuff like that. And then he began to touch me, and I pulled away. But he kept touching me and I was scared...he raped me. But afterwards he told me he hadn’t forced me that I felt something for him, and he gave me some money. I was crying, going down the stairs. I wanted to kill him (Walker 1982: 23).

Bubba, a white powerful lawyer becomes the symbol of the dominating white society. Bubba manipulates the girl in a continued affair by giving her a taste of a richer life. The girl understandably appreciates Bubba’s gifts and what she considers are affections from Bubba. Bubba is merely bribing her, however, the girl is captivated by the satisfaction of experiencing a better world than she has known. This girl manages to evoke sympathy and helplessness among readers, wanting her to realize the unhealthy situation she is in. Bubba becomes the oppressor of a young black girl, a symbol for the white society’s oppression of African Americans since the

1600's. By law black and white people are now considered equal, but Walker questions whether they are equal in eyes of the society.

3.3.1 Equality and Discrimination

“How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy” portrays a naïve girl, who might be perceived as ignorant. When the narrator's mother discovers the affair between her daughter and Bubba she reacts with anger and disappointment.

She said on top of everything else, that man's daddy goes on the t.v every night and says folks like us ain't even human. It was his daddy who had stood in the schoolhouse door saying it would be over his dead body before any black children would come into a white school (Walker 1982: 24).

Walker is referring to the segregation laws that were forced upon the African American population. During the Civil Rights Movement, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act which prohibited discrimination based on sex and race, and the act also banned segregation (*The National Archives*. Web, access date: Nov. 11, 2010 and Simon 2002). However, even though manifested in the law, blacks were still discriminated against, for instance when black and white children were to attend the same school, people like Bubba's father demonstrated against it. Walker might express disappointment towards the younger generations of African Americans for not appreciating the struggles of past generations fight for equality, or reminding African Americans about the discrimination and injustice past generations of African Americans have encountered by the white society. For student readers it would be interesting to relate Walker's message to the Norwegian society. It would be interesting to discuss with students whether or not we take our freedom and our rights for granted in today's society?

The narrator comes across as uneducated and to a degree ignorant. In spite of her mother's arguments, she was convinced that Bubba loved her and she does not understand her mother's arguments regarding equal rights; “What did I know about equal rights? What did I care about integration? I was sixteen! I wanted somebody to tell me I was pretty, and he was telling me that all the time. I even thought it was *brave* of him to go with me. History? What did I know about history?” (Walker 1982: 24 – 25). Her mother represents the generation that witnessed the segregation of blacks, but she also experienced the Civil Rights Movement, and its outcome. To her mother, the narrator's relationship with Bubba becomes a symbol of past injustice and repression.

In order to prevent the affair from becoming public, Bubba manipulates the narrator to have her mother committed to a mental hospital. But I just suddenly – in a way I don't even pretend to understand – woke up” (Walker 1982: 25-26). The young narrator realizes Bubba's manipulative ways, and that to him she is just an available girl. The narrator then goes to Bubba's office and shoots him with his own gun. “No one came after me, and I read in the paper the next day that he'd been killed by burglars” (Walker 1982: 26). In many ways, her “awakening” is symbolic of the new confidence of black people that emerged in the 1950's and 1960's.

“How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy” is a short story with criticism of the white society, and the politics of the government. Through her short story Walker manages to criticize society by using Bubba's manipulation of a poor black girl, his father's attitude toward black people and the narrator's mother's work as symbols for white domination in the society and black people's fight for survival. When she eventually kills Bubba, she is surprised that no one came after her, because she did not have time to wipe the gun. The narrator's actions can be compared to the slave riots that occurred on plantations, when slaves rebelled against their owners. The short story ends in an ironic way as the narrator steals money from Bubba's safe because he had promised her an education, “One of the carrots Bubba always dangled in front of her was that he was going to send her to college: I didn't see why he shouldn't” (Walker 1982: 26). There is a certain irony to the short story, ending with the mistress turned killer watching the children of her former lover, while his wife attends his funeral.

In many ways the short story relates to the survival stories from Africa, because it deals with survival. The narrator in “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy” has a resemblance to the animals portrayed in African survival stories. The Brer Rabbit was considered the weakest animal, but managed to outsmart everyone with his wit (M. L. Wilson 2). The African survival story about the Brer Rabbit resembles the short story, where a young and weak girl is easily manipulated by a much older and stronger man. When she eventually understands her unhealthy situation, she manages to outsmart everyone with her wit, and thus survives. In today's society girls and boys experience manipulative and controlling relationships. It would therefore be interesting for students to discuss the narrator's actions in the story and reflect upon what they would do or could do in a similar situation. It would also be interesting to draw upon African survival stories, challenging students to investigate if we have similar survival stories in Norway.

3.3.2 Challenging Social Values and Survival Stories

Alice Walker is not afraid of challenging social values, both black and white. In her short stories, identity, race, gender and class are central themes. In “Everyday Use” she discussed the heritage of black women, she criticized the Black Power Movement for encouraging African Americans to rediscover their African heritage, thus rejecting their American heritage. In “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy,” we are introduced to several elements that symbolize the difficult position for blacks in America. The narrator becomes a symbol of the black population submissive to and controlled by the white society, here represented by Bubba. In many ways it is a story of survival, which also reflects the survival of African Americans in USA. The young narrator is able to free herself from the controlling hands of the white man and embrace her future. As Leslie Marmon Silko, Walker’s stories also deal with survival in specific historical contexts; this is manifested in their heritage and their identity.

4.0 Raymond Carver

Raymond Carver was born in Oregon on May 25 1938, but raised in Washington. Carver grew up in a working class family, his father worked at a lumber mill, and his mother worked as a waitress and retail clerk. Carver’s father was an alcoholic, and domestic violence was no stranger in the Carver household. Carver married at nineteen and had two children by the time he was twenty. Carver worked different jobs in order to support his family, and through the years he developed a drinking problem. Carver has said that the reason he started writing poems and short stories was so he could earn money fast “I needed to write something I could get some kind of payment from immediately, hence poems and stories” (Stull 1997).

