

How these short stories represent the Modern literary movement

	“The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”	“The Blue Jar”	“Hills Like White Elephants”	“Roselily”
Subject Matter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average guy (less than average) feels isolated / disconnected from reality and prefers to live in his mind • Feels worthless, useless, invisible • Has no purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female heroine, dealing with advent of some feminist issues • It’s about finding a passion and purpose to life that is self-determined, and not determined by social status you’re born into 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging moral taboos about abortion • Power imbalance in relationship • Communication is a relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single woman with kids from different fathers – challenging social and racial norms • Bi-faith marriage • Looking at how complex it is to make a big decision
Style / Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form of short story • Non-linear plot, using flashbacks and ... • Characterization through pathos, dialogue, unreliable narrator to feel bad for him • Open ending • Character has no growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form of short story • Genre bends a bit of fairy tale and historical fiction–esque • Focus on characterization, thoughts, and inner motivation, not description • Unreliable narrator • Linear structure, BUT keeps the story focused on one aspect – character’s pursuit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form of short story • Structure of dialogue and unreliable eavesdropper narrator • Character is revealed through observation and words – so as seemingly objectively as possible • Precise and terse use of imagery and figurative language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form of short story • Non-linear plot – 2 voices • Inner monologue or stream-of-consciousness • Active voice and motif illustrate the various facets of the human psyche that help make decisions •
Social Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader has to get that there are 2 worlds, or miss the boat • Allusions to real events / heroes • Fragility of masculinity at that time • Advent of women’s rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rejection of money, status, consumerism, title of the period before • Critical of the values of the previous time • Makes the reader work to figure out what the jar means to her, and leaves it unanswered • Use of author’s life as inspiration as opposed to total fiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements parallel author’s own life • Iceberg theory of the reader having to look below the surface to understand the text • Open ended for reader to decide with whom they identify most – challenges biases along gender lines • Lost generation writer (ex-pat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harlem Renaissance – African American writers writing about the African American experience • Great Migration of AAs North to escape slavery and racism and poverty of the South • Open ending, interpretation is up to the reader