

Betrayal

Integrating theme with plot

Start

You run a small business. You are liked and respected by both customers and employees. Then one day you discover that Donald, someone you have always trusted, has betrayed you.

Questions

After reading the prompt above, answer the following questions on another sheet of paper. Use your answers to help you think about your subject.

1. Who are you? What does your company do?
2. What is Donald's job?
3. Why have you always been pleased with his work?
4. What is he doing behind your back?
5. How did you find out?
6. What was your immediate reaction? How did you feel? What did you say?
7. Who did you consult?
8. What was your first choice of action?
9. What was another choice?
10. What should you do and why?





Getting Started

Summarize the moments leading up to and immediately after the betrayal.



Starting Your Story

Keep all those moments in mind and then write a ninety-word mini-story for three of these outcomes. Experiment with different points of view: yours, your wife's, another worker's, and Donald's.

1. Donald admits his crime, apologizes, and returns to work a better person.
2. Donald denies his crime and leaves.
3. You discover that Donald had a reason for betraying you and you forgive him.
4. You discover that it was really your own fault; he had no choice but to betray you.
5. Your choice of action fails. You sell the business and move away.
6. Your choice of action fails, but along the way you learn how to make the company even more successful.
7. Your choice of action succeeds. Donald leaves the company and eventually does something even worse.

OR: Come up with your own idea for a mini-story.



Write Away!

1. Pick the mini-story you like most and develop it around one of these themes:
 - Life is fair.
 - Life is not fair.
 - Appearances lie.
 - People never change.
 - We don't understand our own motives.
 - We don't like to admit our mistakes.
2. Study your new draft and consider the following: How have you presented your theme? Is it stated outright or do your readers have to figure it out for themselves?
3. Write the final draft.



Read and Write

Consider reading "The Lie" by Kurt Vonnegut. In this story Eli really lets the family down: He not only fails to meet the admission standards at prestigious Whitehill Academy, but he also tears up the rejection letter before his parents can read it. Note Vonnegut's use of irony at the end—just who has betrayed whom in this story?



On the Screen

Try *Silverado* (rated PG-13), a Western about a man who must decide whether he wants to play it safe or to stand by his friends in their time of danger. Pay attention to the scene in the saloon when Stella, the tiny proprietor, gets angry at the "bullies" in the world.