“The Furious Seasons” was Carver’s first published story, it was published in *Selection*, during the winter 1960-1961. Carver’s writing during the 1960’s expressed his influence by Hemingway, but his writing changed through the years. When , in 1970 Carver found himself without a job, he began to embrace his writing and became a full time writer. During the 1970’s and 1980’s Carver found his register. His stories usually reflected the life of working-class people disrupted by a crisis of some kind (Stull 1997). His first collection of short stories, *Will You Be Please Be Quiet, Please?* was published in 1976, then followed, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* in 1981 and *Cathedral* in 1983 (Stull 1997). Carver stopped drinking

in 1977 with help from Alcoholics Anonymous. He then met his future wife, the poet Tess Gallagher. Carver was diagnosed with cancer in the fall of 1987 and his left lung was removed. The cancer returned and Carver died on August 2, 1988 (Stull 1997).

Carver's mood in many of his short stories reflected Carver's struggles in real life. From a didactic perspective, students having information of the author and his background may understand Carver's choice of character and themes. Two of these stories presented here express a rather dark mood; however, "Cathedral" is a story that in many ways expresses hope. Interestingly enough, "Cathedral" was written when Carver himself was able to feel hopeful. It is important for students to see how much life situations influence us in whatever we do.

In many of his short stories Raymond Carver portrayed working class families often facing obstacles. In the short story "They're Not Your Husband" Carver questions society by ridiculing people's perception of themselves and the importance of appearances. Carver portrays what is considered a traditional working class family. Carver provides a look at the imperfect white working class community in USA, emphasizing the diversity among people and families regardless of race, gender and class. Carver offers humor and irony to his stories, letting students embrace diversity through an economy of language, simple and conversational with much meaning below the surface.

4.1 "They're Not Your Husband"

"They're Not Your Husband" was included in the short story collection *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* published in 1976. The stories in *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* were written over a period of fifteen years, when Carver was abusing alcohol and struggling to make ends meet (Alton 5 and Stull 1997), which is often reflected in Carver's work. Raymond Carver said in an interview with John Alton, regarding his short story collection *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*, "I was simply trying to write the best stories I could write, and, of course, on some extent I drew on personal experience, yes" (Alton 5).

In "They're Not Your Husband", Earl Ober, a salesman between jobs visits the coffee shop where his wife Doreen works as a waitress. Two men in business suits start commenting on Doreen's looks: "Look at the ass on that. I don't believe it. The other man laughed. I've seen better, he said. That's what I mean, the first man said" (Carver 1995: 20). Earl, aware of the business men's comments towards Doreen suggests that she should consider losing a few

pounds. Earl of course offers to help his wife lose those pounds. They start talking about different diets: “Just stop eating, Earl said. For a few days, anyway” (Carver 1995: 23). Earl becomes increasingly obsessed with Doreen’s weight loss and starts monitoring her weight and he also counts her tips for her waitressing job to see if her weight loss has influenced and increased her tips. However, people at Doreen’s workplace are concerned about her weight loss. Earl says “Tell them to mind their own business. They’re not your husband. You don’t have to live with them” (Carver 1995: 25). Towards the end Earl visits the café where Doreen works. Earl desperately tries to engage a customer to talk about his wife’s looks, but is ignored by the customer.

4.1.1 Irony and Masculinity

Carver’s use of irony and dark humor are apparent in this short story when Earl suggests that his wife should stop eating in order to lose weight. Earl’s wife, Doreen wondered why he had not said anything before: “I never felt it was a problem before, he said. He tried to pick his words” (Carver 1995: 22). Earl uses the mirror to point out Doreen’s flaws, asking Doreen to find flaws with her reflection before he suggests what is wrong with her reflection. “I hate to say anything, Earl said, but I think you better give a diet a thought. I mean it. I’m serious. I think you could lose a few pounds. Don’t get mad” (Carver 1995: 22). “All right, she said. I’ll try (...). You’ve convinced me. I’m a closer, Earl said” (Carver 1995: 22). The irony is apparent because as a salesman, the most important quality is the ability to close a sale. Earl does not have a job and so the time of narration, he is neither a closer nor a good salesman.

As Doreen’s new body is revealed Earl waits for the customers’ reaction. However, the customer does not seem interested in Doreen’s new body, despite Earl’s effort to draw the customer’s attention to Doreen. When the other waitresses ask who Earl is. Doreen finally said, “He’s a salesman. He’s my husband” (Carver 1995: 27). Doreen characterizes Earl as a “salesman” before admitting that he is her husband, which reflects Earl’s failure as a husband as well. In this passage Carver compares Earl, the husband with the cynicism of a salesman, and another ironic effect is that even though he uses sales techniques in order to gain more attention and status, and he gets what he thinks is a good result, he still fails to “close the sale”.

Carver questions society’s stereotyped idea of gender roles, which allow students to explore how gender conventions affect men and women’s way of thinking. The reversal of the conventional

gender roles become apparent as Doreen is the main provider in the family and Earl has to engage in the domestic sphere doing what stereotypically are described as housewives' duties, "Earl helped around the house (...) He did all the shopping" (Carver 1995: 25). In "They're Not Your Husband" the gender roles sometimes fluctuate from society's expectations. Earl's unsuccessful attempt to be a salesman causes him to lose his masculinity and his self-confidence as a salesman. He is no longer the provider for his family, and his household chores deprive him of his masculinity. Therefore his attempt to help his wife lose weight is also an attempt to regain his confidence as a salesman but also his masculinity, by having something that other men envy, a form of validation. "They're Not Your Husband" is an opportunity for students to question conventional gender – roles in today's society.

4.1.2 Criticism of a Society?

Carver said in an interview with John Alton that he is never ironic, clever or glitzy. Carver defines his tone as grave, he says "But life is a serious business, isn't it? It's grave, life is, tempered with humor" (Alton 8-9). Even though Carver considers his stories dark, he uses humor and irony to reveal their serious undertones. Humor and irony is certainly central in "They're Not Your Husband". However, the realism of the story causes a grave tone. Earl goes to great and dangerous length to have his wife admired by other men, which is purely intended as a confidence booster or an increase of status for him. The theme of body fixation and validation from others are central in today's society. Young men and women are exposed to numerous media sources that tell you what is pretty and not. "They're Not Your Husband" might help students see the absurdity of body fixation.

In "They're Not Your Husband," there is a dehumanization process of Doreen. During the first parts of the short story, Doreen is dehumanized by two customers at the café: "Look at the ass on that. I don't believe it. The other man laughed. I've seen better, he said. That's what I mean, the first man said" (Carver 1995: 20). The dehumanization of Doreen is not only apparent by the men's fixation on her body, but also when they refer to Doreen as *that*. Earl aware of the men's remarks about Doreen, becomes swallowed by his own shallowness and therefore goes to great lengths to have his wife attract the attention from men that Earl needs. "Each morning he put her on the scale" (Carver 1995: 24). Earl using his sales techniques dehumanizes his wife by forcing her on a dangerous diet and showcasing her at her job as an animal for sale. Earl desperately tries to engage customers in a conversation regarding his wife's looks. The customer ignores Earl,

“Well, what do you think? Earl said. I’m asking. Does it look good or not? Tell me?” (Carver 1995: 27). Earl when talking about his wife, uses the pronoun *it*, and by doing so dehumanizes her. Carver dehumanizes Doreen to accentuate Earl’s obsession in having a successful sale, seeing his wife as a sales object and not a woman or his wife. Carver questions the society’s standards and expectations for individuals, where appearances become more important than the persons behind them. One might consider Earl as a symbol of shallowness that is present in the American society and which we experience in the Norwegian society as well.

Carver has been accused of portraying people that are struggling in a society that oppresses them. However, on the other hand he has been accused of putting a happy face on things. “But all I’m really trying to do is write stories, and for the most part stories about what I know about” (Alton 11). In reality Carver writes about what is familiar to him. He writes about the working poor, a life that Carver knows very well (Alton 10). Carver’s working-class background explains his choice of characters. Carver’s characters are usually everyday people that are not, in any way picture perfect, but are not too damaged or mystical either. Lefebvre observed that Carver’s characters were people who are: “Lost in routines, feeling helpless, estranged from themselves and others, experiencing anger and despair (even ‘crises’ in mid-life) about their jobs and future” (Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh 34). They live an everyday life, as Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh describes it, where they are “reminded perhaps of a series of unexciting routines and repetitive daily tasks from which we dream of escaping” (Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh 33). This becomes central in Carver’s short story “Tell the Women We’re Going”, where the repetitive daily routines of two men instigate an escape from their routine life, which has great consequences.

4.2 “Tell the Women We’re Going”

“Tell the Women We’re Going” was part of Raymond Carver’s short story collection *What We Talk About, When We Talk About Love*, published in 1981 (Rayson: *Carversite*. Web, access date: April 12, 2010). “Tell the Women We’re Going” portrays the routines of everyday life, the frustration of a static life and a yearning for youth and fewer responsibilities. This short story provides a darker and brutal description of working class America. The short story provides a realistic insight to an aspect of the society that students are not familiar with. Though the story includes foul language and violent actions, it describes a reality that is part of the society at large. Carver’s story, as Walker and Silko’s offers diversity within communities or races that often are generalized and categorized as one. In “Tell the Women We’re Going” Carver presents a picture

of frustration from people that presumably are living what the society would consider the 'perfect life', however this view is interrupted when they realize that the goals society has for a perfect life does not reflect the goals they have for their lives. "Tell the Women We're Going" would hopefully evoke a discussion among students regarding the standards of a society. The story can be used to discuss or question peoples and societies idea of a normal and acceptable life. It would be interesting to ask students if they feel judged by society's standard, if is there a society standard and if so do they try to live by society's standard?

In "Tell the Women We're Going" readers are introduced to Bill Jamison and Jerry Roberts, they are best friends and do almost everything together. Jerry dropped out of school and got married to Carol and "Bill went over every chance he got. It made him feel older, having married friends" (Carver 1995: 146). Bill and Jerry had always been friends, they had shared everything. When Jerry marries Carol their male bonding is for the first time interrupted by a woman. After graduation Bill got married to Linda, and every Saturday or Sunday they gathered at Jerry's for a barbecue. However, the idyllic sphere is interfered by a grave Jerry who suggests to Bill that they take a little run. "Sounds good to me, Bill said. I'll tell the women we're going" (Carver 1995: 148). Bill follows Jerry, unable to or not wanting to think for himself, Bill does what Jerry tells him.

Bill and Jerry end up reenacting their carefree adolescent, drinking beer, playing pool and searching for women to have sex with. Driving, they suddenly see two girls "Look at that, Jerry said, slowing. I could use some of that" (Carver 1995: 150). Bill and Jerry try to convince the girls to go with them. However, the girls are not willing to do so. Jerry becomes frustrated and drives off to a popular hiking area where the men wait for the girls to arrive. As the girls arrive, Bill and Jerry start to follow them, the story comes to a dramatic end as Jerry kills both girls.

4.2.1 Brotherly Bonding and Female Interruption

Bill and Jerry had always been friends, they did everything together, "wore each other's shirts and sweaters and pegged pants, and dated and banged the same girls" (Carver 1995: 146). Bill and Jerry were the closest of friends. Their male bonding experience is first interrupted when Jerry marries Carol and drops out of school. As Bill and Jerry's relationship change, their brotherly bond is interrupted by Jerry's marriage. Carol becomes the symbol of Jerry's lost adolescent, he married young and became a father with responsibilities at a young age. Their

brotherly bond becomes more distant when Bill marries Linda. Bill and Jerry who were used to spending every day together now have more limited time together. The women, their responsibilities as husbands and the routines of everyday life drives Jerry into a dark mood.

Jerry's frustration with his situation is apparent as Jerry and Bill go out to drink they try to lure two girls with them. "Bill said, we'll give you a lift. We'll take you where you want. That's a promise. You must be tired riding those bicycles. You look tired. Too much exercise isn't good for a person. Especially for girls" (Carver 1995: 151). The two girls represent Bill and Jerry's past, the girls represent something they miss, when they did not have any responsibilities and were free to roam. "Jerry gunned it back onto the highway, dirt and pebbles flying from under the tires. (...) It's in the bag, Jerry said. You see the look that cunt gave me?" (Carver 1995: 152). The girls' rejection of Bill and Jerry increases Jerry's frustration and his language and actions become violent. Jerry's search for his adolescent and his escape from the routines of his everyday life is embodied in the rejection from the two girls, the rejection from the two girls becomes the symbol of what Jerry has lost and cannot have. The killing of the girls is a symbolic act. Jerry has a strong resentment of women, and the two girls are random victims killed because they rejected Jerry and/or because they represent Jerry's anger towards women. Women were the first interruption to the bond of brotherly love between Bill and Jerry. Jerry believes that women robbed years from his adolescent, they ruined his friendship with Bill, and they rejected him.

The women in "Tell the Women We're Going" are to a large degree dehumanized. Their wives do not seem to exist outside the domestic sphere (Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh 36), and the girls are objectified: "I would like me some of that, Jerry said" (Carver 1995: 150). Bill and Jerry dehumanize the two girls, by using the pronoun *that*, Jerry indicates that the two girls are nothing other than 'props' to them. When Jerry and Bill fail to impress the girls, they follow them as animals waiting for their prey "Jerry said, you go right, I'll go straight. Will cut thee cockteasers off" (Carver 1995: 153). Jerry kills both girls with a rock. The brutality of the murders illustrates Jerry's frustration and anger.

4.2.2 Escape from Everyday Life

Through the short story, Carver expresses the need to escape from everyday life, from the static domestic sphere. Carol and Linda, Jerry and Bill's wives are more or less distant in the story. "The women were in the kitchen straightening up (...) Jerry and Bill were sitting in the reclining

chairs on the patio, drinking beer and just relaxing” (Carver 1995: 148). Aoileann Ní Éigearthaigh suggests that the description of the women is merged with the description of the domestic sphere (Aoileann Ní Éigearthaigh 36), emphasizing traditional daily routines in a household. Carver’s description of everyday life among working class families seem ‘typical’, meaning that it represents people’s perception of a typical working class American family. However, Jerry’s feeling of entrapment in his daily routines seems to frustrate him. Bill and Jerry are strained to their everyday life, which consists of routine. “Guys got to get out, Jerry said. He looked at Bill. You know what I mean?” (Carver 1995: 149). Jerry, has a seemingly happy life, he has a job, a wife, two children and a nice house, however he wants to rekindle his adolescent life when he was free to roam and did not have the responsibility of a father and husband. However, when Jerry realizes that he is not an adolescent and that that life is behind him; his frustration causes him to act violently. His escape from everyday life becomes an escape to his youth and an attempt to find himself. The two girls becomes a symbol of what he cannot have, and that he is trapped in a world where he is unable to act as an adolescent. Jerry’s unprovoked act of violence results in the death of two girls. The two girls become random victims in Jerry’s reaction to, what he considers are an entrapment in the everyday domestic sphere.

Carver’s ending of the story “Tell the Women We’re Going” leaves readers imagining the continuation of the story. Will Bill and Jerry get caught? How will Jerry’s action influence his friendship with Bill? Do Jerry and Bill feel guilty? How will this affect their family life? Carver’s stories keep readers guessing and questioning the characters actions. Carver’s ability to raise questions regarding his short stories helps students reflect on the story and it will increase students’ ability to think independently.

4.3 “Cathedral”

In “Cathedral,” Carver again encourages a variety of interpretations. Carver is hesitant revealing too much about his characters and their actions, especially the narrator. The short story “Cathedral” is from the collection of short story, *Cathedral* published in 1983 (Carver 2003: 2367). “Cathedral” offers an insight to society where people judge based on expectations or generalizations, the story also focuses on the ability to truly communicate and offers self realization.

A husband and wife are expecting a visit from an old friend of the wife, who happens to be blind. The blind man has just lost his wife to cancer. At the beginning of the story, the husband who also serves as the narrator expresses a skeptical attitude towards the blind man. “He was no one I knew. And his being blind bothered me” (Carver 2003: 2368). The husband explains his wife acquaintance with the blind man, how she had worked for him, reading to the blind man. When he meets Robert, the blind man he feels awkward to talk to him, and he becomes an outsider to his wife and Robert’s conversation. As the evening prolongs and the wife falls asleep, Robert and the narrator are able to talk to each other. The two men are watching TV, a documentary about cathedrals. The narrator wants to incorporate Robert in this experience, so he tries to describe the cathedrals but fails. “You have to forgive me, I said. But I can’t tell you what a cathedral looks like. It just isn’t in me to do it. I can’t do any more than I’ve done” (Carver 2003: 2376). Robert asks for a paper and a pen suggests that they can draw a cathedral together. “He found my hand, the hand with the pen. He closed his hand over my hand” (Carver 2003: 2377). The blind man’s hand followed the narrator’s as he started to draw the cathedral. “Close your eyes now, the blind man said to me. I did it. I closed them just like he said” (Carver 2003: 2378). The narrator, Bub, with his eyes closed continued to draw with the blind man, “His fingers rode my fingers as my hand went over the paper. It was like nothing else in my life up to now” (Carver 2003: 2378). When the blind man concluded that they had finished their cathedral he announced to Bub that he could open his eyes now, but Bub kept them closed. “My eyes were still closed. I was in my house. I knew that. But I didn’t feel like I was inside anything. It’s really something, I said” (Carver 2003: 2378).

4.3.1 Communication and Blindness

At the beginning of the story the narrator is insecure and skeptical about his wife’s blind friend’s visit. The narrator has stereotypical thoughts about blindness, and he admits that his idea of blindness comes from the movies, “My idea of blindness came from the movies” (Carver 2003: 2368). This reflects the media’s ability to influence people by their portrayal of different cultural groups or, as in this case blind people, reinforcing stereotypical beliefs. However, it also questions people’s perceptive and uncritical nature when presented with themes through the media, believing what we are being told. “I’d always thought dark glasses were a must for the blind” (Carver 2003: 2371). The narrator’s pre conceived notion of people is distinctive, especially with regards to Robert, the blind man. When the narrator first sees Robert, he is

surprised that he does not have dark glasses on and he is surprised that Robert has a beard. However the narrator's prejudice of Robert and his generalization of blind people makes the narrator blinder than Robert. "I remember having read somewhere that the blind didn't smoke because, as speculation had it, they couldn't see the smoke they exhaled (...) But this blind man smoked his cigarette down to the nubbin and then lit another one" (Carver 2003: 2372). The narrator's assumptions become ridiculous when he says that he did not think blind people could smoke. The narrator becomes increasingly impressed with the blind man because he contradicts all of the narrators pre conceived notions about blindness. Robert can smoke, he can eat and he even has a beard.

The narrator admits that there is a loss of communication between his wife and himself. "My wife and I hardly ever went to bed at the same time" (Carver 2003: 2375). However, this also indicate an isolation within their marriage, though there are efforts of communication based on body language and shared looks, "My wife looked at me with irritation" (Carver 2003: 2373), there is a constant irritation in their communication. When Robert, the blind man comes to visit, the narrator's wife focuses entirely on Robert. The narrator does not take part in the conversation, feeling isolated from it, "For the most part, I just listened" (Carver 2003: 2372). When the narrator begins a conversation with Robert by asking the blind man which side he sat on the train, his wife quickly criticizes him for asking such questions. It seems that the narrator's wife is critical of him regardless of what he says, which interferes with the narrator's ability to communicate. The narrator's communication skills seem hesitant, as if it is better to say nothing than to say the wrong thing. However, when the wife goes to sleep the narrator is able to talk to Robert. The narrator is hesitant in the beginning, faltering towards a conversation. As the narrator's ability to communicate improves, he experiences several epiphanies where his stereotype of blindness is broken and he is able to see and understand himself better.

Robert offers a new insight to the narrator's own sight. Not only has Robert helped the narrator to break down stereotypical ideas about blind people, but he also helps the narrator to see a new world. The narrator is challenged by Robert to see beyond the surface, by challenging him to describe the cathedrals viewed on the TV. Interestingly it is the narrator that instigates this, as he begins to describe the cathedrals because he wants Robert to share the experience. The narrator struggles to express himself when describing the cathedrals, "I'm not doing so good, am I? I said" (Carver 2003: 2376). The blind man realizing the narrator's limitations suggest that they draw the cathedral together. Ironically, by asking the narrator to close his eyes while drawing, he is able to see past the surface. "My eyes were still closed. I was in my house. I knew that. But I

didn't feel like I was inside anything" (Carver 2003: 2378). The narrator's realization that Robert does not meet his stereotypical expectation could help students reflect on their own stereotypical ideas or generalization of people of different races, cultures or physical disabilities.

4.3.2 Isolation and Jealousy

The narrator is uninterested in his wife's former relationships. When the narrator gives us insight into his wife's former life he does not offer much information about her former husband. "Her officer – why should he have a name? He was the childhood sweetheart, and what more does he want" (Carver 2003: 2369). The narrator might feel insecure towards his relationship with his wife or he might feel inadequate when comparing himself to her former husband, therefore dismissing him.

The narrator's insecurity and jealousy regarding his wife's relationship with Robert is apparent when his wife reads him a poem she has written for Robert. The narrator admits that he is not too fond of his wife's poem to Robert, "I can remember I didn't think much of the poem" (Carver 2003: 2368). When Robert arrives the narrator notes a change in his wife's behavior, "She was still wearing a smile. Just amazing" (Carver 2003: 2370). The narrator's reaction to his wife's smiley face indicates that it is rather unfamiliar to him, indicating that she is not happy in her marriage. It is obvious that the narrator is uncomfortable with his wife's relationship with Robert, and his wife's frustrated attitude towards her husband is reinforced when the narrator notices the looks his wife is giving him, "My wife finally took her eyes off the blind man and looked at me. I had a feeling she didn't like what she saw" (Carver 2003: 2371). However, it is evident that the narrator wants his wife's affection, this is reinforced when he sees his wife interact with Robert, "I waited in vain to hear my name on my wife's sweet lips" (Carver 2003: 2372). The narrator is aware of the challenges he faces with his wife and their marriage, but he expresses wanting affection and wanting approval from his wife. Instead he is sidelined as his wife offers this to Robert.

The narrator and his wife seem isolated from the community. "I don't have any blind friends, I said. You don't have any friends, she said" (Carver 2003: 2369-2370). The narrator does not have any friends and spends his time in front of the TV with a drink in his hand. The narrator indicates that neither he nor his wife socialize much, when the narrator offers Robert a drink he reveals that drinking is "one of our pastimes" (Carver 2003: 2371). Though the blind man to the

narrator is suppose to be the “outsider” in the society, the reality is that the narrator is the outsider in the society. Robert in contrasts to the narrator has a lot of friends, a rich social life. However, as the narrator reveals that company is rare to him. “I’m glad for the company. And I guess I was. Every night I smoked dope and stayed up as long as I could before I fell asleep. My wife and I hardly went to bed at the same time” (Carver 2003: 2375). The narrator is stuck in a pattern, a pattern he has become content with. The visitor, Robert helps the narrator realize that he actually enjoys having company, he just needed to be reminded of social interaction and communication. The narrator realizing that he enjoys company has discovered his confidence and tools that will help his social interaction and communication.

John Alton suggested that Carver’s collection *Cathedral* seemed more optimistic than his former collections, such as *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please*. Carver said that his more optimistic tone was reflected his new life. “(...) a number of things coming together, my getting sober, and feeling more hope (...)” (Alton 21). The cathedral that the narrator and Robert draw in “Cathedral” reflects the narrator’s feeling of hope. Carver cleverly uses what the students might see as a random image. Carver carefully chose the cathedral as a reflection of the narrator’s newfound hope. A cathedral is often described as a place for religious worship, a place to connect to your faith, to seek guidance or hope. Robert guiding the narrator’s vision, and by doing so opening his eyes and giving him hope. There is a much more optimistic tone in “Cathedral”, than in “They’re Not Your Husband” and certainly “Tell the Women We’re Going”. As many writers, Carver admits that his mood and his emotions are reflected in his tone when writing short stories. “They’re Not Your Husband”, represent dark realism, but are portrayed with a humorous tone. “Tell the Women We’re Going” is one of the darkest and most violent stories of Raymond Carver. These two stories were written when Carver struggled with depression and alcoholism (Alton 21), and thereby explaining Carver’s dark mood in the short stories. However, Carver has stayed true to his real people, Carver, though some of his modern stories are not as optimistic as “Cathedral” still represents real people, living their life to the best of their abilities. In “Cathedral”

The vision now, today, is, I suppose, more hopeful than it once was. But for the most part, things still don’t work out for the characters in the stories. Things perish. Ideas and ideals and people’s goal and visions – they perish. But sometimes, oftentimes, the people themselves don’t parish. They have to pull up their socks and go on (Alton 14).

Through Carver’s stories students are taught that the world is not perfect, society is not perfect, nobody is perfect. “Well it’s a strange life, we all know that” (Carver 2003: 2377).

5.0 Conclusion

The focus of my thesis was on the cultural and historical aspects the short story can offer. Choosing short stories by authors such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Alice Walker and Raymond Carver provides a unique insight into multicultural America. My thesis further explores the didactic benefits of using short stories as a learning tool when teaching English as a foreign language in Norwegian high schools. In the Norwegian Education plan teachers are encouraged to use literature as a learning tool. The purpose would not only be to expand students' grammatical skills and vocabulary, but also to expand their cultural understanding. Eikrem suggested that short stories would be ideal to use as a learning tool in Norwegian schools, in order to expand students' vocabulary and grammatical skills in English but also to increase students' understanding of the English speaking world. I have offered a variety of short stories in order for students to discover the multicultural America, and in doing so breaking down stereotypical ideas of different cultures within the American society.

Choosing short stories that represent different cultures, races and communities offers an opportunity to discover the diversity within America. Authors writing from an insider's perspective help make the short stories they are writing more believable and compelling. The short stories by Leslie Marmon Silko, Alice Walker and Raymond Carver represent especially good examples of insiders' perspective into this diversity. In writing about the Laguna Pueblo, Leslie Marmon Silko breaks down stereotypical images of Native American culture and traditions. Though the short story is a work of fiction, there is a close connection to actual historical events represented in Silko and Walker's short stories. The short story's ability to connect to a historical event gives the story a more intense realism, which again could help students connect to the short story. My analysis of selected stories by Leslie Marmon Silko, Alice Walker and Raymond Carver gave me the opportunity to discover different cultures and different aspects of the American society. Most of us are aware of African American history, and the injustice they faced for the color of their skin. Alice Walker and Leslie Marmon Silko offered an insight to part of the African American culture and history and a part of the Native American culture and history. Walker and Silko's stories have helped break down stereotypical ideas of African American or Native Americans. Raymond Carver's short stories offer an insight to the white working class community, illustration the hardship of working class families regardless of their race, and reminding us realistically that our society is imperfect.

Students are influenced by media, when discovering the multicultural aspect of the American society. However, many of the cultural portrayals in the media give a restricted insight into different cultures. Through media cultures are often stereotyped or generalized, thereby creating a false realism for outsiders. Short story writers who write from an insider's perspective will help erase stereotypical ideas and generalizations made of different cultures or communities and offer a larger educational gain and a greater understanding of cultures.

Their short stories offer insight into American history, American culture and American diversity. In addition they write stories from an insider's perspective, they are able to tell stories that are familiar to them and their background which brings credibility to their stories. When reading stories about different and unfamiliar cultures there is a risk of stereotyping or generalizing cultures, races or religious communities. We often receive information from secondary sources and often from an outsider's perspective, which could label the story as unconvincing and thereby inadequate. However, by choosing stories written from an insider's perspective and discover that there is more than a single story, we are able to see the diversity within a culture or a community that we would have seen as one before.

In addition my thesis has demonstrated some ways in which students need some basic knowledge of Native American history in order to understand the depth of Silko's stories. Silko's stories offer an insight into a different culture, where outsiders discover a world where songs and stories are central for survival. In her stories Silko manages to portray the diversity that is to be found within her community, emphasizing that not all Native Americans have the same beliefs or traditions, creating more than a single story. Silko also manages to place her stories in an historical context, subtly showing the reader how the intrusion of government has affected many Native Americans. In "Lullaby," Ayah has her children taken away, and in "Tony's Story" Leon and Tony are harassed by a police man. However, in "The Man to Send Rain Clouds," Silko portrays what could be understood as a sense of respect or a step towards mutual respect between two different communities.

Alice Walker's short stories portray characters with an African American background. African American history is on the curriculum presented in Norwegian schools, therefore it is expected that students should have knowledge regarding the slave trade, segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. A reader of Walker's story will benefit greatly from having this historical context. However, when reading these short stories we must remember that though Walker uses historical elements her characters are not representative of all African Americans. Walker an African

American woman writes from an insider's perspective, which gives believability to the themes she is presenting. However, as Silko, Walker merely sometimes hints at the historical context of the story. Walker reflects upon history through her characters, and in this way opens an opportunity for a historical discussion among her readers.

Raymond Carver's stories introduce readers to a different aspect of America, Carver's stories usually evolve around white working class American families who struggle with routines of everyday life, isolation from society or experience a form of crisis. Carver's stories offer an insight to another part of the American society, that we might forget when looking at the multicultural America, the white working class. Carver, as Silko and Walker writes from his own background and life circumstances. Many of Carver's stories question the mainstream society's social expectations for people. Carver's stories give a realistic view of working class families and they also show the diversity among the people labelled as white working class in America.

From a didactic point of view, I believe that literature is central and important when teaching English in Norwegian schools. The introduction of the Communicative Approach in Norwegian schools gave literature legitimacy as a learning tool. It could be used to expand students' vocabulary, improve their grammatical skills and increase their communicative skills. By discussing literature with other students, students also gain a greater understanding of the English speaking world. Literature was to be a resource in language learning and not just a source of enjoyment (Eikrem 21). With the education reform in 1997, Norwegian educational authorities believed that through literary texts the students could develop a greater cultural competence. There was to be a mixture of classic English literature and modern texts that exposed modern life (Eikrem 27-28). The short stories presented in my thesis fulfill several curricular aims in LK06, they provide an insight to a culture or the variety within a culture, they enlighten us about political and social issues that have affected the American society and they give us insight to American history (*Utdanningsdirektoratet: English – Programme Subject In Programmes For Specialization in General Studies. Web, March 14, 2010*).

In my thesis I have looked at contemporary short stories by three different authors, trying to see how these three writers used their knowledge and background to create short stories that not only would intrigue readers but would offer an educational gain for students. I have mentioned that the short story as a literature genre is ideal to use in a teaching situation. The focus of the short story is usually on an episode and there are usually a limited number of characters in each short story. The short story is therefore easy for most students to comprehend. Many EFL students find

it challenging to read English texts; however, to many students the length of the short story helps them to see the texts as accessible.

According to the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, “English literature and other cultural expressions can be a wellspring of experience, satisfaction and personal growth” (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*: English – Programme Subject In Programmes For Specialization in General Studies .Web, March 14, 2010). American short stories offer Norwegian students an experience of American culture, history and society. In today’s schools many students chose not to participate in discussions because they are afraid that they might have the wrong answer. Short stories offer a variety of interpretations, thereby challenging and encouraging students to think independently and develop their own opinions and not worry about a right or wrong answer. Therefore short stories will help students to interact socially with each other, give them practice in using the language, but also help them reflect on their own creativity and knowledge.

In order to achieve the competence aims in the English curriculum, teachers have to choose different stories, various examples of the genre, and also stories that represent different topics and portray different aspects with the American and British culture and society. One of the overall goals of teaching English in Norwegian high schools is to help students increase their insight into other people’s living conditions, to represent different outlooks on life and different cultures that use English. The short stories by Leslie Marmon Silko, Alice Walker and Raymond Carver will help students achieve the competence aims in the English curriculum. These writers and their stories provide students an insight into social and political conditions in an English – speaking country, they are exposed to historical events are how these events have affected the American society. In addition their stories lead us to reflect on our own lives, and also see historical and cultural similarities between America and Norway.

Many educators use the didactic relationship model as a tool in order to create an environment that will enhance the strength of each student in order for the material to be presented in the best possible way for each student. I have used this model and created learning examples of a few short stories presented in my thesis (see Appendix I, II, III).

Finally, as educators it is our job to present material in a way that will make students want to learn. As Galileo Galilei said “You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.”¹ Short stories can provide us with new knowledge and new thoughts about the

¹ Explanatory footnote: I was told this by teacher Terje Fagerbakk at a PPU lecture and found it fitting for my thesis. University of Tromsø, fall 2008.

world, and about ourselves. Stories can inspire us, but they can also encourage reflection of our own life and how we understand other people, cultures and races. Stories can also break down stereotypes students might have towards a culture, a race or a religious community, and makes what seem or is strange become more familiar to outsiders. The short story draws on tradition, it helps keep the oral narrative relevant today, and by using our own knowledge in regards to storytelling, we can use what we already know as an introduction to new knowledge. Being aware of the oral narrative and its inspiration on the short story genre might help students realise that they can use their own knowledge when writing or discussing and not be afraid that they have to be extremely creative and new thinking, but that they can rather develop stories from what is familiar to them. In “The Danger of a Single Story,” Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie said, “Stories can be used to empower and humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity” (Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story.” Web Oct. 27, 2010).

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Appendix I:

A Didactic Plan for teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's "Tony's Story" in a Norwegian High School, vgl level

Learning goals: Competence aims retrieved from the Norwegian education plan (K06) for vg 1.

Aims that are relevant are

- Discuss social conditions and values in various cultures in a number of English-speaking countries
- Discuss literature by and about indigenous peoples in the English-speaking world

(*Utdanningsdirektoratet*: English Subject Curriculum. Web, access date: March 14, 2010)

Learning conditions and settings:

We are in a Norwegian High School, more specifically an English class on vgl level with 25 students, all at different levels concerning their English vocabulary, understanding and ability to produce written text and use the language orally. The English class is restricted to 90 minutes, and usually students take their break individually, when needed. The students are expected to have read "Tony's Story" by Leslie Marmon Silko and be prepared to summarize the story.

The students are divided into groups of four and five.

Content and Learning process:

The teacher divides the students in groups of four and five, so that students that have difficulty speaking in front of a large group of people will feel less intimidated when divided into groups. The students are expected to give a summary of the short story "Tony's Story", to see if every student has understood the content of the story. The students are then as a group, going to create statements or question regarding "Tony's Story", reflecting their interpretation of the story and their understanding of different cultures portrayed in the story.

The students are encouraged to use secondary sources such as books available in the library and internet, regarding information about Native American history, culture and values and use the information to understand "Tony's Story" better. Students are encouraged to find information about

- The BIA
- Government laws that protected Native Americans, or lack of them

- Native American religions and beliefs
- Diversity within Native American tribes
- Social and racial discrimination towards Native Americans.

The last 20-30 minutes will be used to discuss the story and the students' findings in plural.

- What have different groups focused on regarding "Tony's Story"?
- Are their different ways of understanding the story?
- Why is it important to gather historical and cultural information about Native Americans as a resource in understanding "Tony's Story" better?
- Can we relate "Tony's Story" to situations that have occurred in Norway?

Assessments:

Assessments will be on the basis of the students understanding of the short story "Tony's Story" as well as their ability to see how different social values are portrayed. Students will also be evaluated on their participation both as a vital member of a group but also on their individual learning process.

Appendix II:

Didactic Plan for teaching Alice Walker's "The Welcome Table" in a Norwegian High School at vg 2 and 3 level.

Learning goals: Competence aims retrieved from the Norwegian education plan (K06) for vg 2 and 3. These aims are relevant for students studying Social Studies English

- Summarize, comment on and discuss differing viewpoints on social and political issues
- Elaborate on and discuss how key historical events and processes have affected the development of American society and British society.

(Utdanningsdirektoratet: English – Programme Subject In Programmes For Specialization in General Studies. Web, access date: March 14, 2010)

Learning conditions and setting:

We are in a Norwegian High School, an English class on vg 2 level with 19 students. The students have chosen a branch that focuses on the social, political and cultural aspect in English speaking countries. The students are therefore interested in this part of the English speaking world, and their English level is at a more equal level. The English class is restricted to 90 minutes, and usually students take their break individually, when needed.

This is the students' first introduction to African American history before 1960, in an English class in High School. The students are expected to have some basic or general knowledge about African American history, particularly The Civil Rights Movement.

Learning Process and content:

The teacher has prepared a short power point presentation regarding African American history from slavery up to the Civil Rights Movement. In order to have the students full attention the teacher hands out a copy of the presentation. By doing this the teacher prevents students being distracted, trying to write everything down themselves. While having a presentation, teacher should encourage students to ask questions or add information about the topic in order to keep them interested.

The students with their new acquired knowledge about African American history are asked to read Alice Walker's short story "The Welcome Table". Students are given a while reading activity, where they are to mark sections they feel are relevant to the history presented in the power point presentation. Students will not only read the short story thoroughly, but they are also challenged to see the realism literature often displays. Students are to answer questions such as:

- What period of time do you think this short story reflect and why?
- What do you consider major themes in this short story? Find examples from the text that supports your thoughts.
- Do you consider this story relevant today, why/why not?

Towards the end, students are encouraged to share their opinions and interpretation of the short story and its connection to history. Students are expected to have discussed the theme of segregation in the story, and the historical aspect of segregation of African Americans.

Assessment:

The introduction of Alice Walker's "The Welcome Table" is seen as introduction, and to try and give students the necessary knowledge to understand the short story's reflection of realism. This lecture will hopefully provide the inspiration students need to write a short essay, expressing their own opinions regarding segregation and draw examples from Walker's story and history.

Appendix III:

Didactic Plan for teaching Raymond Carver's "They're Not Your Husband" in Norwegian High School at vg2 or vg3 level.

Learning goals: Competence aims retrieved from the Norwegian education plan (K06) for vg 2 and 3. These aims are relevant for students studying English Language and Literature

- Have a command of the terminology needed for analysing works of fiction, films and other aesthetic forms of expression
- Elaborate on and discuss the cultural position of the United States and Great Britain in the world today, and the background for the same

(Utdanningsdirektoratet: English – Programme Subject In Programmes For Specialization in General Studies. Web, access date: March 14, 2010).

Learning conditions and setting:

A Norwegian High School, an English class on vg2 level with 19 students. The students have chosen a branch that focuses on reading, discussing and analyzing English literature. Most students are reading a good amount of English fiction and their English level is at an equal level. The English class is restricted to 90 minutes, and usually students take their break individually, when needed.

The students are expected to have some knowledge of the terminology used when interpreting and analyzing literature. The students are expected to have read Raymond Carver's "They're Not Your Husband" prior to class.

They are expected to:

- Give a short summary of the plot
- Determine the setting of the story. When and where does it take place?
- Determine who is the major character (s) in the story, and describe them.
- How would you describe the relationship between the characters and does it change?
- Determine what type of narration it is. Is it consistent throughout the story?
- What do you consider major themes? Give reasons for your answer.
- Do you consider this short story humorous? Do you see a use of irony in the story? Find examples that support your answer.

The students are to use their own computers and all of the students have good knowledge about the use of internet and Microsoft office word.

Learning process and content:

Teacher has prepared a handout with necessary terminology and their definition that are used when interpreting and analyzing literature. Students can work together in pair or three and three, in order for them to have someone to discuss with. Then students are suppose to determine plot, setting, characterization, narration, use of irony or humor etc. regarding Carver's short story "They're Not Your Husband". Through their interpretation they will discover different cultural and social aspects of the US.

Students are to use their own computer and document their findings. When the students have completed the task, the class is to discuss all the students' findings. Then each student has time to make changes before handing in their work.

Assessment:

The student will be evaluated on the basis of their understanding of the terminology used to analyze literature and their ability to use it when analyzing literature reflected in their submissions.